

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAET'HANAN

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 40:1-26

August 1, 2015 AB 16 5775

DEDICATIONS: For a Refuah Shelemah for Simcha bat Sara

Shabbat Nachamu - Saturday August 1st

Rabbi Naftali Citron will be with us for Shabbat along
with many of the Carlebach Synagogue family and members
Please join us for a memorable Shabbat

**Friends – We need assistance and a commitment for Friday night especially this Shabbat where many will be
at the Carlebach dinner**

Minha & Arbit 7:00 PM -Candle Lighting 7:53 PM

Shabbat

Class with Rav Aharon 8:00 AM – Latest Shema 8:37AM

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

Rabbi Citron will give the Derasha

Kiddish is sponsored by the Sutton and Azizo families.

**By Jack and Patti Azizo in memory of Jack's sister Lena (Rachel bat Latifah) Azizo Cymbrowitz. And by Karen
and Leon Sutton in memory of Leon's father.**

And in welcoming the members of the Carlebach Shul led by Rabbi Naftali Citron

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

Ages 2-5 - in the Playroom/

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

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

Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 5:30

Class with Rabbi Citron: 6:15PM - Minha 6:45 PM - Seudat Shelishit 7:15 PM

Zemirot led by Rabbi Citron – 7:25 to 7:55

Rabbi David is scheduled to give the class at 7:55

Birkat HaMazon 8:30PM Arbit 8:40 PM – Shabbat Ends at 8:52

Carlebach Melave Malka Follows Havdala

SUNDAY MORNING

Breakfast this Sunday given by Ernie Davidson and the Ovadias

In memory of Jeffrey Oberman - Class by Sam Yusupov

DAILY MINYAN

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

Mincha and Arbit - Sunday at 7:45PM

LOOKING FORWARD:

Sisterhood meeting next Sunday Aug 9. 9 30 am

Save The Date - August 30th

Sisterhood's End of Summer BBQ!

With community blood drive.

More details to follow!

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Baruch Dayan Emet
Our Condolences to Joe Sabbagh on the sudden
loss of his mother.
The funeral was today Thursday
Shiva will be at Joe's parents' house in Crown
Heights
Friday and then Sunday through Wednesday
morning
Address: 1590 Carroll Ave, Brooklyn 11213.
Shacharit at 7am and Arvit 8:45pm.

Joe will be home for Shabbat and will be sitting at
his house on Saturday night between 9:30-11pm
– The address is 363 West Walnut St, downstairs
apartment.
Hamakom Yenachem Etchem B'toch Shaar
Aveilei Tzion V'Yerushalayim

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

Editors Notes

We received lots of feedback to last week's article where we spoke of vacationing during the three weeks. I felt for the friend who opened the newsletter while sitting on the beach in Ibiza. My son Jonah reminded me that my article lacked full disclosure. I too spent a few summer weekends in Ibiza though not in the last 25 years. And then there were the questions from the Ashkenazim who wanted to know what Maaza on Friday afternoon is all about? You'll have to wait for that one. Most of the responses though spoke of trying to look at the nine days in a different way. Trying to understand what we lost and what we are lacking.

I told the following story I heard from Rabbi Geisinsky: Sherlock Holmes and Watson went on a camping trip. They set up their sleeping bags and fancy tent and after a good meal and some wine they were exhausted and fell asleep. Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see." Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars." "What does that tell you?" Watson pondered for a minute. "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe

that Saturn is in Leo. Time wise, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that the Lord is all powerful and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you?" Holmes was silent for a minute, then spoke. "Watson, you idiot, someone has stolen our tent!"

We are Watson. We don't even realize that our tent, the Bet HaMikdash is gone.

As we celebrate Tu Be'Av today and as we move from Av in Elul and then Rosh Hashana, let's not sweep the mourning over the Temple away. Let's take the time to learn and connect to the past and our past as a people.

I was asked to locate a story I posted many years ago. I read it and thought the rest of you would enjoy it as well. It's amazing the power that stories from the past can have on us today.

Our friend Gil who sets up the chairs each morning at the Kotel and spends his day helping visitors to the Wall put on Tefilin and say a prayer wrote: Last week at the Kotel, I asked an elderly man to put on tefillin. He strongly refused. I asked him, "When was the last time you put on tefillin?"

He smiled and proudly said, "Seventy-two years ago!", pushing aside any possibility of him putting them on again. He held out his arm to show me the fading numbers tattooed there. "1938," he said. "It was the day of Kristallnacht. Do you know what Kristallnacht is?"

"Of course I do," I told him.

"Two hundred and sixty seven synagogues were burned down in one night. They burned down our synagogue, too. My tefillin were burnt up, and I have never put them on again." He said, telling me in no uncertain terms why he was not going to put them on.

"I have a friend who was in the camps, too," I quickly said, "and he not only puts on tefillin today, but he even put them on others inside the camp!" I was trying to show him that he did not have to reject tefillin because of what those evil people did. "Do you want hear how he got the tefillin into the camp?"

"Yeah," he said, strongly, "How did he get them in there?"

"His name is Laibel. Whenever he comes to Israel, he prays with our sunrise minyan. He also has numbers tattooed on his arm. "When we first met, he asked me, 'What do you do around here?'"

"Wanting to say something exciting, I said, 'I put tefillin on people here at the Kotel.'

"'Oh yeah?' he said, 'Well, I put tefillin on people in the death camp.'

"I stared at him; there was nothing I could say. I was him dumbfounded. I asked him, 'How did you get the tefillin in there?'"

"He looked me in the eye and said that they came to the ghetto and grabbed 137 young boys. He told me that only five of them got out of there alive, only five.

"He was thirteen-and-a half years old. When they grabbed him, he was wearing the high boots that his father had bought for him. He showed me with his hand that the boots came up almost to his knees. When he saw them coming, he stuffed his tefillin in the top of one boot and his prayer book in the other.

"They pushed the boys into a cattle car and drove them to the death camp. It was not far from the ghetto. When the train stopped, they slid open the side of the cattle car and immediately began pushing them toward the open door of the oven. The boys were frightened and crying out. They asked Laibel, 'What should we do?' He told them, 'I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to stand in rows five across and we're going to march right into that oven singing "ani ma'amin . . ." (I believe in G-d). And they did just that. They stood in rows five across and started singing and marching right into the oven.

"The guards became so confused that they did not know what to do. They screamed, 'You can't do that! No one has ever done such a thing before. Stop it! Stop it at once! Here! Go over there to the showers instead.'

"They pushed them over to the showers. They made them take off all of their clothing and throw them into a pile in the middle of the floor. They made them empty out their shoes and the tefillin and prayer book fell out onto the pile.

"After the shower, when they were dressed in the camp clothes and were being pushed back past the pile of their clothes, he saw his tefillin and prayer book lying there. He wanted so badly to run over and pick them up, but there were terrifying guards standing right there so he couldn't. He said to the

boys, 'Okay, I did something for you, so now you do something for me.'

"'Whatever you want,' they said. 'You saved our lives.'

"He said, 'When I give the signal, make a big fight with each other and start screaming out loud. Okay . . . Now!' He whipped his arm in the air as if he was back at the camp giving them the signal. The boys started to fight and scream. The guards ran over and tried to pull them apart, but they wouldn't stop fighting. In the confusion, he ran over and grabbed his tefillin and prayer book and hid them under his arms.

"He was in the barracks and he wanted to put on the tefillin. He was able to put the arm piece on without anyone seeing by pulling his sleeve over it, but how could he put on the head piece? There were evil guards all over the place. He opened the window and stuck his head outside so he could put on the head piece. A guard came by and screamed at him, 'Who said you could open that window?' He told him that he was sick and was throwing up, and if he made him close the window he would throw up inside, too. The guard left him there. And he looked me in the eye and said, 'And I put tefillin on other men like that there, too.' I started to cry and I kissed him on his yarmulke.

"The next day there was a soldier at the Kotel who wouldn't put on tefillin. No matter what I said, he simply refused. Then I told him Laibel's story, and he quickly said, 'Okay, I'll do it.'

"And you can do it, too" I said, as I gently slid the tefillin I was holding on his arm. He said the blessing and started to cry. We said the Shema, and he prayed for his family. He began to smile even while the tears were streaming down his face. A crowd gathered around all congratulating him on his overcoming all those years of rejection.

Gil concludes the story by saying, "You do not always succeed, but you always have to try." And I guess that's what Rabbi Abittan would have told us. Try to remember, try to learn, try to understand and try to do. If we give it our 100% then it's up to Hashem to contribute the rest.

But we need to give the 100%!

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

A sign that Chuck Schumer will back the Iran deal By Seth Lipsky - Lipsky@nysun.com

What a drama Chuck Schumer is going through over how to vote on the Iran deal.

Publicly, New York's senior senator is keeping his cards close to his chest and complaining about what a difficult decision it is.

My guess is that he's going to get behind the president, rebuff Israel's objections and, in the end, vote for appeasement. That's the implication of a little-noticed YouTube video on which he was last month captured talking with a delegation of Orthodox Jews in Washington.

The video has been given little coverage, even as Schumer emerges as a pivotal figure in the debate in the Senate. The meeting was with a delegation of one of the most distinguished Jewish groups, the Orthodox Union. It was apparently filmed on a cellphone by a member of the audience and was uploaded onto YouTube in June.

Schumer was aware of that possibility, because he started out by saying he'd "wanted to talk a lot of tachlis about Iran" — meaning, roughly, get down to business. But, he said, "I'm not going to do this because you're recording it."

Then he proceeded to talk tachlis anyhow, characterizing the question as "which is better — no agreement or an agreement that is not close to the ideal." It would, though, be inaccurate to suggest that Schumer simply endorsed what the administration is doing.

Schumer was nuanced and thoughtful. He gets that an Iranian bomb would be an existential threat to Israel. But he mocked those who advocate a military strike against Iran's bomb-making facilities, calling it "the next-worst solution."

"Tens of thousands of Israelis would die," he warned, expressing fear that an attack would trigger terrorist strikes against America and prompt Hezbollah to launch 10,000 rockets against Israel. Backers of a military solution, he suggested, "are not looking at the facts."

"As a Jewish leader in America," Schumer said, "I have to look at the facts." Bizarrely, he vowed: "I will not be pushed around on this issue." Did he mean pushed around by the Iranians, by the administration or by Israel?

"An agreement that everyone likes" is what Schumer called the best — but extremely unlikely—solution. Hence the question of which is better — no agreement or an agreement that is not close to ideal.

What was most astonishing about the Schumer remarks was when he touched on the issue of dual loyalty. He imagined a hypothetical agreement that had a 95 percent chance of ensuring that Iran would not get an A-bomb.

"If you are president of the United States, president of one of the European countries or an American, an average American, you say that's pretty good to me," he said. But since a nuclear Iran would be an existential threat to Israel, he suggested, there's another perspective.

"If you're prime minister of Israel or an Israeli citizen or for that matter an American Jew or at least some American Jews," he said, "you say I can't live with a 5 percent chance that Israel will be annihilated." So "there is a basic difference in viewpoint."

Schumer also spoke of how the "American Jewish community ignored the threat of Hitler," suggesting some kept quiet out of fear of being accused of dual loyalty. Then, toward the end of his remarks, he asked that the door be closed.

"This is the tachlis part," the senator said. He spoke of how the failure to reach an agreement would leave sanctions in place but only if everyone else stays in. "It so bothers me to have the Jewish fate in European hands," Schumer said.

"We've been through this before, we Jewish people," Schumer said. He then spoke of what a difficult decision he was facing. Noting that he'd been an elected official for 41 years, he said he would not let political pressure interfere.

Yet maybe Schumer will remember Mordechai's injunction to Esther: "If you remain silent at this time, relief and rescue will arise for the Jews from elsewhere, and you and your father's household will perish."

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading

This week's parasha has in it the Shema and Ve'ahavta. The first pasook of Ve'ahavta says "ve'ahavta eht Hashem be'kol le'babcha, be'kol nafshecha, oo'bekol me'odecha". The pasook teaches us how far we should go to love Hashem. Be'kol lebabcha is with all our heart (the Gemara explains that the way to love Hashem with our heart is to pray to Hashem). Be'kol nafshecha is with all our life (i.e., to be willing to give up our life for Hashem). And be'kol me'odecha I've always learned means to love Hashem with all our money (even if loving Hashem causes us to lose money). But more recently I saw that Rashi in the parasha also brings a second interpretation for the words be'kol me'odecha (based on the Gemara in Berachot daf 54). He explains be'kol me'odecha is telling us to love Hashem be'kol mida oo'mida she'modeh lecha (love Hashem with every measure that he gives us). Love Hashem regardless of if he gives us good or if he gives us what appears to be bad. And I thought this was a beautiful explanation. The pasook is telling us to love Hashem unconditionally. And this is a beautiful kavana that we can have when we say the Shema. That we are working on loving Hashem regardless of how our business is going or regardless of what we are experiencing in our lives. We are expressing that we trust Hashem is taking care of us and we love him regardless of how things seem to be going. This is what it means to love Hashem be'kol me'odecha!

Va'etchanan - Moshe tells Benei Israel how to behave once they get into Israel. The 10 Commandments and Shema.

- 1- Moshe recounts how he prayed to Hashem but was not allowed to enter Eretz Israel. Moshe tells Benei Israel of the mitsvot they will need to keep in order to merit staying in the land.
- 2- Moshe tells Benei Israel to remember and tell future generations how Hashem spoke to us at Sinai and did miracles in Mitsrayim so that we keep the laws and not stray after other Gods.
- 3- Moshe sets up cities of refuge in Jordan (where reuben, gad and half menashe were to live).
- 4- Moshe reminds Benei Israel how they all heard Hashem speak directly to them at Sinai. The ten commandments are repeated here.
- 5- Moshe recounts how Hashem then related the hukim and mishpatim to him as an intermediary upon the request Benei Israel who was unable to withstand hearing from Hashem directly.
- 6- The parasha of Shema and Ve'ahavta is said here. Moshe then warns Benei Israel not to succumb to sin as a result of the prosperity they will experience in Israel.

7- Moshe says that when we get to the land we should destroy the 7 nations living there and take care not to show favor to them and inter-marry with them. Moshe tells again how Hashem loves us and warns us to follow in the ways of Hashem.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"Comfort, comfort, My people, says your G-d." (Yeshaya 40:1)

Our Haftarah contains prophecies that offered the people comfort and hope after the destruction of the First Temple. The greatest comfort for us would be the building of the Third Bet Hamikdash. However, given the current situation and the level of our people, how can this happen?

I believe that a discussion that occurred between Rabbi Shimshon Pincus zt"l and Rabbi Noah Weinberg zt"l contains the answer. Rabbi Weinberg was known for bringing back hundreds of Jews to teshubah. Jews that had almost no connection to their religion. So Rabbi Pincus asked how was this possible? For in earlier generations with tremendous effort a Rabbi could bring back two or perhaps three people. He answered with a parable. In a construction site one can witness a complete wall of reinforced concrete, which weighs ten tons, being placed on existing portions of the wall already in place. This is done by bringing a large crane that can lift this monstrous piece of solid concrete. While the concrete wall is in the air, one worker standing in the right place can move this heavy piece into place. How can one man move this huge section? Well, it's easy. Once it is in the air, one puny man can move this entire section. The idea is, the Rabbi explained, that teshubah in our generation is different than in all the previous ones. The Rambam (Laws of Teshubah 7:5) says, "There is a promise from the Torah that at the end of the exile the Jewish people will make teshubah and right after that they will immediately be redeemed." There is a special promise concerning our generation. In the earlier times, the Rabbi would have to "lift" the entire weight of the person to bring him back to his roots. Therefore, a tremendous effort was needed to bring him back. Nowadays, however, Hashem lifts up every Jew with a "crane" so that even a small effort, even by someone who doesn't know too much how to do it, can bring back many people.

This is our situation today. This is our hope for a redemption and the building of the Bet Hamikdash. May this all fall into place soon in our day. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

**"And you shall watch yourselves very carefully."
(Debarim 4:15)**

From this verse, the Rabbis teach us that it is a misvah to watch our health. Even though it may seem unnecessary to command us to protect our health, the Torah felt it important enough to emphasize that we guard our welfare. This should encourage us to watch what we eat in terms of our weight and in terms of nutrition, especially as we get older. The evil inclination doesn't mind if we indulge in the wrong food and drink and then are unable to serve Hashem the next day. This admonition should help us strengthen our resolve to stay healthy, for it provides us with a misvah every time we do something beneficial for our health. Not coincidentally, the Torah doesn't say, "Watch your bodies," rather, "watch your souls," which is learned out to mean our bodies, in order to explain that the main reason we should be healthy is in order to use our souls properly to serve Hashem. A healthy body and a healthy soul, what a combination! Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

BEHOLD IT IS VERY GOOD

On the day Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt"l, passed away, I listened to many eulogies commemorating his life. As each speaker delivered his heart-rending insights into the true greatness of this humble Sage, the Torah giant grew taller and taller in our minds. Many speakers dwelt on his special approach to Torah and life, which Rabbi Miller viewed as inseparable.

"He who possesses an understanding of the goodness of the world always rejoices. Life is full of intense pleasures that are available to all people, but many fail to appreciate them because of mistaken mental attitudes. 'The Almighty saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good!' The Creator Himself declares that everything is not only good, but very good!" (Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Sing, You Righteous)

Rabbi Miller saw good in everything. On a cool, drizzly day, as he was savoring the refreshing sensation of the spray hitting his face, two women passed him in the street. "What a nasty day!" he overheard one woman comment to her companion. Rabbi Miller was shocked. How could someone take a negative view of what Hashem was providing?

When you are about to complain, stop and look for the positive in the situation. Taking this brief pause may cause you to turn around and go from disgruntled to happy! (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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Making A Small Hole In The Fence

The Torah warns in Parashat Vaethanan, "Do not add onto that which I command you, and do not detract from it..." (4:2). This command forbids us from adding to or detracting from the Torah. The Torah consists of 613 Misvot, no more and no less, and it is strictly forbidden to impose changes onto the Torah by adding a new command or by annulling an existing command. There is no such thing as "improving" the Torah. Even if a person enjoys foods flavored with cinnamon, if he adds cinnamon to a recipe that does not call for it, he can ruin the dish. And the same is true about removing a necessary ingredient. Similarly, even if we think we have a good idea for changing the Torah, the result is something completely different, to the point where it simply is not a Torah at all.

Interestingly, after presenting this warning, the Torah then makes mention of the sin of Ba'al Pe'or, when the people became involved with the women of Moab and worshipped the god of Moab: "Your eyes saw what God did at [the incident of] Ba'al Pe'or, that every man who followed Ba'al Pe'or – God destroyed him from your midst" (4:3). The obvious question arises, what is the connection between the prohibition against adding or taking away Misvot, and the incident of Ba'al Pe'or?

The Rabbis teach that the sin of Ba'al Pe'or began when the young women of Moab set up markets near Beneh Yisrael's camp. God had warned the people to distance themselves from the surrounding nations, and not to become involved with them, but the people nevertheless started visiting the Moabites' shops. Gradually, the women of Moab began enticing the men of Beneh Yisrael, ultimately leading to immorality, idolatry, and, eventually, a divine plague that left 24,000 people dead.

The tragedy of Ba'al Pe'or demonstrates most clearly the dangers of slight, seemingly innocuous infractions. The people innocently felt that there would be no harm done in shopping in Moab's markets. Although they were told to stay away, they felt justified in doing something so innocent as window-shopping. Unfortunately, they failed to realize that slight deviations from law and tradition can result in complete disregard for the Torah. The Torah may be compared in this regard to a fence, guarding us from negative influences. Once a fence has a small hole, it no longer serves its purpose. A

fence with a hole is not a fence. Unless the hole is immediately fixed, it will gradually grow larger, until anyone and anything can enter the closed-off area. Similarly, once we make a small hole in tradition, we have no tradition. Even if we add more laws and prohibitions that our ancestors never observed, we have made a hole in the fence, we have transformed the Torah into something completely new, and our commitment to tradition is shaken to its very foundations.

I vividly recall as a young boy hearing Hacham Baruch Ben Haim speak repeatedly about the importance of following the customs and traditions of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. At the time, I found it strange that he would repeat this exhortation time and time again. But as I grew older and studied more, I realized why the Hacham dwelled so heavily on this point. Once we deviate from our traditions, even slightly, and even with inherently innocent measures, we no longer have a tradition, we are no longer committed to our ancient religious teachings. We must therefore constantly reaffirm our commitment to following our laws, traditions and customs down to the last letter, thereby ensuring that the "fence" remains complete and that we remain unwaveringly devoted to our sacred Torah.

Rabbi Wein
POST-TISHA B'AV THOUGHTS

I spent the better part of the afternoon of Tisha B'Av reading a book recently published concerning the history of Chicago's Orthodox rabbinate from the late 1800s to the middle of the twentieth century. The book has special meaning to me since I knew many of the rabbis described in the book during my early years in Chicago a half-century ago.

Also the fact that my father and grandfather are memorialized in the book gave it very special meaning. The book evoked in me many different and even contradictory emotions. On one hand I was in admiration for all of the scholars, those of whom came from Eastern Europe and were great students of great scholars there, who were able somehow to transfer their lives to a very different and alien - even hostile community and environment.

The book records their struggles to try and maintain some semblance of a traditional Jewish life while everything in American culture and society opposed it. Sabbath observance, intensive Jewish education and traditional family bonds all were being eroded and destroyed before their very eyes. And yet somehow, almost in blind defiance of the facts and

realities that surrounded them, they persevered to instill Jewish values, Torah knowledge, love for the land of Israel and a feeling of Jewish solidarity within their congregants and those who came in contact with them.

We have to realistically admit that, in the main, they were unable to stem the tide of assimilation and alienation from Judaism that has so engulfed American Jewry, till this very day. Yet, if there is a vibrant and functioning Jewish Orthodox community in Chicago today it is because these men somehow were able to pass on the torch of Judaism to select individuals and families. And it is those individuals and families that have created the strong Jewish Orthodox community which lives in Chicago today.

But I was overcome by another emotion, that of sadness and mourning, an emotion which befitted the mood of the somber day of Tisha B'Av. That emotion was one of enormous frustration for what happened to the families and descendants of many of these great-grandparents and scholars.

I made careful note regarding many of those whom I knew and I realized that most of them were unable to transmit their way of life and value system to their own children, grandchildren and certainly not to later generations. I make no judgment whatsoever regarding this fact. I also have relatives, descendants of great rabbis and scholars, who have completely assimilated and even intermarried.

The Torah teaches us that parents are not held liable for the behavior of their children nor are children held liable for the behavior of their parents. Leon Trotsky has descendants living in the land of Israel who are observant Jews. Great rabbis have descendants living all over the world who have deserted Judaism and have intermarried and are even anti-Jewish. God's ways are inscrutable and freedom of individual choice as to what type of life one wishes to lead is a paramount rule in God's world. But I was saddened by the heavy casualty rate, spiritually and Jewishly speaking, that this book indirectly and probably inadvertently portrays.

To me this was a sobering dose of realism that needs to be injected into a mostly unrealistic and overconfident Orthodox Jewish world. The generations of Israel that experienced the destruction of both Temples felt that God would not allow it to happen. After all, the God of Israel was intimately associated with both structures and with the Jewish people. Somehow destruction and annihilation was not going to be the scenario that would occur.

We see this reflected in the word "eichah" that characterizes the sad day of fasting and morning. It basically means: how could this have happened? It reflects the terrible realism of history as opposed to wishful thinking and an overabundance of self-pride and smug assumptions as to Heaven's will.

So we need to concentrate on the realities of the situation, to do all in our power to preserve our Jewish heritage, further family ties and our loyalty to Torah and Israel. We should not think that we can afford all of the divisions, poor educational methods, disputes and meanness that so often typifies our current Orthodox Jewish society.

We have much to be proud of. We have rebuilt ourselves over the past half-century in a manner that defies logic and expectation. The rabbis described in the book would stare in amazement at the vibrancy, strength and influence of today's Chicago Jewish Orthodox community – replacing the tens of Chicago synagogues that appear in the book, but which are no longer. Yet, they would also be familiar with the ills that ravaged, and still ravage today, the general Jewish community – intermarriage, ignorance and the abandonment of heritage and tradition to follow shallow ideas and false gods.

In retrospect, I think that this was a very good book for me to read and absorb on the afternoon of the saddest day of the Jewish calendar. It shows what happened, what can happen and yet it also shows the great resilience and commitment of portions of the Jewish people to the Temples of Jerusalem and to the study and perpetuation of Torah and its values within the Jewish soul and people. The book to me was sobering and inspiring at one and the same time.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Right and the Good

Buried among the epic passages in Va-etchanan – among them the Shema and the Ten Commandments – is a brief passage with large implications for the moral life in Judaism. Here it is together with the preceding verse:

You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and His testimonies and His statutes, which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers. (Deut. 6: 17-18)

The difficulty is obvious. The preceding verse makes reference to commandments, testimonies and

statutes. This, on the face of it, is the whole of Judaism as far as conduct is concerned. What then is meant by the phrase "the right and the good" that is not already included within the previous verse?

Rashi says, it refers to "compromise (that is, not strictly insisting on your rights) and action within or beyond the letter of the law (lifnim mi-shurat ha-din)." The law, as it were, lays down a minimum threshold: this we must do. But the moral life aspires to more than simply doing what we must.[1] The people who most impress us with their goodness and rightness are not merely people who keep the law. The saints and heroes of the moral life go beyond. They do more than they are commanded. They go the extra mile. That according to Rashi is what the Torah means by "the right and the good."

Ramban, while citing Rashi and agreeing with him, goes on to say something slightly different:

At first Moses said that you are to keep His statutes and his testimonies which He commanded you, and now he is stating that even where He has not commanded you, give thought as well to do what is good and right in his eyes, for He loves the good and the right.

Now this is a great principle, for it is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man's conduct with his neighbours and friends, all his various transactions and the ordinances of all societies and countries. But since He mentioned many of them, such as, "You shall not go around as a talebearer," "You shall not take vengeance nor bear a grudge," "You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor," "You shall not curse the deaf," "You shall rise before the hoary head," and the like, He went on to state in a general way that in all matters one should do what is good and right, including even compromise and going beyond the strict requirement of the law ... Thus one should behave in every sphere of activity, until he is worthy of being called "good and upright."

Ramban is going beyond Rashi's point, that the right and the good refer to a higher standard than the law strictly requires. It seems as if Ramban is telling us that there are aspects of the moral life that are not caught by the concept of law at all. That is what he means by saying "It is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man's conduct with his neighbours and friends."

Law is about universals, principles that apply in all places and times. Don't murder. Don't rob. Don't steal. Don't lie. Yet there are important features of the

moral life that are not universal at all. They have to do with specific circumstances and the way we respond to them. What is it to be a good husband or wife, a good parent, a good teacher, a good friend? What is it to be a great leader, or follower, or member of a team? When is it right to praise, and when is it appropriate to say, "You could have done better"? There are aspects of the moral life that cannot be reduced to rules of conduct, because what matters is not only what we do, but the way in which we do it: with humility or gentleness or sensitivity or tact.

Morality is about persons, and no two persons are alike. When Moses asked God to appoint a successor, he began his request with the words, "Lord, God of the spirits of all flesh."^[2] On this the rabbis commented: what Moses was saying was that because each person is different, he asked God to appoint a leader who would relate to each individual as an individual, knowing that what is helpful to one person may be harmful to another.^[3] This ability to judge the right response to the right person at the right time is a feature not only of leadership, but of human goodness in general.

Rashi begins his commentary to Bereishit with the question: If the Torah is a book of law, why does it not start with the first law given to the people of Israel as a whole, which does not appear until Exodus 12? Why does it include the narratives about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the patriarchs and matriarchs and their children? Rashi gives an answer that has nothing to do with morality – he says it has to do with the Jewish people's right to their land. But the Netziv (R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin) writes that the stories of Genesis are there to teach us how the patriarchs were upright in their dealings, even with people who were strangers and idolaters. That, he says, is why Genesis is called by the sages "the book of the upright."^[4]

Morality is not just a set of rules, even a code as elaborate as the 613 commands and their rabbinic extensions. It is also about the way we respond to people as individuals. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is at least in part about what went wrong in their relationship when the man referred to his wife as *Ishah*, 'woman,' a generic description, a type. Only when he gave her a proper name, *Chavah*, Eve, did he relate to her as an individual in her individuality, and only then did God "make them garments of skin and clothed them."

This too is the difference between the God of Aristotle and the God of Abraham. Aristotle thought that God knew only universals not particulars. This is the God of science, of the Enlightenment, of Spinoza.

The God of Abraham is the God who relates to us in our singularity, in what makes us different from others as well as what makes us the same.

This ultimately is the difference between the two great principles of Judaic ethics: justice and love. Justice is universal. It treats all people alike, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, making no distinctions on the basis of colour or class. But love is particular. A parent loves his or her children for what makes them each unique. The moral life is a combination of both. That is why it cannot be reduced solely to universal laws. That is what the Torah means when it speaks of "the right and the good" over and above the commandments, statutes and testimonies.

A good teacher knows what to say to a weak student who, through great effort, has done better than expected, and to a gifted student who has come top of the class but is still performing below his or her potential. A good employer knows when to praise and when to challenge. We all need to know when to insist on justice and when to exercise forgiveness. The people who have had a decisive influence on our lives are almost always those we feel understood us in our singularity. We were not, for them, a mere face in the crowd. That is why, though morality involves universal rules and cannot exist without them, it also involves interactions that cannot be reduced to rules.

Rabbi Israel of Rizhin once asked a student how many sections there were in the *Shulchan Arukh*. The student replied, "Four." "What," asked the Rizhiner, "do you know about the fifth section?" "But there is no fifth section," said the student. "There is," said the Rizhiner. "It says: always treat a person like a *mensch*."

The fifth section of the code of law is the conduct that cannot be reduced to law. That is what it takes to do the right and the good.

[1] See Lon Fuller, *The Morality of Law*, Yale University Press, 1969, and R. Aharon Lichtenstein's much reprinted article, 'Is there an ethic independent of the halakhah?'

[2] Numbers 27: 16.

[3] *Sifre Zuta*, *Midrash Tanhuma* and *Rashi to Numbers ad loc.*

[4] *Ha-amek Davar to Genesis*, Introduction.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL**“Hear, Israel! Hashem (is) our G-d, Hashem is one” (6:4)**

The recitation of the following is a Torah obligation.

The exhortation “Hear!” is actually the Israelite’s way of life. “We shall do and we shall listen” (Shemot 24:7) was the vow that Israel made at Sinai. “We shall do” means “We shall obey and fulfill”, but “We shall listen” means “We shall Learn”. This is the Israelite’s career of listening (“Hear, Israel”) to the word of Hashem.

It bespeaks the attitude of eagerness to hear and learn, to understand and to become saturated with Hashem’s teachings and ways of thought and opinion. In many instances, the word ‘Shamoa’ (to hear) means also “to obey”, but always it bears the connotation of giving attention and thought.

Thus “Hear, Israel” is the summons to all Israel forever to devote their lives to learning the Oneness of Hashem and His attributes and His ways, and the following verses (6:6-9) summon Israel to implement the first verse by means of Torah-study.

Because of the extraordinary importance of the statement, it is preceded by “Hear, Israel”, which means:

Put your heart into this great teaching and consider it well. The name Israel is here mentioned, for this matter is the foundation of the name Israel, and it is the identity of the people of Israel.

Hashem, the particular name by which He is known to His people, is the Creator (the word Hashem in the Hebrew original denotes both 1) Being and 2) Cause of being (“He that spoke and caused the world to be” – Zevachim 46B). But He is particularly the G-d of Israel (as stated in the scriptures more than 165 times). “He is Hashem our G-d.” (Tehillim) Quoted from “Fortunate Nation” by Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT’L

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