

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

BEHAR-BEHUKOTAI

MAY 18-19, 2012 27 IYAR 5772 - Day 42 of the Omer
Rosh Hodesh Sivan will be celebrated on Tuesday, May 22.

DEDICATIONS: Thanks to Chantelle for creating Marakesh on Third Avenue

Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach Schedule and Announcements
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We offer our deepest condolences to Gila Hoffman and her family on the loss of Gila's father Sion. Sadly we were not informed sooner in order to announce and advise people to visit. We understand now that Shiva was in Israel. In the future, we ask our readers to let us know when there is something we should announce. Gila, we offer our apologies on behalf of the entire congregation. Tehi nafsho Serurah BeSrur HaChayim

Shavuot – Please let us know if you will be around for Shavuot next weekend
We are trying to organize ten for Shaharit at 4:15AM after all night study on Sunday morning and we want to make sure we'll have enough guys for the 9AM minyan

Friday Night: Candles: 7:50PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:00 PM

Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM

Please say Shemah at home by 8:23 AM

Kiddush is sponsored by Baruch and Karen (Kayla) Kahn in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of Yosef Zohar

Pirkei Avot with Rabbi Aharon at 6:15 PM –

Childrens program at 6:15 with Rabbi Colish followed by Minha: 7:00 PM

Seudah Shelishi and a Class with David 7:35 –

Truman, Anti-Semitism, Ruth and Statutes

Evening Service (Arbith): 8:45 PM - Shabbat Ends: 8:50PM

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00,

It seems Sunday, when almost everyone is around is the hardest day to get ten to come on time
Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Sunday Morning Halacha with Breakfast 9:00 AM

Kosher Kitchen Series 9:30AM – Led by Rabbi Colish – Cancelled this week

No arts & crafts this weekend.

6:30 AM class – Shelah Hakadosh on the Perasha

This week's men's Halacha class is cancelled as David is in Florida,
we will have a group class for all with rabbi Colish – men and women are invited at 8PM at the Synagogue.
Judaism's Response to Christian Missionaries.

Kiddush Celebrating Dan and Daniella Kahen – Shabbat Shelach LeCha – June 16th

Sponsors - So far we have The Azizo, Mizrahi, Yusupov, David Pinto, Aaron Levi,

Bibi, Ronen and Robert Yadgarov Families – Please add your name to the list

Thanks to the Lembergers for inviting Mr. and Mrs. Schweke for the summer.

We want to thank Gregory and Boris Safaniev for organizing a class this past Monday night with Rabbi Eliyahu Yanay. We had almost twenty people at the class and all present were able to see why Rabbi Yanay is called a rising star in the Torah community. We hope to organize this into a regular class in the future.
Chazak U Baruch to all who came.

please reply to
ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com

Editors Notes

Last week we began writing about the concept of connections as they relate to the commandments. We are connected by 613 strands which bind us from above to below and from below to above. These are the misvot and fulfilling them binds us to our father in Heaven. But few if any of us can be bound by all 613 at the same time. And the cords that bind us vary in gage and strength directly proportional to the effort we exert in performing the tasks we have accepted.

I wrote about the fact that a few years ago, we began a minyan and together each day we meet for the afternoon service. Whatever we are doing, we stop for a few minutes.

We have a core group of the same guys from the neighborhood each day, but every once in a while a stranger comes and joins us. Often that stranger needs to join a minyan in order to say Kaddish, I find it so interesting that many times those who join us are so disconnected from Judaism but the loss of a loved one and especially a parent, through the Kaddish draws them back.

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum tells that the Bostoner Rebbe, zl, relates that in America, circa 1930 through 1950, the only Jewish observance which Jews kept religiously, the only contact they had with their local shul, was to recite Kaddish for the passing of a parent. They kept very little to nothing else, but Kaddish for a parent was different. Jews in those days had respect for parents. They represented an old world from which the children had divorced themselves. In some

instances, their parents represented their last ties to Judaism.

The Rebbe relates that once on a long, hot summer Shabbat, he was giving a class in Pirkei Avot in the Bostoner shul. In the middle of the class, a young man dressed in work clothes entered and asked the Rebbe, "Can I ask the Rabbi a question?" The Rebbe promptly responded in the affirmative. Obviously, the young man did not understand that one does not interrupt a shiur.

Apparently, he had just lost a parent a few days earlier, and he was still in the middle of shivah. Just before Shabbat, someone had mentioned to him that shivah is not observed publicly on Shabbat. The Rebbe confirmed this. The fellow looked at the Rebbe, and, in all seriousness born of naiveté, he asked, "Can I go to my Saturday job as usual, or must I sit at home?"

The question bespoke an innocence which was the consequence of ignorance of his own religion and was heartbreaking. He had heard of shivah, even Yizkor, but Shabbat - one of Judaism's staples - was foreign to him. He had not the vaguest idea what Shabbat was all about. He typified members of the American Jewish community, an entire generation of Jews lost to their heritage

But let me tell you the rest of the story. Perhaps it was not the same man who went into see the Bostoner Rebbe, but it was someone who was in exactly the same place. And there are countless of those some ones.

That single cord; that dedication to a parent which motivates a person for whatever reason has such incredible strength that it gives birth to many other cords.

I have seen the year of Kaddish lead to a renewed connection. I knew someone who first committed himself to praying with a minyan three times a day. Even on Shabbat, he attended early minyan then drove to work. And then he started celebrating Friday night. Next came Koshering his home while still eating out each day at the local diner. Soon he started attending a class, then another and then stopped working on Shabbat and cleaning up his business act. He became a new person and brought his family along with him. His relationship with his family improved. His kids changed course and found themselves on a path towards education and responsibility. He had a new lease on life.

Each of us has some cord that remains, even if the other 612 snap, one remains. And that remaining cord can reattach all the others. We just need to put an effort into it.

I want to close with a story I told some years back about one man's commitment to Kaddish. The story is called, "Kaddish with Oprah", and its by Simcha Jacobovici. Now many of you will recognize the name. I was introduced to the works of Simcha Jacobovici by my friend, filmmaker, Ricky Magder.

The phone rang in my New York hotel room. It was 1995, and I was saying Kaddish for my late father, of blessed memory, Joseph Jacobovici. I live in Toronto, but I'm a filmmaker, so I move around.

During my eleven months of saying Kaddish, I ended up in various minyans from San Francisco to Halifax. Once... I extended a stopover in Detroit and rushed to the basement of an old shul, where I was greeted by

nine octogenarians as if I were the Messiah himself. But the phone call in New York was the start of what turned out to be perhaps the most interesting Kaddish experience of them all.

I had just finished a documentary film called "The Selling of Innocents." The film won an Emmy, attracting the attention of Oprah Winfrey, the American icon and celebrated TV host. The producer at the other end of the telephone line asked if I could fly to Chicago and appear with my fellow producers on the Oprah show the day after next.

I was taken aback. This was the Oprah show. The big time. Great publicity for the film, and great promotion for me and my company.

"I'd love to do it," I said, "but I don't think I can."

"Why not?" the producer asked, her voice betraying her surprise. Nobody says "too busy" to the Oprah show.

"I have a problem," I answered.

The producer's voice, Lisa was her name, became steely. All business. "What's the problem?" she asked.

"It's complicated."

"Try me," she said.

I began the process of explaining to a non-Jewish television producer from Chicago about the Jewish ritual of Kaddish.

Whenever I had to explain this, [people] never quite got it. I would tell them that I need a minyan, and they would drive me to an empty shul.... It never quite worked out. But this was Oprah.

So I gave it a try.

"I'm Jewish. My father passed away. In our religion it's incumbent on me, three times a day, to say a certain prayer, a glorification of G-d's Name, really. It's called Mourner's Kaddish. To do this, I need to be in a 'Jewish quorum.' It's called a minyan... So I can't miss this ritual. If I come to Chicago, I would have to attend morning services prior to being on Oprah."

"No problem," she said. "You need a minyan to say Kaddish. Ten Jewish men. For morning services. I'll arrange it."

"It's not so simple," I said. "You may find a synagogue, but it might not have a minyan in the morning. Or the Jewish community may send you to a synagogue that's open... which wouldn't do the trick for me."

Lisa tried to be patient. "I'll fax your flight information to your hotel. You will be met in Chicago by a limo. The driver will have the minyan information. You will say Kaddish for your father."

The rest unfolded like a military operation. The next day the ticket came. Then the limo came. The driver took me to a hotel and said, "I'll be here at 6:30 a.m. Your minyan begins at 7 a.m. I'll pick you up at 8 a.m. You'll be at the Oprah show by 8:30 a.m."

The hotel room was beautiful. I slept like a baby. At 6:30 in the morning, I came down and stepped into my limo. There was a newspaper on the seat.

I could get used to this, I thought.

The driver pulled up in front of a downtown office building and told me that there was a Chabad Lubavitch minyan on one of the upper floors.

When I got there, the rabbi looked at me and said, "So you're the guy saying Kaddish. I was warned by the Oprah show that I'd better have a minyan."

We smiled at each other. I was really impressed with Lisa and Oprah. And I felt that my father was surely amused. After davening, my driver took me to the Oprah show. I was met by Lisa, a black woman in her thirties. She got straight to the point.

"You had a minyan?"

"Yes, thank you," I said.

"Was it proper? Did you say Kaddish?"

"Absolutely. Couldn't be better," I answered.

She looked at me with that look that star surgeons have when they come out of the operating room. Or maybe it's the look that battle commanders have when coming back from a military operation. It's a look that says, "Nothing is too complicated."

I was on Oprah. She was very professional. I had my five minutes of fame. But all I can remember of that day is the Kaddish.

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

PS ... My daughter Mikhayla wrote a terrific article as we conclude the book of Leviticus. It follows. Also take a look at Rabbi Wein's article of Minyan.

**Summary of our Shiur Klali
with Rav Milston...
Mikhayla Bibi**

Sefer Vayikra has numerous mitzvot which end with the phrase

"I am Hashem.", "I am Hashem your G-d.", or "Fear your G-d." One has to wonder, why is there a need to have these added phrases emphasizing who is commanding us? Don't we know that all mitzvot come from G-d? To try to come up with an answer, let's take a look at some specific examples.

"You shall not curse a deaf person, and you shall not place a stumbling block in front of a blind person; and you shall have fear of your G-d- I am Hashem." (Vayikra 19:14) Rashi writes that placing a stumbling block before a blind person does not necessarily mean a blind person, but someone who is "blind" to a situation. Do not give out advice that is not appropriate for that person. Don't tell someone, "Sell your house! It'll be good for you." only because you intend to buy the house.

Rashi then continues to answer our question. "And you shall have fear of your G-d." One man doesn't know another man's true intentions. If one tells another to sell their house, they have no clue and no possible way to know if the advice is honest. The only ones who know what's in your mind, are you and G-d. That's it. So when it comes to mitzvot regarding your intentions, there is a little reminder to fear G-d. Why? Because when the day finally comes we won't be able to say "Oh no I really wanted this etc." We're not going to be able to make up stories and most of all we're not going to be able to hide from the truth.

"You shall rise in the presence of an old person and you shall honor the presence of an elder and you shall have fear of your G-d- I am Hashem." (Vayikra 19:32) Rashi says that you shall honor him by not sitting in his seat, by not speaking when he speaks, and by

not contradicting his words, etc. But imagine the situation. We're sitting on the bus or the train and an elderly person walks on. We think it's been a long day and we're tired. So what do we do? We close our eyes. We pretend we're sleeping or that we just don't see the person. Again, how does the commandment end? We are reminded that however sneaky one might think he is and even though the elderly person as well as all the people around think the person is asleep, G-d knows.

"Do not harass one another, and you shall have fear of your G-d; for I am Hashem, your G-d." (Vayikra 25:17) Harassing one another, says Rashi, falls under the category of giving bad advice. Giving bad advice is a result of bad intentions. Once again, G-d knows one's intentions.

"Do not take from him interest and increase; and you shall have fear of your G-d- and let your brother live with you." (Vayikra 25:36) One can't pull a fast one on G-d...

"Do not subjugate him through hard labor- you shall have fear of your G-d." (Vayikra 25:43) This details the commandment of not working a servant too hard. Do not assign him to do work that does not need to be done. Do not subjugate another just to show him who's boss and don't think that it can be done, because the slave will never know... Again, we learn to fear G-d, because G-d knows everything that runs through our minds.

He has the ultimate movie system. Judgment day will come and not only will He show us the video of our life and our actions, but each thought that accompanied each of those actions. There will be no running away.

"You shall not have in your pouch a stone and a stone- a large one and a small one. You shall not have in your house a measure and a measure- a large one and a small one. A perfect and honest stone shall you have, a perfect and honest measure shall you have, so that your days shall be lengthened on the land that Hashem, your G-d gives you. For an abomination of Hashem, your G-d, are all who do this, all who act fraudulently. Remember what Amalek did to you, on the way, when you were leaving Egypt." (Devarim 25:13-17)

The Kli Yakar explains the stones as the perfect way for a thief to cheat. He takes one large stone which is his perfect stone and the other is a smaller one. If he has ten customers a day, for eight of the customers he is going to use the right stone and for the two of them he uses the smaller stone. But if he is going to cheat, why not cheat with everyone? Because by cheating only two out of the ten times, he creates a perfect defense. Almost all of his customers know he is an honest man and they'll back him up. It must have been the fault of these two customers who claim they have less than what they paid for.

A person who cheats like this is described as an Amaleki. Amalek creates doubt. This is their skill. In this same vein, this cheater causes doubt, because the truth becomes hidden and inaccessible. We are reminded not to think as the thief who assumes he will get away with it. G-d will even things out and bring justice.

It's quite a shock to us when we see a religious person cheating in business. We don't expect it. Yet we must remember that the greatest day to day challenge of our faith has to do with parnasa and with earning a living. A

person needs incredible faith to say what will be will be and have trust in Hashem.

This week's Parsha, Parshat Behar speaks of the shmitah or Sabbatical year. It is the prototype mitzvah. Living off the food of the land is the ultimate proof in Judaism of having complete faith in G-d. It's taking our parnasa or sustenance and throwing it up in the air, and saying "I believe!" It is us repeating "We will do and we will hear." True belief demands from us not just our external actions, but our internal thoughts as well.

There may be a hundred things we do, because people are watching us. What really is us, what makes us up? It is our thoughts. The ultimate way to fear G-d and to do his commandments is in a threefold manner; first through action, then through our words, and finally through our thoughts. Our thoughts are just us; just us and G-d.

The Ramchal in his book, Mesillat Yesharim – the Path of the Just – provides an example of a straw house. It may look sturdy, but once the wind comes, the house falls down. A person's inside will be seen through their outside. In the end, every person will expose themselves.

The Talmud tells us about our Matriarch Rivka who wanted to die before she learned she was having twins. Rivka, who was barren for almost twenty years wanted to die from a little morning sickness? Obviously that can't be. The verses tell us that when she walked by a house of Torah she felt a kick and when she walked by a house of idol worship she felt a kick. Rivka thought she had a hypocrite within her, one who acted in one way, but believed in another and that is what scared her. She was only calmed down

when she learned that it wasn't one child, but two. She carried two children who would act according to their beliefs; their true beliefs.

The Shela HaKadosh writes that the heart is the source of everything. All of our characteristics come from the heart, the good and the bad. The only way to work on them is by truly fearing G-d, by really understanding that He knows our thoughts. The work isn't simply a fixing one's actions, but its working on the root, on knowing who we really are and fixing what's in our heart.

Life isn't meant to simply be the game that too many of us play. Although it's great to put a smile on, we're not meant to mask ourselves with permanent fake ones. And when we walk in the streets, how many of us offer the quick, "hi, how are you" without even waiting or caring for the reply. The bottom line is that one has to believe in everything that they do, everything that they say, and exactly who they are. For a moment lets forget about G-d knowing. This 18 year old has to wonder, how can one exist without being truthful to one's self? Why would one want to be a person who doesn't exist as an individual? Why would one want to be a person who has no true completeness whatsoever?

Taking it to the next level, a true teacher, friend, or parent has an incredible responsibility to do what is right with regard to those in their charge. Oh it's certainly easier to turn a blind eye and make believe everything's perfect. When dealing with a child, student or even a friend, they must pull with the right arm and push with the left. Those who ignore because it will make them more loved for the moment or more popular are not doing what

is best for their counterpart. Responsibility dictates that we say something when we need to. In a time of crisis who is that child or friend going to run to? The one they see as the pushover? The one who is constantly contradicting themselves? Or the one they know stands by what is right?

The mitzvot all end telling us that we should fear G-d. It's not so much that we should fear G-d, but the word Yirah is perhaps better related to the word to see or recognize. We are being told to recognize G-d's existence. We should know that with every step we take, every thought that runs through our minds, He is there and He is with us.

Sefer Vayikra comes to tell us to do the right thing in G-d's eyes. It serves to remind us not to worry about what the people around us might thin as long as in the eyes of the Almighty, I am doing the right thing. And if we can go beyond and not only act correctly, but truly believe it as well we will be blessed. May we all merit to have complete happiness in our lives and the ability to really live.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: Parshas BeHar begins with the laws of Shemitah and Yovel. The land lay fallow every 7th year, and after the 49th year, (7x7) it lay fallow a 2nd year for the 50th as well.

2nd Aliya: Hashem (G-d) promises (25:21-22) that He will provide for the nation, regardless of the land being fallow. No one will go hungry. The return, at Yovel, of all hereditary lands to their original owners is commanded.

3rd Aliya: The difference between the sale of a property in a walled

city vs. an unwallled city is established. Continuing the theme of providing and dependency, we are commanded to provide for our impoverished brethren. Just as Hashem provides for us, we must provide for each other.

4th Aliya: The freeing of all Jewish slaves at the Yovel is detailed. The Torah discusses redeeming a Jewish slave from a non-Jewish owner, and the formula for how much to pay the non-Jewish master. We begin reading BeChukosai. The opening verses describe the wondrous successes awaiting the nation, so long as they follow Hashem's Mitzvos.

5th Aliya: This Aliya is called the Tocheche - The Rebuke. It is a lengthy description of the terrible punishments awaiting the nation, if they do not follow the Torah. It is customary for the Baal Koreh (Reader) to have this Aliya, and to read it faster and more quietly than the rest of the Parsha.

6th Aliya: The established prices for endowments of individual worth, or that of an animal, are listed.

7th Aliya: The final portion deals with endowments of property to the Bais Hamikdash.

Summary of The Haftarah:
Haftarah: Yirmiyahu 16:19 - 17:14

Yirmiyahu's words ring with the same urgency and fear as the Tochacha itself. Yirmiyahu was the Navi who beseeched his people to repent before the impending destruction and exile of the nation. He decried the delusions of those who used their ill begotten wealth to serve idols and foreign ideologies. They denied the benevolence of G-d and were destined to go into exile.

The acquisition of wealth through illegal means is a denial of G-d's ability to provide and protect. He who trusts in man for his strength and future is destined to be betrayed. He will be as a lone tree in the wilderness (17:6) bereft of protection or support. On the other hand, he who trusts in G-d will be blessed and secured.

Reemphasizing the message of Sefer Vayikra, Yirmiyahu exhorts the nation to beg G-d for salvation and healing, and to trust His constant love and caring.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“Then I will provide your rains in their time and the land will give its produce and the trees of the field will give their fruit.” (Vayikra 26:4)

Our perashah tells about the bounty and blessing that we will get as a result of the observance of the misvot and dedicated Torah study. One cannot help but wonder, why does the Torah only promise agricultural blessings? Why doesn't the Torah promise gold and silver or a great amount of real estate?

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus explains that great wealth in gold and silver and money might not be a blessing. If one has this kind of wealth, he might feel very secure. Although we like to feel secure, we might not feel the need to lift our eyes to Heaven to ask Hashem to help us. Gold doesn't rust and silver doesn't deteriorate. One may feel so secure that even if there would be a famine it wouldn't be a problem. He could simply get on a plane with his money and go to a place that has food and live there with his wealth. Therefore, Hashem promises wealth that won't cause

a person to distance himself. On the contrary, Hashem promises wealth that needs rain. The result is a blessing that is double. The wealth itself and the closeness to Hashem that it causes.

What are the greatest blessings? Health, children, and life itself. These things cannot be put in a safe. Our lives and our health and the lives and health of our children are in the hands of Hashem and He watches over us. Even our paychecks, even though they seem to come on a regular basis and the amount is the same, are not regular. They arrive only with the will of Hashem.

If a person always feels the need to pray for his livelihood, and for his and his family's health, that person is truly blessed many times over. Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

"If you will walk in my statutes..." (Vayikra 26:3)

The perashah begins a whole series of blessings promised to the Jewish people if they will "walk" in Hashem's statutes. Rashi tells us this means to toil in Torah study. This is the source of all the berachot, and conversely, when the section dealing with the curses begins, Rashi tells us it is because there was no toil in Torah study.

The question is asked: Why is this command called a "hok" - statute - which means something with no understandable reason? Isn't Torah study something which is logical, and yet the Torah calls this "behukotai" - My statute? The answer is, to learn Torah just to know what to do is not sufficient. There is a misvah to toil in Torah study, to involve ourselves in the wisdom and beauty of Torah, regardless of whether it is relevant at this

moment or not. This may not seem comprehensible to some and therefore it is called a "hok". Yet here we see that this is the basis for all of the blessings and vice versa, G-d forbid?

We have to ask ourselves truthfully, are we involved in Torah study? Do we have a set time to toil in the understanding of the Torah? Especially now, when the holiday of Shabuot, which reenacts the giving of the Torah to our generation, is right around the corner, we should be prepared to have an answer to this question. As we read the perashah and see how many blessings and, G-d forbid, curses are involved due to toiling in Torah study or the lack of it, we should commit ourselves to a set time of Torah learning, with toil and effort, so that we should merit all these blessings for ourselves and our families. Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

"Be bold as a leopard" (Abot 5:20)

What lesson can be learned from the boldness of the leopard? The leopard is not as strong as many other beasts, but it is bold and fearless, and it frequently seems to exceed its apparent strength and agility. Likewise man should not hesitate to undertake spiritual endeavors that seem beyond his capabilities. Rather, a person should be bold and fearless like a leopard and assume spiritual duties beyond his perceived capabilities. When a sincere effort is made, Hashem will grant the strength to make the seeming impossibility a reality. (Vedibarta Bam)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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The Effort and the Results Parashat Behukotai describes the blessings that God promises to bestow upon Beneh Yisrael in reward for their observance of the Torah. The Parasha begins with the verse, "If you follow My statutes, and you observe My commands and perform them..." Much has been written about this opening verse of the Parasha, and among the famous commentaries is that of Rashi, who explains the phrase, "If you follow My statutes" to mean, "If you toil in Torah" ("She'tiheyu Amelim Ba'Torah"). According to Rashi, the Torah here refers not only to observing the Misvot, but to Torah learning.

Rashi's comments are cited very often in Yeshivot when the Rabbis wish to impress upon their students the importance of hard work and diligence in learning. It is significant that Rashi does not speak simply of "learning" Torah, but rather of "toiling" in Torah – "Amelut." This means exerting effort, sweating, and breaking our heads to understand the words of Torah to the best of our ability. Rashi's comments are thus often invoked in the context of the unique importance of not just studying, but of putting in time, work and effort.

The importance of "Amelut," as the Hafetz Haim (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan, 1839-1933) explained, lies in a fundamental difference between Torah and all other endeavors. Outside the realm of Torah learning, what matters is the end product. If a salesman travels the world but fails to sell a single piece of merchandise, he won't get paid a dime. Even if he invested Herculean efforts and

marketed the item with the highest levels of professional skill, the bottom line is that he failed to produce the desired results, and he will not get rewarded. This is not how it is in Torah. What matters most in the area of learning is the "Amelut" – the work and effort that one invests. A student can come to the yeshiva, spend several days knocking his head against a single piece of Gemara, and leave more confused than when he came in. Still, assuming he genuinely tried and made sincere efforts to understand the material, he will be rewarded no less than the most accomplished scholar. He fulfilled the mandate of "Amelut"; he put in the effort, and this is what is expected of us. As Rashi says, the rewards of Parashat Behukotai are primarily for the "Amelut," for the hard work invested, regardless of the bottom-line accomplishments.

This is a vital lesson for parents and educators. Unfortunately, many of our Torah education systems place too strong an emphasis on the achievements, rather than the effort. The students who receive prizes, accolades and notoriety are the ones who score in the top percentiles on the exams and who win the contests – but not necessarily those who try the hardest. Parents, too, tend to focus too heavily on exam scores and grades rather than the child's attitude and efforts. We must remember that the goal in education is, ultimately, the "Amelut," not the grade. Of course, we want all our children to succeed and to know and understand the material. But this goal is secondary to the goal of producing young men and women who put in the effort, who try, who work hard. This is the message of "Amelut," and this is the message we ought to convey to our children and our students.

Rabbi Wein

Last week for various reasons, none of which were connected to my piety, I arrived at the synagogue for the morning prayers service very early – so early in fact that I was the one who unlocked the gates of the synagogue for entry. As I sat there alone in the synagogue waiting for the rest of our faithful to arrive, I looked around the synagogue room. In my mind's eye I was no longer alone for now I glimpsed all of my minyan companions that I have known over the past many decades in Chicago, Miami Beach, Monsey and here in Jerusalem.

I was amazed that I now remembered so many of them, their appearances, words, habits and individual traits and peculiarities. Eerily but also comfortably, I no longer felt alone in that spacious empty room. I believe that such hallucinations are indicative of the years that I have achieved but nevertheless they were of great effect and importance to me.

They reinforced my lifelong belief that Jews should never feel utterly alone and abandoned. The unseen minyan is as important to our souls and well being as is the visible and real one. Over the last few years the inexorable fate of time has transferred many of my friends from the seen minyan to the unseen minyan. But now suddenly in the early morning light of that synagogue room it was the unseen minyan that was present.

I saw them in their prayer shawls and tefilin, in their contributions to the charity box and in their friendly countenances and good cheer. I saw my teachers and students, my father and my congregants and synagogue officers, my teaching and rabbinic

colleagues – the synagogue prayer room was crowded and full. But they were all participants in that unseen minyan of mine.

As the members of the real minyan arrived and the prayer service commenced, the unseen minyan faded away. It is difficult to hold on to the unseen minyan when the real one is actively functioning. Yet during the prayer service, I thought that it is obvious that no Jew prays alone. Aside from the active minyan that surrounds the one who is praying there is an unseen minyan that also participates in one's prayers.

That influence can be very great. It is this chain of the past that has shaped each and every one of us. I wonder if that unseen minyan approves of my prayer or even of me personally as I now am. Transferring to the unseen minyan now changes their relationship to me. They now have the right to be judgmental about my actions and me. And, to me, they now have become examples and role models and no longer the members of the peer group to which we once belonged together.

None of them were perfect for there are no perfect humans but each one of them had a special quality that deserves to be remembered and emulated. In fact that is the efficacy of a minyan itself – it combines all of the special qualities of those present and studiously and purposely ignores their individual human imperfections.

When I recited the Amida that morning I understood why the Men of the Great Assembly began that prayer by referring to the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. I realized that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the original founders and members of our unseen

minyan. It is they who are our role models and teachers and they are the main influences in our lives and hopes.

Our real minyan cannot really function too well if the unseen minyan is somehow not also present in our prayer room and in our hearts and souls. In fact it dawned upon me that our unseen minyan numbered in the thousands and millions. All of Jewish history and tradition has come to pray with us and strengthen us in continuing the chain of Sinai.

Once we realize that we are not alone in this endeavor - that it is not only the ten or twenty people before us, but that we are aided and helped by so many generations that have preceded us, only then we can view our tasks and challenges with greater equanimity and confidence.

Knowing and believing that we are never truly alone and that together with our unseen minyan, God, so to speak, also accompanies us on our life's journey, will certainly improve our outlook on life and our payers.

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

As I was writing this essay a newspaper headline caught my eye. It read, "The UK's richest people have defied the double-dip recession to become even richer over the past year." Despite the fact that most people have become poorer, or at least seen their real income stay static, since the financial crisis of 2008. As the saying goes, "There's nothing surer: the rich get rich and the poor get poorer." It is to this phenomenon that the social legislation of Behar is addressed.

Leviticus 25 sets out a number of laws whose aim is to correct the tendency toward radical and ever-increasing inequality that result from the unfettered play of free market economics. So we have the sabbatical year in which debts were released, Hebrew slaves set free, the land lay fallow and its produce, not to be harvested, belonged to everyone. There was the Jubilee year in which, with some exceptions, ancestral land returned to its original owners. There was the command to help the needy: "If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you." (25: 35). And there was the obligation to treat slaves not slavishly but as "hired workers or temporary residents" (25: 40).

As Heinrich Heine pointed out, "Moses did not want to abolish ownership of property; he wished, on the contrary, that everyone should possess something, so that no man might, because of poverty, be a slave with a slavish mind. Liberty was forever the ultimate thought of this great emancipator, and it still breathes and flames in all his laws which concern pauperism." (Israel Tabak, *Judaic Lore in Heine*, Johns Hopkins University Press reprints, 1979, 32.)

Despite the sheer antiquity of these laws, time and again they have inspired those wrestling with issues of liberty, equity and justice. The verse about the Jubilee Year, "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (25: 10) is inscribed on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. The international movement that began in the late 1990s and involved more than 40 nations, campaigning for cancellation of Third World debt

was called Jubilee 2000 and was directly inspired by our parsha.

The approach of the Torah to economic policy is unusual. Clearly we can make no direct inference from laws given more than three thousand years ago, in an agricultural age and to a society consciously under the sovereignty of God, to the circumstances of the twenty-first century with its global economy and international corporations. Between ancient texts and contemporary application comes the whole careful process of tradition and interpretation (Torah shebe'al peh).

Nonetheless, there do seem to be some important parameters. Work – making a living, earning your daily bread – has dignity. A Psalm (128: 2) states: "When you eat of the labour of your hands, you are happy and it shall be well with you." We say this every Saturday night at the start of the working week. Unlike aristocratic cultures such as that of ancient Greece, Judaism was never dismissive of work or the productive economy. It did not favour the creation of a leisured class. "Torah study without an occupation will in the end fail and lead to sin" (Avot 2: 2).

Next, unless there are compelling reasons otherwise, one has a right to the fruits of one's labours. Judaism distrusts large government as an infringement of liberty. That is the core of the prophet Samuel's warning about monarchy: A king, he says, "will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants ... He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves" (1 Sam. 8).

Judaism is the religion of a people born in slavery and longing for redemption; and the

great assault of slavery against human dignity is that it deprives me of the ownership of the wealth I create. At the heart of the Hebrew Bible is the God who seeks the free worship of free human beings, and one of the most powerful defences of freedom is private property as the basis of economic independence. The ideal society envisaged by the prophets is one in which each person is able to sit "underneath his own vine and fig tree" (Micah 4: 4).

The free economy uses the fuel of competition to sustain the fire of invention. Long before Adam Smith, Judaism had accepted the proposition that the greatest advances are often brought about through quite unspiritual drives. "I saw," says the author of Ecclesiastes, "that all labour and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbour". Or as the talmudic sages put it, "Were it not for the evil inclination, no one would build a house, marry a wife, have children, or engage in business." The rabbis even favoured the free market in their own sphere of Jewish education. An established teacher, they said, could not object to a rival setting up in competition. The reason they gave was, simply: "Jealousy among scholars increases wisdom."

The market economy is the best system we know for alleviating poverty through economic growth. In a single generation in recent years it has lifted 100 million Indians and 400 million Chinese from poverty, and the sages saw poverty as an assault on human dignity. Poverty is not a blessed or divinely ordained condition. It is, the rabbis said, 'a kind of death' and 'worse than fifty plagues'. They said, 'Nothing is harder to bear than poverty, because he who is crushed by

poverty is like one to whom all the troubles of the world cling and upon whom all the curses of Deuteronomy have descended. If all other troubles were placed one side and poverty on the other, poverty would outweigh them all.'

However, the market economy is better at producing wealth than at distributing it equitably. The concentration of wealth in a few hands gives disproportion power to some at the cost of others. Today in Britain it is not unusual for top CEOs to earn at least 400 times as much as their employees. This has not produced economic growth or financial stability but the opposite.

As I write these words, one of Margaret Thatcher's advisors, Ferdinand Mount, has just published a critique of the financial deregulation she introduced: *The New Few*. Equally impressive is the recent book by the South Korean economist Ha-Joon Chang, *23 Things they don't tell you about Capitalism*. This is not a critique of market economics, which he believes is still the best system there is. But, in his words, "it needs careful regulation and steering."

That is what the legislation contained in Behar represents. It tells us that an economic system must exist within a moral framework. It need not aim at economic equality but it must respect human dignity. No one should become permanently imprisoned in the chains of debt. No one should be deprived of a stake in the commonwealth, which in biblical times meant a share in the land. No one should be a slave to his or her employer. Everyone has the right – one day in seven, one year in seven – to respite from the endless pressures of work. None of this means dismantling the market

economy, but it may involve periodic redistribution.

At the heart of these laws is a profoundly humane vision of society. "No man is an island." We are responsible for one another and implicated in one another's fate. Those who are blessed by God with more than they need should share some of that surfeit with those who have less than they need. This, in Judaism, is not a matter of charity but of justice – that is what the word *tzedakah* means. We need some of this spirit in advanced economies today if we are not to see human misery and social unrest.

No one said it better than Isaiah in the first chapter of the book that bears his name:

Seek justice, encourage the oppressed,
Defend the cause of the fatherless,
Plead the case of the widow ...

Mankind was not created to serve markets. Markets were made to serve the image of God that is mankind.

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