

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

AHAREI MOT

Haftarah: Yehezkel 22:1-16
 MAY 6-7, 2016 29 NISAN 5776
 Day 14 of the Omer

Rosh Hodesh Iyar will be celebrated on Sunday and Monday, May 8 & 9.

**DEDICATIONS: In memory of Lorraine Bat Victoria Iyar 4
 Happy Birthday Moses – Congratulations Mazal Tov to Mathew**

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Editors Notes

Coming Together After Tragedy

This week, those of us in the diaspora will be reading the portion of Aharei Mot while our brothers in Israel will be reading the portion which follows, Kedoshim Tihyu. This difference in the weekly portion is caused when with our additional day of Yom Tov. Last Shabbat while we in the exile were celebrating the eighth day of Passover, those in Israel had already ended Passover on Friday night. So for the next 15 weeks or so, all the way through the 9th of Ab, we will be reading different portions.

Aharei Mot Kedoshim Tihyu – After the death, you should be holy.

I find it interesting how difficult times bring us together. Human nature leads us to seek the comfort of others, not only when we face tragedy, but when find ourselves in any shared trouble.

Rabbi Rephael Farhi who was visiting Florida for Passover reminded me of this fact.

My son Moses and I left for Florida on the Tuesday night before Passover. We were originally booked on JetBlue's 7:30 flight out of LaGuardia. We met at the airport at around 6PM and checked our bags and walked out to the gate for a 7PM boarding. My sister Ellen texted to ask me if the flight was cancelled as it no longer appeared on the schedule. We asked at the gate and they said there was a delay, but the flight was still scheduled and the plane was already at the gate. People who might normally ignore each other started to speak. A group of guys was trying to arrange for Mincha and although we both prayed already, we stood with them to form a quorum, introducing ourselves and playing Jewish geography while we waited. The flight appeared to be made up

of Jewish families on Exodus to Miami for the Passover. Lots of parents and grandparents were there accompanied by even more kids and carriages.

And then at 7:30, the dreaded announcement came over the loudspeaker. "Good evening ladies and gentlemen. We are sad to inform you that the 7:30PM flight to Fort Lauderdale has been cancelled due to an equipment failure. Please make your way out to the check in counters and they will assist you. We have no additional information at the gate."

While the Minyan was completing the final kaddish and the people all around us began to panic, I dialed JetBlue. Your call will be answered in 12 minutes. Figuring we might need to make a mad dash to Kennedy, I sent Moses to the baggage carousels to grab out two bags and made it out to the check in counter where a dozen families were already on line ahead of me as the agent in charge tried to deal with the panic along with those checking in for the 9:30 flight.

The gate attendant had already announced that the 9:30 flight was pretty full and there were a few seats, but most of us would need to be rebooked from other airports or other days. He begged us to have patience and to allow those checking in for the 9:30 flight ahead of us. One imagines the worse as I heard someone saying they would rebook us for Friday. All I could think was that Friday wouldn't really work!

While on line an agent picked up. I explained the situation, gave her our confirmation status and suggested getting on a flight to either West Palm or Fort Lauderdale out of Kennedy or LaGuardia. I also asked her to see if she could steal the two seats reserved for security on the 9:30 flight that night. The phone agent hearing the commotion apologized, noting my frequent flyer status and confirmed she had blocked two seats on the 9:30 flight. Pushing my luck I asked for isles in the front and she gave us row three. She told me my confirmation number would stay the same and she would update my boarding passes on my phone. Amazing!

I then noted the growing anxiety in the faces of my new minyan friends with the kids on line, so I asked if the agent on the phone could help any others. She

said she would try and I handed the phone to one of the fathers, but cautioned him to hand the phone to the next person when done. We were now one group of Jews, some with hats and some with streimels in their boxes, some with baseball caps and some bareheaded, but we were in this together. Over the next thirty minutes the agent at the airport had not assisted a single person, while the agent on the phone rebooked the entire minyan with only one sub-group of eight being asked to quickly get to Kennedy. And we eventually met that sub-group in Fort Lauderdale while collecting luggage at 2AM that morning. I'm not sure what happened to the rest of the people from the 7:30 flight either, but our newly extended family all seemed to make it.

Strangely enough, while on the line after handing off my phone, I realized I did not have my license and identification. Didn't we have enough panic for one evening? As my phone was being used, I borrowed a phone from one of my new friends and called Moses downstairs at the luggage carousel. He didn't see anything. I then asked my new friends to watch my carry-on bags while I checked with security. One who was already confirmed for the 9:30 flight with us volunteered to watch everything if I had to take a cab home to get a passport. I hoped that would not be needed.

I walked over to security and the TSA agent in charge came out to meet me. He told me that no identification had been found in the last hour but he would double check. He asked me for anything else with my name, took that and asked me to wait. I went back to see if Moses had returned and to make sure someone was still using my phone. I walked back to the security desk and the agent checking identifications called me over. He handed me my ID case with my license and ID. He said that it must have slipped out of the basket going through the X-ray machine as the supervisor found it there. When I returned to the gate, Moses was there and together with our new friends we rechecked our luggage, passed through security and prayed that this flight would not be too delayed.

And while waiting for the flight I learned about the other guys we had prayed with. I learned about where they came from, where they were going and all about their families. We exchanged ideas and chidushim on Pesach and boarded with a whole different feeling.

One could really see where the minyan and the cancelled flight brought people together and allowed people to open their eyes and better understand each other and be willing to go out of their way to assist each other. The world may abide by a different set of

rules where passengers and crew on stricken vessels have historically abided by the axiom: "Every man for himself." As Jews, I saw this was not the case. I learned so much from a cancelled flight.

My dad would say the world is filled with lessons. Every moment is an opportunity to learn and incorporate.

We should keep this in mind this week as we commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day

Author Aharon Appelfeld, a Holocaust survivor, while visiting the Zigfried Mozes Old Age Home in Jerusalem, explained that "as IDF commanders, it is our duty to instill in all the soldiers of the IDF the enormity of the responsibility they bear -- to carry the torch of remembrance of the survivors of the Holocaust and the victims of the Holocaust for many years to come, and to pass it on to future generations. Ensuring the existence and security of the State of Israel is our way of perpetuating their choice -- by choosing life."

And next week we will also commemorate Yom HaZikaron, Memorial Day, not with barbecue and massive sales but with moments of silence and visits to cemeteries.

In these moments, it is crucial to remember and to remind that we are not alone, but we stand with each other. It's a pity that it often takes bad news to bring us together, but at least it doesn't break us apart. And as we stand with each other during and after tragedy we should be blessed that Hashem will stand with us for all time. VeAhavata LeRehacha Kamocho And you should love your friend as yourself ... only then Ani Hashem ... only after you come together can I be your G-d. Let's show Hashem this week and next how we truly come together and let him bless us to come together in joy and in happiness with the coming of Mashiach Bimherah BeYameynu Amen.

Commentary Mag Essay by ZOA's Klein on the Jewish Future

Morton A. Klein is national president of the Zionist Organization of America.

Fifty years from now, the Jewish community will be thriving; Israel will be in the midst of a golden age. Israel and the Jewish people will have prevailed over threats experienced today and in the near future. Worsening anti-Semitism during the next half-century's initial years will be followed by a stronger, more united Jewish community.

The Iranian nuclear threat will have been dealt with. During the first few years of the next half-century, Iran will continue moving toward nuclear-weapons capability and developing missile-delivery systems. But Israel will destroy Iran's nuclear-weapons capability—something that Israel has spent years training for. A new U.S. president may assist this effort.

During the initial decades of this 50-year period, competing radical Islamic groups will wage internecine warfare, wreaking an enormous toll on the lives and economies of many of Israel's neighbors, creating nightmarish conditions, and reducing these countries' capacities to harm Israel. Arab nations and economies will collapse. The Jewish people—and the world—will have also realized that appeasement of radical Islamic terrorists only encourages more terror.

In Europe, the large influx of Muslim migrants will continue to bring instability, increased anti-Semitism, and economic weakness. These conditions will also cause a dramatic increase in aliyah to Israel (and result in smaller, weaker Jewish communities in Europe). Likewise, faced with growing anti-Semitism on U.S. college campuses and a weakening American economy, more American students will attend college in Israel, and more American families will make aliyah. The rise in aliyah will greatly strengthen Israel by 2065.

Israel will emerge as one of the world's strongest, most stable economies. The world's voracious appetite for Israel's high-tech products will lead to greater reliance on Israeli inventions and industries. Haredi communities will continue joining Israel's high-tech sector, becoming a positive economic force.

Current Jewish population trends will hold, significantly transforming the Jewish community's composition. Orthodox Jews will continue having large families; by 2065, the Orthodox Jewish population will be proportionately and numerically far larger than it is today. By contrast, the numbers of secular and non-Orthodox Jews will decline, due to extremely low birthrates, intermarriage, and "drop outs" from the community.

This shift toward Orthodox Jews will ensure an increasing proportion of Jews who are highly committed to Israel. Orthodox army officers—who today already are 40 percent of Israel's officers—will predominate. In the United States, increased Orthodox Jewry will change Jewish voting patterns. In 50 years, politically conservative and Republican

Jews will have grown to be approximately equal in number to their liberal brethren.

Israel and the Jewish community at large will also have developed and enhanced important alliances by 2065. China will become an even larger trading partner with Israel. Alliances with moderate Muslim states that face common enemies will have continued to develop. Today's small cadre of moderate, pro-Israel Muslim intellectuals, working to redefine Islam in a nonviolent manner, will have expanded their work and enabled new alliances to form.

And, in the wake of radical Islamic terrorists' brutality toward Christians and others, Christians and others will increasingly see Israel as their only true friend in the Middle East, a beacon of tolerance, light, and stability in a barbaric world. After facing the reality of radical Muslim onslaughts that seek to destroy the Western way of life and impose Sharia on non-Muslim countries, non-Muslim nations will turn against radical Muslims and their states and recognize Israel as an important ally. BDS will collapse. The world's Christians and Jews will enjoy an unprecedentedly strong alliance.

The Jewish people—and the world—will have also realized that appeasement of radical Islamic terrorists only encourages more terror. Israelis will better understand that concessions such as evacuating Jewish communities from Gaza, empowering and bringing the PLO into Judea/Samaria under the Oslo accords, releasing from prison terrorists convicted of murdering Jews, only led to more terror. Violence in Europe and elsewhere will lead to an appreciation of Winston Churchill's warning: "Those who appease the crocodile will simply be eaten last."

In every generation, as the Passover Haggadah foresees, enemies will rise up against the Jewish people, but each time we will overcome our enemies and prevail. We have always emerged to rebuild and become stronger than before. Fifty years from now will be a time of regeneration, hope, new opportunities, and stronger Jewish communities.

The Torah promises that the Jewish people will be an eternal people. Unlike politicians, G-d keeps his promises.

We The Drones, Part II: The Poor 1 Percenters

By: Lenore Suri Davis Stern

Lenore has been practicing Trust and estate/elder for 25 years.

One percenters are the 1% of the very wealthy whose incomes are about 225 times the average income earner in the United States. This figure depends on location and age. For instance, in Hawaii, a 1 percenter has to make \$225,00, while in Connecticut that figure is about \$667,000. President Obama and his congress has defined wealthy as those whose income is in excess of \$250,000. The Federal income tax rate is its maximum, almost 40%, when married couples jointly make \$250,000. Add to that State and local taxes, and the combined tax rates easily top 55% of income, or for this fictional couple, a net amount of \$87,500. While this income might sustain a family living in Hawaii, it will not sustain a family living in New York. We talked about what tuition for an average yeshiva school sending family is in the Five Towns, K-12, this week we will discuss Gap Year(s) in Israel. In the early 1900s, there were three types of Jewish schools. The first group went to public school during the week and Talmud torah in the evenings or on Sundays. The second group was the "Agudah" group, who went to full time yeshivas which concentrated on Jewish learning, and after 12th grade, the boys got married and either went into a business or trade or, if they showed promise as learners, continued learning in kollel receiving stipends from their yeshivas. The third group went to schools like Torah V'daath, where they learned through high school and went on to college for a profession. It was always a struggle to pay for private yeshivas or parochial schools, but parents were committed to having their children have a strong basis and identification with their religion. How did it evolve that those who went to yeshiva K-12, started going to yeshivas in Israel after high school and before college. What was the purpose, what was there to gain over and above the 12+ years they steeped themselves daily in yeshiva life and learning? Is there something amiss in the yeshivas here? Did the children of wealthy want a comparable "gap year" with the secular wealthy, a time to explore abroad, learn a new culture and language, learn about the land, mature, find themselves before starting college? Our children learn about the holy land, about its holiness and they want to live the land as though inhabitants. My son tells me that spending years learning Torah hour after hour, day after day is teaching him skills he had not learned in high school. In my high school years, there was a recognition that twelfth grade was

useless and redundant, and many of us went early admissions into college, where we matured. Why aren't our yeshivas taking this year and turning it into a beis medrash type of experience. If they and we value it so very much, why not teach these skills to our children in that otherwise useless 12th grade year? Why the need for an extra year of Torah learning? Sure we can all use extra torah learning, but at some point, parents have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars sending their kids to yeshiva, why do we keep the gravy train going?

Travel and living abroad is an experience, but it is a privilege, once reserved for the wealthy, and now de rigeur for all Orthodox Jewish high school students, male and female. It grew from one year to two years for boys, and one and a half years for girls. With it are now trips to Poland for March of the living, off to Uman to feel the greatness at the grave of Rav Nachman or off to Berlin or Ukraine to share Jewish experiences with native Jews. WHAT, FOREGO THE FULL CHAVAYA/EXPERIENCE??? G-d forbid you don't keep up with the Joneses, it hurts...your shidduch resume.

Aaaaaahhh the shidduch resume, its why we send our kids where we do, Chai Lifeline, Camp Simcha, Camp Kaylie, Yachad, Yad b'yad, your child gets to work with disabled and ill children and have the privilege of paying \$8,000 for five weeks to do so. The shidduch resume is the equivalent of the standard tests. No longer are teenagers lives ruled by internships that teach them how to hold down a job and interact with the world, paying jobs is not a line item on the shidduch resume, chesed projects are. OPT OUT WHILE YOU CAN, although it might be too late. As teachers teach to the tests, teenagers choose camp and schools for their shidduch resumes.

A marriage is about chemistry, that is why even an arranged couple must meet before they marry, just to give their okay to the other person. There is a crisis now in the shidduch world because more is cared about answers to multiple paged questionnaires, than they do about meeting a person and determining if there is chemistry.

To go out means that you have to put yourself on the line, the real you, not the virtual you, the social media you. It means that the boy/man has to be gracious, take a girl out, speak with her, find out what she's all about and tell a girl what's meaningful to him. It means being cordial even if the date is going bad. It means both parties have to agree to go out again or say, "it's been nice to meet you, but I don't think so." The shidduch scene allows both parties to escape the hard meaningful interactive stuff in favor of a surrogate who will ask the girl "do you want to go out." There is something life important about both parties putting themselves on the line and risking

rejection and being able to bear rejection. It's about maturing as part of your life growth, the most important part of knowing about the other person is how he/she deals with uncomfortable emotional situations.

As boys who know they hold the ropes in the shidduch game bury themselves deeper into their entitled selves, the shidduch resume now has to include a shidduch video, a picture will no longer do. He wants to know her personality before he puts himself on the line, his list of what she needs to do before she can get even one date grows with each passing year. He has a list of dozens of girls who want him and he controls upon whom he will bestow a date. It is sickening, but we have built these entitled boys, it is our fault.

These same boys/men who ask the shadchan to intervene, are the ones who during childbirth, which is emotionally difficult for them, because they have to support this brand new wife through an emotionally and physically challenging time, ask their mothers in law to come to the delivery room to support her daughter, his wife, because he cannot do so himself.

When do we ask these children to grow up?

Shouldn't they grow up before having to make life decisions and having children of their own?

We the poor one percenters who feel the pressure to keep up with the Joneses, have raised our children with the feeling of entitlements. They are entitled to a private sheltered Jewish education K-12, they are entitled to a year or two or three in Israel to give themselves more time to grow. They are entitled to a shadchan to relieve themselves of the difficulties of interacting with a strange person. They are entitled to in-laws who support them through marriage. Where does this entitlement end? Certainly not for those in Kollel

A man was arrested, accused of plotting an attack against the Aventura Turnberry Jewish Center

BY JAY WEAVER - jweaver@miamiherald.com

A Hollywood man accused of trying to blow up an Aventura synagogue stood in Miami federal court on Monday and gave the judge two names - one real, the other an alias. "My name is James Medina, also known as 'James Muhammad,' " Medina told Magistrate Judge William Turnoff. James G. Medina, 40, was arrested by federal agents on a charge of attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction against the Aventura Turnberry Jewish Center, 20400 NE 30th Ave., during services on Friday. The actual bomb - sold to him in Hallandale Beach by an FBI undercover operative just before the planned terror attack - was a dummy, authorities said.

On Monday, federal prosecutors Marc Anton and Karen Gilbert told the magistrate judge that Medina should be detained before trial, arguing that he is a danger to the community and a flight risk. If convicted, Medina, who is being held at the Federal Detention Center, faces up to life in prison.

The judge set Medina's bond hearing for Thursday and his arraignment for May 16. He also appointed the Federal Public Defender's Office to represent him.

Initially, an FBI confidential source met with Medina and two of his associates in late March and discussed the attack plan for the first time, according to an FBI affidavit. In early April, Medina talked about the timing of the assault with the source, who mistakenly suggested it could be carried out in a couple of weeks on the Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur - not realizing the upcoming holiday was Passover.

Medina's response: "... that'll be a good day to go and bomb them," the affidavit said.

One of Medina's associates informed the FBI source that Medina was planning to martyr himself in a firearms attack on the Aventura synagogue, using AK-47 assault rifles - then, the affidavit said, the conversation turned to claiming responsibility for it. Medina said he liked the source's idea of using the name of a notorious terrorist group - ISIS or al-Qaida-linked Shabaab - to assume responsibility.

"You can, you can do all that," Medina told the source, who recorded their conversation. "Yeah, we can print up or something and make it look like it's ISIS here in America. Just like that."

Soon after, the plot shifted to setting off explosives remotely instead of attacking the synagogue in an assault-weapons raid, the affidavit said. Medina conducted surveillance with the FBI source.

Medina, who told the source he had converted to Islam four years ago, said the planned synagogue attack would inspire other Muslims. Medina would later express his "current hatred for the Jewish people," the affidavit said.

An FBI undercover employee questioned Medina about his resolve: "You're sure this is something you want to do?" Medina answered: "I feel like it's my calling," adding he was "comfortable" with killing innocent women and children.

Medina was portrayed in the FBI affidavit as being anti-Semitic and that might have been a critical factor in his motivation to carry out the alleged deadly plot, authorities said. Medina's criminal complaint did not suggest he was directed by a foreign terrorist

organization such as ISIS to carry out the planned synagogue attack.

Before his arrest, Medina made three videos with his cellphone: In the first, he was recorded saying, "Aventura, watch your back. ISIS is in the house." In the second, he said, "Today is gonna be a day where Muslims attack America. I'm going to set a bomb in Aventura." And in the third, he said his good-byes to his family.

In response to Medina's arrest, Rabbi Jonathan Berkun and Executive Director Elliott Karp released a statement on the synagogue's Facebook page:

"The leadership of our congregation has been briefed by law enforcement and Jewish community security officials about this situation. They assured us that the synagogue and school were never at risk at any time during the investigation and arrest, and that there are no credible threats directed against us at the present time.

"Please be assured that our security protocols are well in place, which includes close coordination with local law enforcement agencies to insure the security of our facility and the safety of our members, children, staff and visitors."

U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Weston, praised the FBI's arrest of Medina.

"I am deeply grateful that the FBI arrested this individual before he was allegedly able to do harm to the Aventura Turnberry Jewish Center and its congregants, so many of whom are my constituents, who were observing the end of Passover," the congresswoman said in a statement.

"I will be in contact with federal and local authorities immediately and working with them to ensure our community's places of worship - no matter what faith - are safe for all those who worship in them. As the month of May begins and we recognize Jewish American Heritage Month, this attempted attack is a harsh reminder that there are many in our community who are motivated by bigotry and violence." Medina has had several brushes with the law for minor offenses. But one case sticks out for its potential similarity to the alleged Aventura synagogue bombing plan. In 2012, Medina was accused of texting violent threats to a Coral Springs family and their church.

Medina, charged with aggravated stalking, told a Broward Circuit Court judge at the time that he was a glass installer and a lifelong resident of South Florida.

That August, a Coral Springs police officer responded to the family's complaint about threatening texts and

called Medina, who told the officer, "It's going down," before hanging up, according to an arrest affidavit. A temporary order of protection was issued for the family. Days later, they had received approximately 50 additional texts, police said.

One text stated, "By next week, Ima bomb ya [curse word] . . . Bring him! I will buy a gun [off] the street and rampage [family member's] church," the affidavit said. "Murder she wrote."

Summary of the Perasha

Acharey Mot - The Yom Kippur Service, Forbidden Relations

- 1- The order of the Kohen in the Yom Kippur service (clothes, washing, lottery, incense, sprinkling blood, viduy, slaughtering)
- 2- The service of the Kohen on Yom Kippur in regards to the seir le'azazel
- 3- The commandment to observe Yom Kippur (resting from work and afflicting ourselves)
- 4- The issur of bringing a korban outside the azara
- 5- Laws regarding blood (the issur of eating blood, the mitsvah of covering the blood)
- 6- Laws of Arayot - Who is assur to us
- 7- Laws of Arayot - Severity of the sin and what the punishment is

FROM THE JERSEY SHORE NEWSLETTER

"Aharon shall place lots upon the two he-goats, one lot "to Hashem" and one lot "to Azazel." (Vayikra 16:8)

Our perashah discusses the Yom Kippur service that took place in the Mishkan. Two he-goats were brought to the opening of the Mishkan. A lottery was used to determine which one would be used as a korban and which one would be pushed off a cliff called "Azazel." Both goats brought atonement to the nation. The one as a korban brought about atonement through the avenue of holiness and sanctity. The other goat brought about atonement by being used as a "scapegoat." The sins of our nation would be blamed on the forces of evil that the goat represents. Hence the word "scapegoat" originated here from the goat being pushed off the high place (the scape) called Azazel. One goat represents holiness, and one represents something being wasted.

Our Sages teach us that both goats should look exactly the same, both in size, color and value. They should be identical and equal, and only the lottery would determine which would be holy. The

sefer called "Al Hatorah" (quoted by the "Hameir") brings a fascinating hint hidden here.

The Torah is coming to tell us that many times, emphasis is placed more on the physical things than on the spiritual things. Often one might be willing to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on a home. However when it comes time to purchase the mezuzot, he tries to find the cheapest ones. Often one is unwilling to compromise on the accessories of his car that they should be the most expensive, or the store that one shops in should be the most prestigious. But when it comes to buying a pair of tefillin, he would rely on anyone who says it's good enough and might even buy the cheapest.

Here the Torah is teaching us to at least equate the things that are not important, that which will eventually be wasted, to the things that will last forever, that have holiness like a korban. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"Do not follow their statutes." (Vayikra 18:3)

The Torah prepares us for entering the land of Canaan by warning us not to do like the pagan practices. What is interesting is that the Torah uses the word "hok" which means statute, a law that we cannot understand. In our religion we have "hukim", statutes, such as not eating meat and milk together, shaatnez (not wearing wool and linen together), etc. and we keep them because our Creator knows that this is the best thing for us. But why would the heathens have hukim? And why is the Torah so adamant to warn us specifically about not doing their statutes?

The answer can be readily understood when we see how society acts in ways that make no sense. I recently asked someone what he sells for a living and he said "used jeans." As we spoke, he mentioned that the ripped ones command a heftier price. I exclaimed, "That makes no sense!" He nodded and said, "That's what sells." Basically it's a "hok". In my early baseball days, only the catcher wore a baseball cap backwards but today, to look hip everyone does. Why? No reason, it's a "hok", statute. If we analyze much of society's practices, we will see the same thing, their clothing, food and entertainment to name a few.

So the Torah warns us to be logical and have common sense. "Do not follow their statutes." Next time we choose to emulate others, let's see if it makes sense. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

ETHICS OF THE FATHERS

Let the poor be members of your household." (Abot 1:5)

What is the basis for our obligation to the poor? Why are they our concern? Hashem made them poor; let Hashem provide!

The Maggid of Dubno explains the matter with the help of a dramatic parable: A wealthy man gave a party at his home, and invited twenty guests to it. The proper number of settings, all in sterling silver, were set out. Yet, as the last guest came to the table, there appeared to be no setting for him. The host was extremely upset. Rising, he said to the assembled: "I know that twenty settings were placed on this table to provide for all the invited guests. If one of you has none, the only explanation is that someone must have taken more than his share!"

And the Dubno Maggid concluded: "Our host, the Almighty, has prepared enough of everything for each one of His guests. If one man is not able to manage, someone must have taken two shares. Every man has been provided for on this earth. Therefore, 'you shall surely open wide your hand to him.' Why should you have two portions and he none?"

On this premise it becomes futile to try to "save" money by not giving to the poor. It is not ours to begin with; hence such "savings" will not ultimately remain in our possession. (Ethics from Sinai)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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Our Connection to the Heavens

The Torah in Parashat Ahareh Mot presents the prohibition against the consumption of animal blood. For most of us, this prohibition is natural and intuitive. The consumption of blood strikes us as repulsive, and it would appear, at first glance, that this is precisely the reason why the Torah forbade it. We are bidden to conduct ourselves in a becoming, dignified manner, and revolting eating habits – such as consuming animal blood – are thus naturally forbidden.

In truth, however, this is not the case. The Torah forbids eating blood even if in societies where it is deemed acceptable, and even if it is mixed into a food and its taste is not noticed. Thus, for example, Halacha requires "Meliha"– salting meat before it can be eaten, to ensure that every drop of blood has left the meat.

Indeed, the Torah itself gives the reason why blood is forbidden: "Ki Nefesh Ha'basar Ba'dam Hi"– "Because the soul of the flesh is in the blood" (17:11). We are not permitted to consume animal blood because the blood contains the "soul" of the animal. What exactly does this mean?

The Or Ha'haim (Rav Haim Ben Attar, 1696-1743) explains that this prohibition relates to the concept of the "Nefesh", an aspect of the soul. Human beings possess a Neshama (soul), which originates from the Almighty Himself. The Neshama actually consists of three parts, called Nefesh, Ru'ah and Neshama. The "lowest" of these three elements is the Nefesh. Although the Nefesh originates from God in the heavens, like the other two components of the soul, its consequences are earthly. It is the Nefesh that drives us to eat and sleep, for example. It is a heavenly part of our beings, but its manifestations are generally physical and mundane.

The Nefesh is the only part of the soul that we share with animals. They do not have the higher, more exalted aspects of Ru'ah and Neshama, but they do possess a Nefesh. It is this element that accounts for the more refined aspects of animal life, such as the animal's instinct to care for its young, the loyalty to its master (in animals such as dogs), and so on. These natural instincts are the product of the Nefesh, the quality of Godliness which is infused even within animals.

The Or Ha'haim explains that the Torah forbade us from eating blood because it is there, in the blood, where the animal's Nefesh is contained. If we ingest an animal's blood, its Nefesh will supplant our Nefesh. The Nefesh aspect of our souls will be replaced by the animal's Nefesh. This would have a disastrous spiritual effect on our beings, and for this reason the Torah demands that we do not ingest any animal blood – in order to preserve the sanctity and purity of our souls.

This prohibition thus reminds us of the special spiritual quality with which we are all endowed. If we only had a body, without any spiritual component, then a person who happens to enjoy the taste of animal blood would be allowed to ingest it. But the Torah informs us that we have something special and holy inside us that we need to protect.

The soul is our connection to the heavens. We cannot see it, but there is a kind of "rope" that extends from the heavens, from the source of our soul, to the soul within us. And this is why our actions have such a profound effect. Imagine one person holding the edge of a rope in New York, and his friend holding the other end of the rope in Los Angeles. If the person in New York shakes his end, it creates a slight tremor in the rope that, after several days, will be felt at the opposite end, in Los Angeles. This is precisely what happens when we perform a Misva, or when, Heaven forbid, we commit a sin. It stirs the "rope" that connects our soul with the

heavens, and has a significant impact in the upper worlds. The sacred Neshama inside us means that we are connected at every moment to God in the heavens – which means that everything we do, big and small, has a profound impact.

This is why nobody can say that he is not important enough for his actions to matter. We must never think that our misdeeds are inconsequential, and we must never refrain from a "small" Misva thinking that it won't have any effect. We have a soul which is our connection to the heavens, and thus everything we do is significant and consequential. Even the seemingly small things we do have an extraordinary impact on even the upper worlds. And so we can never disregard the "little things" – because in truth, nothing we do is "little."

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
IT IS CLOSING DOWN**

One of the great cardinal errors of early Zionism was its complete negation of the millennia old Exile and the achievements of the Jews in that Exile. The early Zionist leaders did not stress the spiritual, national and psychological allure of the Land of Israel as much as they emphasized the shortcomings of Jewish life in the lands of Jewish dispersion. This philosophy generated a great deal of opposition to Zionism, an opposition that in many respects still remains active today in many communities outside of Israel.

But neither the Zionists nor their opponents imagined at the beginning of the twentieth century what the Jewish world would look like a century later. The heartland of the Jewish people then was central and eastern Europe, the home of Ashkenazic Jewry. The Sephardic diaspora was scattered throughout the Middle East, the Mediterranean basin and the Balkans, with small pockets in other parts of the world.

The number of Jews living in the Land of Israel under discriminatory Turkish rule and economic ruin was very small, probably not even approaching ten thousand souls. And after some initial enthusiasm, the idea of Zionist sponsored immigration to the Land of Israel waned and faded.

The major Jewish immigration, from Eastern Europe and other parts of the world as well, was headed for North and South America, especially the United States. This immigration involved millions of people making a conscious decision to embark on a new life in a new environment and milieu. Yet, even after this mass immigration, most of the Jews in the world still lived in Europe.

But unforeseen world events changed the picture, as they always do. The First World War in all of its horrors and tens of millions of corpses scarred the Jewish and European landscape forever. In its aftermath it gave rise to institutionalized, government-sponsored anti-Semitism and to the Communist revolution that created the Soviet Union.

This occasioned a second wave of Jewish immigration from Europe, but again the vast majority of Jews leaving Europe came to the United States and other Western countries, though there was a significant number who chose to come to the Land of Israel. The Jews were on the move but tragically not enough of them were able to leave in time.

World War II and its attendant Holocaust made Europe the graveyard of the Jewish people. Great Britain made immigration to the Jewish homeland difficult if not impossible for most European Jews. Eventually the State of Israel came into being and over its decades of existence has more or less successfully absorbed enormous amounts of Jewish immigrants from all over the world.

The once great centers of Jewish life in Europe and the Levant are no more and have become only a tourist attraction, to visit Jewish cemeteries. And even those Jewish communities that still remain in Europe are slowly hemorrhaging with the continuing danger and discomfort of hope and anti-Semitism, much of it now cloaked in the pious garb of anti-Israel hatred.

So, at least as far as Europe is concerned, the centuries old Jewish exile there is definitely closing down... with the Jewish communities dwindling in numbers, influence and leadership. The main exile remains in the United States of America.

But the United States is going through a hard time, economically, politically and diplomatically. My grandchildren there are growing up in a completely different America than the one I grew up in decades ago. There was a period of time, not too long ago, when it was unthinkable to imagine that American Jewry would feel uncomfortable and less confident of

its future and its accomplishments. But that time has passed. Jewish students are subject to open anti-Semitism on American college campuses, the government of the United States, under the current administration, has been a constant critic of Israeli policies and behavior. The entire tone of the liberal, leftist social revolution of the past few decades has made Jewish life and leadership in the United States cautious, reserved and in my opinion somewhat fearful.

It certainly is incorrect to say that the romance of the Jewish people with the United States of America has ended. Nevertheless we do live in a rapidly changing world and completely unpredictable events have become the norm of our existence. The Jewish population of Israel is currently as great as in the United States. The balance of influence is also changing in favor of Israel. In many respects we all have to agree that the exile is inexorably closing down.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Courage to Admit Mistakes

Some years ago I was visited by the then American ambassador to the Court of St James, Philip Lader. He told me of a fascinating project he and his wife had initiated in 1981. They had come to realise that many of their contemporaries would find themselves in positions of influence and power in the not-too-distant future. He thought it would be useful and creative if they were to come together for a study retreat every so often to share ideas, listen to experts and form friendships, thinking through collectively the challenges they would face in the coming years. So they created what they called Renaissance Weekends. They still happen.

The most interesting thing he told me was that they discovered that the participants, all exceptionally gifted people, found one thing particularly difficult, namely, admitting that they made mistakes. The Laders understood that this was something important they had to learn. Leaders, above all, should be capable of acknowledging when and how they had erred, and how to put it right. They came up with a brilliant idea. They set aside a session at each Weekend for a talk given by a recognised star in some field, on the subject of "My biggest blooper." Being English, not American, I had to ask for a translation. I discovered that a blooper is an embarrassing mistake. A gaffe. A faux pas. A bungle. A boo-boo. A fashla. A balagan. Something you shouldn't have done and are ashamed to admit you did.

This, in essence, is what Yom Kippur is in Judaism. In Tabernacle and Temple times, it was the day when the holiest man in Israel, the High Priest, made atonement, first for his own sins, then for the sins of his "house," then for the sins of all Israel. From the day the Temple was destroyed, we have had no High Priest nor the rites he performed, but we still have the day, and the ability to confess and pray for forgiveness. It is so much easier to admit your sins, failings and mistakes when other people are doing likewise. If a High Priest, or the other members of our congregation, can admit to sins, so can we.

I have argued elsewhere (in the Introduction to the Koren Yom Kippur Machzor) that the move from the first Yom Kippur to the second was one of the great transitions in Jewish spirituality. The first Yom Kippur was the culmination of Moses' efforts to secure forgiveness for the people after the sin of the Golden Calf (Ex. 32-34). The process, which began on 17th Tammuz, ended on the 10th of Tishri – the day that later became Yom Kippur. That was the day when Moses descended the mountain with the second set of tablets, the visible sign that God had reaffirmed his covenant with the people. The second Yom Kippur, one year later, initiated the series of rites set out in this week's parsha (Lev. 16), conducted in the Mishkan by Aaron in his role as High priest.

The differences between the two were immense. Moses acted as a prophet. Aaron functioned as a priest. Moses was following his heart and mind, improvising in response to God's response to his words. Aaron was following a precisely choreographed ritual, every detail of which was set out in advance. Moses' encounter was ad hoc, a unique, unrepeatable drama between heaven and earth. Aaron's was the opposite. The rules he was following never changed throughout the generations, so long as the Temple stood.

Moses' prayers on behalf of the people were full of audacity, what the sages called *chutzpah kelapei shemaya*, "audacity toward heaven," reaching a climax in the astonishing words, "Now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book You have written." (Ex. 32: 32). Aaron's behavior by contrast was marked by obedience, humility, and confession. There were purification rituals, sin offerings and atonements, for his own sins and those of his "house" as well as those of the people.

The move from Yom Kippur 1 to Yom Kippur 2 was a classic instance of what Max Weber called the "routinization of charisma," that is, taking a unique moment and translating it into ritual, turning a "peak experience" into a regular part of life. Few moments

in the Torah rival in intensity the dialogue between Moses and God after the Golden Calf. But the question thereafter was: how could we achieve forgiveness – we who no longer have a Moses, or prophets, or direct access to God? Great moments change history. But what changes us is the unspectacular habit of doing certain acts again and again until they reconfigure the brain and change our habits of the heart. We are shaped by the rituals we repeatedly perform.

Besides which, Moses' intercession with God did not, in and of itself, induce a penitential mood among the people. Yes, he performed a series of dramatic acts to demonstrate to the people their guilt. But we have no evidence that they internalized it. Aaron's acts were different. They involved confession, atonement and a search for spiritual purification. They involved a candid acknowledgment of the sins and failures of the people, and they began with the High Priest himself.

The effect of Yom Kippur – extended into the prayers of much of the rest of the year by way of *tachanun* (supplicatory prayers), *vidui* (confession), and *selichot* (prayers for forgiveness) – was to create a culture in which people are not ashamed or embarrassed to say, "I got it wrong, I sinned, I made mistakes." That is what we do in the litany of wrongs we enumerate on Yom Kippur in two alphabetical lists, one beginning *Ashamnu*, *bagadnu*, the other beginning *Al cheit shechatanu*.

As Philip Lader discovered, the capacity to admit mistakes is anything but widespread. We rationalize. We justify. We deny. We blame others. There have been several powerful books on the subject in recent years, among them Matthew Syed, *Black Box Thinking: The Surprising Truth About Success (and Why Some People Never Learn from Their Mistakes)*[1]; Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margins of Error*,[2] and Carol Tavis and Elliot Aronson, *Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me*.[3]

Politicians find it hard to admit mistakes. So do doctors: preventable medical error causes more than 400,000 deaths every year in the United States. So do bankers and economists. The financial crash of 2008 was predicted by Warren Buffett as early as 2002. It happened despite the warnings of several experts that the level of mortgage lending and the leveraging of debt was unsustainable. Tavis and Aronson tell a similar story about the police. Once they have identified a suspect, they are reluctant to admit evidence of his or her innocence. And so it goes.

The avoidance strategies are almost endless. People say, It wasn't a mistake. Or, given the circumstances, it was the best that could have been done. Or it was a small mistake. Or it was unavoidable given what we knew at the time. Or someone else was to blame. We were given the wrong facts. We were faultily advised. So people bluff it out, or engage in denial, or see themselves as victims.

We have an almost infinite capacity for interpreting the facts to vindicate ourselves. As the sages said in the context of the laws of purity, "No one can see his own blemishes, his own impurities."^[4] We are our own best advocates in the court of self-esteem. Rare is the individual with the courage to say, as the High Priest did, or as King David did after the prophet Nathan confronted him with his guilt in relation to Uriah and Batsheva, chatati, "I have sinned."^[5]

Judaism helps us admit our mistakes in three ways. First is the knowledge that God forgives. He does not ask us never to sin. He knew in advance that His gift of freedom would sometimes be misused. All he asks of us is that we acknowledge our mistakes, learn from them, confess and resolve not to do them again.

Second is Judaism's clear separation between the sinner and the sin. We can condemn an act without losing faith in the agent.

Third is the aura Yom Kippur spreads over the rest of the year. It helps create a culture of honesty in which we are not ashamed to acknowledge the wrongs we have done. And despite the fact that, technically, Yom Kippur is focused on sins between us and God, a simple reading of the confessions in Ashamnu and Al Chet shows us that, actually, most of the sins we confess are about our dealings with other people.

What Philip Lader discovered about his high-flying contemporaries, Judaism internalized long ago. Seeing the best admit that they too make mistakes is deeply empowering for the rest of us. The first Jew to admit he made a mistake was Judah, who had wrongly accused Tamar of sexual misconduct, and then, realizing he had been wrong, said, "She is more righteous than I" (Gen. 38: 26).

It is surely more than mere coincidence that the name Judah comes from the same root as Vidui, "confession." In other words, the very fact that we are called Jews – Yehudim – means that we are the people who have the courage to admit our wrongs.

Honest self-criticism is one of the unmistakable marks of spiritual greatness.

[1] Portfolio Books, 2015.

[2] Ecco Books, 2011.

[3] Mariner Books, 2008.

[4] Bekhorot 38b.

[5] 2 Samuel 12: 13.

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