

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

BEHAR

MAY 10, 2014

10 IYAR 5774

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Farha Aziza Bibi
Happy Mother's Day
Happy Anniversary Chantelle

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH

Candle lighting this Friday evening is at 7:40 p.m. Shir Hashirim 7:15 Mincha at 7:30 SHARP
For the last two weeks, we began Shir HaShirim at 6:40 and then had to wait until after 7:30 to begin Mincha and then rush through so people would get home. So this week lets try getting everyone there at 7:15 for Shir HaShirim but no later than 7:30 for Mincha. We will also endeavor to finish at a reasonable time.
Please join us!

SHABBAT Class at 8:30, Relevant Daily Halachot based upon the teaching of HaRav Ovadia Yosef Hashem Melech at 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:30AM

We will endeavor to keep it to the 7 aliyot, somech, samuch and maftir each week.
Dr Bellehsen will be reading the Haftara and saying Musaf

Kiddush this week sponsored by Bobby and Hindy Mizrahi in honor of Matthew's birthday and the birth of their grandson Shlomo Yitzchak Avroham, Jacob Hudson, to their children Scott and Lindsay

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30
Ages 0-5 - in the Playroom/ Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!
We are hoping to come up with a children's program for the afternoon
Rabbi Colish will not be running this program
We are reviewing options and will keep you updated

Pirkei Avot With Rav Aharon at 6:30 –
Mincha at 7:00 – Followed by Seudah Shelishi at 7:30
Class with David
Second Chances!

Birkat HaMazon at 8:20
Arbit at 8:25 - Shabbat Ends – 8:40

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

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

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE - Men and Women are Invited
Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai 7:30

Daily class with Rabbi Colish - Weekday 6:30 AM (ADDITIONAL NEW TIME Sunday Mornings 7:30)
Kaballah as a Guide to Spiritual Growth based upon the teachings of Likutei Moharan

Goldie and Mel Isaacs will be sponsoring the kiddush next Shabbat as they say goodbye to the Sephardic Community and how special it is to be part of this kehilah. Mel writes: "We will miss one and all but it is time to downsize and to live closer to children" Mel will read the Haftarah next Shabbat and hopefully will give us a few words at Kiddush. Goldie and Mel will always be a part of us and we will miss their daily presence.

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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame. Mincha at 4PM through October 30th – Please join us! 212-289-2100

Editors Notes

The Gift of Powering Down

I'm writing this and sending it from an iPhone, 30,000 feet in the sky, where we are no longer told to power down our devices. At first everyone got a scare as the purser was having a problem with the wifi, but once it went on, everyone took out their phones, iPads and lap tops breathing a sigh of relief that their Facebook and Twitter accounts were connecting. Even at 30,000 feet, one doesn't get to separate from their electronically ball and chain.

This week the concept of Shabbat is expanded into the concept of Shemithah. The sabbatical year where the farmer stops, disconnects from the physical and reconnects with the spiritual. Living in a world where minutes disappear into hours, hours into days, days into months and months into years, people rarely step off the merry go round. Life becomes a blur.

Furnishing homes for the rich and famous and meeting and getting to know the clients often affords me a different perspective from which many lessons can be learned. Seeing the world through someone else's eyes often helps to open our own eyes.

A sports reporter and radio host mentioned that as he sat in the Garden last week watching the rangers playoff game, he looked around and noticed almost everyone in the stands doing something with their phones. Some were taking pictures, some were texting, and some were updating their social networks. Everyone he observed, seemed to be involved only with themselves. Everyone had transformed into a reporter of sorts and instead of enjoying the game, hanging with friends and laughing together, each was engrossed in his own electronic device.

Going for a late dinner after the game and the interviews and stepping into the restaurant with some coworkers, he noticed what he has probably seen for years. Almost every person regardless of the company at his table was busy on his phone. Instead of conversing with those around them, each was locked in his self created electronic cocoon. Each he stated, seemed to be an exclusive resident of his own world.

Even more depressing was his recognition at that moment that he too had been drawn into and was a slave to his electronic world. He waits for his name to be tweeted or to receive a notification from google that he's been mentioned again.

And then he asked me a question. Do you really turn off your phone for 24 hours? How do you do it? Where do you get the strength to free yourself from that four inch screen that peaks out onto the beyond?

The idea of taking a break from the world at every seventh day was introduced by G-d to the world through the Jewish people. 25 hours where we stop, power down, unplug and wipe our minds from the work week. We disconnect from the physical in order to connect to the spiritual. Shabbat is a gift taken from G-d's treasury and bestowed upon the Jewish people.

Most of us cannot take advantage of Shemithah, but each Shabbat grants us a taste of Shemithah and in the words of the rabbis, a taste of olam habah, the world to come.

Those who don't understand often feel that Shabbat diminishes their personal freedom while in fact it does the opposite.

We are blessed to have a world filled with external gifts, we have more gadgets and possessions than any generation prior, we have modern conveniences beyond the imagination of our grandparents, but we forget that those gadgets, those "freedoms", enslave us.

Shabbat builds for us the presence of mind; it fortifies and strengthens us to realize that we can have these things and that we are able to do without them. We walk away knowing that it is these devices which are meant to serve us and not us them.

My 13 year old daughter Mariyah sent the family a video this week. It's was about the dangers of locking ourselves into our phones. "This media we call social is anything but, when we open our computers and it's our doors we shut".

It makes us aware that , "Children are growing up in a world where they don't play outside or communicate with their friends. It seems today everything is done via text message or over the internet. It's heartbreaking..."

I loved Jonah's response to her. "Great video Mariyah. So now turn off your phone and go outside and play. "

This video is a reaction to the cocoon. Just as the sportscaster recognized the problem, his problem and our problem, people around the world are waking up. There are movements for "technology free Shabbats". And "Shabbats unplugged". Anything is a start on the road to regain control of our lives.

The Sabbath Manifesto was created by a group of Jewish artists in search of a modern way to observe a weekly day of rest. The group are all members of Reboot, a non-profit group designed to "reboot" the cultures, traditions and rituals of Jewish life. Their message is simple: Take a break. Call a timeout. Find some balance. Recharge.

I found their words so interesting. "Somewhere along the line, this mantra for living faded from modern consciousness. The idea of unplugging every seventh day now feels tragically close to impossible. Who has time to take time off? We need eight days a week to get tasks accomplished, not six."

But they have committed themselves to making the change. "In the Manifesto, we've adapted our ancestors' rituals by carving out one day per week to unwind, unplug, relax, reflect, get outdoors, and get with loved ones. The ten principles are to be observed one day per week, from sunset to sunset."

It may not be our ideal Shabbat where we not only disconnect from the mundane but reconnect to the holy, but it's a start.

And we need to sell the idea of Shabbat in a positive way to our own children and grandchildren who are beginning to find this disconnect difficult and near impossible. When 20% of us, who call ourselves observant have texting kids, losing the Shabbat in its entirety looms scarily overhead.

A sabbatical year may be a fantasy for the moment but the sabbatical day is not. I explained to the client that something magical happens when the sun begins to set. I shut down the devices and I'm free. I'm not even curious as to what emails I'm missing. Yes, it's true that moments after havdala I reach for my phone and it's back into the rat race. But those 25 hours are priceless.

Regain your life. Help your children and grandchildren regain theirs. Rediscover Shabbat. We begin by disconnecting. But the delight is on reconnecting with family, with friends, with Torah and with G-d. Shabbat is truly the source of blessing. It's a gift that needs to be cherished.

Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

Foundation of Reason Behind J Street Rejection Morton Klein

There were very good reasons why the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations clearly voted against the membership application of J Street, an extremist group whose activities are hostile to Israel.

The key stated missions of the conference are to: mobilize support to halt Iran's nuclear program; counter the global campaign to delegitimize Israel and the Jewish people; bolster Israel's security; and combat terrorism and anti-Semitism. J Street's actions are clearly at odds with these policies.

J Street lobbies against sanctions and against military action to stop Iran's nuclear weapons program. J Street works closely with the National Iranian American Council, a notorious apparent agent of the Iranian regime. The council's board member Genevieve Lynch is a significant J Street donor. J Street brings to its conferences and college campuses leading pro-Iranian regime speakers, including NIAC head and leading Iran apologist Trita Parsi. J Street likewise urges members of the U.S. Congress to simply "believe in Iran."

J Street-PAC raises million of dollars to defeat Israel's staunchest supporters in the U.S. Congress — further damaging the Conference of Presidents' efforts to mobilize support to halt Iran's nuclear weapons.

J Street and its campus arm, J Street U, bring to college campuses and conferences leaders of the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement to economically destroy Israel. It also brings "Breaking the Silence," a group that defames Israel and the Israel Defense Forces, including falsely accusing the IDF of committing brutal atrocities against Palestinians and anti-Israel Muslim leaders.

As Harvard Law School Professor Alan Dershowitz put it in a March 29 interview with the Israeli daily Ha'aretz; J Street calls itself pro-Israel and pro peace

but “always seems to be taking positions that are anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian.” He further noted that J Street invites BDS supporters and those who oppose Israel’s right to exist as the nation-state of the Jewish people to speak at its events.

J Street also lobbied to have the Obama administration vote for an anti-Israel U.N. resolution — a clear conflict with the Conference of Presidents’ mission, and it promoted and disseminated the Goldstone Report, which falsely accused Israel of committing war crimes in Gaza. J Street took no corrective action when Goldstone recanted much of his report.

In addition, on the very first day in 2008 that the IDF began operations in Gaza to stop thousands of Hamas rockets from falling on Israeli men, women and children and homes and schools in Southern Israel, J Street demanded that Israel stop this essential, defensive, long-overdue operation.

And in recent weeks, when Fatah and Hamas signed a unity agreement, despite Hamas calls for murdering every Jew and Israel’s destruction, and despite the fact that the U.S. State Department recognizes that Hamas is a terrorist organization, J Street promoted “aggressively” pushing a framework for a Hamas-Fatah state. Promoting a Hamas-Fatah state framework surely conflicts with the Conference of Presidents’ goal of combating terrorism and anti-Semitism.

Furthermore, last week J Street actually supported as accurate Secretary of State John Kerry’s “apartheid” accusation against Israel. In addition, J Street criticized the bipartisan Jewish organizations that had pointed out how offensive Kerry’s remarks were.

Is it any wonder that avowed “I am not a Zionist” billionaire George Soros is a major funder of J Street?

The “big tent philosophy” must never be a “universal tent” philosophy. Everyone agrees that there must be a red line. J Street has clearly crossed that line by engaging in activities that defame and delegitimize Israel and that are antithetical to the conference’s purposes.

Morton Klein is the president of the Zionist Organization of America, a founding charter member of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

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

2nd, 3rd & 4th Aliyot 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.

5th Aliya: The difference between the sale of a property in a walled city vs. an unwalled city is established. Continuing the theme of providing and dependency, we are commanded to provide for our impoverished brethren. Just as G-d provides for us, we must provide for each other.

6th & 7th Aliyot 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.

his week's Haftorah relates one of the most tragic yet uplifting episodes in the life of Yirmiyahu and the history of the destruction of the 1st Bais Hamikdash. Yirmiyahu, the prophet of doom, began his prophecies 40 years before the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash in 3298; 463 b.c.e. One year before the actual destruction, Yirmiyahu was imprisoned for a second time on charges of treason. However, he continued to proclaim the eventual destruction of Yerushalayim and the exile of the nation from Israel.

G-d sent Yirmiyahu a message while he was in prison that he was to redeem the ancestral field of his uncle Chanamael the son of Shalum. (That is the direct connection to Parshas Bhar.) Yirmiyahu purchased the field and gave the deed of purchase to his student Baruch ben Nuriyah (who would succeed Yirmiyahu as spiritual leader of the nation) to be secured in a sealed clay vessel for safekeeping.

G-d's message to the Yirmiyahu and the Jews was direct and simple. Repentance is yet possible. “Houses, fields, and vineyards will yet be bought in this land. (32:15)

Imagine! On the eve of the First Temple's destruction, while imprisoned on charges of treason for demoralizing the nation with his incessant message of impending doom and destruction, Jeremiah was commanded to act out a charade of optimism and hope. Yirmiyahu himself questioned G-d's message. (32:25) Why should I do this? The city has been

handed over to the Chaldeans!. G-d answered, (32:27) Behold! I am G-d. Is anything to wondrous for Me to do?

Although Yirmiyahu had futilely prophesized the destruction of the land for 40 years, there was still a chance for the Jews to reverse the decree. However, more than the ever-present possibility of repentance and redemption was the message of hope. No matter how dismal the times or seemingly inevitable the doom, we must have hope. Even the great Yirmiyahu needed to be reminded to have hope.

In the end, on the day of the actual destruction of the Temple, Yirmiyahu was not in Yerushalayim. The Medresh relates that upon turning toward his beloved Yerushalayim, Yirmiyahu saw smoke rising from the Temple Mt. Instead of suspecting the worst, Yirmiyahu allowed himself to hope, as G-d had taught him, that the smoke was from sacrifices that the Jews had finally decided to offer on the Temple altar. He allowed himself to hope that the nation had repented and the disaster would be averted. Unfortunately, it was not so

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“And My Sanctuary shall you revere.” (Vayikra 26:2)

At the close of this week's perashah we are told to revere and respect Hashem's Sanctuary, which is the Bet Hamikdash. It is the dwelling place of the Presence of Hashem in this world. Today we have a synagogue and in many places it is referred to as the "Mikdash Me'at," or the small version of the Bet Hamikdash. However, there is a great misunderstanding today how to understand this concept of the small Mikdash. Some think that during the time of the Bet Hamikdash there was a greater connection between the Jewish people and Hashem in the form of the Bet Hamikdash, and that connection has changed since then. But, the truth is that the connection and the interaction between us and Hashem has not changed from what it was before to what it is today. The synagogue is not just a small piece of the Bet Hamikdash.

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus explains this with a comparison to something we have experienced. More than thirty or forty years ago there was a device called a tape recorder. I remember the large tape-to-reel machine that weighed a ton and cost a ton. Today we have a tiny version of that tape recorder. It doesn't mean that someone took a saw and cut off a piece of the larger machine and we only have a piece

of the original machine. But it means that all that was in the original is found in the new one, only it is a smaller version.

The synagogue, which is called the Mikdash Me'at, is not a small remnant of the original Mikdash. It is the Bet Hamikdash in a small version. It has all the elements of holiness as the original. The Bet Hamikdash was a closed area where the nation and Hashem were alone together, us with the One and Only. It's the same thing today in our exiles. The close contact between us and the One and Only was never lost and it's still alive and well in the synagogue, the mini Bet Hamikdash of our times. Therefore, there should be no changes to the original sanctity, and any change will result in no Mikdash at all.

When we enter the shul, during our exiles, we should know that Hashem is with us as He always was. Therefore, we should make sure that we are with Him only and we shouldn't distract ourselves with anything else. Shabbat Shalom.] Rabbi Reuven Semah

"If you will say 'What will we eat in the seventh year?'" (Vayikra 25:20)

The Torah commands the Jewish people to keep the laws of shemita (sabbatical) and to refrain from planting or harvesting during the seventh year. Hashem promised that if they kept the laws properly, they would be blessed with an abundance of crops during the sixth year which would provide for them until the next planting.

The question is, if so, why will the Jews ask "what will we eat on the seventh year" if they already saw the blessing during the sixth year?

One of the commentaries answers that this question will be posed before the sixth year, even during the times of plenty, because it is not really a logical question, but rather, it reflects anxiety and worry by the Jewish people. It is possible for many of us to have abundance for the present and lack nothing, and still we will worry about the future to the extent that we don't even enjoy what we really have. It is OK to prepare for the unknown but we should differentiate between logical concern and irrational worry and anxiety.

The way to overcome these kinds of feelings is through faith and trust in G-d, which the misvah of shemita helped to instill in the Jews. There are many other commandments which also teach us this very important lesson of faith, such as closing our businesses for Shabbat and holidays, and the monetary laws which demand that we act in a very scrupulous manner. One who tries to strengthen his faith in Hashem will not only have peace of mind about the future, but will enjoy the present as well.

Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

THAT'S A LIE!

"If you sell anything to your neighbor, or buy anything from your neighbor, you should not defraud one another." (Vayikra 25:14)

The Talmud Baba Batra 87b details a number of fraudulent practices which were employed by less-than-honest businessmen who would cheat their customers. Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai hesitated publicizing these practices, explaining that he was confronted with a moral dilemma. If he would lecture, it was quite possible that some of the listeners who were themselves dishonest might learn new methods for defrauding others. On the other hand, if he did not lecture, the cheaters would posit that the scholars were naive to the ways of the world and unaware of the various ploys for cheating others. One wonders why it was Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai's responsibility to inform the wise cheaters that the Sages were just as aware of their methods of depravity as they were. Who really cares what dishonest people think of us?

In his commentary to the Talmud, the Maharsha explains that it was important for Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai to relay this message to the cheaters: Yes, we are aware of all of the shtick, the deceit, the lies that can be employed to defraud the unsuspecting, but we would never do it, due to our ethical character. This approach might target some of the cheaters who, as a result of this information, might consider repenting their ways and putting an end to their sordid behavior. No longer could they rationalize their unethical behavior, saying, "We are only doing what everybody else is doing. We are no different than the rest."

When the dishonest dealers realize that, indeed, many people are aware of the numerous ways to take advantage of unknowing and trusting souls - yet, because they value and appreciate the gift of honesty, they will not resort to stealing from others - it will change their attitudes. Many swindlers will change their ways and look for honest work and honest ways in which to earn a living.

This, explains Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, z"l, is the power of a Kiddush Hashem, sanctification of Hashem's Name. The force of absolute truth emanating from such an experience can even impact the most deceitful sinner into altering his fraudulent lifestyle. Merely becoming aware of the honest behavior of righteous people can do a world of good and quite possibly change a life.

Rav Henach relates a famous story concerning Horav Aharon Kotler, z"l, founder and Rosh Yeshivah of Bet Midrash Gavohah. He was presented with an artist's rendering of the proposed new structure for the yeshivah building. This drawing was to serve as the backdrop for fundraising

purposes and publicity about the yeshivah. The artist had visualized how the edifice, once completed, would appear. It truly was an impressive picture. Rav Aharon studied the picture and found a flaw. He pointed out that there was one extra tree in a place where it did not - nor could ever - exist. Defending the drawing were those who commissioned the artwork. They noted that everything else was true to its image. The yeshivah building was accurate; the surroundings were on target. One tree was out of place - Nu! It had no bearing on the building itself, and, after all, the artist had worked so hard to prepare a flawless graphic. The Rosh Yeshivah was adamant. "It is not the emet!" The drawing was laid to rest. Torah can only be established on a foundation of pure emet. Honesty and integrity may never be compromised - regardless of one's lofty goals. (Peninim on the Torah)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

**Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
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Shemita and Mount Sinai**

The Torah in Parashat Behar presents the laws of Shemita – the seventh, “sabbatical” year when farmers were forbidden from working their lands, and were required to allow all people to freely partake of their fields’ produce. The opening verse of the Parasha states, “G-d spoke to Moshe at Mount Sinai,” emphasizing that this Misva was told to Moshe at Sinai.

The commentators raise the question of why this point needed to be mentioned. After all, weren't all the Torah's laws conveyed to Moshe at Sinai? Why specifically in reference to Shemita did the Torah need to inform us that the command was taught at Mount Sinai?

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin (1880-1966) suggests an answer based on the Midrash's interpretation of the verse in Tehillim (103:20), “Barechu Hashem Malachav Giboreh Koah Oseh Debaro” – “Bless Hashem, His angels, those mighty in strength who obey His word.” The Midrash explains that this verse refers to two different groups of people. The phrase “His angels” refers to Beneh Yisrael at the time of Matan Torah, when they declared, “Na'aseh Ve'nishma” – “We will do and we will hear.” With this declaration, they committed themselves to a set of obligations and restrictions which they had not yet heard. They announced their allegiance to G-d's laws before learning what this entails, a level of commitment which is more “angelic” than human. They rose to the level of “Malachav,” of G-d's angels,

by committing themselves unconditionally to whatever G-d commands them.

The next phrase in the verse – “those mighty in strength who obey His word” – refers to farmers who obey the laws of Shemita. This Misva, more so than perhaps any other Misva in the Torah, requires courage. Imagine a retailer with a store on Fifth Ave. shutting down his business for an entire year, during which time he keeps the door open with a large sign announcing, “All merchandise free for the taking.” Without exaggeration, this is precisely what the Torah demands of farmers in Eretz Yisrael during Shemita. They are to shut down their enterprise for a full year and allow all people to help themselves to their produce. These farmers are “Giboreh Ko’ah,” the courageous heroes of the nation.

Rav Sorotzkin suggests that this is the connection between Shemita and Mount Sinai. These two occasions marked the highest level of commitment to G-d. Both at Matan Torah and during Shemita, Beneh Yisrael expressed their firmly-held belief that the highest value is observing G-d's laws. This belief is what led them to make the blind commitment of “Na’aseh Ve’nishma,” and what led them to leave their fields every seven years. The law of Shemita is thus rooted in Sinai, in the firm faith displayed by Beneh Yisrael when they received the Torah and announced their willingness to obey all the Misvot regardless of the sacrifices it entails

Rabbi Wein

THE EYES HAVE IT

Among the many positive attributes that my great-grandchildren possess is that many of them have unusually beautiful eyes. This is especially true of the female branch of our family. And that is truly fortunate, for the Talmud teaches us that a woman who possesses beautiful eyes needs no further inspection – one can be assured that she is of exceptional quality.

The Torah points out that our mother Leah had dim or weak eyes in contradistinction to the beauty of her sister Rachel. But the idea of beautiful eyes is not limited to physical beauty alone. The Torah demands of us, eyes that have a sense of vision that can see from afar - even see the otherwise unseen.

Our vision is not limited to our physical eyes but rather is defined by our ability to see beyond our physical boundaries and natural limitations. And that perhaps is what the rabbis really meant, on a deeper

level, when they wrote of the great attribute of beautiful eyes.

In effect, the Torah requires that we engage in periodic eye checks. We all know how difficult it is to read the bottom lines of the eye chart. The letters are too small and the distance from our eyes to the chart itself is too great. So too is it in the realm of life and the spirit. We are unable to read the lines that forecast our futures and we feel that the challenge of doing so is too much to ask of us. But the Torah is unrelenting in posting its eye charts for us to attempt to read.

The Talmud offers a majority opinion that the sightless are freed of certain obligations of performing the commandments of the Torah. But there is a minority opinion, faithfully and respectfully recorded, that they are nevertheless fully obligated in the performance of the commandments of the Torah.

On a certain level of understanding, the idea of the sightless is only a physical defect, albeit certainly a major one. But the Torah operates on a spiritual and non-physical plane as well as on the rational, realistic one that we can all experience. The commandments of the Torah can have relevant meaning and spiritual accomplishment even to the visually impaired.

And, the Talmud again respectfully and faithfully records the minority opinion for the Torah's commandments have effect and relevance on many levels and planes of meaning and importance. The Torah mocks idolatry and those that worship idols by stating that “they have eyes but nevertheless are unable to see.” Worshipping physical items, hedonism, false gods and warped ideals are symptoms of severe sightlessness.

By not being able to see the consequences of immoral behavior and perverted attitudes one is doomed to failure and pain, just as the sightless are liable to cause themselves physical harm by venturing out unguided onto a road strewn with obstacles. Without vision there can be no progress or achievement.

The Torah, when it wishes to inform of the unique character and personal qualities of our father Abraham, states: “And he saw the place from afar.” Midrash points out that his two colleagues who accompanied him to Mount Moriah, Yishmael and Eliezer, were unable to see that place from a distance. However, Abraham's son Isaac, like his father, saw the unseen through the omnipresent godly cloud hovering over the mountain.

In the long and very dark night of the Jewish exile, Jews nevertheless saw beyond their current plight and difficulties and envisioned their promised, eventual return to their ancient homeland, the Land of Israel. They were able to see the place and their better future from afar. And that vision became a reality in our generations.

The Bible in Proverbs teaches us that “a wise man has eyes in his head.” Well, doesn’t everyone have eyes in their head? That is certainly true in physical terms but in terms of vision and spiritual farsightedness, there are many who tragically are not too wise. The connection between our eyes and our head, our behavior and our moral and spiritual aspirations is not always what it should be.

A wise person realizes that one’s eyes must be in one’s head and that one’s eyesight must always be checked and corrected. So even though my great-granddaughters have beautiful eyes, I still pray that they will be blessed with good vision, physically and spiritually. For truly, the eyes do have it.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks THINK LONG

In last week’s parsha and this there are two quite similar commands, both of which have to do with counting time. Last week we read about the counting of the omer, the forty nine days between the second day of Pesach and Shavuot:

From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord. (Lev. 23: 15-16)

This week we read about the counting of the years to the Jubilee:

Count off seven sabbath years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. (Lev. 25: 8-10)

There is, though, one significant difference between the two acts of counting, and it tends to be missed in translation. The counting of the Omer is in the plural:

u-sefartem lakhem. The counting of the years is in the singular: vesafarta lekha. Oral tradition interpreted the difference as referring to who is to do the counting. In the case of the Omer, the counting is a duty of each individual.[1] Hence the use of the plural. In the case of the Jubilee, the counting is the responsibility of the Bet Din, specifically the supreme court, the Sanhedrin.[2] It is the duty of the Jewish people as a whole, performed centrally on their behalf by the court. Hence the singular.

Implicit here is an important principle of leadership. As individuals we count the days, but as leaders we must count the years. As private persons we can think about tomorrow, but in our role as leaders we must think long-term, focusing our eyes on the far horizon. “Who is wise?” asked Ben Zoma, and answered: “One who foresees the consequences.”[3] Leaders, if they are wise, think about the impact of their decisions many years from now. Famously, when asked in the 1970s what he thought about the French Revolution in 1789, Chinese leader Zhou Enlai replied: “Too soon to say.”[4]

Jewish history is replete with just such long-term thinking. When Moses, on the eve of the exodus, focused the attention of the Israelites on how they would tell the story to their children in the years to come, he was taking the first step to making Judaism a religion built on education, study and the life of the mind, one of its most profound and empowering insights.

Throughout the book of Devarim he exhibits stunning insight when he says that the Israelites will find that their real challenge will be not slavery but freedom, not poverty but affluence, and not homelessness but home. Anticipating by two millennia the theory of the 14th century Islamic historian Ibn Khaldun, he predicts that over the course of time, precisely as they succeed, the Israelites will be at risk of losing their asabiyah or social cohesion and solidarity as a group. To prevent this he sets forth a way of life built on covenant, memory, collective responsibility, justice, welfare and social inclusion – still, to this day, the most powerful formula ever devised for a strong civil society.

When the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah went into exile to Babylon, it was the foresight of Jeremiah, expressed in his letter to the exiles,[5] that became the first ever expression of the idea of a creative minority. The people could maintain their identity there, he said, while working for the benefit of society as a whole, and eventually they would return. It was a remarkable prescription, and has guided Jewish communities in the Diaspora for the twenty-

six centuries since.

When Ezra and Nehemiah gathered the people to the Water Gate in Jerusalem in the mid-fifth century BCE and gave them the world's first adult education seminar,[6] they were signaling a truth that would only become apparent several centuries later in Hellenistic times, that the real battle that would determine the future of the Jewish people was cultural rather than military. The Maccabees won the military struggle against the Seleucids, but the Hasmonean monarchy that ensued eventually became Hellenised itself.

When Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai said to Vespasian, the Roman general leading the siege against Jerusalem, "Give me Yavneh and its sages,"[7] he was saving the Jewish future by ensuring that an ongoing source of spiritual and intellectual leadership would remain.

Among the most prescient of all Jewish leaders were the rabbis of the first two centuries of the Common Era. It was they who ordered the great traditions of the Oral Law into the disciplined structure that became the Mishnah and subsequently the Talmud; they who developed textual study into an entire religious culture; they who developed the architectonics of prayer into a form eventually followed by Jewish communities throughout the world; and they who developed the elaborate system of rabbinic halakhah as a "fence around the law." [8] They did what no other religious leadership has ever succeeded in doing, honing and refining a way of life capable of sustaining a nation in exile and dispersion for two thousand years.

In the early nineteenth century, when rabbis like Zvi Hirsch Kalisher and Yehudah Alkalai began to argue for a return to Zion, they inspired secular figures like Moses Hess (and later Yehudah Leib Pinsker and Theodor Herzl), and even non-Jews like George Eliot, whose Daniel Deronda (1876) was one of the first Zionist novels. That movement ensured that there was a Jewish population there, able to settle and build the land so that there could one day be a State of Israel.

When the yeshiva heads and Hassidic leaders who survived the Holocaust encouraged their followers to marry and have children and rebuild their shattered worlds, they gave rise to what has become the single fastest growing element in Jewish life. Because of them there are now, within living memory of the almost total destruction of the great centres of Jewish learning in Eastern Europe, more Jews studying at yeshivah or seminary than at any time in the whole of

Jewish history – more than in the great days of the nineteenth century yeshivot at Volozhyn, Ponevez and Mir, more even than in the days of the academies at Sura and Pumbedita that produced the Babylonian Talmud.

Great leaders think long-term and build for the future. That has become all too rare in contemporary secular culture with its relentless focus on the moment, its short attention spans, its fleeting fashions and flash mobs, its texts and tweets, its fifteen-minutes of fame, and its fixation with today's headlines and "the power of now."

Nonetheless the real business leaders of today are those who play the longest of long games. Bill Gates of Microsoft, Jeff Bezos of Amazon.com, Larry Page and Sergei Brin of Google, and Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, were all prepared to wait a long time before monetizing their creations. Amazon.com, for example, was launched in 1995 and did not show a profit until the last quarter of 2001. Even by historic standards, these were exceptional instances of long-term thinking and planning.

Though they are secular examples, and though in any case we have not had prophets since the Second Temple, there is nothing intrinsically mysterious about being able to foresee the consequences of choosing this way rather than that. Understanding the future is based on deep study of the past. Chess masters have committed so many classic games to memory that they can almost instantly tell by looking at the placing of the pieces on a board, how to win and in how many moves. Warren Buffett spent so many hours and years as a young man reading corporate annual accounts that he developed a finely honed ability to pick companies poised for growth. Already in 2002, five years before the financial collapse actually came, he was warning that derivatives and the securitization of risk were "financial weapons of mass destruction," a secular prophecy that was both true and unheeded.

Throughout my years in the Chief Rabbinate our team – and I believe leadership must always be a team enterprise – would always ask: how will this affect the Jewish community twenty-five years from now? Our task was to build not for us but for our children and grandchildren. The great systemic challenge was to move from a community proud of its past to one focused on its future. That is why we chose to express our mission in the form of a question: Will we have Jewish grandchildren?

The leadership challenge of Behar is: count the years, not the days. Keep faith with the past but your

eyes firmly fixed on the future.

[1] Menachot 65b.

[2] Sifra, Behar 2: 2, Maimonides, Hilkhoh Shemittah ve-Yovel 10:1.

[3] Tamid 32a.

[4] Truth to tell, the conversation was probably not about the Revolution in 1789 but about the Paris students' revolt of 1968, just a few years earlier. Still, as they say, some stories are true even if they did not happen.

[5] Jeremiah 29: 1-8.

[6] Nehemiah 8.

[7] Gittin 56b.

[8] Avot 1: 1.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“And you should not cause sorrow, a man to his fellowman, and you shall fear your G-d, for I am Hashem your G-d” (25:17)

Although this is said in the matter of money dealings, as is evident from a foregoing verse, yet the fact that this commandment is a repetition of verse 14 indicates an especial emphasis. You shall not cause sorrow to your fellowman in any instance, even when no money is involved. “The verse speaks of causing sorrow by words” (Baba Metzia 58B). The word “Tonu” (from which we have the expression ‘Onaat Devarim’) is derived from ‘On’, as in the verse “I have not eaten thereof in my mourning (‘Oni’)” (Devarim 26:14). Thus we have a specific ‘Lav’ (negative Mitzvah) against speaking words that hurt a fellowman's feelings.

In three ways the hurtful words are more severe than wronging a fellowman in money matters.

- 1) The previous admonition (25:14) which speaks of money matters is not accompanied by the words “You shall fear your G-d” (although indeed even there he should fear Hashem). But this verse which is specifically intended for hurtful words is specifically accompanied by the admonition “You shall fear your G-d”.
- 2) The previous admonition is against a wrong done to your fellowman's money, but this admonition is against hurting your fellowman personally. Because unkind words cause hurt and sometimes “there is one that speaks like the piercings of a sword” (Mishle 12:18).
- 3) A money-wrong can be rectified by returning the money, but words cannot be rectified, or the hurt is already done.

The expression “A man to his fellowman” adds to the gravity of this sin,

1) in the sense of the *loyalty* to your *fellow Israelite* with whom you should feel a togetherness (‘Amito’ derived from ‘Im’, ‘with’ or ‘together’).

2) Because of the great love that Hashem has for your fellowman (19:18).

The first of these two considerations, the loyalty to your togetherness (Amito), imposes a greater responsibility toward kin/family, and the closest togetherness is that of a husband and wife. When married persons engage in exchanging hurtful words, “like the piercings (plural) of a sword” and they cause to each other hurt, and even cause harm to the mate's health “like the piercings (again and again) of a sword”, they indeed have reason to be afraid of Hashem's retribution.

“The one who is with you in Torah and Mitzvot (Amito), do not cause him any hurt” (Baba Metzia 59A).

And surely “A man should always beware of causing sorrow to his wife: (ibid.), for the above mentioned reasons and also because she is more easily hurt (ibid.)

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