

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

LECH LECHA

NOVEMBER 1, 2014

8 HESHVAN 5775

Remember to move your clocks back one hour on Saturday night.

. Candle lighting Friday evening 5:35 p.m. Mincha at 5:35
Through the winter we will schedule Mincha Friday evenings with Candle Lighting

SHABBAT Hashem Melech at 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 9:21 AM
Uri Lemberger will lead us for Musaf - Rabbi Yosef will give the morning derasha
(Rabbi David will be in JCAB on Shabbat Morning)

Please sponsor a Kiddush or Seudah Shelishi or breakfast in memory or in honor of a loved one
Next week we move to early Mincha so we need a good Kiddush.

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!

Children's afternoon program with the Bach at the Bach 4:30 PM

Pirkei Avot with Rav Aharon at 4:30
Mincha at 5:00 – Followed by Seudah Shelishi at 5:30 with Rabbi David
Birkat HaMazon at 6:20 Arbit at 6:25 - Shabbat Ends – 6:34

Our new board elected on Sunday is as follows

Rabbi Dr. Meyer Abittan	Trustee
Shaya Abittan	Secretary
Ely Altarac	Treasurer
Jack Azizo	Trustee
Dr. David Bellehsen,	Gabai *
Rabbi David Bibi	President
Dr. Baruch Kahn	Trustee
Robert Mizrahi	Trustee
Dr. Hal Waldman	Vice President
Robert Yadgarov	Counsel *
Albert Yusapov	Trustee

*A formality requires that the Gabai and Counsel be formally ratified at the next Trustee Meeting

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00AM, Mon and Thurs at 6:55, Tues, Weds and Fri at 7:00

We have been having a great Sunday morning class with Sam Yusupov 9AM
This Sunday's class with Rabbi David dedicated by Rebecca and Herman
In memory of Rebecca's Mother - Batsheva bat Avraham and Herman's father - Shmuel ben Chaim.

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE - Rabba Yenai will advise when his class will resume
Thursday Nights 8:30-9:30 Virtual* Class facilitated by Rabbi Yosef Colish.
Practical Laws of Shabbat for Sephardim

Long Beach Kristallnacht Commemoration on November 2, 2014 at 1:00pm at City Hall.
They emphasize the need for the younger generation to attend.

Long Beach Community Krav Maga Self Defense Course: Starting Sunday November 9th 10am-11am @Sephardic
Congregation of Long Beach. 12 sessions. 16 yrs old and up. Cost: \$300 payable in 3 installments. To join or for more
information please text/call. Yosef Colish.

GENERAL SYNAGOGUE MEETING For all congregants
At the Synagogue - Sunday December 7th at 9:30 AM
Looking forward to 2015 - Plans for the future and transitions

SAVE THE DATE: Sisterhood Annual Dinner December 9 honoring Hinda and Robert Mizrahi.

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 Israel or something of interest

**Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue,
 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us!
 212-289-2100 – Mincha and Arbit – Give us 22
 minutes and we'll give you the World To Come!**

Editors Notes

Our community has been blessed this past week with the visit of Hakahm HaRav Ezra Basri and his son, Rabbi Moshe of the Machon HaKtav Institute. Machon HaKtav was founded in 1979 by Rav Ezra Basri, who has also served as the Av Bet Din (president) of the Jerusalem Rabbinic Court for many years. Machon HaKtav has published manuscripts and republished early printings of sefarim / religious books from the leading Jewish scholars through the generations from Hakhmei Sefarad and from all over the world. Many of these works have been translated into English, Spanish and French, including Rabbi Basri's popular Dinei Mamot Series (Ethics of Business Finance and Charity) in 6 volumes. The Rabbi is now in the process of republishing this work, which is important for all Jewish businessmen in order to follow Halakha properly in their businesses, with a new and easier-flowing English translation. To that end, the Rabbi is trying to raise \$30,000 for the publication. If anyone is interesting in contributing towards this project, they may send a tax-deductible donation to:

American Friends of Yeshivat Amele Torah
 c/o Townley
 389 Fifth Avenue
 11th Floor
 New York, NY 10016

Tizku LeMissvot !

Election Day is this Tuesday. If you didn't think to cast your vote for a Congress that may counter-balance our president, you may want to reconsider. How did Jeffrey Goldberg's article affect you? He begins *"The other day I was talking to a senior Obama administration official about the foreign leader who seems to frustrate the White House and the State Department the most. "The thing about Bibi is, he's a chicken*hit," this official said, referring to the*

Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, by his nickname." This comment is representative of the gloves-off manner in which American and Israeli officials now talk about each other behind closed doors, and is yet another sign that relations between the Obama and Netanyahu governments have moved toward a full-blown crisis. The relationship between these two administrations— dual guarantors of the putatively "unbreakable" bond between the U.S. and Israel—is now the worst it's ever been, and it stands to get significantly worse after the November midterm elections. By next year, the Obama administration may actually withdraw diplomatic cover for Israel at the United Nations, but even before that, both sides are expecting a showdown over Iran, should an agreement be reached about the future of its nuclear program." Netanyahu will be appealing to Congress for cover and we need to make sure we give him a Congress who is not afraid to stand against the president. Those in my neck of the woods should come out to vote for Bruce Blakeman....

While speaking at a Synagogue in Manhattan a few weeks ago, I mentioned a new Shabbos App being developed. You can't imagine how many people followed up with me on where they could find the app. They asked if the app was real, if it was kosher and what I thought of it. My answer was that it would be fantastic for emergency personnel, doctors, EMT people and security workers who must text on Shabbat and understanding the technology that they say allows its use will be extremely interesting, but in theory it would be immensely problematic for the rest of us.... Let us know what you think of Maayan Jaffe's article....

Additionally, there is an article on Challahween that those of us who grew up with Halloween might find interesting. Rabbi Wein has a great article on Klinghoffer and taking responsibility. Finally Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has an article entitled "How Perfect were the Patriarchs and Matriarchs?", which peaks my interest and unnerves me a bit. I hope its not as controversial as it sounds.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Holy Texting! Does New App Make Smartphone Use Permissible on Shabbat? By Maayan Jaffe JNS.org

Teens love texting. Cell phones don't jive with Shabbat. A new app seeks to address this uniquely Jewish case of "unstoppable force meets immovable object."

In 2012, teens were sending an average of 60 texts per day, according to a report by the Pew Internet & American Life Project. That number was up from 50 in 2009, so it is likely even higher in 2014. Orthodox teens are no exception. In 2011, an article published in The New York Jewish Week drew attention to the high percentage of modern Orthodox teens for whom "half Shabbos" is a way of life. Half Shabbos is when one refrains from all of the 39 Shabbat prohibitions except when it comes to texting, which falls under the prohibition of using electricity in non-emergency situations.

Yossi Goldstein and a like-minded team of smartphone app developers, however, think they have a solution to half Shabbos, one that enables teens to text on Shabbat without compromising halacha.

"It's to make life easier for Orthodox Jews," Goldstein, a partner in the Shabbos App, told JNS.org.

On the company website is a list of the halachic challenges related to texting, such a muktzah (the device has no use on Shabbat), mavir (turning the screen on and off may be considered making a fire) and koteiv (writing), among others. It also lists why the Shabbos App technology works around these challenges, making it possible for teens (and anyone else) – for \$49.99 – to text permissibly on Shabbat.

The company, according to Goldstein, does not yet have rabbinic support or approval but is "working with several rabbis."

Could the Jewish world be seeing widespread smartphone use in synagogue by next Rosh Hashanah? It's unlikely, say all those who spoke with JNS.org about the app – Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. That's because the app goes against what is commonly referred to as "the spirit of Shabbat," explained Rabbi Daniel Rockoff, who received rabbinic ordination from Yeshivat Sha'alvim in Israel.

"The observant community won't go for it," he said.

Nonetheless, Rockoff isn't surprised such a technology was invented. He said Jewish law develops with the times and that technology is playing an ever-increasing role in our lives. He said this role is heightened for teens, and that it's the responsibility of the Jewish community to listen to, understand, and address the next generation's concerns.

"But we also need to keep it in perspective and realize the things we think are necessities may not be, and we have to consider their place in relation to the whole idea of Shabbos and that Shabbos is a sanctuary in time. We need to show the next generation Shabbos is something to be preserved," he said.

Rockoff drew on a rabbinic dialogue that dates back to 1917, around the time when telephones were invented. He said rabbis at the time examined telephones from a scientific perspective to determine whether they could be used on the Sabbath. By 1930, rabbis had determined that while use of the telephone might work out on a technical level – "the circuits are open so by picking up the phone you are not really doing anything substantial" – using them was not something the Jewish people chose to accept.

"Just because something is OK in principle, that doesn't mean it is something that should be practiced. We don't use electricity because of minhag Yisrael (tradition)," said Rockoff.

That doesn't mean that there haven't been inventions that have made keeping Shabbat easier or have enabled people with disabilities and other challenges to keep Shabbat. Machon Tzomet, a company in Alon Shvut, Israel, has been at the forefront of these developments, including a Shabbat-permissible electric wheelchair and stairlift as well as disappearing ink for essential writing tasks.

Maish Latidus, chief engineer for Machon Tzomet, said he thinks the Shabbos App might be something worth exploring, but not for the reasons the company is touting. He told JNS.org he does not like the direction of the app.

"When you look at the applications Machon Tzomet works on, they are either for essential services such as health or security or they are for other services in line with the spirit of Shabbat," said Latidus, noting he could see such an app being used to make a necessary map accessible, perhaps for doctors who would need to use smartphones anyway.

Elie Klein – who from 1999-2003 served as an advisor for NCSY, the youth movement of the Orthodox Union, today is raising his own two children, ages 7 and 5, in Jerusalem – said he was taught from working with teens was that one should empower them, help them create their own Jewish path, and meet them on their level and at the locations they like to frequent. But one shouldn't water down faith on their behalf, he said.

"There has to be a point at which you stop giving them all the power and hold a little bit back, so they understand the way tradition works and that to some extent they have to fit into the framework of what came before [them]," said Klein. "They can push it forward with their own voice and in their own way, but it has to fit."

Klein said the Shabbos App should force the Orthodox community to examine itself and how it conveys the message of Shabbat observance to youth. He said Jewish teens should be taught to feel the beauty of Shabbat, and to understand their history as well as the depth of the religion and tradition.

"Shabbat is the technology you cannot get enough of once you get into it," Klein said. "I think it is really important to model that."

Meredith Jacobs, author of "The Modern Jewish Mom's Guide to Shabbat," expressed a similar sentiment. She said that even for non-observant families, Shabbat can and should be seen as a day "that we do things differently, where we spend more time at dinner, where we have a different kind of meal, linger at synagogue with friends – spending time with each other." The Shabbos App, she said, "would ruin Shabbat."

Jacobs thinks today's teens are losing the ability to communicate in person and that family celebrations of Shabbat can serve a role in helping teens to unplug and be present – and for parents to do the same.

"The turning off of electronics lets you have that time to communicate with each other in a way I feel we lose otherwise," Jacobs said, noting that parents should set limits on texting and electronics for themselves and their children. Using Shabbat as an opportunity for this will help teach teens that there is something deeper than their smartphones, and there should be repercussions if a parent's limits are not adhered to, she said.

"You are the parent and no means no," said Jacobs.

But what about when it comes to outreach? The Chabad-Lubavitch movement, for example, has been at the forefront of creative use of technology to meet people where they are at, and to engage them in Jewish life and learning. Could the Shabbos App work in these instances?

"It's a slippery slope," said Mendel Segal, executive director of the Vaad Hakashruth of Kansas City and a member of the Chabad movement. "What is being done on the phone? Is it something necessary or is it just for personal gratification? First your texting, next thing you could be watching a movie, buying shoes."

Segal said Chabad takes Shabbat laws very seriously, and cannot imagine the app being encouraged.

But how about further down the road?

"I don't know how technology will evolve in the next five years," said Rabbi Rockoff. "Could I see even in 20 years that there is some way to read literature or learn on some type of electronic device on Shabbos? Yeah. The Shabbos App is making waves and that will lead to something – at a minimum the process of a good conversation."

Maayan Jaffe is senior writer/editor at Netsmart and a Kansas-based freelance writer. Reach her at maayanjaffe@icloud.com.

**Is Challahween the Sequel to Thanksgivukkah or Totally Different?
Rabbi Efreim Goldberg October 29, 2014
This article originally appeared on
rabbisblog.brsonline.org.**

Last year, due to a very rare intersection of the Jewish and Gregorian calendars, Thanksgiving coincided with the first day of Chanukah resulting in a day that was popularly referred to as Thanksgivukkah. This week a different overlap which occurs much more often will take place as Halloween falls on Friday Night. While Thanksgivukkah was widely embraced and broadly celebrated by many in the observant community, Challahween will go by without recognition or fanfare for what we think are obvious reasons, obvious until we try to articulate them.

In contemporary times, Halloween seems to lack religious significance and serves only as a platform to have fun, dress up and collect candy. What is wrong

with putting on a costume, being friendly with the neighbors and satisfying our sweet tooth?

Unlike Thanksgiving, whose origins are consistent with our religious beliefs, Halloween began as the pagan Celtic festival of Samhain, a day on which the devil was invoked for various divinations. Encyclopedia Britannica says, "The souls of the dead were supposed to revisit their homes on this day and the autumnal festival acquired sinister significance, with ghosts, witches, hobgoblins...and demons of all kinds said to be roaming about."

Today, the overwhelming majority of those trick or treating and dressing up, not only have no pagan thoughts or intent, but don't even know Halloween's historical background. So again, if all my children or I want to do is put on a fun costume and knock on neighbors' door to collect candy with no religious association, what is the problem?

The Torah (Vayikra 18:3) cautions us from imitating chukas ha'akum, foreign practices and customs, not because we discriminate against non-Jews, but rather in an effort to preserve and support Jewish values, ideals and a distinctly Jewish lifestyle with pride. The Rama, Rav Moshe Isserless, on his gloss on Shulchan Aruch (y.d. 178:1) rules that it is forbidden to observe a custom that has pagan origins, even in a secular context devoid of religious significance and meaning.

Dressing up for Halloween and trick or treating are a perfect example of the Rama's ruling and perforce are forbidden. The issue is not judging or rejecting the practices of our non-Jewish neighbors as much as seeking to reinforce distinctly Jewish practices and Torah values in our families and communities.

Fascinatingly, despite Halloween's designation as having pagan roots, several gedolim proudly distributed candy to those who knocked on their door trick or treating. The Artscroll biography of Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky describes how Rav Yaakov cheerfully handed out candy to all those who knocked on his door on Halloween.

Rabbi Akiva Males recounts his father-in-law's memory of being in Rav Pam's home on Halloween night.

"When my wife's older sister became engaged in the 1990s, my in-laws took my (future) sister-in-law and my (future) brother-in-law over to meet Rav and Rebbitzin Pam and receive their bracha and good wishes. What's the most vivid memory they all have of that evening? It was October 31st. In contrast to

the many Jewish homes around the Pams who had turned off their lights to discourage trick-or-treaters, the Pams left their front light on. While they all chatted with Rav Pam in the dining room, his Rebbitzin was in the kitchen working the hot-air popcorn popper and preparing plastic baggies of popcorn to give out with a smile to all the local non-Jewish kids who knocked at their door."

How do we reconcile the prohibition of observing Halloween with the stories of great rabbis responding so positively to trick or treaters?

Avraham Avinu, the founder of ethical monotheism and the father of our people, when purchasing a grave for his wife, described himself as "ger v'toshav anochi imachem, I am a stranger and a resident together with you."

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt"l explains that in this introduction Avraham captured the tension that every Jew is destined to live with forever. On the one hand, we are toshavim, residents and inhabitants of the great countries in which we live. We function as active citizens participating in the fullness of the society around us. And yet, at the same time, we must remain geirim, strangers: different, apart, distinct and dissimilar. Ger v'toshav – we are to simultaneously be part of, and apart from, the general world around us. Striking the proper balance and equilibrium between our dual identities and roles is the mission of the Jew at every time and in every place that he or she has ever lived.

There have been periods in our history in which we didn't need to work hard to remember that we were different. Through their anti-Semitism, persecution and oppression, our hosts have often reminded us that we were geirim, we were not the same. As badly as we tried to blend in, as hard as we tried to assimilate and as much as we sought to merge with those around us, we were denied the opportunity to be toshavim, equal residents and citizens. Indeed, the imbalance which tilted towards being geirim, towards being different, was our default status for the bulk of our history.

And yet, at this moment in history, blessed to live in this great country, a truly exceptional place that has afforded us extraordinary opportunity, once again our balance is off, our equilibrium between ger v'toshav, stranger and resident, is out of alignment. This time, it is in the opposite direction with devastating results, as evidenced by the recent Pew study.

The observant community is not immune from the draw of assimilation and the temptation to do what

everyone around us is doing, particularly when it seems as innocuous as dressing up and collecting candy. But it is specifically when things seem innocuous that in some ways they are the most threatening.

As part of a general movement in America away from particularism and towards universalism, there has been a shift in recent years from December greetings of Merry Christmas to a more generic Happy Holidays. At first blush, as Jews one might think we should be grateful for the nonspecific greeting which seems more sensitive to those who don't practice Christmas.

However, I submit to you that, in fact, changing the greeting to Happy Holidays combined with the overall secularization and commercialization of much of Christmas doesn't serve the Jewish people; it threatens to blur the lines that we rely on to distinguish us. The more secular Christmas becomes, the more accessible and inviting it will be to Jews who may someday have a tree and leave gifts under it, arguing that it has no religious significance to them. It is just fun, like Halloween.

All one has to do is survey the young people who are struggling mightily with the rigorous expectations of observant Judaism and the traditional viewpoints of Torah towards many social issues of the day to realize how threatening the allure of being a toshav is and its impact on our religious community. Our generation needs to place a greater emphasis on the ger aspect of our identity, not out of a sense of retreat, isolationism or defensiveness, but with pride, excitement and enthusiasm for our Jewish holidays, practices and customs.

Recognizing our role as geirim, different and distinct, Rav Yaakov and Rav Pam most certainly would never endorse or permit Jews to trick or treat or dress up for Halloween. Yet, they understood that, at the same time, our identity as toshavim demands that we not turn out the lights, literally or metaphorically, when our non-Jewish neighbors knock on our door, but instead we greet them with warmth and cheerfulness.

On Challahween this year, I suggest we follow the example of our great leaders. We should graciously give candy to those who knock on our doors, while abstaining from dressing up or trick or treating ourselves.

Let's use this Friday night around our Shabbos tables for a meaningful dialogue about the challenges of being geirim and toshavim at the same time. Let's

share ideas and strategies about how we can best preserve our Jewish identity and practices with pride, without having to forfeit our participation in and concern for the society around us.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: Avram is instructed to leave Charan and travel 400 miles to the Land of Canaan. (Charan was 600 miles from Ur Casdim) Upon arriving, they are forced to leave Canaan, due to a local famine, and travel to Mitzrayim in search of food.

2nd Aliya: Avram plans for his encounter with the amorality of Egypt. His and Sarah's confrontation with Pharaoh is detailed. Avram and Sarah return home.

3rd Aliya: Avram separates from his nephew / brother-in-law Lot, due to Lot's defection from the teachings of Avram. Hashem reassures Avram that he will have children, "like the dust of the earth", who will inherit the Land and carry on his work.

4th Aliya: Avram is forced to rescue Lot from captivity. In so doing, he adjusts the balance of power in Canaan and is recognized by the other political leaders for his military and moral strength. His encounter with Malki Tzedek (Shem) is in stark contrast to his confrontation with the King of Sodom.

5th Aliya: Hashem again reassures Avram that he will have genetic children (not just students) who would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

6th Aliya: The monumental "Covenant Between the Halves" takes place during which the next 430 years of Jewish history is revealed. Avram is 70 years old. Sarai instructs Avram to marry Hagar. The story of her conflict with Sarai, her encounter with an angel, and the birth of Yishmael in 2034 is told. Following the birth of Yishmael Avram's name is changed to Avraham.

7th Aliya: Avraham is presented with the Mitzvah of Circumcision. Sarai's name is changed to Sarah, and Hashem assures Avraham he and Sarah will have a son called Yitzchak. It is the year 2047 and Avraham circumcises himself, Yishmael, and his entire household.

THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“And you shall go to your father’s house in peace.” (Beresheet 15:15)

Rashi asks: Abraham Abinu’s father, Terah, was an idolator. If so, why did Hashem promise Abraham that he would join his father after he dies? The answer is that Terah repented before his death, and was considered so righteous that Abraham would join him after his death.

Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin zt”l observed: How wonderful are the ways in which people influence others. Abraham, the great influencer of so many people, was able to draw countless souls under the wings of the Shechinah and to persuade them to abandon their pagan beliefs. However he was unsuccessful in all his days in exerting any positive influence over his own father, who clung so closely to his idolatrous ways that he was willing to cast his son, Abraham, into a fiery furnace for the sake of his beliefs. It was only after Abraham distanced himself from his father that Terah, due to his paternal longing, realized the validity of his son’s teachings and repented sincerely.

The Torah LaDa’at says that the lesson here is obvious. Even if one seems unsuccessful in positively influencing someone else, he should not despair. One can never be certain that his efforts will not bear fruit in a future time and in a different place. Rabbi Reuven Semah

“And Abraham went on his sojourns” (Beresheet 13:3)

After Abraham went down to Egypt because of the famine, he came back to the land of Canaan. Rashi says that he stopped off at all the old lodging places in order to pay up his debts. While the simple meaning may be that Abraham had to borrow during the famine and now he could clear up those loans, there is a deeper meaning.

When people saw Abraham leaving Canaan because of the famine, they questioned him, “What happened to Hashem’s promise to take care of you during your journey?” The faith in Hashem was weakened due to Abraham’s struggling during these years. After Abraham was made wealthy in Pharaoh’s palace, Abraham went back to the same people to show them, “Here is the fulfillment of Hashem’s promise!” It sometimes takes time to see the Hand of G-d, and Abraham showed people that Hashem will not neglect anyone. That is the “repayment of the debts” that is meant in this chapter. We should all take note of when things are not going the way they should, so that when they are straightened out, we should realize how Hashem works it out for us. Don’t forget to “pay up those debts!” Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com
We are Always G-d’s Children**

The Torah in Parashat Lech-Lecha tells the story of Abraham Abinu’s sojourn in Egypt, where he was forced to relocate due to a famine which struck the land of Canaan. While he and Sara were in Egypt, Sara was abducted by Pharaoh. That night, we read, G-d punished Pharaoh and his household with various afflictions, compelling Pharaoh to return Sara and then send Abraham out of Egypt with great wealth.

The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe Nahmanides, Spain, 1194-1270), in a famous passage, notes how this episode served the purpose of “Ma’aseh Abot Siman La’banim” – establishing events that Abraham’s descendants would experience. Abraham’s descendants, too, would go to Egypt to escape a famine in Eretz Yisrael, and they would be mistreated and tormented by the Egyptians. G-d would then afflict the Egyptians and force them to send Beneh Yisrael away with great wealth.

After making this point, the Ramban proceeds to make a very surprising comment, writing (based on the Zohar) that Abraham sinned by moving to Egypt. Rather than remaining in Canaan and trusting that Hashem that would sustain him during the years of harsh drought, Abraham left the land promised to him by Hashem and went to Egypt, placing himself and his wife at risk.

There is much to be said about this comment of the Ramban, but the question we ask here is why the Ramban makes this point in the context of his discussion of “Ma’aseh Abot Siman La’banim.” The Ramban in this passage speaks of how Abraham’s experiences in Egypt foreshadow the experiences of his descendants. How is the fact that Abraham sinned by going to Egypt relevant to this discussion?

The answer is that this, too, is part of the “Ma’aseh Abot Siman La’banim.” Despite the fact that Abraham acted incorrectly by going to Egypt, nevertheless, G-d harshly punished Pharaoh for abducting Sara and saw to it that Abraham would leave Egypt with wealth. Similarly, even though Beneh Yisrael were not necessarily deserving of the miracles of the Exodus, G-d struck the Egyptians with ten plagues for enslaving Beneh Yisrael, and brought them out of Egypt as they carried all the country’s treasures. The model established by Abraham was not merely that of slavery and redemption, but also that of G-d’s unconditional love for His people. Even when we are

unworthy, He still cares for us and is prepared to help and protect us.

This is something which is vitally important for all of us to know and be mindful of. Parents do not abandon their children, even when their children misbehave. We are all Hashem's children, and He never abandons us. Even when we make mistakes, He is still there helping us, and He is always waiting for us to improve and return to Him. A person should never feel that G-d no longer cares about him and is not interested in having a relationship with him. A parent might become upset with a child and punish him, but he still loves him and will continue caring for him and helping him. And this is precisely Hashem's relationship to us. Even if we've slipped and made mistakes, He is still here with us and will always be here with us.

Rabbi Wein Klinghoffer

An elderly, crippled, wheel chair bound Jew by the name of Klinghoffer was thrown overboard from a cruise ship by Arab terrorists about a decade ago. Klinghoffer's only crime was that he was Jewish. These facts are uncontested and well-documented. Nevertheless, in the name of artistic freedom, a play was written that justified the murderous deed and intimated that Klinghoffer's murder was really the fault of the Jewish state of Israel.

Again in the name of artistic freedom, an opera was written reiterating that theme and the opera was produced and presented by the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York last week. It seems that all of the musical critics are in agreement that it was not a great opera, artistically speaking.

However, in today's completely politicized and overwhelmingly anti-Israel and anti-Jewish intellectual world, the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York felt impelled to produce this second-rate work in order to make a statement regarding its own political agenda and skewed worldview.

There was a protest mounted against the showing of this opera by some Jewish organizations in New York. But, the Metropolitan Opera Company, using the shield of artistic freedom *uber alles* – just as the Jew haters on university campuses use the shield of academic freedom to dispense their poison – naturally defended its production and in fact was proud that it engaged in such a groundbreaking venture.

The New York Times, one of the leaders of the consistently shrill anti-Israel chorus, in its column regarding the production of this opera interviewed a few Jewish opera goers who were at the Klinghoffer presentation. These Jews were not disturbed by the nature or message of the production and seemed to be somewhat bewildered as to what all of the controversy was about.

They unfortunately represent a large section of the American Jewish community, that is completely asleep as its society hurtles towards the brink of societal weakness, loss of influence, if not even self extinction. They just don't understand that they are Klinghoffer..... and that they are applauding their own eventual demise.

Of course, the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York is financed very heavily by Jewish donors. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, none of these influential contributors to the Metropolitan has publicly voiced any criticism of the decision to mount and produce this opera, which makes the murderers heroic and the victim pathetic.

This opera is perfectly acceptable in today's American society because poor Mr. Klinghoffer was Jewish. These donors also don't realize that they are also Klinghoffer. Had Klinghoffer been Moslem or black, his murder would have been judged to be a racist and terrorist crime, worthy of punishment and universal criticism. And certainly no opera would have been produced to "explain" the "justified motives" of the murderers. Hitler arrived on the scene three generations too soon. In today's climate there would have been many who would have "understood" him and his motives.

In spite of the disaster of the "appeasement" policy of the 1930's, it is being followed today in negotiations with murderers that will only lead to a dead end.....and I do mean dead. The only difference is that in today's world, it is called "engagement." It is a prime example of whistling past the graveyard, which always eventually leads to being in the graveyard.

It is no surprise that the Associated Press, in reporting the terrorist incident last week in Jerusalem, ran a headline that read "Israeli Police Shoot Man in Jerusalem." No mention was made in the headline of the three-month-old infant murdered by this Arab terrorist who drove his automobile into a crowd of innocent people waiting for a train or bus, and who was then subsequently shot dead.

This time, after a sufficient outcry of Jewish outrage, the headline was removed a few hours later and

replaced with a more accurate description of the terrible event that had occurred. Jews and Israel are fair game for every sort of distortion, criticism and slight, diplomatic, governmental or media generated.

The Jewish world somehow still believes that it exists in the more tolerant and subdued immediate post-Holocaust world of the 1950s when "Hava Nagilah" was the most popular song on American radio and stage. Those days are long gone and have been replaced by hatred, discrimination and demonization of all things Jewish.

Hillel said that "If I am not for me, then who will be for me?" If individual Jews and communal Jewish organizations are not now prepared to vigorously counteract what is happening in the Western world and the United States vis a vis Jews and the Jewish state then we are truly staring into the abyss. We should remember and assimilate into our inner being that we are all Klinghoffer.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks How Perfect were the Matriarchs and Matriarchs?

In an extraordinary series of observations on this week's parsha, Nahmanides (Ramban, Rabbi Moses ben Nahman Girondi, 1194 – 1270), delivers harsh criticisms of Abraham and Sarah. The first has to do with Abraham's decision, after arriving at the land of Canaan, to leave and go to Egypt because "there was a famine in the land." On this Nahmanides says:

Know that Abraham our father unintentionally committed a great sin by bringing his righteous wife to a stumbling-block of sin on account of his fear for his life. He should have trusted that God would save him and his wife and all his belongings, for God surely has the power to help and to save. His leaving the Land concerning which he had been commanded from the beginning, on account of the famine, was also a sin he committed, for in famine God would redeem him from death. It was because of this deed that the exile in the land of Egypt at the hand of Pharaoh was decreed for his children.[1]

According to Ramban, Abraham should have stayed in Canaan and had faith in God that he would sustain him despite the famine. Not only was Abraham wrong to leave. He also put Sarah in a position of moral hazard because, as a result of going to Egypt, she was forced to tell a lie, that she was Abraham's sister not his wife, and because she was taken into pharaoh's harem where she might have been forced to commit an act of adultery. This is a very harsh judgment, made more so by Ramban's further assertion that it was because of this lack of faith that

Abraham's children were sentenced to exile in Egypt centuries later.

Later in the parsha, Ramban criticizes Sarah. Despairing of having a child, she asked Abraham to sleep with her handmaid Hagar in the hope that she might bear him a child. Abraham did so, and Hagar became pregnant. The text then says that Hagar "began to despise her mistress." Sarah complained to Abraham, and then "afflicted Hagar" who fled from her into the desert. On this, Ramban writes:

Our mother [Sarah] transgressed by this affliction, as did Abraham by allowing her to do so. So God heard her [Hagar's] affliction and gave her a son who would be a wild ass of a man to afflict the seed of Abraham and Sarah with all kinds of affliction.[2]

Here the moral judgment is easier to understand. Sarah's conduct does seem volatile and harsh. The Torah itself says that Sarah "afflicted" Hagar. Yet Ramban seems to be saying that it was this episode in the ancient past that explains Jewish suffering at the hands of Muslims (descendants of Ishmael) in a much later age.

It is not difficult to defend Abraham and Sarah in these incidents and other commentators did so. Abraham was not to know that God would perform a miracle and save him and Sarah from famine had they stayed in Canaan. Nor was he to know that the Egyptians would endanger his life and place Sarah in a moral dilemma. Neither of them had been to Egypt before. They did not know in advance what to expect.

As for Sarah and Hagar, although an angel sent Hagar back, later when Ishmael and Isaac were born, Sarah once again banished Hagar. This time, though Abraham protested, God told him to do what Sarah said. So Ramban's criticisms are easily answered. Why then did he make them?

Ramban surely did not make these comments lightly. He was, I believe, driven by another consideration altogether, namely the justice of history. Why did the Israelites suffer exile and slavery in Egypt? Why in Ramban's own age were Jews subject to attack by radical Islamists, the Almohades, who brought to an end the Golden Age of Spain they had enjoyed under the more tolerant rule of the Umayyads.

Ramban believed, as we say in our prayers, that "because of our sins we were exiled from our land," but what sins had the Israelites committed in the days of Jacob that merited exile? He also believed that "the acts of the fathers are a sign for the children," and that what happened in the lives of the patriarchs

foreshadowed what would happen to their descendants. What had they done to Ishmael to earn the scorn of Muslims? A close reading of the biblical text pointed Ramban in the direction of Sarah's treatment of Hagar.

So Ramban's comments make sense within his reading of Jewish history, but this too is not without its difficulties. The Torah states explicitly that God may punish "the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation" but not beyond. The rabbis further restricted this to cases where "the children continue the sins of the parents." Jeremiah and Ezekiel both said that no one would any more say, "The parents have eaten sour grapes and their children's teeth are set on edge." The transfer of sins across the generations is problematic, Jewishly and ethically.

What is deeply interesting about Ramban's approach to Abraham and Sarah is his willingness to point out flaws in their behaviour. This answers a fundamental question as far as our understanding of the narratives of Genesis is concerned. How are we to judge the patriarchs when their behaviour seems problematic: Jacob taking Esau's blessing in disguise, for example, or Shimon and Levi's brutality in the course of rescuing their sister Dina?

The stories of Genesis are often morally perplexing. Rarely does the Torah pass an explicit, unequivocal verdict on people's conduct. This means that it is sometimes difficult to teach these narratives as a guide to how to behave. This led to their systematic reinterpretation by rabbinic midrash so that black and white take the place of subtle shades of grey.

So, for example, the words "Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian ... mocking," were understood by the sages to mean that the thirteen-year-old Ishmael was guilty of idolatry, illicit sex or murder. This is clearly not the plain sense of the verse. It is, instead, an interpretation that would justify Sarah's insistence that Ishmael be sent away.

Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chajes explained that the entire tendency of midrash to make the heroes seem perfect and the villains completely evil is for educational reasons. The word Torah means "teaching" or "instruction," and it is difficult to teach ethics through stories whose characters are fraught with complexity and ambiguity.

Yet the Torah does paint its characters in shades of grey. Why so? For three reasons:

The first is that the moral life is not something we

understand in depth all at once. As children we hear stories of heroes and villains. We learn basic distinctions: right and wrong, good and bad, permitted and forbidden. As we grow, though, we begin to realise how difficult some decisions are. Do I go to Egypt? Do I stay in Canaan? Do I show compassion to my servant's child at the risk that he may be a bad influence on my child who has been chosen by God for a sacred mission? Anyone who thinks such decisions are easy is not yet morally mature. So the best way of teaching ethics is to do so by way of stories that can be read at different levels at different times in our life.

Second, not only are decisions difficult. People are also complex. No one in the Torah is portrayed as perfect. Noah, the only person in Tanakh to be called righteous, ends drunk and dishevelled. Moses, Aaron and Miriam are all punished for their sins. So is King David. Solomon, wisest of men, ends his life as a deeply compromised leader. Many of the prophets suffered dark nights of despair. "There is none so righteous on earth," says Kohelet, "as to do only good and never sin." No religious literature was ever further from hagiography, idealisation and hero-worship.

In the opposite direction, even the non-heroes have their saving graces. Esau is a loving son, and when he meets his brother Jacob after a long estrangement, they kiss, embrace and go their separate ways. Levi, condemned by Jacob for his violence, counts Moses, Aaron and Miriam among his grandchildren. Even Pharaoh, the man who enslaved the Israelites, had a moral heroine for a daughter. The descendants of Korach sang psalms in the Temple of Solomon. This too is moral maturity, light-years removed from the dualism adopted by many religions, including some Jewish sects (like the Qumran sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls), that divides humanity into children of light and children of darkness.

Lastly and most important, more than any other religious literature, the Torah makes an absolute distinction between earth and heaven, God and human beings. Because God is God, there is space for humans to be human. In Judaism the line dividing them is never blurred. How rare this is was pointed out by Walter Kaufmann:

In India, the Jina and the Buddha, founders of two new religions in the sixth century BCE, came to be worshipped later by their followers. In China, Confucius and Lao-tze came to be deified. To the non-Christian, Jesus seems to represent a parallel case. In Greece, the heroes of the past were held to

have been sired by a god or to have been born of goddesses, and the dividing line between gods and men became fluid. In Egypt, the Pharaoh was considered divine.

In Israel, says Kaufmann, "no man was ever worshipped or accorded even semi-divine status. This is one of the most extraordinary facts about the religion of the Old Testament." There never was a cult of Moses or any other biblical figure. That is why "no man knows Moses' burial place to this day," so that it could never become a place of pilgrimage.

No religion has held a higher view of humanity than the book that tells us we are each in the image and likeness of God. Yet none has been more honest about the failings of even the greatest. God does not ask us to be perfect. He asks us, instead, to take risks in pursuit of the right and the good, and to acknowledge the mistakes we will inevitably make.

In Judaism the moral life is about learning and growing, knowing that even the greatest have failings and even the worst have saving graces. It calls for humility about ourselves and generosity toward others. This unique blend of idealism and realism is morality at its most demanding and mature.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"In this manner (idolatry) the world continued to develop until the birth of Abraham, the Pillar of the World" (RAMBAM, Idolatry 1:2).

"When this giant among men was weaned, he began to cast about in his mind by day & by night, wondering: Whence comes the Energy which rotated the celestial bodies? There was no one to instruct him. But his mind could not rest and he continued to gain in understanding until he finally arrived at the truth." (adapted from RMBM *ibid.* 1:3).

When Abraham Abinu came on the scene, the Rambam says, he looked at the sun and saw how wonderfully it works. The sun is just big enough to warm us. If it were bigger, we would be burned to a crisp; if it were smaller, we would be frozen. If the sun were a little closer, we would be burned; if it were more distant, we would be frozen. How did it happen that the sun was the exact distance and the exact size? Abraham was studying the happiness of this world, how good the sun is for us. With that he came to recognize that there is Someone in charge. That is Abraham's system.

He looked at everything in the world and saw that nothing was accidental. Everything is full of plan and purpose which demonstrates Kindness, Wisdom & Power, and from that he came to recognize the Creator/Bore' Olam.

Whenever you look into the whole purpose of the universe, there is not a thing that doesn't demonstrate plan and purpose. Apples turn red when they are ripe and fit to eat. When they are not the right color, they are hard and sour. They are not healthy that way, and you could get a stomachache if you ate them. The fact that apples turn red is enough proof for everyone to know there is a Creator. And peaches turn pink and red, and oranges turn orange and bananas turn yellow and Granny Smith apples turn green.

All of the instructions to produce these fruit are encoded in 1 million bits of information on the DNA of each seed. This includes production of the tree which bears the fruit which has seeds inside them in order to continue reproduction of these fruits for us.

It is as if Hashem signed His name on them, "Hashem is here." Everything proclaims Hashem's Presence. "The World is filled with the Hesed of Hashem" (Tehillim 33)

Abraham became the "Pillar of Hesed" in emulation of Hashem whose greatest Hesed is revealing Himself to mankind through all His creations. "All of Your deeds praise You" (Ashre).

Adapted from "Rabbi Avigdor Miller Speaks" by Artscroll

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