



## YISE Programs and Listings

**Pesach at Home for the First Time?** - Special Shiur with Rabbi Rosenbaum, Sunday, March 22, 8:00 PM, online, **Zoom A** listed above.

**Pre-Pesach Class with Rabbi Rosenbaum** - Sunday, March 29, 8:00 PM, online. **Zoom A** listed above.

**Camp Shomrai 2020** is open for registration! Programs for campers entering 2-year-old Preschool through 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Camp Dates: Monday, June 29 - Thursday, August 13. Register online at <https://campshomrai.campapplications.com> For more information contact Sarah Dollman at [camp@yise.org](mailto:camp@yise.org)

**Shomrai Preschool 2020-2021** - Online registration is now open for children ages 2 to 5 years old with customizable extended care options from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM. Visit [preschool.yise.org](http://preschool.yise.org) or email [preschool@yise.org](mailto:preschool@yise.org) for more information or to schedule a tour. Ask about our special, deeply reduced tuition for incoming 2-year-olds!

**Helping Hands Across Kemp Mill** is a part of YISE's Chesed Committee. The program helps members undergoing serious medical crises. We are always looking for volunteers to help. To be a part of this program by helping with meals, visitation, shopping, childcare, etc., contact: Melanie Karlin, 301-681-4740, [mskarlin@gmail.com](mailto:mskarlin@gmail.com) or Miriam Friedman, 301-754-1517, [mfriedman2@yahoo.com](mailto:mfriedman2@yahoo.com)

**The Rachel Bassan Horwitz Fund** is used for medical needs in our area, elsewhere in the US, and in Israel. In order to continue this much needed medical fund your financial help is needed! Tax deductible contributions may be made payable to: YISE Charity SPECIAL Fund, c/o Norma Burdett, 11720 Lovejoy St., Silver Spring, MD 20902. Earmark: Bassan Fund. For more info: Norma Burdett, 301-593-5964 or Pearl Bassan, 301-649-3137.

**Shiurim from Rabbi Gedaliah Anemer, ZT"l**, are available at <http://audio.yise.org>

## Community Programs & Listings

**Tzurba M'Rabanan** - will not take place until further notice.

**Rabbi Marvin Goldman's Shiur at University Towers** - Shabbos afternoons at 4:00 PM, will not take place until further notice.

**Remote Night Shiurim from YGW** - Sunday 8:30 PM - 9:15 PM, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Blate; Monday/Wednesday 9:00 PM - 9:30 PM, Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky; Tuesday/Thursday 9:00 PM - 9:30 PM, Rabbi Eliyahu Reingold. Register at [https://zoom.us/webinar/register/1715843153121/WN\\_n6jNGqUpTpCN6ikCabUutA](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/1715843153121/WN_n6jNGqUpTpCN6ikCabUutA)

**Kemp Mill Toastmasters** - An online meeting is being planned for Wednesday, March 18, 8:00 PM - 9:15 PM. See what Toastmasters is all about and find out how you can become a more confident communicator & leader. Contact Manasseh Katz at [ymp@kempmilltoastmasters.com](mailto:ymp@kempmilltoastmasters.com) for more info. or check [www.kempmilltoastmasters.com](http://www.kempmilltoastmasters.com) for the latest information including online meeting details.

**Free Webinars on Federal Jobs** - Presented by Kathryn Troutman of Resume Place:

- "10 Steps to a Federal Job" - Thursday, March 26, 12:00 Noon - 12:45 PM, register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/98813191917>
- "Federal Resume Writing in the Outline Format" - Tuesday, March 31, register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/98818214941>

**Daf Yomi Shiur** currently meets online via a WebEx video conference. There is still room for a few more participants. Anyone interested may email Judd Lifschitz at [lifschitz@srlaw.com](mailto:lifschitz@srlaw.com) to be added to the invite list. Sunday 7:00 AM, Monday - Thursday 9:00 PM, Friday 5:45 PM.

**Partners in Tefillah** matches people with others in need of similar assistance from Hashem. The feedback we have received so far has been amazing. You, too, can Daven for someone else in the community and have them daven for you. May Hashem answer all your prayers. Please visit [www.yadyehuda.org/partners-in-tefillah](http://www.yadyehuda.org/partners-in-tefillah) to learn more and to sign up.

**Community Helping Community: Yad Yehuda's COVID-19 Crisis Relief** - During this crisis, previously financially stable households in our community are already experiencing financial challenges. Yad Yehuda is receiving many more assistance requests than usual. With Pesach coming soon, we expect that to increase. Community financial donations are critical now. Please make an additional donation to Yad Yehuda today to help us address this unforeseen need at [www.yadyehuda.org/donate](http://www.yadyehuda.org/donate) A COVID-19 Telephone Assistance Hotline is now available at 301-494-1010, Sunday - Thursday 9:00 AM - 6:00 PM, Friday 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM. When you call, one of our dedicated Yad Yehuda volunteers will answer questions and help connect you with resources in the Jewish community and the area at large. If the volunteer is unable to answer your issue or question, they will, IY"Y, ensure that someone gets back to you in a timely manner. Our friendly volunteers are there to help and will do so with the utmost discretion and privacy. Please visit [www.yadyehuda.org/covid19](http://www.yadyehuda.org/covid19) for additional and updated information.

**Capital Kosher Pantry: Annual Chometz-Be-Gone Drive** - As you clean your home for Pesach, please donate unwanted Chometz to the Capital Kosher Pantry. Food should be shelf-stable, in sealed containers, well within the sell-by date and have kosher certification. Please deposit food in our collection bins located outside KMS, YISE and the Woodside Shul; in Shalom Kosher and Moti's Market; and outside our Pantry at 1910 University Blvd West. All bins are checked daily.

**Daily Halacha Program from Rabbi Eliyahu Reingold** - Receive one every day in your inbox. Visit [dvarhalacha.com](http://dvarhalacha.com) and click "Sign Up."

**Kemp Mill Village** volunteers are now offering services to Village members, including rides for appointments, shopping, and visits to friends and family, help with household tasks, and prescription deliveries. Call the toll free number 1-833-KMV-20902 to request member services or to volunteer.

**Silver Spring Gemachim** - For a complete list: [www.gemachexchange.com](http://www.gemachexchange.com)

The Week Ahead	Sunday March 22	Monday March 23	Tuesday March 24	Wednesday March 25	Thursday, March 26 Rosh Chodesh	Friday March 27
No Minyanim will take place at YISE next week. You are encouraged to Daven at home at your regular Minyan time. Mincha was scheduled for March 22 - 26 at 7:10 PM (Ashkenazi)/7:05 PM (Sephardi). In addition to Shiurim listed above, conference calls are scheduled with Rabbi Rosenbaum for Tehillim and a 15-minute Shiur on the Parsha in the mornings (Sunday 9:00 AM, Monday through Friday 8:30 AM) and for Tehillim and a 15-minute Shiur on Hilchos Pesach in the evenings (Sunday through Thursday, 7:30 PM) using Zoom A listed above.						
<b>Halachic Times:</b> Earliest Talis and Tefillin: 6:16 AM, Latest Krias Shma: 10:05 AM, Earliest Mincha: 1:46 PM						

### Upcoming Events

Wednesday, March 25 YISE Board Meeting, 8:00 PM. Contact [secretary@yise.org](mailto:secretary@yise.org) for connection details.

### Next Shabbos

March 27 - 28, 2020 - 3 Nissan 5780

Parshas Vayikra

Light Candles: Friday by 7:09 Havdalah: 8:09

Next Shabbos Shorts Deadline: Wednesday, March 25 at 12:00 Noon

Submit items for the Shabbos Shorts to: [announce@yise.org](mailto:announce@yise.org)

Office Phone: 301-593-4465 Office Fax: 301-593-2330

Eruv line: 301-593-5561 E-Mail: [office@yise.org](mailto:office@yise.org)

Website: [www.yise.org](http://www.yise.org)

Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Friday: 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Rabbi Dovid Rosenbaum Sammy Franco - President

Rabbi Binyamin Silver - Asst. Rabbi Simi Franco - Office Manager

**Making Pesach for the first time? Find out how!**  
**YISE presents a class with Rabbi Rosenbaum via Zoom\***  
**Sunday, March 22, 8 pm**



**PESACH AT HOME?!**



**Meeting ID: 416 963 9000**  
**call in: 301 715 8592**

# ISRAEL REPORT

To provide greater exposure to primary Israeli news sources and opinions in order to become better informed on the issues, and to gain a better understanding of the wide range of perspectives that exist in Israeli society and politics.  
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## ISRAEL APPROVES MASS SURVEILLANCE TO FIGHT CORONAVIRUS (YNet 3/17/20)

The government amended and unanimously approved early Tuesday a motion allowing authorities to utilize advanced digital monitoring tools to track and surveil Israelis infected with coronavirus.

The Shin Bet security agency will document and examine the location patients had visited before entering quarantine or being hospitalized and whether they had broken any government directives related to the spread of COVID-19.

The technology will allow the Shin Bet to track down people who were at contagion distance from the patient along their path and report directly to their phones that they have been exposed to the disease and must enter quarantine or get tested for the virus.

Special artificial intelligence systems can quickly pinpoint the locations of all people who are at risk of exposure and their whereabouts from the point of infection.

The regulations enable the authorities to collect any digital data, excluding the content of conversations, on either the carriers or those exposed to the virus.

The measure's implementation does not require a judge's warrant.

All collected data will be deleted after the government lifts the state of emergency - announced on Monday evening - and not after a 30-day period as initially proposed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The data that was collected would be saved for an additional 60 days after the state of emergency is lifted to perform "an internal investigation of the efforts performed by the Health Ministry."

Shin Bet Director Nadav Argaman published a statement clarifying the extent the security agency will be making use of the new regulations.

"As the head of the Shin Bet security service, I want to make it clear that the sensitivities around this matter are entirely clear to me," he said. "Therefore, I have only allowed a very small group of agency officials to be a part of this matter and that the information will not be saved to the Shin Bet's databases," Argaman added.

"The data collected would be given directly to the director-general of the Health Ministry or the head of the ministry's public health services, to be used only for the purpose of providing instructions to save lives."

I would like to emphasize that the Shin Bet will not at any stage enforce or supervise quarantine."

## JERUSALEM MAYOR: FULL CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN EXPECTED WITHIN 2 DAYS (JPost 3/18/20)

As the national battle with the coronavirus outbreak continues, Jerusalem mayor Moshe Lion explained on Wednesday what steps the nation's capital is taking to protect residents and to prepare for a full lockdown that will be announced within two days.

The mayor stated the elderly are the municipality's main concern. The city is doing whatever it can so that those who are over 60-year-old can stay at home. Thousands of volunteers are coordinating with the municipality to keep in contact with the city's elderly residents and provide aid as needed. The municipality is in contact with 21,000 elderly homes in Jerusalem.

Lion stressed that residents must understand that they should not leave their homes unless absolutely necessary.

The mayor discussed what the lockdown would entail with Home Front Command and Israel Police on Wednesday, but added that details of what

such a measure would entail were still somewhat unclear. He added that it seemed unlikely that all movement would be forbidden.

"You can't close the city completely so that no one leaves and no one comes. It's also definitely hard to enforce such a thing. On the other hand, at the end of the day, people will not leave their homes," said Lion.

"We're building more on people listening to and following instructions on their own than on active enforcement," said the mayor, adding that those caught outside in the lockdown will need to explain what they're doing outside.

Groceries, pharmacies and essential services will be open even in the lockdown, Lion said. The mayor believes the only difference between the current situation and a lockdown will be that the lockdown will be enforced by Israel Police. The mayor clarified he still is unsure of the details of the lockdown, including whether restaurants will still takeout and delivery, but that he believes that it won't be much different than what is currently happening.

The Jerusalem Municipality is preparing to ensure essential services in the case of the lockdown.

The mayor added that discussions about a drive-through coronavirus testing center have been taking place with the municipality and that a center should be set up soon, possibly in Teddy Stadium.

Magen David Adom is preparing to roll out such testing centers, in which individuals would drive up to large medical tents with their windows open and be swabbed without having to leave their vehicle.

Leon was worried that the 11 crossings between the PA and Jerusalem were open up until Tuesday. He clarified that as of Wednesday evening, the crossings with the PA were closed. The mayor stressed that Kafr Aqab and Shuafat are considered part of east Jerusalem and are therefore under the authority of the municipality. East Jerusalem residents, but not Palestinians living in Areas A and B, can enter the city through Qalandiya crossing,

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The Learning Shul, Columbia, SC  
Temple Emanuel of Pascoack Valley, NJ  
Woodsburgh, NY Minyan  
Young Israel Bet Tefilah of Aberdeen, NJ  
Young Israel of Brookline, MA  
Young Israel of East Brunswick, NJ  
Young Israel of Fort Lee, NJ  
Young Israel of Hancock Park, CA  
Young Israel of Holliswood, NY  
Young Israel of Houston, TX  
Young Israel of New Hyde Park, NY  
Young Israel of North Woodmere, NY  
Young Israel of New Rochelle, NY  
Young Israel of Sharon, MA

YI Shomrai Emunah, Silver Spring, MD

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located in Kafr Aqab.

Amid reports that haredi institutions were breaking Health Ministry directives, the mayor stated that almost all, if not all, haredi institutions in the city are closed and are following instructions. Institutions in east Jerusalem are also following the Health Ministry's instructions. Leon stressed that everyone in the city understands that regulations must be followed.

"If you don't follow these instructions, the first person you'll infect are actually the people from your community and therefore I think that everyone here has the responsibility [to follow the instructions]," said Leon. The PA and east Jerusalem are also following these instructions, and the mayor stressed that he hadn't heard of any exceptions.

Some public areas have been disinfected and the municipality is preparing to disinfect more areas. But disinfecting takes place in areas with localized outbreaks and so far there are no such areas in the city, according to Leon.

Like the rest of Israel, Jerusalem is also working to find ways to help businesses survive the lockdown.

The mayor announced that the municipality is examining establishing a "virtual mall" for Jerusalem businesses, which will be free-of-cost for businesses to use. All businesses with a website will be able to join and be featured on the site.

A fund will be established in order to loan money to businesses. The fee for opening a file for a business is NIS 500, but the municipality will cover the fee.

Facility fees for business have been forgiven until June 30. Arnona payments for April have been delayed for a month so that the payments can be made over three months.

"Concerning what comes next, we'll see how we move forward with the difficulties and how many more discounts we can offer to businesses. I hope this period will be short and not very long," said Lion.

### **ISRAEL BANS ENTRY OF NON-ISRAELIS (YNet 3/18/20)**

Israel announced Wednesday, it has banned entry for non-citizens unless they hold residency and can prove the center of their lives is in the country, according to a statement from the Population and Immigration Authority.

"Following two weeks of restricting entry to travelers who are neither citizens nor residents of the State of Israel, the Ministry of Health has recommended stricter entry prevention measures in order to halt the spread of the Coronavirus," the statement said.

Exceptions will be made for those whose lives are based in Israel, it added. The measure has immediately come into effect.

Israel has 433 confirmed cases of COVID-19 as of Wednesday afternoon, no deaths have been reported.

During an interview with Army Radio on Wednesday, Israel's Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan predicted that the country was headed for a "full shutdown" warning "this is an inevitable decision."

Israel had been set to begin drive-thru testing stations across the country on Wednesday, but Health Ministry officials were forced to delay due to a shortage of testing kits.

### **SETTING DIFFERENCES ASIDE, ISRAEL, PA COORDINATE FIGHT ON VIRUS (Israel Hayom 3/19/20)**

Israel and the Palestinian Authority have reportedly set up a joint headquarters to combat the coronavirus outbreak, a Palestinian official revealed Wednesday. An Israeli Defense Ministry official confirmed the statement but did not elaborate.

"Our shared borders and relations do not leave room for hesitation over the need to take severe measures and cooperate on the highest levels to prevent the spread of the virus," PA government spokesman Ibrahim Milhem told reporters in Ramallah.

The PA said Wednesday that the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the West Bank currently stands on 44. It said three new cases were

discovered near Bethlehem prompting the Palestinian security forces to impose a curfew on the town.

Also on Wednesday, Israel imposed a closure on the West Bank as part of the effort to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

Yotam Shefer, an official with the Office of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, told reporters that the decision to impose a closure was made in conjunction with the Ramallah-based Palestinian government.

Israel's border crossings with the Gaza Strip have also been closed, Shefer noted.

COGAT's directive allows the 70,000 Palestinians in the West Bank who have work permits in Israel, three days to either enter Israel with the understanding that they will have to remain there for as long as two months, or remain in the West Bank.

The PA government has reportedly made a similar announcement.

### **BATTLING DEFIANCE, HEALTH MINISTRY ISSUES EMERGENCY ORDER CLOSING ALL HAREDI SCHOOLS (Israel Hayom 3/19/20)**

The Health Ministry on Wednesday issued an immediate injunction ordering ultra-Orthodox schools to shut down.

The emergency order was issued after many schools flouted existing ministry directives regarding the coronavirus outbreak, over the orders of Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, the leader of the Lithuanian stream.

Earlier this week, Kanievsky ruled that suspending Torah studies "is more dangerous than the virus" and ordered all schools in his community to remain open, despite the national shuttering of the Israeli education system, on all levels, over the global pandemic.

Given how crowded haredi schools are, fears rose of a mass infection among the ultra-Orthodox sector.

This prompted the Health Ministry, headed by Yakov Litzman, leader of the Ashkenazi haredi party United Torah Judaism, to issue the highly unusual order, ruling that this was a situation of "pikuach nefesh" – the Jewish principle declaring that the preservation of human life overrides virtually any other religious rule.

The order has shuttered all schools, yeshivas, and religious seminaries, the ministry said, adding the police will be asked to enforce the directive.

### **RIVLIN TELLS KNESSET SPEAKER HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT PARLIAMENTARY WORK STALLED (YNet 3/18/20)**

President Rivlin on Wednesday spoke with Speaker of the Knesset about the importance of maintaining ongoing parliamentary activity and was updated on the challenges in light of the corona crisis.

The Knesset plenum session was officially closed after less than one minute due to disagreements between the two major factions preventing the establishment of critical committees.

"The ongoing dispute about opening the Knesset harms our shared fight against corona," Rivlin said, "and particularly when we are on an emergency footing, the Knesset plays a crucial role," Rivlin said.

The president told the Speaker of the Knesset that he is full of admiration for him and his work over the years and that he is sure that no-one holds Israeli democracy more dearly than he does, as someone who has fought for the Zionist idea his whole life and has paid a heavy personal price for doing so. "I know you, as the successor of all former speakers, will guard the status of the Knesset as a beacon of democracy, particularly at this time," said the president.

Edelstein told the president he hoped the disputes would be resolved quickly. "The gaps between the sides are not great and Israeli citizens deserve that their elected representatives work for them and oversee the work of the government. There is no reason to drag this out," he said.

However a second attempt at conducting a plenum session also failed and the Knesset was adjourned for the day after only three minutes.

Teams from both the major factions are continuing to meet but have not yet managed to resolve the issues that some in the Blue & White leadership, see as Netanyahu's efforts to block attempts by Blue & White to assume leadership of critical committees that could affect the prime minister's chances to continue in his job in light of the criminal corruption charges that have been filed against him.

Yair Lapid, a member of the party's leadership posted on his Twitter account his wonder that not one member of Netanyahu's coalition seemed concerned about the anti-democratic maneuvers by their leader.

#### **GANTZ: WE WILL TURN TO THE SUPREME COURT (Arutz-7 3/19/20)**

Blue and White chairman MK Benny Gantz issued a video statement to the citizens of Israel on Wednesday evening, in which he stated that his party would petition the Supreme Court over the recent goings on in the Knesset.

Earlier on Wednesday, Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein halted the proceedings of the Knesset plenum in the wake of continued fighting over the makeup of Knesset committees.

Edelstein said that Blue and White was unwilling to accept his compromise proposals which could have allowed the Knesset to start working immediately and, as such, suspended the activities of the Knesset until Monday.

"We are in the midst of a health and economic emergency, at a time when we are all required to show personal and national responsibility. These days it is important for me to tell you that despite the fact that there is no functioning government in Israel, and despite all the background noise: On the issue of the fight against coronavirus we are all united as one person and for me this is also a significant and leading consideration in political conduct," said Gantz.

He noted that "alongside the health and economic problems, I know many of you are as troubled as I am - and rightly so, by the unchallenged and unprecedented paralysis currently imposed by Netanyahu and Edelstein on the work of the Knesset. It is an improper act that hurts every citizen and therefore Blue and White will appeal to the Supreme Court to intervene."

"It is important to understand," said Gantz, "that if there is no functioning Finance Committee, no budget transfers can be made to compensate for the coronavirus damage. If there is no functioning Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, there will be no one to oversee the surveillance of citizens. A committee that oversees the coronavirus crisis, as we intend to set up, will make sure for your that the activities are done right."

"A crisis, however big it is - must not result in the crushing of statesmanship and in the harming the will of the voter. The Likud does not have a majority in the Knesset and therefore it closes it - we will not allow it. The Knesset is always a vital institution and the same is true in an emergency. It is impossible and wrong to manage a crisis of this magnitude without a functioning Knesset. We face a great challenge today - and the people of Israel have always faced the big challenges while united. Listen to the instructions, help each other, and we will also get through this crisis together," concluded the Blue and White chairman.

#### **CHIEF RABBI: LEAVE PHONES ON DURING SHABBAT (JPost 3/19/20)**

Chief Sephardic Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef sent Health Minister Yaakov Litzman a ruling of Jewish Law on Wednesday, calling on people to leave their phones on during Shabbat.

"There is no doubt that all those tested for coronavirus have to have a phone on during Shabbat so [the Health Ministry] will be able to update him on his results and tell him where to evacuate," Yosef said.

"Even those who did not get tested should leave his phone on, so he would be able to be briefed in case it is discovered that he was near a confirmed carrier."

Yosef also ruled that all synagogues at hospitals should be closed as it is difficult for people to keep a distance of two meters (6.6 feet) while in them.

The Health Ministry recently updated its recommendations for the public,

calling on people to avoid person-to-person contact and keep a two-meter distance from one another.

The authorities also urged Israelis to stay home and refrain from going to public places. All entertainment facilities have been shut down and workplaces have reduced the amount of active employees to 30% as per the request of the ministry.

Zaka Search and Rescue announced Thursday morning that it would deploy 32 ambulances in Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) Jewish population centers as per the request of the Health Ministry, in order to be able to inform locals on coronavirus patients in the area.

Zaka added that it is examining the possibility of following the ministry's instructions in accordance with the organization's rabbis.

"These days, Zaka and its volunteers are on high alert for anything that may come," said the organization's Director Yehuda Meshi Zahav. "The organization's volunteers are in nationwide deployment and are ready to respond at any moment."

Zahav continued, saying that Zaka has "supplied the volunteers with protective gear and specialized equipment designed to protect them."

He added that "the coming Shabbat, 32 Zaka ambulances will be deployed around the country in order to inform and alert the surroundings of a confirmed coronavirus patient, so anyone who has been in contact with [him or her] would enter quarantine in accordance with the Health Ministry's instructions."

#### **REPAIR WORK TO WESTERN WALL STONES COMPLETED (JPost 3/16/20)**

The Western Wall Heritage Foundation announced on Monday that work to secure stones in the Western Wall at the Robinson's Arch area where the egalitarian prayer section is located has finished.

In July 2018, a large stone fell out of the wall above a prayer platform that is part of the egalitarian prayer section of the Western Wall, causing significant damage to the site.

The platform, the only area with direct access to the stones of the Western Wall in the egalitarian section, has been closed ever since due to safety concerns and the ongoing work to survey the site to determine if other stones were loose and the execution of the requisite work to secure any such stones.

The main part of the egalitarian section at the Robinson's Arch area at the southern end of the Western Wall is set several meters away from the stones of the wall itself. This area was not closed and has continued to function during the repair work.

The lengthy delay in completing the surveys and repairs to the smaller platform abutting the wall itself has caused consternation amongst the Masorti (Conservative) and Reform movements in Israel, as well as the progressive Jewish movements in North America, who use the egalitarian prayer section for prayer services, as well as frequent bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies.

Although the repair work has now been completed, it is unclear exactly when this platform will be reopened.

According to the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, engineers from the Antiquities Authority conducted a thorough survey of the site and found many loose stones that were liable to fall and needed securing.

The loose stones were secured with metal pins requiring drilling work into the stones, something that needed specific dispensation from leading rabbis due to the sensitivity of such work under Jewish law.

#### **NETANYAHU'S CORONAVIRUS COUP: ISRAELIS' BASIC RIGHTS ARE NOW ON LIFE SUPPORT (Eva Blum-Dumontet, Ha'aretz 3/18/20)**

Early this week, the Israeli government passed new regulations for tracking the cellphones of coronavirus patients, or those suspected of being infected, circumventing the approval of the Knesset in the process. The technologies

used for such tracking had up until now never been used against Israeli civilians.

Monday, caretaker Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a "drastic expansion" of the tracking and geolocation of people who may have been in close contact with confirmed patients. In Netanyahu's own words, those "are not minor measures. They entail a certain degree of violation of privacy."

He is absolutely right. And let us be clear about this: the moment a government starts using surveillance against its own citizens, we reach a tipping point in the infringement of our most fundamental rights.

Coronavirus is a threat we all acknowledge. We accept major restrictions to our rights, including our freedom of movement. But the moment we accept seeing victims of the virus – and surely, soon enough, the population at large – to be treated like a hostile military threat, we have let the virus shape who we are as a society.

We are about to let the government gain absolute control over our lives – and thus know who we are, where we have been, when and with whom and who we speak to and when – without any form of consent or restriction.

In doing so, Israel joins China and Iran on the list of countries that have chosen to address the spread of coronavirus this way. As Israeli citizens, we should stop and ask ourselves if this is really a club we want to be part of.

We should also ask ourselves if this is the best way to fight the virus in the first place. Is creating a climate of fear – not of the virus but of the government – the best way to ensure people with symptoms will come forward to get tested and ensure the people they have been in touch with are protected?

### **ISRAEL NEEDS AN EMERGENCY UNITY GOVERNMENT TO DEAL WITH THE CORONAVIRUS** (Asher Fredman, JPost 3/15/20)

The health, economic and psychological impacts of the coronavirus will get worse before they get better. Dealing with these tremendous challenges will require far-reaching economic and governmental measures, which in turn require a stable government. While neither side of the political divide will be happy with the compromises necessary for an emergency unity government, such a government is what Israel desperately needs, at least for the near future.

COVID-19 has already dealt devastating blows to Israel's travel, tourism and entertainment sectors. However, the impact on Israel's economy will be far wider.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of COVID-19 is that its spread has been most severe in highly developed countries. With the exception of China (the world's second-largest economy) and Iran, the top 15 countries with the most COVID-19 cases are all members of the OECD. This means that the coronavirus will likely lead to at least temporary recessions in the countries that are Israel's most important trading and hi-tech partners.

Israel's economy will be put under further strain in the event of wide-spread school closures and an increasing number of people under home quarantine. Over an extended period of time, such closures and quarantines will lead to social and law-and-order problems as well.

From a public health perspective, an increase of the burden on an already overloaded healthcare system could harm the quality of medical care received by patients suffering from other conditions. It may also lead to a spike in already high levels of secondary infections in hospitals. In some medical specialties, Israel has little strategic depth. If even a small number of specialist physicians are forced to self-quarantine, this could lead to significant delays in life-saving procedures.

The psychological strain of the coronavirus should not be underestimated either. Until very recently, social isolation and distancing were considered negative consequences of the digital age which needed to be mitigated. Now they are encouraged.

Levels of tension and uncertainty will grow, just as traditional outlets such as

communal gatherings, entertainment events and vacations become less available. This deepening isolation will have a particularly strong impact on vulnerable populations such as the elderly.

There will be new technological and legal challenges as well. What happens when the first coronavirus case is discovered in the Knesset? Will Knesset committees and plenary votes be able to take place virtually? (Adding emojis to Knesset debates could be entertaining.)

All of these challenges could be compounded by new security threats. A weakened Palestinian Authority could lead to an increase in terrorism, necessitating widened operations. The Iranian regime may seek to distract attention from its failures and take advantage of the situation by instructing its proxies to launch attacks. Concentrating large numbers of IDF soldiers to deal with these threats could increase transmission.

It is not at all clear how long this crisis will last. Among the scientific community, there is a debate whether the spread of COVID-19 will taper off as the weather warms. But even the optimists expect it to resurge in the fall, well before a safe vaccine is widely available.

Meeting these challenges will require a far-ranging governmental response, including emergency economic measures, budget restructuring, and perhaps even greater centralized control of essential goods and services. On the other hand, some of the measures suggested to slow the spread of COVID-19, such as tracking the movement of citizens, raise serious concerns about privacy and individual rights. Such measures may be necessary for a limited time, but they require a delicate balancing act that should be based on national consensus.

Weathering this crisis will also require a high degree of national resilience and social cohesion. While this is an area in which Israeli society generally excels, it will be extra difficult this time. During the Lebanon and Gaza wars, residents of less-affected cities opened their homes to those from the hardest-hit locations. During snowstorms, people went door-to-door to make sure the elderly had all they needed. However, as people become wary of social contact, preserving national resilience and sustaining social initiatives will require an even greater effort.

AT THIS time of national crisis, a broad national-unity government is needed, at least in the short term. Call it an emergency government if you like.

Such a government would leave each side of the political divide highly unsatisfied. The Right would likely have to put on hold key objectives, such as judicial reforms and the application of sovereignty in Judea and Samaria. The Left would have to overcome its antipathy towards Netanyahu and agree to freeze the religion and state status quo.

In such an emergency government, Netanyahu should serve first as prime minister under any rotation agreement. With all due respect to Benny Gantz's military record, he has never faced the challenge of steering a national economy or managing a government bureaucracy. The IDF is a complex organization with a large budget, but that is not the same as dealing with market forces or a public health emergency. Gantz also lacks preexisting relationships with foreign leaders and has little diplomatic experience. This is no time for a learning curve.

As difficult as the compromises required of both sides would be, they are absolutely necessary. Continued political infighting, governmental paralysis, and ad hoc budgetary decisions will prevent an adequate economic and public policy response, and will undermine national resilience.

There is simply no way to justify the costs of a fourth election campaign at this time. It is not even clear that such elections would be logistically feasible. Israel's political leaders like to declare that what drives them is a sense of responsibility toward the people and the State of Israel. Now they have a chance to prove it.

Israel's citizens need to raise their voices and make clear that this is not only what they want, but that politicians who refuse will pay a political price.

And there's no need to worry. We can always go back to infighting and election campaigns when the crisis passes.

This week, in addition to the two *Parashot*, *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei*, we are scheduled to read *Parashat Ha'chodesh*, the additional passage usually read on the *Shabbat* immediately preceding the month of *Nissan*. There we read (*Shmot* 12:2), "This month [*Nissan*] shall be for you the beginning of the months, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year."

Commentaries ask: How can *Nissan* be the first month, when our tradition teaches that the world was created in *Tishrei*? Indeed, we call the first day of *Tishrei*, "*Rosh Hashanah*" / "the head of the year"!

R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (*Ramban*; 1194-1270; Spain and *Eretz Yisrael*) explains that *Nissan* is not, in fact, the first month of the year. Nevertheless, because it is the month in which we were redeemed from Egypt, we can call it "first," *i.e.*, the "first month of our redemption."

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) writes, however: Because *Nissan* is the month of the redemption, it actually is the first month. True, the world was created in *Tishrei*. But, for *Bnei Yisrael*, a new world began in *Nissan*. The world that was created in *Tishrei* is a world that operates according to the laws of nature. In *Nissan*, however, a new world order began -- a world in which the study of Torah and the performance of *Mitzvot* allow *Bnei Yisrael* to live outside of the laws of nature. "This month shall be for you the 'Rosh' / 'beginning' or 'head,'" *i.e.*, in this months our "heads" are elevated above the natural world. (*Si'ach Yitzchak* p.265)

## Thirty Days Before Pesach

The *Gemara* (*Ta'anit* 29a) states: "When *Adar* enters, joy increases." *Rashi* z"l explains: "They were days of miracles for the Jewish People -- *Purim* and *Pesach*."

R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (1923-1986; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the *Ponovezh Yeshiva*) observes: Apparently, *Purim* and *Pesach* have something in common, and that commonality is a source of joy. What is it? Also, asks R' Friedlander, we read in the Torah sections describing the Ten Plagues that *Hashem* wanted Pharaoh to acknowledge Him. Why was that important to Him?

R' Friedlander explains: One of the most foundational "Ways of *Hashem*" is that His Honor will be revealed in this world no matter what man does. Indeed, at times, His Honor is revealed as a result of the actions of the wicked -- not merely despite their actions. This occurred, for example, when Haman was hanged on the very same gallows that he had made for Mordechai. This teaches that, not only can the wicked not foil *Hashem's* plans, they themselves are tools in His hands.

The very same lesson is demonstrated by the story of the Exodus. Pharaoh hoped to prevent *Bnei Yisrael's* savior from growing to adulthood by decreeing that all newborn boys be drowned. As it turned out, that very decree resulted in the savior, Moshe, growing up in Pharaoh's own palace. Moreover, continues R' Friedlander, classical commentaries say that it was in Pharaoh's palace that Moshe learned leadership skills.

*Hashem* was not trying to make a religious man out of Pharaoh, R' Friedlander explains. But, if Pharaoh would acknowledge *Hashem*, it would teach us that *Hashem* always "gets His way," no matter how much the wicked try to resist. That is the shared message of *Purim* and *Pesach*. And, the more clarity we have about this point, the more joy it will bring us.

(*Siftei Chaim: Mo'adim* p.249)

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**“The hundred talents of silver were to cast the sockets of the Sanctuary and the sockets of the Partition; a hundred sockets for a hundred talents, a talent per socket.” (38:27)**

The *Gemara* (*Menachot* 43b) teaches that one is obligated to recite 100 *Berachot* every day. R' Michel Zilber *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of the *Zvhilyeshiva* in Yerushalayim) quotes R' Menachem Recanati *z"l* (1223-1290; Italian *Kabbalist*), who writes that the “secret” of the 100 *Berachot* is connected with the 100 *Adanim* / sockets that held the posts making up the walls of the *Mishkan*. Thus, if one recites 100 *Berachot*, it is as if he assembled the *Mishkan*. [Until here from R' Recanati]

R' Zilber explains: We read (*Devarim* 10:12), “Now, *Yisrael*, *Mah* / what does *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, ask of you? Only *Le'yir'ah* / to fear *Hashem* . . .” The *Gemara* cited above states that “*Mah*” can be read as “*Me'ah*” / “one hundred” -- a hint that one should recite 100 *Berachot* a day. Further, notes R' Zilber, since the subject of the verse is having *Yir'ah* / fear or awe of *Hashem*, we can infer that reciting 100 *Berachot* a day is a means to develop that trait. This, he notes further, may answer the question that the *Gemara* asks elsewhere (*Berachot* 33b), “How can the verse say, ‘What does *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, ask of you? Only to fear *Hashem*’? Is that a small request?” The answer is: Yes! If one recites 100 *Berachot* a day, *Yir'ah* of *Hashem* will come easily.

R' Zilber continues: In this light, we see a connection between 100 *Berachot* and the 100 *Adanim*. The word “*Adanim*” (sockets) hints to the Divine Name *Aleph-Dalet-Nun-Yud*, which is associated with the Divine Attribute of Justice; hence, with *Yir'ah*. We read, for example (*Malachi* 1:6), “If I [G-d] am a Father, where is My honor, and if I am *Adonim* / a Master, where is *Yir'ah* of Me?”

R' Yaakov ben Asher *z"l* (the “*Ba'al HaTurim*”; 14<sup>th</sup> century) writes that King David established the recitation of 100 *Berachot* daily in response to a plague that was killing 100 of his subjects each day. It follows, writes R' Zilber, that reciting 100 *Berachot* a day has a life-giving force. This, again, connects the 100 *Berachot* with the 100 *Adanim*, for our Sages teach that during the entire time that the *Mishkan* was under construction, not one of *Bnei Yisrael* passed away. This was, in particular, in the merit of the *Adanim*, which, say our Sages, were made from the half-*Shekel* coins that *Bnei Yisrael* donated. [The Torah says about the half-*Shekel* donations (*Shmot* 30:12), “So that there will not be a plague among them.”] The *Mishkan* was given as an atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf, which brought death back to the world (after it briefly was abolished when the Torah was given). When one recites 100 *Berachot* daily, it is as if he lays down the 100 *Adanim* and stands up the posts of the *Mishkan*, thus bringing life to the world. (*Ba'yam Darech: Ma'amarei Ha'mishkan* No. 36)

**“On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for *Hashem* . . . Moshe said to the entire assembly of *Bnei Yisrael*, saying: ‘This is the word that *Hashem* has commanded, saying: . . . Every wise-hearted person among you shall come and make everything that *Hashem* has commanded: the *Mishkan* . . .” (35:2, 4, 10-11)**

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 31b) teaches that the *Melachot* / labors or activities that are prohibited on *Shabbat* are those that were necessary for the construction or functioning of the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle in the desert. *Rashi z"l* writes (in his commentary to *Shabbat* 5a) that this connection is learned from the juxtaposition of *Shabbat* and the *Mishkan* in our *Parashah* [as seen in the above verses].

Why should the *Melachot* prohibited on *Shabbat* be learned from the *Mishkan*? Moreover, the *Zohar* teaches that those same *Melachot* were used by *Hashem* to create the world. How should we understand that, since *Hashem* obviously does not perform physical labor?

R' Avraham Zvi Kluger *shlita* (*Chassidic Mashpia* in Bet Shemesh, Israel) explains: *Hashem* implanted in Creation the possibility that we can find His Presence within it. Indeed, that was the purpose of Creation. And, while *Hashem's* Presence could be sensed most intensely in the *Mishkan* (and, later, the *Bet Hamikdash*), it also can be found throughout His Creation. The possibility of “finding” *Hashem* in Creation and in the *Mishkan* is the common denominator between them to which the *Zohar* alludes.

R' Kluger continues: It is clear from our Sages' teachings that they did not look down on “work.” To the contrary, they valued work, because, when a person performs his work in accordance with *Halachah*, he is bringing spirituality into Creation. He is, quite literally, building a “*Mishkan*,” a place where *Hashem* is revealed. Notably, the word “*Melachah*” / “labor” or “work” shares a root with “*Mal'ach*” / “angel.”

On *Shabbat*, however, we are instructed not to work, not even in order to build the *Bet Hamikdash*. On *Shabbat*, explains R' Kluger, *Hashem* reveals His Presence to us (referred to as an “awakening from Above”); we do not need to go searching for Him using our own labors (an “awakening from below”). Moreover, the revelation on *Shabbat* takes place in the realm of “*Machshavah*” / “thought” or “intellect,” not in the realm of “*Ma'aseh*” / “deed.” Creation and the building of the *Mishkan* / *Bet Hamikdash* both “rested” on *Shabbat*, because that is not how the revelation is meant to occur on that day. In line with this, the Torah prohibits only “*Melecheth Machshevet*” / “thoughtful work” on *Shabbat* (as defined by *Halachah*). (*Yichud Ha'Shabbat* III p.61)

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## Covenant and Conversation: R. Jonathan Sacks

**Making Space** - With this week's double parsha, with its long account of the construction of the sanctuary – one of the longest narratives in the Torah, taking a full 13 chapters – comes to a magnificent climax: Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Sanctuary. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the Glory of the Lord filled the Sanctuary.

That is what the building of the sanctuary was about: how to bring God, as it were, from heaven to earth, or at least from the top of the mountain to down in the valley, from the remote God of awe-inspiring power to the Shekhinah, the indwelling Presence, God as shakhen, a neighbour, intimate, close, within the camp, in the midst of the people.

Yet for all this, we wonder why the Torah has to go on at such length in its details of the Mishkan, taking up the whole of Terumah and Tetzaveh, half of Ki Tissa, and then again Vayakhel and Pekudei. After all, the Mishkan was at best a temporary dwelling for the Shekhinah, suited to the years of wandering and wilderness. In Israel, it was superseded by the Temple. For two thousand years in the absence of a Temple its place was taken by the synagogue. Why, if the Torah is timeless, does it devote such space to what was essentially a time-bound structure?

The answer is deep and life-transforming, but to reach it we have to note some salient facts. First, the language the Torah uses in Pekudei is highly reminiscent of the language used in the narrative of the creation of the universe:

### Genesis 1-2

And God saw all that He had made and behold it was very good. (1:31)

The heavens and earth and all their array were completed. (2:1)

And God completed all the work that He had done. (2:2)

And God blessed... (2:3)

And sanctified it. (2:3)

### Exodus 39-40

Moses saw all the skilled work and behold they had done it; as God had commanded it they had done it. (39:43)

All the work of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting was completed. (39:32)

And Moses completed the work. (40:33)

And Moses blessed... (39:43)

And you shall sanctify it and all its vessels. (40:9)

Clearly the Torah wants us to connect birth of the universe with the building of the Mishkan, but how and why?

The numerical structure of the two passages heightens the connection. We know that the key number of the creation narrative is seven. There are seven days, and the word "good" appears seven times. The first verse of the Torah contains seven Hebrew words, and the second, 14. The word *erec*,

"earth," appears 21 times, the word *Elokim*, "God," 35 times, and so on.

So too in Pekudei, the phrase "as the Lord commanded Moses" appears seven times in the account of the making of the priestly garments, and another seven times in the description of Moses setting up the Sanctuary.

Note also one tiny detail, the apparently odd and superfluous "And" at the very beginning of the book of Exodus: "And these are the names ..." The presence of this connective suggests that the Torah is telling us to see Genesis and Exodus as inherently connected. They are part of the same extended narrative.

The final relevant fact is that one of the Torah's most significant stylistic devices is the chiasmus, or "mirror-image symmetry" – a pattern of the form ABCC1B1A1, as in "(A) He who sheds (B) the blood (C) of man, (C1) by man (B1) shall his blood (A1) be shed". This form can be the shape of a single sentence, as here, or a paragraph, but it can also exist at larger levels of magnitude.

What it means is that a narrative reaches a certain kind of closure when the end takes us back to the beginning – which is precisely what happens at the end of Exodus. It reminds us, quite precisely, of the beginning of all beginnings, when God created heaven and earth. The difference is that this time human beings have done the creating: the Israelites, with their gifts, the labour and their skills.

To put it simply: Genesis begins with God creating the universe as a home for humankind. Exodus ends with human beings, the Israelites, creating the Sanctuary as a home for God.

But the parallel goes far deeper than this – telling us about the very nature of the difference between kodesh and chol, sacred and secular, the holy and the mundane.

We owe to the great mystic, R. Isaac Luria, the concept of *tzimtzum*, "self-effacement" or "self-limitation." Luria was perplexed by the question: If God exists, how can the universe exist? At every point in time and space, the Infinite should crowd out the finite. The very existence of God should act as does a Black Hole to everything in its vicinity. Nothing, not even light waves, can escape a Black Hole, so overwhelming is its gravitational pull. Likewise, nothing physical or material should be able to survive for even a moment in the presence of the pure, absolute Being of God.

Luria's answer was that, in order for the universe to exist, God had to hide Himself, screen His presence, limit His Being. That is *tzimtzum*.

Now let us come back to the key words *kodesh* and *chol*. One of the root meanings of *chol*, and the related root *ch-l-l*, is "empty." *Chol* is the space vacated by God through the process of self-limitation so that a physical universe can exist. It is, as it were, "emptied" of the pure Divine light.

*Kodesh* is the result of a parallel process in the opposite direction. It is the space vacated by us so that God's presence can be felt in our midst. It is the result of our own *tzimtzum*. We engage in self-limitation every time we set aside our devices and desires in order to act on the basis of God's will, not our own.

That is why the details of the Sanctuary are described at such length: to show that every feature of its design was not humanly invented but God-given. That is why the human equivalent of the word

"good" in the Genesis creation account is "as the Lord commanded Moses." When we nullify our will to do God's will, we create something that is holy.

To put it simply: *chol* is the space God makes for humankind. *Kodesh* is the space humankind makes for God. And both spaces are created the same way: by an act of *tzimtzum*, self-effacement.

So the making of the Sanctuary that takes up the last third of the book of Exodus is not just about a specific construction, the portable shrine that the Israelites took with them on journey through the wilderness. It is about an absolutely fundamental feature of the religious life, namely the relationship between the sacred and the secular, *kodesh* and *chol*. *Chol* is the space God makes for us. *Kodesh* is the space we make for God.

So, for six days a week – the days that are *chol* – God makes space for us to be creative. On the seventh day, the day that is *Kadosh*, we make space for God by acknowledging that we are His creations. And what applies in time applies also in space. There are secular places where we pursue our own purposes. And there are holy places where we open ourselves, fully and without reserve, to God's purposes.

If this is so, we have before us an idea with life-transforming implications. The highest achievement is not self-expression but self-limitation: making space for something other and different from us. The happiest marriages are those in which each spouse makes space for the other to be his or her-self. Great parents make space for their children. Great leaders make space for their followers. Great teachers make space for their pupils. They are there when needed, but they don't crush or inhibit or try to dominate. They practice *tzimtzum*, self-limitation, so that others have the space to grow. That is how God created the universe, and it is how we allow others to fill our lives with their glory.

## Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day" The Sages of the Talmud query the significance of this verse; after all, the Bible commands us in several places not to do "any manner of creative, physical activities on the Sabbath day" (Exodus 20:10, for example). In fact, the verse preceding this command not to light a fire on Shabbat says, "whoever does an act of physical creativity on [the Sabbath day] shall be put to death."

These are generic prohibitions, which include the 39 acts of physical creativity that according to our Oral Tradition are forbidden on Shabbat (Mishna Shabbat 7:2). "Kindling a fire" is one of those 39, so why is it singled out again in this week's biblical portion? Philo Judaeus (c. 20 BCE-c. 50 CE), a great Alexandrian rabbi, exegete and philosopher, explains and provides a fascinating spin on this prohibition, taking it to mean: "Do not kindle the fire of anger in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath." The Oral Tradition forbids kindling a fire Philo interprets our biblical verse to be adding "the fire of anger" against any individual or familial member!

Allow me to record two anecdotes that will provide an interesting postscript to Philo's masterful interpretation.

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There was a young man studying in the famed Yeshiva of Volozhin, bright and especially gifted of mind and pen, who began to go “off the derech” (lose his way religiously).

He was discovered smoking a cigarette on the holy Shabbat. The head of the yeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, asked to see the errant student, urging him to mend his ways. The young man audaciously responded that he was merely exercising his gift of free will.

The yeshiva head, who had given his life and finances to the institution – and who continued the difficult task of teaching and fund-raising to maintain his yeshiva even in his later years – was overcome with anger. He slapped the “student” on the cheek.

The mortified young man left the yeshiva and made his way to America, where he became a well-known author and editor of Yiddish newspaper *The Jewish Daily Forward*. He was for many years bitterly anti-religious, and under his watch, the famous (or infamous) “Yom Kippur Eve parties” were held in the *Forward*’s building on the Lower East Side.

In the early 1970s, my family and I would vacation in Miami Beach, Florida, where on Shabbat afternoons I would give shiurim (Torah classes) at the Caribbean Hotel. On one particular Shabbat, I was speaking about the Mussar (Ethicist) Movement and specifically about the famed Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, known as the Hafetz Haim after his book against slander, I invoked a passage in the Talmud (B.T. Arachin 16b), in which Rabbi Tarfon maintains that “no one knows how to properly rebuke in our times; if one person says to another, ‘remove the flint from between your teeth,’ the other will respond, ‘remove the beam from between your eyes.’”

However, I added, apparently the Hafetz Haim, who lived 2,000 years after Rabbi Tarfon, did know how to rebuke, and how to bring an errant Jew back to God. It is told that a student in the Yeshiva in Radin (the city of the Hafetz Haim) was caught smoking on Shabbat.

The Hafetz Haim spoke to him for two minutes, and the student not only repented, but even received rabbinical ordination from the Hafetz Haim.

As I concluded my lecture, an elderly gentleman, who had been visibly agitated as I spoke, grabbed my arm and urgently whispered, “Where did you hear that story?” I told him I didn’t remember, and I didn’t even know if it was true. “It is true,” he said. “I was that boy; I was smoking on Shabbat and I have semicha from the Hafetz Haim. The great rabbi spoke to me briefly, after which I willingly and even gladly returned to the Yeshiva and would not leave until I received his ordination!”

We were both overcome with emotion. We left the hotel and silently walked along the beach. Finally, I couldn’t restrain myself. “What did the Hafetz Haim tell you that changed your life in two minutes?” Here is what the elderly man responded, and his words remain inscribed on my soul.

“I was standing in front of the yeshiva with my belongings, ready to leave for home. Standing in front of me was the Hafetz Haim, who took my hand in his and politely asked if I would come to his house. I felt I couldn’t refuse. We walked the two blocks in silence, hand-in-hand, until we reached his home. I entered a very small, dilapidated but spotlessly clean two-room hovel, in which not one piece of furniture was whole.

The Hafetz Haim, who was quite short, looked up at me and said only one word: ‘Shabbos.’ “He gently squeezed my hand as an embrace, and there were tears in his eyes. He repeated again, ‘Shabbos,’ and if I live to be 120 I will never stop feeling the scalding heat of his tears as they fell on my hand. He then guided me to the door, embraced me and blessed me.

At that moment, I felt in my soul that there was nothing more important than the Shabbat, and that – despite my transgression – this rabbinical giant loved me. I took an oath not to leave the yeshiva without rabbinical ordination from the Hafetz Haim.”

### The Person in the Parsha: R. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

**Black Sabbath** - We were walking down the long airport corridor on the way to the boarding gate. Somehow, it seems that whenever my wife and I have a flight to catch, anywhere, our gate is always at the furthest end of the long hall. We had plenty of time until the airplane departed, but somehow I experience an urgent need to rush whenever I am in an airport, and so we were in a hurry.

There was a couple coming toward us, equally hurried. At first, they didn’t even come into focus for me. They were just anonymous faces in a crowded hallway. As they came closer, there was something vaguely familiar about them. I turned to my wife and said, “Don’t we know those people from somewhere?” “I don’t think so,” she responded, “but they resemble the Goldblatts.”

As we came still closer to each other, we realized that indeed they were the Goldblatts, but a twenty years older version of the Goldblatts we knew. Of course, we were a twenty years older version too, so it was no wonder that they didn’t recognize us either.

But soon we were face-to-face, and the intervening years vanished, and the good memories resurfaced. We all slowed down our rushed pace and took some time to reconnect with each other.

“We can never forget,” exclaimed Mrs. Goldblatt, “the Friday night that you had us over for a Shabbat meal. What we remember most was the light – the candles, the chandelier, and the standing lamps in the corner. They made the entire dining room glow.”

“Yes indeed,” agreed her husband. “Real light and spiritual light; real warmth and the warmth of friendship.”

I first met Mrs. Goldblatt in a professional context. She was the administrator of a large social services agency where I consulted. She was, to say the least, not a religiously observant Jew. But when her mother passed away, my wife and I paid her a condolence call. She did not “sit shiva” in any traditional sense, but let her friends and acquaintances know that she was home for the weekend and accepting condolences.

At that visit, we learned about her background. Her parents had been ardent communists, and in fact her father was the last editor of a once famous Jewish communist newspaper. She made it clear that she shared her father’s atheistic vision as well as his social ideals. Her husband’s weltanschauung was not very different from hers.

As we left her house, my wife and I uttered the same words to each other: “We must have them over for a Shabbat meal!” And so we did.

Now do not think for a moment that I am about to relate some wonderful story of a religious transformation. Quite the contrary. The Goldblatts came to our home one Friday night, we had a stimulating conversation, good food, and our kids behaved themselves. And then we went our separate ways, occasionally exchanging greeting cards over the years, but no more. As far as we knew, they remained religiously indifferent.

Until that encounter in the airport corridor, it was then that we learned how much of an impression that Shabbat dinner made upon them, and about how that one evening had changed their attitude toward Judaism. And of all the things that they remembered, it was the light and warmth that they remembered most.

When we were finally on our flight, I had time to think, and I found myself reflecting upon a verse in this week’s double Torah portion, Vayakhel-Pekudei,

## Likutei Divrei Torah

(Exodus 35:1-40:38). The verse occurs very near the beginning of the parsha and reads “...On the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord... You shall kindle no fire throughout your settlements on the Sabbath day.”

Two classic Jewish thinkers, neither of whom I mention frequently in this column, speak about this verse and its interpretation by an ancient sect of the Jewish people, the Karaites. This group denied that there was any interpretation possible of the Bible except a literal one. They claim that there was no such thing as an Oral Law and rebelled against rabbinic tradition.

This sect persisted for many centuries and was persecuted, along with mainstream Jews, by our enemies throughout history. I have heard tell that there are still remnants of that sect in Israel and the Balkan countries.

But all I know about the Karaites is what I have read in the works of the great Jewish philosopher, Saadia Gaon, and in the biblical commentary of Abraham Ibn Ezra. Both of these sages see our verse and its interpretation as one of the major differences between traditional rabbinic Jews and the Karaite sectarians.

The rabbis understood this verse to mean that one could not kindle fire on the Sabbath, and that cooking was prohibited on that day. But they go into great detail about how to prepare in advance stoves and lamps that will heat and illuminate our homes and keep our Sabbath foods warm throughout the Sabbath day.

The Karaites understood the verse quite differently. “You shall kindle no fire...” meant, for them, that all fires had to be extinguished before sunset on Friday, and that the home had to remain dark and cold. They would partake of no warm food for the entire day.

Their Sabbath was darker still. They forbade intimate relations between husband and wife on the Sabbath, and they insisted that the biblical verse which enjoins us to remain in our places on the Sabbath was also to be taken literally. So they left their homes only to attend their houses of prayer, but not even to visit family and friends.

How different is the Sabbath prescribed by our rabbinical sages. They insist that our homes be well lit, and to this day we are careful to include at least one hot portion of food in our Sabbath day meal as a statement against the Karaite heresy.

The Goldblatts (this, of course, is not their real name) remain to this day as ignorant of rabbinic Judaism as I am of the Karaite version of our faith. But their one visit to our Shabbat table was sufficient to dispel their previous notion of the Sabbath as a day of darkness and despondency. They learned that the Sabbath home is a home of warmth and light, and that the Sabbath day is indeed a gift from the Almighty’s special treasury.

My family and I are proud that we were able to create a Sabbath environment on that Friday night long ago which could teach that lesson to our ear and respected friends, the Goldblatts.

Would that each of us, less observant or more so, would create such a Sabbath environment this Friday night and for every Friday night for the rest of our lives. May we all bask in the glowing light and loving warmth of Shabbat this week as we read Parshiyot Vayakhel and Pekudei.