

Young Israel Shomrai Emunah - Shabbos Shorts ^{ת"ד}

March 5 - 6, 2021 - 22 Adar 5781 - Parshas Ki Sisa/Parah

Light Candles by 5:47 - Havdalah 6:46

The Shabbos Shorts is sponsored this week by Jennifer & Yitzhak Cohen in honor of the wedding of their son, Max, to Daria Karpova in Israel on March 1, and by Melanie & Sandy Karlin in memory of Sandy's father, Charles Karlin, Betzalel Reuven ben Rephael Shlomo, Z"L, on his 4th Yahrzeit.

Mazal Tov

- **Tzivia Bramson** on the Bar Mitzvah of her great-grandson, Shlomo, son of Devorah & Yaakov Ryp and grandson of Renee & Mayer Weinstein.
- **Jennifer & Yitzhak Cohen** on the marriage of their son, Max, to Daria Karpova in Netanya on March 1. Mazal Tov also to Max's siblings and to grandmother Grace Weiner.

Shabbos Schedule

Limited Minyanim are now taking place at YISE under Montgomery County's Phase 2 guidelines. **All Minyanim require advance registration and confirmation.** If you are interested in attending Minyanim and have not already registered, please go to <https://www.yise.org/minyan>. If you are registered for a Minyan and are unable to attend at that time, please do not go to a different Minyan. If you have any questions, please contact minyan@yise.org

Friday Night:

- Light Candles by 5:47
- Mincha: 5:55, 5:50 (Sephardi)

If you Daven Kabbalos Shabbos prior to Shkia (6:05 PM), it is preferable to Daven Mincha prior to Plag (4:53 PM).

Shabbos Day:

- Shacharis: 7:00, 9:00, 9:30, 8:30 (Sephardi)
- Mincha: 2:30, 4:30, 4:45 (Sephardi)
- Shabbos ends/Maariv: 6:46

Purim Thank You

A hearty Yasher Koach to our members, Max Rudmann, Saul Singer, Aron Trombka and Raph Ginsburg, for their involvement with the Kemp Mill Community Megillah Reading Project. Hundreds of our neighbors were able to participate in this important Mitzvah due to their efforts.

COVID-19 Updates

- **Outdoor Minyan** - If you are interested in a Shabbos morning outdoor Minyan without a tent, subject to weather conditions, please email Ari Elias-Bachrach at outdoor@yise.org
 - Advance registration for Minyanim is **required** and space is limited. Go to <https://www.yise.org/minyan> to register. If you have changes to your original registration form, please send an email to minyan@yise.org with details.
 - The Shul office is still open, but hours may vary.
- Let us Daven to Hashem to keep all of us in good health and to return our lives to normal as soon as possible. In protecting each other as we navigate this unfolding situation, may we grow stronger as individuals and as a community.

Weekday Shiurim

Options for remote learning are listed below. For the latest list and times, go to: <https://wp.yise.org/remoted-learning-schedule/>

- **Rabbi Rosenbaum** - Daily - one chapter of Tehillim followed by a 15-minute Shiur on the Parsha. Sunday through Friday 8:30 AM - **Zoom A.**
 - **Rabbi Rosenbaum** - Daily - one chapter of Tehillim, followed by a 15-minute Halacha Shiur. Sunday through Thursday, 7:30 PM - **Zoom A.**
 - **Rabbi Rosenbaum's** Mussar Study Group for Women (spiritual self-improvement), Sundays at 9:30 AM, **Zoom A.**
 - **Rabbi Rosenbaum's** Gemara Shiur for Men, Tuesdays and Fridays, 6:00 AM, **Zoom A.**
 - **Rabbi Rosenbaum's** Nach Shiur, Wednesdays at 11:00 AM, **Zoom A.**
 - **Rabbi Rosenbaum's** Women's Navi Shiur, now studying Sefer Yehoshua, Wednesdays at 8:00 PM, **Zoom A.**
 - **GWCK Sunday Kollel Brunch and Learn for Men and Women** - Sunday mornings, 9:30 AM
 - Unraveling the Navi with Rabbi Hillel Shaps, **Zoom B.**
 - **Rabbi Tuvia Grauman** - Rabbi Hyatt's Gemara Shiur, Sundays at 10:00 AM, **Zoom F.**
 - **Rabbi Yonatan Zakem's** Shiur for men & women, Pearls of Prayer, exploring the depth and meaning of our daily prayers. Sunday evenings at 7:30 PM, **Zoom I.**
 - **GWCK presents CLAS (Community Learning at Shomrai)** - 8:15 PM - 9:15 PM (except as noted). For more info. contact Rabbi Hillel Shaps, hshaps@gwckollel.org 347-869-9361.
 - For Men & Women - **Zoom C** (except as noted):
 - Mondays: (for men only) Rabbi H. Shaps, On the Same Page Gemara, **Zoom B.**
 - Tuesdays: Rabbi Winter - Torah Topics
 - Wednesdays: Rabbi Grossman - Reading Responsa
 - Thursdays: Rabbi Grossman - Parshas Hashavua, 9:00 PM.
 - For Women - **Zoom D**:
 - Mondays: Mrs. Sara Malka Winter - Parsha Journeys
 - Tuesdays: Mrs. Sara Malka Winter - Bereishis in-Depth
 - **Semichat Chaver Program**, Tuesdays at 9:00 PM with Rabbi Hillel Shaps. For more information, please contact Rabbi Hillel Shaps: hshaps@gwckollel.org
 - **The Golden Network Presents: Rabbi Barry Greengart's** Shiur on Daily Halachos for men & women, Tuesdays 9:15 AM, **Zoom E.**
 - **Rabbi Yitzhak Scher's** Shiur for Men and Women, Tuesdays, 1:30 PM, "A Second Look-Stories in the Torah from a Deeper Perspective", **Zoom H.**
 - **Rabbi Moshe Arzouan's** Advanced Gemara Shiur for Men, learning Maseches Gittin on Wednesday evenings, 8:00 PM, **Zoom G.**
- Connection Details:** Go to <https://zoom.us/join/> and enter the meeting ID, or call 301-715-8592 and enter the meeting ID & password:
- Zoom A: ID: 416 963 9000, password 492019
Zoom B: ID: 349 754 2180, password Learn
Zoom C: ID: 746 455 2195, password Learn
Zoom D: ID: 601 853 4021, password Winter
Zoom E: ID: 970 1398 4837, password 613
Zoom F: ID: 978 8156 7874, password RabbiHyatt
Zoom G: ID: 539 496 3506, password ygarwz
Zoom H: ID: 713 7408 5130, password 045079
Zoom I: ID: 269 840 3648, password online Pearls, phone 621690

YISE Youth Announcements

Dor L'Dor - Motzei Shabbos, March 6, 8:00 PM. Parsha, pizza, prizes and more - but this year Virtual! Register by 10:00 AM, Friday, March 5, at www.yise.org/doridor If you have any questions or would like to sponsor, please contact Michael Shimoff at mshimoff@yise.org See flyer for details.

Camp Shomrai is back for another fun-filled summer with programming for children in preschool through ninth grade! Camp runs from July 5th through August 13th. For more info or to register online, visit our website at <https://Campshomrai.org> See flyer for details.

YISE Programs and Listings

Pesach Hashomer - Deadline for articles and ads is Friday, March 5. Email hashomer@yise.org or contact Simi in the YISE office.

Ask The Rabbi - This month's topic: Pesach. Tuesday, March 9, 8:00 PM on **Zoom A**. Send your Pesach questions to AskTheRabbi@yise.org by Sunday, March 7. For more information and to submit questions by phone, contact Miriam Friedman at 301-754-1517 or mfriedman2@yahoo.com To sponsor the Shiur, contact office@yise.org Recordings of Shiurim available at <https://wp.yise.org/ask-the-rabbi>

Pesach Gift Bags - Join YISE in wishing everyone a Chag Kasher V'sameach by sponsoring a gift bag for local members. We wish we could celebrate in person as usual, but instead, we will deliver a Pesach bag to your home before Pesach! The gift bags will be delivered to all YISE members in the local area, including Kemp Mill, White Oak, Woodside, and Rockville. There are several sponsorship opportunities available: Platinum - \$500, Gold - \$250, Silver - \$180, Bronze - \$100, Seder - \$50, Afikomen - \$36. All information must be received by Wednesday, March 10 at 10:00 AM for inclusion with the gift bag. Please pay your sponsorship via the PayPal button on <https://wp.yise.org/pesach> A list of all sponsorships will be included with the gift bag. If you have any questions, please contact the YISE office at office@yise.org

Registration for Shomrai Preschool 2021-2022 is now open! We are excited to be offering a Torah-rich, child-centered program for children entering 2 year-old Nursery - 4 year-old Pre-K. School day runs from 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM. Extended care options available from 7:30 AM -8:30 AM and 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM. Register early for maximum savings! Visit our website for tuition rates and online registration at <https://preschool.yise.org/registration> For more information about the program email Sarah Dollman at director@yise.org See flyer for details.

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, mkarlin@gmail.com or Miriam Friedman, 301-754-1517, 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>

Happy Birthday! Happy Anniversary!

Looking for a way to celebrate someone's upcoming birthday or anniversary? For an \$18 donation, you can include the name (birthday) or names (anniversary) in this section of the Shabbos Shorts. Please send the following information to office@yise.org: Sponsor name, birthday or anniversary date, name (birthday) or names (anniversary). The birthday or anniversary will be listed in the Shabbos Shorts based on the date of the event.

Dvar Torah Dedications/Sponsor a Shiur

During this difficult time, we pray to Hashem that the day that we can all come together again in Tefillah and Torah study in good health arrives speedily. Until that point, YISE continues to offer a number of different remote learning options. These options are now available for sponsorship on an individual Shiur or a daily basis.

Our current limited ability to Daven with a Minyan and to say Kaddish is difficult and a challenge. However, sponsoring a Shiur or other Torah learning is a meaningful way to commemorate a Yahrzeit or honor a loved one. Sponsorships are also a great way to celebrate a Simcha or any other milestone, while helping YISE at a time when many of the Shul's other sources of revenue are not available.

1. The following individual Shiurim are available for sponsorship at \$18 (per day):
 - Daily Morning (Sunday through Friday) Tehillim and Parsha Shiur
 - Daily Evening (Sunday through Thursday) Tehillim and Halacha Shiur
 - Rabbi Rosenbaum's Sunday Morning Mussar Study Group for Women
 - Rabbi Rosenbaum's Tuesday or Friday Morning Gemara Shiur for Men
 - Rabbi Rosenbaum's Wednesday Morning Nach Shiur
 - Rabbi Rosenbaum's Wednesday Night Navi Shiur for Women
 - Rabbi Grauman - Rabbi Hyatt's Gemara Shiur, Sunday Morning
2. Sponsorship of the Morning and Evening Tehillim and Parsha/Halacha Shiurim together is available for \$25.
3. The Pre-Shabbos Drasha video is available for sponsorship at \$54.

Please email to sponsor. Thank you for your support.

Thank you to this past week's Shiurim sponsors:

Rabbi Rosenbaum's Tehillim/Parsha and Halacha Shiur

- **Marvin Konick** in memory of the Yahrzeit of his grandfather, Yehoshua ben Yehudah Leib, on the 19th of Adar.

Rabbi Hyatt's Gemara Shiur

- **David Jaray** for a Refuah Sheleimah for Rabbi Hyatt and in honor of Rabbi Grauman and all those who attend the Shiur.

Assistant Rabbi - Proba - Rabbi Avraham Wein

The YISE Assistant Rabbi Search is happy to introduce Rabbi Avraham Wein to the community. Complete details, including a video Drasha, is available online at: <https://wp.yise.org/probawein>

- Text of Rabbi Wein's Shabbos Dvar Torah, "The Surprisingly Empowering Message of the Cheit Ha-Egel" is on Parashas Ki Sisa is on page 4 of the Shabbos Shorts.
- Sunday, March 7 - 11:00 AM - Rabbi Avraham Wein will present a halachic, source-based exploration, "The 'Phoney' Blood Libel of the 1960s: A Historical, Halachic, and Hashkafic Analysis." The shiur will last 30 minutes. There will be an opportunity for questions through the Zoom chat at the end of the session.
- Sunday, March 7 - 8:15 PM - 9:15 PM - Questions and Answers. YISE members will have an opportunity to get to know our candidate, Rabbi Avraham Wein and his wife, Shira. Rabbi Wein and Shira will answer questions previously submitted by members. This session will be moderated by a member of the Assistant Rabbi Search Committee.
- All programs will take place on **Zoom A**.
- Direct link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4169639000?pwd=Q1JKU2N2TVo1d0pnQ0lHQ2g0YXg2Zz09>
- Meeting ID: 416 963 9000 Passcode: 492019
- Go to <https://zoom.us/join/> and enter the meeting ID, or call 301-715-8592 and enter the meeting ID and passcode.
- Recordings of the programs will be available at: <https://wp.yise.org/probawein>



Community Programs & Listings

Kemp Mill Toastmasters - Wednesday, March 10, 8:00 PM - 9:15 PM. See what Toastmasters is all about and find out how you can become a more confident communicator. Contact Manasseh Katz at vypr@kempmilltoastmasters.com for more info. Zoom meeting ID: 986 546 841, password: 3671

The Yad Yehuda Clothing Exchange has available hours for all members of the community to shop at no cost the next three Sundays from 10:00 AM - 12 Noon. This is an opportunity for people to come and shop for beautiful, Tzanua clothing in our well-equipped showroom, while wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. Everyone must be in good health and not have been in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19. Please sign up for a slot online by Motzei Shabbos at: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fhBnGaalIgwEUT4rDFUwdVKGz1_U9CeOYD-f_A10iY/edit If you have any questions or would like to make an appointment for another day, please contact ncarmel@yadyehuda.org

Passover Car Cleaning to Benefit MES - Shine My Ride by Empire www.shinemyrider.com is offering special pricing on car detailing and a portion of the proceeds will benefit the Mikvah Emunah Society. Interior Spruce, \$35 sedan/coupe, \$55 SUV/wagon/crossover/minivan (2 car minimum for mobile service). Deluxe Interior Detail \$100 sedan/coupe, \$155 SUV/wagon/crossover/minivan. Child Car Seat Cleaning is \$20 per seat. NEW Germ & bacteria steam sanitization \$50 extra. We can come to you or you can come to us! 5006 Howard Ave. Beltsville, MD. Exterior wash/tire shine add \$30, wash and wax add \$75. Book your appointment for 3/9 through 3/26 by email sales@shinemyrider.com or call 240-965-6095. For further information (not to book appointments), contact Rhonda Lehman rhonda.socialworker@verizon.net or call 301-351-1725

Penetrating Thoughts and Practical Perspectives - Thoughts on life, Torah and Middos. Based on Michtav M'Eliyahu, from Rav Eliyahu Dessler, Z"L. Mondays, 9:00 PM - 9:30 PM, with Rabbi Yitzchak Scher. Zoom - Meeting ID: 736 4190 7086, Passcode: torah. Presented by YGW Kollel Zichron Amram. For more information, contact Rabbi Moshe Chaim Blate at 404-273-3392.

What Happened at Sinai: An Exploration of the Sinai Revelation and the Ten Commandments - Wednesdays, 8:00 PM on Zoom. Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps. Join any time! No cost. Zoom info and registration at linksgw.org/classes

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

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@slslaw.com to be added to the invite list. Sunday 8:30 AM, Monday - Thursday 9:00 PM.

Daily Halacha Program from Rabbi Eliyahu Reingold - Receive one every day in your inbox. Visit dvarhalacha.com and click "Sign Up."

Kemp Mill Village is providing friendly phone calls and limited deliveries during the pandemic. Call 1-833-KMV-20902 to request service or to volunteer. See kempmillvillage.org for more information.

Silver Spring Gemachim - For a complete list: www.gemachexchange.com

The Week Ahead	Sunday March 7	Monday March 8	Tuesday March 9	Wednesday March 10	Thursday March 11	Friday March 12
Limited Minyanim will take place at YISE next week, advance registration and confirmation required . You are encouraged to Daven at home at the same time as a Minyan at YISE. Shacharis: Sunday 6:30 AM/7:30 AM/8:45 AM; Monday through Friday 6:15 AM/7:00 AM/8:45 AM. Mincha/Maariv: Sunday - Thursday: 6:00 PM.						
Halachic Times: Latest Alos Hashachar 5:12 AM, Earliest Talis and Tefilin: 5:39 AM, Latest Netz: 6:32 AM, Latest Krias Shema: 9:20 AM, Earliest Mincha: 12:50 PM, Earliest Shkia: 6:07 PM, Latest Tzeis Hacoachavim: 6:54 PM						

Next Shabbos

March 12 - 13, 2021 - 29 Adar 5781
Parshas Vayakhel/Pekudei/HaChodesh
Light Candles: 5:54
Havdalah: 6:54

Next Shabbos Shorts Deadline: Wednesday, March 10 at 12:00 Noon

Submit items for the Shabbos Shorts to: announce@yise.org

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

Eruv line: 301-593-5561 E-Mail: office@yise.org Website: www.yise.org

Office Hours:

Monday through Thursday 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Friday - 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Rabbi Dovid Rosenbaum

Yale Ginsburg - President

Simi Franco - Office Manager

**RABBI WEIN'S SHABBOS DVAR TORAH
ON PARASHAS KI SISA:**

“The Surprisingly Empowering Message of the Cheit Ha-Egel”

Video available at: <https://wp.yise.org/probawein>

What went wrong? This question has long plagued our greatest commentators. Bnei Yisrael, in the immediate aftermath of the awe-inspiring miracles of Har Sinai and *yetziat mitzrayim* (Exodus from Egypt), somehow spiraled into committing one of the gravest mistakes in Jewish History. How could the nation of *na'aseh ve-nishma* so suddenly perform the *cheit ha-egel*, the sin of serving an idolatrous golden calf? What triggered this terrible downturn?

Rabbi Avraham Ben Ha-Rambam -the son of Maimonides- proposes an answer that deeply resonates with me. As the *pesukim* describe (Shemot 32:1-4), Bnei Yisrael sees Moshe taking a long time to return from Har Sinai. As a result they decide to build another God. Why were they so worried about this delay? Rabbi Avraham Ben Ha-Rambam argues that the people assumed Moshe wasn't coming back. This realization was devastating because they believed that only Moshe Rabbeinu, who was so perfect and complete, could access God and the Torah. Only perfect people like Moshe could connect to Hashem. If Moshe was lost, and they no longer had that intermediary to guide them, Bnei Yisrael's ability to access the Torah and Hashem was gone. As Rabbi Avraham Ben Ha-Rambam writes: “*ve-ain bahem ko'ach be-atzmam ve-lo sheleimut ha-Torah*, They didn't possess the strength nor the perfection of the Torah themselves.”

Bnei Yisrael thought that since they weren't as perfect and as great as Moshe, they didn't have the ability to connect with Hashem. Without Moshe and his abilities to access God, Judaism was a lost cause. So they gave up and made a horrifying, yet calculated, decision to return to their previous religion of idol worship. It's this feeling of inadequacy that causes all to go wrong for Bnei Yisrael.

I'd like to suggest (inspired by an idea from the *Derashot Ha-Ran* 5:5) that Bnei Yisrael not only committed a crucial error, but misunderstood a critical lesson of Moshe's leadership. When Hashem challenges Moshe to be the leader, Moshe is very hesitant. He argues he is not fit because “*chevad peh u-chevad lashon anochi*, I am slow of lips and slow of tongue.” Later, Moshe describes himself as being someone “*ve-ani arel sefatayim*, with uncircumcised lips.” Based on this, many commentaries understand that Moshe had a type of speech impediment. Thus, Moshe feels inadequate and is aware that he is imperfect. He won't be able to check every box of a dynamic leader.

Yet who does God choose to be the leader of the Jewish people, who takes them out of Egypt to Har Sinai and beyond- specifically someone who is imperfect! God gets frustrated with Moshe and essentially declares to Moshe “enough.” It is not despite your imperfection I am appointing you, it is precisely because of it! I seek to send a message to the People of Israel for eternity, that despite whatever defects, insecurities, and challenges you face, you can come close to God, you can make a lasting impact, become transcendent, and even become as great as Moshe Rabbeinu. Someone who is imperfect is capable and expected by God to achieve great things. We need not be perfect to be meaningful and reach God. We all have the ability to connect with Hashem, even if we are not as “*shalem*” as Moshe.

According to R. Avraham Ben Ha-Rambam, this message is exactly what Bnei Yisrael failed to comprehend. Their feelings of inadequacy impeded their service of God and led them astray. That was their mistake.

In our lives, we all have insecurities, at times feel inadequate, have our own imperfections, and we consciously and subconsciously have them hold us back. But our challenge and opportunity is to persevere with them because we truly are all able to access Hashem in our own way.

Young Israel Shomrai Emunah Presents

DOR L'DOR

ONLINE!

Family Chevrusah-Style Learning - The Same Usual Motzei Shabbos Fun, but This Year Virtual!

- **Delicious Pizza - delivered to homes within Kemp Mill for children ages Pre-K - 6th grade**
- **Interactive online discussions**
- **Raffle of exciting prizes**

5781 Motzei Shabbos Times:

November 7 — 7:00 pm

November 14 — 7:00 pm

December 5 — 7:00 pm

December 19 — 7:00 pm

January 9 — 7:15 pm

January 30 — 7:30 pm

February 6 — 7:30 pm

February 20 — 7:45 pm

March 6 — 8:00pm

Register your family at <https://yise.org/dorldor>

Must register your children prior to each event by that Friday at 10am

To sponsor this program, please contact Michael Shimoff at mshimoff@yise.org



“Ask The Rabbi”

Come join our virtual Halacha program!

Topic: PESACH



- ♥ ***How am I supposed to burn chametz when erev Pesach is on Shabbos?***
- ♥ ***When does the chametz actually get sold?***
- ♥ ***How does Seudah Shlishit work?***

This special Pesach program will be extended to 1.5 hours. The first hour is for Shailos submitted in advance and the last 30 minutes are for Q & A.

Send in your questions about Pesach to: AskTheRabbi@yise.org by Sunday, March 7.

When: Tuesday, March 9, 8:00 PM – 9:30 PM

Where: Zoom – Meeting ID: 416-963-9000, Passcode: 492019

For more information or to submit questions by phone, contact Miriam Friedman at 301-754-1517 or mfriedman2@yahoo.com



SUMMER

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JULY 5 - AUGUST 13

Preschool *Division*

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**BOYS ENTERING
7TH-9TH GRADE**

- Weekly Trips
- Swim
- Sports
- Learning
- Woodworking

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website: www.campshomrai.org
or Email: camp@yise.org

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Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah
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Sponsored by Arlene Pianko Groner and family
in honor of the second yearzeit of her mother, Marion Pianko, z"l,
and the yearzeits of her grandparents Jack and Anna Burstein, z"l

Volume 28, Issue 21

Shabbat Parashat KiTisa

5782 - B"H

Covenant & Conversation: R. Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Moses Annuls a Vow - Kol Nidre, the prayer said at the beginning of Yom Kippur, is an enigma wrapped in a mystery, perhaps the strangest text ever to capture the religious imagination. First, it is not a prayer at all. It is not even a confession. It is a dry legal formula for the annulment of vows. It is written in Aramaic. It does not mention God. It is not part of the service. It does not require a synagogue. And it was disapproved of, or at least questioned, by generations of halachic authorities.

The first time we hear of Kol Nidre, in the eighth century, it is already being opposed by Rav Natronai Gaon, the first of many Sages throughout the centuries who found it problematic. In his view, one cannot annul the vows of an entire congregation this way. Even if one could, one should not, since it may lead people to treat vows lightly. Besides which, there has already been an annulment of vows ten days earlier, on the morning before Rosh Hashanah. This is mentioned explicitly in the Talmud (Nedarim 23b). There is no mention of an annulment on Yom Kippur.

Rabbeinu Tam, Rashi's grandson, was particularly insistent in arguing that the kind of annulment Kol Nidre represents cannot be retroactive. It cannot apply to vows already taken. It can only be a pre-emptive qualification of vows in the future. Accordingly he insisted on changing its wording, so that Kol Nidre refers not to vows from last year to this, but from this year to next.

However, perhaps because of this, Kol Nidre created hostility on the part of non-Jews, who said it showed that Jews did not feel bound to honour their promises since they vitiated them on the holiest night of the year. In vain it was repeatedly emphasised that Kol Nidre applies only to vows between us and God, not those between us and our fellow humans. Throughout the Middle Ages, and in some places until the eighteenth century, in lawsuits with non-Jews, Jews were forced to take a special oath, More Judaica, because of this concern.

So there were communal and halachic reasons not to say Kol Nidre, yet it survived all the doubts and misgivings. It remains the quintessential expression of the awe and solemnity of the day. Its undiminished power defies all obvious explanations. Somehow it seems to point to something larger than itself, whether in Jewish history or the inner heartbeat of the Jewish soul.

Several historians have argued that it acquired its pathos from the phenomenon of forced conversions, whether to Christianity or Islam, that occurred in several places in the Middle Ages, most notably Spain and Portugal in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Jews would be offered the choice: convert or suffer persecution. Sometimes it was: convert or be expelled. At times it was even: convert or die. Some Jews did convert. They were known in Hebrew as anusim (people who acted under coercion). In Spanish they were known as conversos, or contemptuously as marranos (swine).

Many of them remained Jews in secret, and once a year on the night of Yom Kippur they would make their way in secret to the synagogue to seek release from the vows they had taken to adopt to another faith, on the compelling grounds that they had no other choice. For them, coming to the synagogue

was like coming home, the root meaning of teshuvah.

There are obvious problems with this hypothesis. Firstly, Kol Nidre was in existence several centuries before the era of forced conversions. So historian Joseph S. Bloch suggested that Kol Nidre may have originated in the much earlier Christian persecution of Jews in Visigoth Spain, when in 613 Sisebur issued a decree that all Jews should either convert or be expelled, anticipating the Spanish expulsion of 1492. Even so, it is unlikely that conversos would have taken the risk of being discovered practising Judaism. Had they done so during the centuries in which the Inquisition was in force they would have risked torture, trial and death. Moreover, the text of Kol Nidre makes no reference, however oblique, to conversion, return, identity, or atonement. It is simply an annulment of vows.

So the theories as they stand do not satisfy.

However it may be that Kol Nidre has a different significance altogether, one that has its origin in a remarkable rabbinic interpretation of this week's parsha. The connection between it and Yom Kippur is this: less than six weeks after the great revelation at Mount Sinai, the Israelites committed what seemed to be the unforgivable sin of making a Golden Calf. Moses prayed repeatedly for forgiveness on their behalf and eventually secured it, descending from Mount Sinai on the Tenth of Tishrei with a new set of tablets to replace those he had smashed in anger at their sin. The tenth of Tishrei subsequently became Yom Kippur, the day of atonement, in memory of that moment when the Israelites saw Moses with the new tablets and knew they had been forgiven.

Moses' prayers, as recorded in the Torah, are daring. But the Midrash makes them more audacious still. The text introducing Moses' prayer begins with the Hebrew words, *Vayechal Moshe* (Ex. 32:11). Normally these are translated as "Moses besought, implored, entreated, pleaded, or attempted to pacify" God. However the same verb is used in the context of annulling or breaking a vow (Num. 30:3). On this basis the Sages advanced a truly remarkable interpretation:

[*Vayechal Moshe* means] "Moses absolved God of His vow." When the Israelites made the Golden Calf, Moses sought to persuade God to forgive them, but God said, "I have already taken an oath that Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the Lord must be punished (Ex. 22:19). I cannot retract what I have said." Moses replied, "Lord of the universe, You have given me the power to annul oaths, for You taught me that one who takes an oath cannot break their word but a scholar can absolve them. I hereby absolve You of Your vow" (abridged from Exodus Rabbah 43:4).

According to the Sages the original act of Divine forgiveness on which Yom Kippur is based came about through the annulment of a vow, when Moses annulled the vow of God. The Sages understood the verse, "Then the Lord relented from the evil He had spoken of doing to His people" (Ex. 32:14) to mean that God expressed regret for the vow He had taken – a precondition for a vow to be annulled.

Why would God regret His determination to punish the people for their sin? On this, another Midrash offers an equally radical answer. The opening word of Psalm 61 is *la-menatzeach*. When this word

appears in Psalms it usually means, "To the conductor, or choirmaster." However the Sages interpreted it to mean, "To the Victor," meaning God, and added this stunning commentary:

To the Victor who sought to be defeated, as it is said (Isaiah 57:16), "I will not accuse them forever, nor will I always be angry, for then they would faint away because of Me—the very people I have created." Do not read it thus, but, "I will accuse in order to be defeated." How so? Thus said the Holy One, blessed be He, "When I win, I lose, and when I lose I gain. I defeated the generation of the Flood, but did I not lose thereby, for I destroyed My own creation, as it says (Gen. 7:23), "Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out." The same happened with the generation of the Tower of Babel and the people of Sodom. But in the days of Moshe who defeated Me (by persuading Me to forgive the Israelites whom I had sworn to destroy), I gained for I did not destroy Israel.[1]

God wants His forgiveness to override His justice, because strict justice hurts humanity, and humanity is God's creation and carries His image. That is why He regretted His vow and allowed Moses to annul it. That is why Kol Nidre has the power it has. For it recalls the Israelites' worst sin, the Golden Calf, and their forgiveness, completed when Moses descended the mountain with the new tablets on the 10th of Tishrei, the anniversary of which is Yom Kippur. The forgiveness was the result of Moses' daring prayer, understood by the Sages as an act of annulment of vows. Hence Kol Nidre, a formula for the annulment of vows.

The power of Kol Nidre has less to do with forced conversions than with a recollection of the moment, described in our parsha, when Moses stood in prayer before God and achieved forgiveness for the people: the first time the whole people was forgiven despite the gravity of their sin. During Musaf on Yom Kippur we describe in detail the second Yom Kippur: the service of the High Priest, Aharon, as described in Vayikra 16. But on Kol Nidre we recall the first Yom Kippur when Moses annulled the Almighty's vow, letting His compassion override His justice, the basis of all Divine forgiveness.

I believe we must always strive to fulfil our promises. If we fail to keep our word, eventually we lose our freedom. But given the choice between justice and forgiveness, choose forgiveness. When we forgive and are worthy of being forgiven, we are liberated from a past we regret, to build a better future.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the Two Tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord" (Exodus 34:29) What is the significance of the dazzling radiance of Moses's face and why did it not attain this shining glow until he received the Second Tablets on Yom Kippur? And, perhaps the most difficult question of all, why did Moses break the first tablets? Yes, he was bitterly disappointed, perhaps even angry, at the Israelites'

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worship of the Golden Calf only 40 days after God's first Revelation on Shavuot; however, these tablets were "the work of God and they were the writing of God." How could the holiest human being take the holiest object on earth and smash it to smithereens? Was he not adding to Israel's sin, pouring salt on the wounds of the Almighty (as it were)? My revered teacher, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, taught that Moses emerges from our portion of Ki Tisa not only as the greatest prophet of the generations but also as the exalted rebbe of Klal Yisrael (All of Israel), as Moshe Rabeinu; Moses the teacher and master of all the generations. This unique transformation of his personality took place on Yom Kippur; it is the sobriquet of Rebbe which occasions the rays of splendor which shone forth from his countenance.

The midrash on the first verse of the Book of Leviticus, "And [God] called out to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting..." provides a remarkable insight.

The biblical word for "called out" in this text is *vayiker*, a word which suggests a mere chance encounter rather than an actual summoning or calling out of the Divine; indeed, our Masoretic text places a small letter 'alef' at the end of the word. The midrash explains that it was Moses's modesty which insisted upon an almost accidental meeting (*veyikra*) rather than a direct summons.

However, when God completed the writing down of the Five Books, there was a small amount of ink left over from that small 'alef'; the Almighty lovingly placed the surplus of sacred ink on Moses's forehead, which accounts for the glorious splendor which emanated from his face.

Allow me to add to this midrash on the basis of the teaching of Rabbi Soloveitchik. The essence of the Second Tablets included the Oral Law, the human input of the great Torah Sages throughout the generations which had been absent from the first tablets.

Hence Chapter 34 of our portion opens with God's command to Moses, "Hew for yourself two stone tablets" – you, Moses, and not Me, God; the first tablets were hewn by God and the commandments were engraved by God, whereas the second tablets were hewn by the human being Moses and the commands were engraved by him. The chapter concludes: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Write for yourself these words for on the basis of these words [the Oral Law, the hermeneutic principles and the interpretations of the rabbis of each generation] have I established an [eternal] covenant with Israel.'"

Rabbi Soloveitchik maintains that during the 40 days from the beginning of the month of Elul to Yom Kippur, Moses relearned the 613 commandments with the many possibilities of the Oral Law; Moses's active intellect became the "receiver" for the active intellect of the Divine, having received all of the manifold potential possibilities of the future developments of Torah throughout the generations. This is the meaning of the Talmudic adage that "Every authentic scholar (‘talmid vatik’) who presents a novel teaching is merely recycling Torah from Sinai."

In this manner, Moses's personality became totally identified and intertwined with Torah, a sacred combination of the Divine words and the interpretations of Moses. Moses became a living 'Sefer Torah', a "ministering vessel" (‘kli sharet’) which can never lose its sanctity.

The Beit Halevi (Rav Yosef Dov Baer Halevi Soloveitchik, the great-grandfather of my teacher) maintains that the special radiance which emanated from Moses's countenance originated from the concentrated sanctity of Moses's identity with the many aspects of the Oral Torah which his own generation was not yet ready to hear, but which

Moses kept within himself, for later generations. Whenever the inner world of the individual is more than it appears to be on the surface, that inner radiance becomes increasingly pronounced and externally manifest. Moses's radiant glow was Oral Torah dependent, not at all germane to the first tablets, which contained only the Written Law; the glow expressed the radiance and love which would suffice the manifold interpretations which were beneath the surface, but would emerge throughout the future generations of oral interpretations to come!

Why did Moses break the first tablets? Moses understood that there was a desperate need for a second set of tablets, born of God's consummate love and unconditional forgiveness, with an Oral Law which would empower the nation to be God's partners in the developing Torah. But God had threatened to destroy the nation. Moses breaks the first tablets as a message to God: Just as the tablets are considered to be "ministering vessels" which never lose their sanctity even if broken, so are the Jewish People, Knesset Yisrael, teachers and students of Torah, "ministering vessels," who will never lose their sanctity, even if God attempts to break them! The Jewish nation, repositories of the oral teachings, are the heirs to the eternal sanctity of Moses their Rebbe.

The Person in the Parsha: R. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

From a High Roof - It is hard to sustain a spiritual high. Those of us who are committed to religious observance know that long periods of successful adherence to our standards are sometimes rudely interrupted by sudden, seemingly inexplicable lapses. Long-enduring spiritual experiences yield to momentary temptations and vanish in a flash.

Experts in the psychology of religion, some of them within our own Jewish tradition, understood this. They have warned us that the experience of closeness to God waxes and wanes, comes and goes. It is a process of advance and retreat, of approach and withdrawal.

The Sages of Talmud refer to this phenomenon with a telling metaphor: "From a high roof to a deep pit, *me'igra rama le'bira amikta*."

Parents often witness this strange process in their children and are perplexed by it. A child commits himself to good behavior, cleans his room and does his other chores for months on end without complaint. Then, out of the blue, he fails to come home by curfew one evening, and a panic-stricken call to the police ensues.

As a former psychotherapist, I can attest to the experience of all my fellow practitioners, especially those who deal with adolescents, of long periods during which the patient or client maintains a long streak of weeks of healthy adjustment, which are followed by moments of profound crisis.

I remember well a teenager I saw early in my training, when I was thankfully still under the supervision of a senior professional. The young man, from an affluent family, was arrested after many incidents of shoplifting. I worked with him and his family, and he seemed to have developed insight into his actions and great self-control. Months passed by, and then, one rainy night, I was summoned to the police station because he had shoplifted again. "From a high roof to a deep pit."

In this week's Torah portion, Ki Tisa, we have a dramatic example of this puzzling phenomenon. For the past many weeks, we have read of a people making political and spiritual progress. They are freed from slavery. They witness wonders and miracles. They experience the revelation of the Almighty and the giving of the Law. They donate generously to the construction of the Tabernacle. They enjoy the manna, the "bread of heaven."

Likutei Divrei Torah

And then, one fine day, their leader Moses returns a little late from his rendezvous with the Lord Himself, and the bubble bursts. Gone is the exhilaration of freedom, and gone are their cries of commitment to a new way of life. Yesterday: "We will do and we will heed." (Exodus 24:7) Today: "Let us make for ourselves a Golden Calf." (Exodus 32:1)

In all of my years of Torah study, of carefully reading the weekly parsha, it is this sudden backsliding that confounds me more than any other narrative. And of course, I am by no means the first to be amazed by this rapid deterioration of commitment, by this utter transformation of a people from a faithful, grateful, self-disciplined folk into a wild crowd, dancing and singing in orgiastic enthusiasm around an idol.

Every year, I attempt anew to resolve this puzzle to find an answer for myself and for those who looked to me to help them understand the Bible. This year, I find myself contemplating a new answer based upon a very unusual source.

Some years ago, the Wall Street Journal carried an essay by one Amy Chua. The essay was entitled *Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior*. The author describes her own experience as a Chinese mother and the strict expectations she has of her adolescent daughters.

This column evoked strong reactions all over the world. Many believed that her approach was the correct one and represented a much-needed corrective antidote for the permissiveness of American parents. Others found her approach to be nothing short of cruel and even sadistic.

While I personally found some of her prescriptions worthy of consideration, I believe that most of them are excessive. But in her article, she makes an astute remark that I find to be memorable and useful, despite, or perhaps because of, its simplicity.

"Chinese parents understand that nothing is fun until you are good at it. And you can only be good at it if you work at it."

We all would like our activities to be fun and our lives to be enjoyable. But the roads to fun and the paths to joy are effortful ones. Hard work and persistence are necessary in all fields of endeavor, and religion and spirituality are no different. They too require diligence and toil.

No wonder, then, that we are capable of many months of perfect religious behavior, of adherence to the highest moral standards, and of spiritual edification. But it's hard work, as promises of "easy fun" often surround us and seduce us.

There is an insight here that can help parents, teachers, and psychotherapist deal with the unpredictable shifts in the behaviors of those they work with.

There is also a profound lesson here for those who look for an explanation of the Golden Calf episode in this week's Torah portion. The way of life that the Jewish people were just beginning to learn is a wonderful and rewarding one. But the wonder and the rewards, the fun, come only when we are "good at it", when we work hard to perfect our lives.

We all are well advised to be on guard against the promise of "easy fun". The Golden Calf took no work at all. The verse in Exodus 32:34 suggests that the Jews had to only cast their gold into the fire and the Golden Calf effortlessly emerged. The Golden Calf imposed neither moral restrictions nor ethical standards. Just dancing and singing. Fun?

Amy Chua teaches us that that's not fun. Having real fun in life requires that "you be good at it", good at life. And that takes work.

In this week's *Parashah*, we read of the making of the Golden Calf and of Moshe's prayers for *Bnei Yisrael* to be forgiven. R' David Tevel Rubin z"l (1792-1861; rabbi of Minsk, Belarus) writes: This sin can be broken down into five components. First, it was a sin against G-d in that He had shown *Chessed* / kindness to *Bnei Yisrael*--taking them out of Egypt and supplying them with *Mahn* to eat, water to drink, and Clouds of Glory to protect them. Second, it was a sin against G-d in that He had shown *Gevurah* / strength in avenging Himself on *Bnei Yisrael's* enemies, Pharaoh and Amalek. Third, it was a sin against G-d in that He had chosen *Bnei Yisrael*, and no other nation, to receive the Torah. Fourth, it was a sin against the loftiness and holiness of G-d in that *Bnei Yisrael* did not not show him even that respect that one would give to a human king who had done all of these things. Fifth, it was a rejection of Moshe Rabbeinu, who had risked so much for *Bnei Yisrael*.

R' Rubin continues: In light of this, we can better understand Moshe's prayers. First, Moshe prayed (32:13), "Remember for the sake of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael..." Avraham is known for his attribute of *Chessed*; Yitzchak, for *Gevurah*; and Yaakov, for Torah--corresponding to the first three aspects of the sin. Also, Moshe prayed (32:32), "Now, if You would but forgive their sin!--but if not, erase me from Your book that You have written." The second phrase, "Erase me from Your book," corresponds to the offense against Moshe. And, the phrase, "Forgive their sin! -- but if not," corresponds to the sin against *Hashem's* loftiness, saying: This part, only You can atone. (*Derashot Nachalat David, Drush 1*)

Tefilah

This year, we will iy"H devote this space to discussing various aspects of our prayers. This week, we continue addressing the subject of "Kavanah."

Rabbeinu Asher z"l (1250-1327; Germany and Spain; one of the three "pillars" of *Halachah* on whose works the *Shulchan Aruch* is based) writes: Concentrate during prayer, for it is the service of the heart. If your son would speak to you, but not from his heart, would you not be upset? All the more so, you, who are like nothing before the King of the universe!

He continues: Do not be like a slave who was given fine work to perform, and who ruined it; how will he stand before the king?

He adds: It would be good to ask forgiveness for the way one asks for forgiveness.

He concludes: If one is unable to have *Kavanah* for the entire prayer, at least he should concentrate during the first blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei* and when reciting the verse, "*Shema Yisrael.*" (*Orchot Chaim* No. 36)

R' Simcha Zissel Ziv z"l (1824-1898; the *Alter* of Kelm) asks: How can it be sufficient to have *Kavanah* during the first blessing only? During prayer, one requests his needs from *Hashem*. To do this properly, one must have *Emunah* / faith in his heart that everything is in *Hashem's* "hands," that He is the Master of everything, and no one else can provide a person's needs. [Seemingly, this requires concentration!]

He answers: The first *Berachah* of *Shemoneh Esrei* sets forth the foundation of our *Emunah*--that Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov recognized their Creator, that the world has a Director, and that He is the "Cause of all causes." Once a person implants this *Emunah* in his heart during the first blessing, it will be a given that there is no one else to whom he could make his requests. Even if he is unable to maintain *Kavanah* in his active thoughts for the entire prayer, it becomes the foundation for all the later blessings once he implanted it in his mind during the first blessing.

(Quoted in *Orach Yesharim Al Orchot Chaim*)

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“Aharon and *Bnei Yisrael* saw Moshe, and behold! -- the skin of his face had become radiant.” (34:30)

R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (Belarus; 1749-1821) writes: The *Gemara* (*Nedarim* 38b) teaches that, at first, Moshe Rabbeinu would forget the Torah that he had learned, but then it was given to him as a gift. The *Gemara* (*Eruvin* 54a) teaches that one merits this gift through humility.

Thus, R' Chaim notes, nowhere in the Torah is Moshe cautioned to review his Torah learning. He did not need to do so, because it was given to him as a gift. In contrast, his student and successor, Yehoshua, was admonished (*Yehoshua* 1:8): “This Book of the Torah is not to leave your mouth. You shall contemplate it day and night.” (*Ruach Chaim* 1:1)

R' Aharon David Goldberg *shlita* (*Rosh Hayeshiva* of the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland, Ohio) adds: The radiance on Moshe Rabbeinu's face when he descended from *Har Sinai* reflected the gift of remembering what he had learned. This is consistent with the teaching of R' Chaim of Volozhin (in *Nefesh Ha'Chaim* 1:15) that when a person's soul makes its home in his body, he merits to remember everything he learns. However, when he sins, as *Bnei Yisrael* did by making the Golden Calf, part of his soul leaves his body to go to reside “above,” and then he does not merit to remember his learning to the same degree.

A *Midrash* teaches that the radiance on Moshe's face came from the ink that was left over when he wrote the verse (*Bemidbar* 12:3), “Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble.” The Hebrew word for “humble” (“*Anav*”) should be spelled *Ayin-nun-yud-vav*. However, in his humility, Moshe (with *Hashem's* permission) omitted the letter “*Yud*,” as if to suggest that his humility was incomplete. The leftover drop of ink that would have been the *Yud* spilled on Moshe's head and caused his face to be radiant [until here from the *Midrash*]. R' Goldberg notes that this is consistent with what was stated above, for, as noted, the *Gemara* teaches that the ability to recall one's Torah learning, which is what Moshe's radiance indicated, comes from being humble. (*U'vacharta Ba'chaim Al Ruach Chaim* p.21)

R' Yitzchak Arieli z"l (1896-1974; *Mashgiach* of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; author of *Enayim La'mishpat*) writes: We say in the prayer “*Nishmat*” (on *Shabbat* morning and at the *Pesach Seder*): “Even if our mouths were full of song . . . we would be unable to thank You.” The feelings within one's soul are always greater than one can express, R' Arieli explains. Some part of man's feelings always remains unexpressed. Similarly, there was leftover ink on Moshe's quill, and that was the source of his radiance [*i.e.*, there was some part of the Torah he learned that he could not pass on].

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Shirat Ha'geulah* p.91)

“Now, go and lead the people to where I have told you. Behold! My angel shall go before you.” (32:34)

“[Moshe] said to Him, ‘If Your Presence does not go along, do not bring us forward from here.’” (33:15)

“[Moshe] said, ‘If I have now found favor in Your eyes, my Master, let my Master go among us . . .’” (34:9)

“[Hashem] said, ‘Behold! I make a covenant: Before your entire people I shall do wonders such as have never been created in the entire world and among all the nations . . .’” (34:10)

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) writes: There are two types of *Hashgachah* / Providence--*i.e.*, two ways that *Hashem* interacts with the world. Sometimes He performs hidden miracles which, to the undiscerning eye, appear to be coincidence or “in the course of nature.” The *Purim* story is the paradigm for this type of interaction. At other times, *Hashem* performs open miracles, of which the Exodus is the paradigm.

R' Chaver continues: After the sin of the Golden Calf, *Hashem* said that He would send an angel before *Bnei Yisrael*. An angel, like nature, is a messenger of *Hashem*. Thus, in effect, *Hashem* was saying: I will not perform miracles openly, only in a hidden manner. Moshe protested this plan of *Hashem's* and, ultimately, *Hashem* acquiesced, saying: “Before your entire people I shall do wonders such as have never been created in the entire world and among all the nations”--*i.e.*, open miracles. Only after Moshe's death did *Hashem* reinstate His earlier plan and begin to interact with *Bnei Yisrael* indirectly, through hidden miracles. (*Be'er Yitzchak: Devarim* 18:22)

From the Haftarah (for Parashat Parah) . . .

“I shall take you from the nations and gather you in from all the countries, and I shall bring you to your Land. And I shall sprinkle pure water upon you, that you be cleansed; From all your contamination and from all your filth I will cleanse you.” (Yechezkel 36:24-25)

There is a well-known dispute between two Sages of the *Mishnah*, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua, whether the ultimate redemption will come as a result of our repentance, or even without our repentance. R' Yitzchak Arieli z"l (see facing page) writes: As with any dispute among the Sages, “Both opinions are the words of the living *Elokim*.” R' Yehuda Loewe z"l (*Maharal* of Prague; died 1609) writes that the future “holy kingdom of *Yisrael*” will arise from a kingdom which is not holy. This means, writes R' Arieli, that the redemption will begin without repentance, and that itself will inspire repentance, which will lead to the complete redemption. As our verses say: First, “I shall take you from the nations”; then, “I shall sprinkle pure water upon you, that you be cleansed.”

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Shirat Ha'geulah* p.9)

ISRAEL REPORT

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ICC PROSECUTOR TO OPEN FORMAL PROBE INTO WAR CRIMES IN WEST BANK, GAZA (YNet 3/3/21)

The outgoing chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Fatou Bensouda said Wednesday that her office will open a formal investigation into war crimes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during a period beginning June 13, 2014, just three weeks before the start of the 2014 Gaza war between Hamas and Israel.

She said the probe would be conducted "independently, impartially and objectively, without fear or favor."

"In the end," Bensouda said, "our central concern must be for the victims of crimes, both Palestinian and Israeli, arising from the long cycle of violence and insecurity that has caused deep suffering and despair on all sides."

Bensouda said how prosecutors prioritize their work will be "determined in due time" based on constraints including the coronavirus pandemic, limited resources and their existing heavy workload.

"Such challenges, however, as daunting and complex as they are, cannot divert us from discharging the responsibilities that the Rome Statute places upon the Office," she said, referring to the court's founding treaty.

The prosecutor said in 2019 there was a "reasonable basis" to open a war crimes probe into Israeli military actions in the Gaza Strip as well as Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank.

Following that assessment, she asked judges to rule on the extent of the court's jurisdiction in the troubled region. They did that last month, saying that the court's jurisdiction extends to territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War, namely the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

The ICC could also potentially investigate crimes committed by Palestinian terror groups, including rockets strikes on Israeli civilian targets by Hamas and other groups in Gaza.

Israeli officials have previously accused the court of overstepping its bounds, saying Israel has been unfairly singled out. They reject the allegations, saying military actions in Gaza were acts of self-defense and the status of the West Bank is disputed and must be resolved through negotiations.

While the court would have a hard time prosecuting Israelis, it could issue arrest warrants that would make it difficult for Israeli officials to travel abroad. Israel estimates that hundreds of its citizens might be subject to war crimes probes and is working on how to protect them, Defense Minister Benny Gantz said last month.

Including himself among Israelis who could be threatened with arrest, the former IDF chief said: "I was never afraid to go across enemy lines, I will continue to stand wherever I have to."

The ICC in February rejected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's claims that the decision to investigate Israel for war crimes proved that the court is politically biased.

"This is not a political decision. The court is an independent and impartial judicial institution that is critical to ensuring responsibility for the most serious crimes under international law," said the court in a statement.

ISRAEL FEARS SOUTH AFRICAN COVID STRAIN SPREADING BEYOND CONTROL (Ha'aretz 3/4/21)

Israeli efforts to stop the spread of the South African variant of the coronavirus, which included the shut down of Ben-Gurion International Airport last month, have brought little results, data shows.

Over 450 cases of the infection have been diagnosed so far in Israel, and health professionals estimate that dozens more are being infected each day. The Health Ministry's committees on vaccinations and the pandemic said two

weeks ago that the variant was spreading beyond control.

The focus on variants was supposed to prevent a scenario in which Israel would be forced to deal with a more infectious and virulent strain of the coronavirus that would turn out to be less sensitive to the Pfizer vaccine. But ministry experts had cautioned that shutting the airport would not prevent the strain from reaching the country.

Israel had already missed out on stopping the entry of the British variant, which is responsible for 90 percent of newly confirmed COVID-19 cases. Now the South African variant has been identified in hundreds of patients despite airport measures and isolating passengers in hotels.

Dozens of cases of the South African variant were discovered in random testing which means they could not be traced directly to contact with a person who brought the virus in from overseas.

Reports have recently shown that other variants have also reached Israel, including the variant from California discovered in random testing; three cases of the New York strain; and one case of a variant from Uganda.

The spread of these variants has raised a number of important questions: How much is the fear of these variants justified and how important is it to stop them? Is there any practical way to prevent or significantly reduce their presence and spread? And how effective are the vaccines in fighting them?

When the first cases of the British variant were identified in December, it was only a matter of weeks before its effect and spread were felt. January was the worst month since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis by any measure, with record highs of over 1,000 deaths and over 1,200 patients in serious condition – including pregnant women hospitalized in serious condition. Doctors in coronavirus wards and intensive care units reported that their patients were in a more serious and complicated condition. They said the disease was more severe and virulent and caused a faster deterioration, including among younger people.

The Pfizer vaccine has been found to be effective against the British variant, but experts fear that other variants may be less susceptible to these

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Cong. Anshe Shalom, Jamaica Estates, NY	Kehillas Bais Yehudah Tzvi, Cedarhurst, NY
Cong. Anshe Sholom, New Rochelle, NY	Kemp Mill Synagogue, Silver Spring, MD
Cong. Beth Aaron, Teaneck, NJ	Mizrachi Shul, Johannesburg, SA
Cong. Beth Shalom, Monroe Twp, NJ	North Shore Hebrew Academy HS, NY
Cong. Bnai Yeshurun, Teaneck, NJ	Suburban Torah Center, Livingston, NJ
Cong. Brothers of Israel, Long Branch, NJ	Temple Emanuel of Pascack Valley, NJ
Cong. Etz Ahaim, Highland Park, NJ	The Learning Shul, Columbia, SC
Cong. Ohav Emeth, Highland Park, NJ	Torah Academy of Bergen County, NJ
Cong. Ohr Torah, Edison, NJ	Woodsburgh, NY Minyan
Cong. Rinat Yisrael, Teaneck, NJ	Young Israel Bet Tefilah of Aberdeen, NJ
Cong. Shomrei Torah, Fair Lawn, NJ	Young Israel of Brookline, MA
Cong. Sons of Israel, Allentown, PA	Young Israel of East Brunswick, NJ
Cong. Zichron Mordechai, Teaneck, NJ	Young Israel of Fort Lee, NJ
Cong. Zichron R. M. Feinstein, Brooklyn, NY	Young Israel of Hancock Park, CA
Delray Orthodox Synagogue, Delray Beach, FL	Young Israel of Holliswood, NY
East Denver Orthodox Synagogue, CO	Young Israel of Houston, TX
Flatbush Park Jewish Center, Mill Basin, NY	Young Israel of New Hyde Park, NY
Harvard University Library	Young Israel of North Woodmere, NY
Hebrew Academy of Long Beach, NY	Young Israel of New Rochelle, NY
Hillel at Baruch College	Young Israel of Sharon, MA

YI Shomrai Emunah, Silver Spring, MD

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vaccines. The South African variant is the only one so far to have been linked to a lower effectiveness of the jab; it has also caused reinfection among those recovering from COVID-19. It is worrying experts because of the mutations in its protein wrapper, which the virus uses to bind to cells. These changes make it the most distant variant from the original coronavirus – the one that the vaccines were developed for.

Officials express their concerns and voice disagreements as how to fight the variant viruses. A meeting on February 18 was devoted mostly to discussing the South African variant. The data presented showed an increased presence of the variant among the Arab community, and in particular in the Triangle region in the center of the country – as well as in Arabeah, Sahknin, Yarka and Bet Jann in the north.

Shmuel Ohayon, who is responsible for the matter in the ministry's information center on the disease, said the South African variant has spread widely in Taibeh in the Triangle region. "Most of the infections have spread within the family, in social gatherings and random meetings."

"Over 20 percent of newly confirmed cases of residents of Taibeh are carriers of the variant," and every day dozens more are being infected, Ohayon said. He said this meant that hundreds of carriers of the variant are in Israel, and the situation has "gotten out of control and we need to think epidemiologically how to handle it, and whether it is still possible at this stage."

The South African variant has reached Israel mainly via the United Arab Emirates, as well as from South Africa, Turkey, Tajikistan and France.

PA ADMIT VACCINES SLATED FOR HEALTH WORKERS SIPHONED OFF FOR GOV'T OFFICIALS, ATHLETES (Israel Hayom 3/3/21)

The Palestinian Authority admitted on Tuesday that some of the COVID-19 vaccine doses it received to inoculate health workers were in fact administered to others, prompting a public outcry as earlier statements from officials suggested those would only be used for medical professionals.

According to a statement from the Palestinian Health Ministry, the Palestinians, who are yet to begin mass inoculations, have thus far received 12,000 vaccine doses in total.

Out of those, 2,000 doses went to the Gaza Strip, while the West Bank retained the rest, also handing over some 200 doses to Jordan.

In the West Bank, 8,820 vaccines were administered to essential healthcare workers, including the staff at intensive care units and first responders.

Also on the list of those prioritized for immunization, however, were the athletes playing for the Palestinian national soccer team, who required the vaccines for matches abroad, the ministry said.

Palestinian ministers also got their inoculations, as did the security details for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh.

Finally, some of the officials with the Central Elections Commission and Palestine Liberation Organization executive committee members were vaccinated as well.

The statement, which the ministry also shared on social media, went viral almost immediately and users did not mince words in expressing their opinion of Ramallah's decision. "As long as the soccer team gets to play, everything will be okay," one user tweeted sarcastically.

Another wrote, "Israel has more respect for its people and for Arab workers than you do. They don't distinguish between Arab workers and Jewish ones."

ISRAEL THROWS OUT 1.5 MILLION FLU VACCINES DUE TO LACK OF DEMAND (Arutz-7 3/3/21)

The 2020-2021 winter has seen zero cases of flu, after Israel ordered four million doses of flu vaccine.

According to Israel Hayom, the health funds are now tossing 1.5 million doses of flu vaccine, after no one requested them.

The interest in flu vaccines dropped when the coronavirus vaccines arrived in Israel, and due to the lack of cases. However, a relatively high percentage - 25.6% - of Israelis received this year's flu vaccine. Last year, 24.6% of Israelis received the flu vaccine, compared to 18% and 19% during the

previous two years.

Israel's Health Ministry prepared for the winter, during which there were expected to be simultaneous outbreaks of both flu and coronavirus. However, data from the Israel Center for Disease Control showed that not a single lab test was positive for flu this year.

Throughout the winter, the number of people turning to clinics, emergency rooms, and children's wards due to flu-like winter illnesses was low. For example, the number of people turning to clinics because of flu-like illnesses was close to zero; in the past few years, it ranged from 15-20 per 10,000 people during the same period.

"The numbers of respiratory infections are low," the Health Ministry stated. "We have not yet identified flu activity among the Israeli populace."

IN BOMBSHELL RULING, COURT INSTRUCTS STATE TO RECOGNIZE NON-ORTHODOX CONVERSIONS (Israel Hayom 3/1/21)

The High Court of Justice handed down a landmark decision on Monday after 15 years of deliberations on the hot-button issue of non-Orthodox conversion, ruling that the state could no longer abide by only one stream when it comes to the immigration of Jews under the Law of Return.

Under that law, Jews have the right to immigrate to Israel if they are considered Jewish ethnically or via their religion, but the latter criteria had until now been limited to Orthodox Judaism when it comes to converts.

The nine-justice panel on Monday said that for the purpose of immigration and citizenship, prospective immigrants can qualify even if they joined the Jewish faith via Reform or Conservative conversion processes, but they must do so in Israel.

The ruling comes just three weeks before Israelis go to the polls to select a new Knesset, and this will most likely fire up debate on the role of Judaism in government. The ultra-Orthodox parties, who have had control over the state institutions recognizing conversions, will most likely raise this issue when it comes time to choose whom they will support in the post-election coalition negotiations, and this could determine who will become prime minister.

ISRAEL SAYS IT HAS 'CAUGHT' THE SHIP RESPONSIBLE FOR COUNTRY'S WORST OIL DISASTER (Ha'aretz 3/3/21)

Environmental Protection Minister Gila Gamliel said on Wednesday that Israel caught the ship behind the worst oil spill in Israel's history.

Disclosing no further details as to the ship's location, ownership or how it was identified, Gamliel said Israel's "long arm will reach" all those who "harm our nature, beaches and coasts."

An estimated 1,000 tons of black tar from the leak washed up on over 90 percent of the country's 195 kilometer (120 mile) coastline. The government is awaiting the results of water quality testing before potentially reopening some beaches, which remain closed along the coast.

Water samples from various points along the coast were taken for analysis soon after the oil began washing up.

After the pollution was first spotted on February 17, the Environmental Protection Ministry said the most likely source of the oil was an unreported spill of perhaps dozens of tons of oil from a tanker. The ministry has not yet disclosed the type of oil involved, but researchers from Hebrew University's Hermann Institute of Earth Sciences who collected samples of the tar said that they believe it is from crude oil.

The ministry identified roughly 10 ships in the region as possible culprits. Subsequently the names of dozens of other ships were added to the list. The list of suspected ships was again narrowed to about 10, with assistance from foreign officials.

On Sunday the Environmental Protection Ministry said that the Minerva Helen, a Greek tanker, had been cleared of suspicion for the oil spill, following an inspection of the ship.

On Saturday, a team of Israeli investigators from the ministry's marine environment protection division examined the tanker, which is anchored at the port of Piraeus.

The ministry said that, following a "meticulous, professional and compre-

hensive" investigation carried out in cooperation with the authorities in Greece and without advance notice to the ship's operators, it was ruled out the ship as the source of the spill.

SHIP ACCUSED OF ISRAEL OIL SPILL SHOWN ANCHORED OFF IRAN COAST (JPost 3/4/21)

The Emerald, the Iranian vessel at the heart of the Israeli oil spill crisis was seen anchored off the coast of Iran's Kharg Island on January 17, new information has revealed.

Photographs of the vessel, which Israel has accused of deliberately sabotaging the coastline and its environment in an act of 'eco-terrorism', show the ship off the Iranian coast.

There, it is loaded with an estimated 112,000 tons of crude oil, before encircling the Persian Gulf and entering Egyptian waters.

One photo shows the Emerald in Israel's economic waters, near Haifa, and two others show the oil stain in the Mediterranean moving closer to Israel.

Another shows the Emerald engaging with a ship that has its transmitter off, west of Syria, and its depth lessening from 14.3 meters under the sea to 8.5 meters, which likely indicates that it unloaded tanks of oil to the other ship, while at sea.

A further photo directly shows the Emerald unloading 750,000 barrels of Iranian oil to a tanker called Lotus, a Syrian ship flying an Iranian flag.

The photographs were made public via TankerTrackers.com, an online service that tracks and reports shipments and storage of crude oil, and passed on to the Environmental Protection Ministry.

The Libyan-owned vessel turned off its automatic identification system (AIS) – which transmits its location to other ships in the area, as it entered Egyptian waters.

It turned the AIS on as it went through the Suez Canal, and then off again as it approached Israel's shores.

The ship remained within tens of kilometers of Israel's shores, within Israel's economic waters, for nearly a full day, spilling large amounts of oil on February 1-2, with its AIS off.

Then it continued on to Syria, where it turned on its transmitter, and it returned to Iran, turning off its AIS as it passed Israel. It is currently in Iran.

The tar from the oil spillage reached Israel's shores on February 17, causing untold damage to the Israeli coastline and its natural habitats.

HUGE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT BRINGS WATER FROM THE MOUNTAIN TO JERUSALEM (JPost 3/4/21)

"This is real Zionism," says Mekorot CEO Eli Cohen, as we walk through part of a massive 13.5 km. tunnel on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

"I grew up learning that Israel had to ration water very carefully," Cohen says. "There were instructions about the importance of reusing bath water for cleaning and watering plants. Now, we are in a position of being able to help provide water for others."

The tunnel we are walking through, which extends from Moshav Eshtaol to Jerusalem's Ein Kerem neighborhood, is the highlight of the national water company's new pipeline that will supply the capital with water for the coming decades. When it is complete, it will be one of the longest tunnels in the world for transporting water with pressure, and represents one of the country's largest infrastructure projects ever. It's an engineering marvel fit for a country that has used technology to rise from water scarcity in its early days to abundance today.

"During the time of King David, Jerusalem's only water source was the Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley," Cohen said. "When my mother lived in Jerusalem in 1948, every day she would go out to draw water at the well outside of her house."

At the time of Israel's independence in 1948, the first water line to Jerusalem ran along the Burma Road from Kibbutz Hulda, with pipes that measured 19 inches in diameter. When that system was upgraded in the 1950s, the pipes grew to 24 inches, and a later upgrade in the 1970s used 36-inch pipes. The pipeline currently in use, completed in 1994, has a 46-inch diameter. The fifth

water system, as the project is known, will more than double the throughput with gigantic 102-inch pipes that can pump 65,000 cubic meters per hour.

The population of Jerusalem, Israel's largest city, is nearing one million people, and projections show that the city and its outlying areas will keep growing in the future. That means that the city's water consumption will rise from 340,000 cubic meters per day now to more than 1.65 million cubic meters by 2065.

"The problem is that the current water line isn't enough for Jerusalem's growing population," Cohen says. "This new system is designed thinking 60 years ahead."

THE NIS 2.5 billion project, which is scheduled to come to completion later in 2021, has been 15 years in the making, says Micky Elisha, project manager for the pipeline. The government tender for the Jerusalem water project was first issued in 2006, and approvals for the west side of the pipeline, a 22-km. stretch from Kibbutz Hulda to Moshav Eshtaol, were given three years later. Five years after that, in 2014, the western section was completed, and permissions were signed for the more complicated eastern portion of the line. Work on the 13.5-km. tunnel from Eshtaol to Ein Kerem began in 2016 and was completed in March 2020. Since then, workers have been laying the massive pipes inside the tunnel, with plans to finish later in the year, Elisha explained. An access tunnel runs along the length of the pipeline, with a small train track that can transport people and materials.

The tunnel, which was named Yael after Elisha's daughter, was dug through mountains and reaches as low as 300 meters underground. Mekorot brought in teams from Germany and Austria with a powerful and massive tunnel boring machine (TBMs) that is 240 meters long and uses a 170-ton mining head. The machine would "bite" into the earth with powerful jaws, and send the stone out of the tunnel by way of a conveyor belt, while another arm lays a steel ceiling over the fresh hole for support. This process required workers on shift 24 hours a day, and progressed by about a meter per hour, with a tunnel diameter of about 4 meters. The occasional complication, like the unexpected discovery of a massive stalactite cave underground that had to be sealed off, led to temporary delays, but the tunnel was delivered on time. (Work on Shabbat was done by non-Jewish workers, Cohen notes.)

Unlike most water tunnels that pump water downhill, these pipes must pump the water from sea level to 860 meters above sea level. "Most water tunnels in the world are downhill, and rely on gravity instead of complicated pumps," Elisha says. "We had to build the tunnel to be able to support a tremendous amount of pressure."

It also means that it will require an incredible amount of electricity. The new pipelines will use more than NIS 100 million of electricity each year to pump the water uphill, and while there is a focus on energy efficiency to cut this down as much as possible, that still amounts to more than 10% of Mekorot's annual budget, says Elisha. "Making the system even 1% more efficient translates to significant savings," he says. "We are already Israel Electric's biggest client, spending about NIS 800 million a year for our systems around the country."

Each pump station has about six pump units that consume 7–8 kilowatts (kW) each, and power substations near each pump station will supply close to 65 kW each, Elisha says.

As the pipes are laid through the tunnel, one side of the pipe is filled with concrete to remove the gap between it and the tunnel's walls. The other side has an access tunnel that allows people and equipment to reach any part of the line.

Each portion of the pipeline has sensors that can identify leaks or other problems, connected to a central command center where the system is constantly monitored. "If we need to fix a pipe, we can shut off the pumping and send people inside the pipe to fix it," Elisha says.

The pipeline reaches until Ein Kerem, the final station of the pipeline, where reservoirs and a pumping station are being built that will receive and store the water. From there, responsibility for delivering the water is handed over to Hagihon, the local water company responsible for supplying water, sewage and drainage services for the greater Jerusalem area. A separate pipeline

will take some of the water north toward Ramallah and the Palestinian towns near there, Elisha notes. "At that point, it's in their hands to finish the job."

AS NOTED earlier, Jerusalem's water supply comes from desalination plants along Israel's Mediterranean coast, not the Sea of Galilee. While the Kinneret, as it is known in Hebrew, was Israel's main water source for most of the country's history, technology has changed all the rules of Israel's water economics for the better.

"Israel's water now comes almost exclusively from desalination," Cohen says. "We currently have five desalination plants in operation, and another two are nearing completion. Another three will be ready within the next seven years or so, for a total of 10 plants."

The Soreq plant near Rishon Lezion is Israel's largest desalination plant, providing about 150 million cubic meters of water a year for Israel. The Hadera plant produces 127 million m³ per year, Ashkelon provides 118 million m³, Ashdod delivers 100 million m³, and the Palmachim plant offers 90 million m³. The new Soreq B and Western Galilee plants will provide an additional 300 million cubic meters in the near future, according to government information.

Water is transported throughout the country by the National Water Carrier, Israel's network of pipes, canals, tunnels, reservoirs and pumping stations that was completed in 1964 and runs from the Kinneret in the North to the northern Negev Desert in the South. While this system was designed to transport water from the Kinneret, it has been expanded and rerouted to move water from the desalination plants.

About 85% of Israel's water currently comes from desalination, with the remaining portion pumped from the Kinneret and underground reservoirs. "We actually don't need the Kinneret's water at all, but after the heavy rains of the past two years, we started taking out a little bit," Cohen says. "Once the new desalination plants are ready, we'll go up to 100%, and just keep the pump in the Sea of Galilee as an emergency backup."

This comes after nine consecutive years of drought prior to the desalination era, when Israelis obsessively tracked how far the Sea of Galilee was under its "red line", and how much more water could be pumped before permanent ecological damage was caused to the body of water.

Jordan's King Hussein once said that the region's next wars will be fought over water, Cohen notes. But now, a country that once perpetually feared drought has as much water as it needs.

More than 55 years have passed since Israelis developed drip irrigation to optimize agricultural water usage while increasing crop yields. Now, some 75% of Israel's wastewater is recycled for agricultural use, Cohen says.

With Israel a world leader for water technology and innovation, water resource consulting for other nations has become a significant part of Mekorot's operations. Since 2007, it has provided outsourced consulting, technology, engineering, operation, maintenance and management projects in Argentina, Mexico, the USA, Romania, Cyprus, Guinea, Malta, Azerbaijan, India, and other countries. The normalization agreements with Arab Gulf countries provide an opportunity for further cooperation, with various collaborations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain being discussed, Cohen says.

"The main water problem in the world is management – not technology," Dr. Diego Berger, international special projects coordinator at Mekorot, told the Magazine in January. The Jewish state "is blessed by its lack of water resources" because it forces us to manage our water carefully and innovate, he said.

It is that attitude that has allowed Israel, a small country on the edge of the desert with scant amounts of water, to become the global water superpower it is today.

HIGH COURT CONVERSION RULING HELPS BRIDGE ISRAEL-DIASPORA RIFT (Editorial, JPost 3/2/21)

All Jews should welcome the landmark ruling by Israel's High Court of Justice on Monday recognizing conversions by the Reform and Conservative movements that are performed in Israel.

Not only does it pave the way for Jews of all streams to be eligible for Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return, it also sends an unequivocal message to the government, Knesset and Diaspora Jewry that the Orthodox monopoly on the Jewish state is not sustainable.

The ruling was the culmination of a petition process that began more than 15 years ago, involving a dozen people who converted to Judaism in Israel via non-Orthodox denominations. In an 8-1 decision that appeared to end the legal battle, the justices – led by Supreme Court President Esther Hayut – said they decided to act after lawmakers had failed to advance legislation in the intervening years.

"The petitioners came to Israel and went through a conversion process in the framework of a recognized Jewish community and asked to join the Jewish nation," Hayut wrote.

The dissenting judge in the case, Noam Sohlberg, said that while he agreed with the "legal conclusion of the verdict," he believed that the Knesset should have been given more time to act.

Still, the ruling – as expected – triggered a political firestorm, with haredi (ultra-Orthodox) and right-wing politicians denouncing the decision, while secular and left-wing groups praised it.

Arye Deri (Shas) called the ruling "a mortal blow to the Jewish character of the state." Naftali Bennett (Yamina) vowed to advance new legislation on the issue, accusing the High Court of "intervening in government decisions and forgetting its role."

On the other hand, opposition leader Yair Lapid (Yesh Atid) declared that Israel must have complete equality of rights for all streams of Judaism, saying: "We all need to live here together with tolerance and mutual respect." Similarly, Avigdor Liberman (Israel Beytenu) promised to "continue to battle religious coercion and preserve the State of Israel's character as a Jewish, Zionist and liberal state."

It is significant that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not immediately issue a statement, although his Likud Party joined the chorus of condemnations led by Sephardi Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef and Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi David Lau.

Yosef called the ruling "regrettable," saying it would lead to "thousands of gentiles among the people of Israel," while Lau insisted that "those who converted through Reform conversions and the like are not Jewish: No High Court decision will change that fact."

The chief rabbis are wrong. Firstly, the decision – if it is not overturned – will help heal the rift within the Jewish people and bridge the growing divide between Israeli and Diaspora Jews. More importantly, though, the ruling gives legal and moral weight to Israel being a country that opens its arms to all Jews, without favoring or discriminating against any denomination.

Now is the time to free Israel from the choke hold of the Chief Rabbinate.

As Israel approaches the March 23 election, its politicians – from the prime minister down – should begin internalizing the sea change represented by the High Court's decision.

All Israel's prime ministers have allowed the Orthodox to rule when it comes to religious affairs. Among the obvious examples are the facts that civil marriages are still not allowed in Israel, the rabbinate still determines standards of kashrut and there is still no egalitarian prayer section at the Western Wall.

After the upcoming election, it is possible that the new Knesset could pass legislation that reverses the High Court decision and allows for only Orthodox conversions to be recognized under the Law of Return.

This would be a regressive step that would be detrimental to the country and the Jewish people.

If the Jewish state cannot embrace all Jews and be a homeland for all Jews, then what is its *raison d'être*? And what message does it convey to other faiths and other countries?

Let us applaud the High Court for its just decision. And let's move forward, not backward, in implementing it to make Israel a country of which we can all be proud.



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"L

Presented by Rabbi Menachem Winter

From our archives

Moshe ascends Mount Sinai and remains there atop the mountain for forty days and nights, while G-d imparts to him all the secrets and wisdom of the Torah. As the days go by, the people grow increasingly fearful that their beloved leader will never return. Anxious and searching for a new "intermediary," the people gather their gold together and fashion a golden calf. The people proceed to worship it, offering to it sacrifices, while singing and dancing around it. Angered by the brazen display of heresy, G-d informs Moshe of the nation's actions and sends him down from the mountain. Moshe makes his way down the mountain, carrying the two tablets of stone on which G-d engraved the Ten Commandments. When Moshe draws near to the camp and sees the golden calf and the revelry that surround it, Moshe's anger flares. He casts down the tablets and shatters them. The Torah, when it records the narrative above, employs a "Kri and Ksiv" - a word that is written one way but by tradition is meant to be read a different way. Here the Torah writes "he cast down the Tablets from his hand" (Miyado) - in the singular, but it is read "from his hands" (Miyadov) - in the plural.

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter provides us an insight into the meaning of this "Kri and Ksiv." Upon seeing the idolatrous conduct of the Jewish people, Moshe knew that their relationship to G-d had been grievously harmed. He therefore intended to throw down the first tablet, which contains the first five commandments that legislate man's conduct with G-d. Moshe reasoned though, that the second tablet, which legislates man's relationship with his fellow, could be preserved because the worship of the golden calf did not contravene those laws. Moshe, however, concluded that man's relationship with G-d and his relationship with his fellow man are inextricably linked. If man does not have a healthy and wholesome relationship with G-d, he cannot have a true and proper relationship with others. Likewise, if man does not have a healthy and wholesome relationship with other people, he cannot have a proper relationship with G-d. This is the meaning of the "Kri and Ksiv." Initially, Moshe intended to only throw down one tablet ("from his hand") but concluded that both had been violated and, therefore, both should be cast down ("from his hands").

What a powerful lesson to take to heart! We can never be true G-d fearing individuals if we don't treat G-d's children with respect and compassion. And likewise, without a firm and committed relationship with G-d, we will not attain a truly upright and virtuous affiliation with those around us.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

He gave to Moshe, when He finished speaking with him on Har Sinai... (31, 18)

Just as a bride adorns herself with twenty-four ornaments, mentioned in Sefer Yeshaya, so too a Torah scholar must be fluent in the twenty-four books of TaNaCh. (Rashi)

Rav Chiya told Rav, "Son of great ones, did I not tell you, when Rebbi is learning one Tractate do not ask him a question pertaining to another Tractate because he may not know the answer?" (Shabbos 3b)

Rebbi was the quintessential Torah scholar. Wasn't he fluent in every Tractate?

Parsha Riddle

What is the connection between the Machatzis HaShekel (half-shekel) and Yosef HaTzadik?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

What were the names of the seven maids of Esther?

Answer: Esther's seven maids were named for the days of the week, in order to remind her when it would be Shabbos. 1) Chulsa: beginning; refers to the beginning of creation. 2) Rukiasa: sky; the sky was created on the second day 3) Ginunisa: garden; refers to vegetation which is grown in a garden that was created on the third day 4) Nihoryasa : luminaries; refers to the luminaries which were created on the fourth day 5) Ruchshista: swarming; refers to the swarming creatures which were created on the fifth day 6) Churfisa: means the day before, since the sixth day is the day prior to Shabbos 7) Rugiasa: means feeling which refers to Shabbos when there is a feeling of tranquility in the air.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In parashas Ki Sisa (32:2), Aharon instructs the Jewish people: "Remove the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, sons, and daughters, and bring them to me," but (as understood by various midrashim) the women refused to cooperate with the project of the Golden Calf. The Torah relates: "The entire people removed the gold rings that were in their ears, and brought them to Aharon." The Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (45) explains that when faced with the women's recalcitrance, the men simply contributed their **own** earrings instead. The Tosafists (to 35:22), on the other hand, understand that the men **forcibly seized** the women's jewelry from them.

In any event, the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer declares that as a reward for the women's faithfulness, in contrast to the behavior of the men, they were granted Rosh Chodesh (the first of the month) as a holiday that is especially theirs. The Yerushalmi (Pesachim 23a) endorses a custom of women refraining from "work" on Rosh Chodesh, and the Tur (OC #417) explains that this is based on the aforementioned passage in the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer. The Shulchan Aruch rules that the custom of women to refrain from work "is a good custom," and the Rema adds that if the custom is to refrain from some types of work but not others, the custom is to be followed.

While it is not entirely clear from the language of the Shulchan Aruch whether this custom is universal or mandatory, the Biur Halachah concludes that it is indeed a universally binding custom.

R. Doniel Neustadt (Weekly Halacha, Parshas Noach) writes:

Over the centuries, various customs evolved as to exactly what is considered "work" vis-à-vis Rosh Chodesh. Nowadays, women generally refrain from sewing, crocheting and doing laundry on Rosh Chodesh. Ironing, however, is permitted.

Some poskim hold that using a washing machine is permitted, and only washing by hand is prohibited. Others are more stringent and prohibit laundering in washing machines as well.

According to this author's small, informal survey, the main type of work that many, albeit not all, contemporary observant women refrain from on Rosh Chodesh is laundry (even via a washing machine).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I served the below.
2. I lost my position.
3. I need redemption.
4. I was spared from the tenth.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. My mother cleans my mess.
2. I am not part of your leg.
3. I wasn't a golden opportunity.
4. Walking metal.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Choshen Mishpat (I'm named for the High Priest's garment, I'm for the money matters, The lips of the Kohen explain me, I also have "enlighteners.")

#2 Kohen's hat (Wrapped, On top, One of four and one of eight, I was not black.)

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