THE GUTNICK EDITION

Chumash

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

With Rashi’s commentary, Targum Onkelos, Haftaros and commentary anthologized from Classic Rabbinic Texts and the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

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### Table of Contents

- Preface ................................................. ix
- Devarim ............................................. 1
- Va’eschanan ........................................... 29
- Eikev .................................................. 55
- Re’eh ................................................... 85
- Shoftim ............................................... 125
- Ki Seitzei ............................................... 155
- Ki Savo ............................................... 187
- Nitzavim ............................................. 211
- Vayeilech ............................................ 225
- Ha’azinu ............................................... 237
- Vezos Habrachah ................................. 257
- Haftoros ............................................. 271
- Appendix ............................................. 303
- Bibliography ....................................... 305
We are delighted that *Sefer Devarim* of the *Kol Menachem* Chumash is now entering its third edition, which includes numerous amendments to both the Hebrew and English texts and commentary to the Haftaros.

We once again extend our thanks to Rabbi Meyer Gutnick, who has graciously accepted upon himself the labor and expense of publishing and distributing this work. May this merit be a source of eternal blessing for him and his family.

May we soon merit the true and complete redemption, with *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*, speedily in our days.

*Kol Menachem*

25th of *Elul* 5768
Cantillation Marks /

שׁשׁעַשׁאַ שׁנַּה קְרַאָ שׁנַּה סָנוֹלָ שׁנַּה | שׁנַּה בְּכִלִּין
מְחַמְּדַ עַשְׁשַׁעַ שׁנַּה קְרַאָ שׁנַּה בְּכִלִּין מְרַבְּתָ שׁפָּחָה
שְׁנַה אַרְגְּנָהָ שׁוֹרְ חֹלְלֶשָׁר קְמֶנָה
חַלְּשָׁשָׁר בּוֹרְלָ בִּלְפַּמָּ שׁוֹרְ חֹלְלֶשָׁר קְמֶנָה
דָּרְנַּה תִּבְרֵי בִּזְיָבָ פָּסִיק | מָחְרַסְפָּק: שׁלְשָׁלָה
כְּרִינָה פְּלָה מְרַבְּתָ שׁפָּחָה בְּפַולָ בְּרִיָּה.
Blessings on Reading the Torah

The person who is called to the Torah takes hold of the handles of the Sefer Torah with his tallis', unrolls the Sefer Torah and, with his tallis (or the belt of the Torah) touches the beginning and end of the reading. The scroll is then closed, he turns slightly to the right and says:

בָּכֵלֵי אָתָא עִנְיָנָא דְּנַחֲלוּמָא.

The congregation responds:

בָּרוּךְ אֶתֶנָא לְעֵד לְעָלָם יְדֵוָא.

The person called to the Torah continues:

בָּרוּךְ אֶתֶנָא לְעֵד לְעָלָם יְדֵוָא:

בְּרָאוּ דִּינָא וְאֵלְהֵמָה קְנֹתָא דְּנַחֲלוּמָא עַכּיֵי בֵּרֵה בֵּטַנְי,

מְסַלֶּה שָׁפִּים וּבֵיתָנָא לְאֵת הַחֲרַתָוָה, בֶּרוּךְ אֶתֶנָא עַכּי

נַחֲלוּמָא דְּנַחֲלוּמָא.

The person called to the Torah now reads along with the reader in an undertone.

After the reading is complete, the person called to the Torah touches the end and the beginning of the reading with his tallis (or belt of the Sefer Torah) and kisses it. He then closes the scroll, turns slightly to the right and says:

בָּרוּךְ אֶתֶנָא לְעֵד לְעָלָם יְדֵוָא,

בֶּרֶא וּנְפָפִּי לְאֵת הַחֲרַתָוָה בֶּרוּךְ אֶתֶנָא עַכּי

נַחֲלוּמָא דְּנַחֲלוּמָא.

After the reading is complete, the person called to the Torah stays at the bimah until the next reading is concluded (or, if it is the last reading, until the Torah is raised).

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1. Sefer Haminagim. According to the Rebbe's personal custom, the handles are held directly, without the tallis in between.
2. Sefer Haminagim. According to the Rebbe's personal custom, the tallis is used to touch the beginning, the end and then the beginning of the reading again.
3. Sefer Haminagim. According to the Rebbe's personal custom, the tallis is used to touch the end, the beginning and then the end of the reading again.
In the early years of his leadership, the Alter Rebbe declared publicly:

“We have to live with the times!”

Through his brother, the Maharil, the senior chasidim discovered that the Rebbe meant that one should live with the Parsha of the week, and the particular Parsha of the day. One should not only study the weekly Parsha, but live with it.

(Hayom Yom, Cheshvan 2)
“Look at these!” are words that might be exclaimed upon encountering something new or different. Thus, the opening phrase of our Parsha, “These are the words which Moshe spoke to all the Jewish people,” comes to teach us that words of Torah should always be looked upon as something new and exciting—as our Sages said, “they should be new in your eyes every day” (see Rashi to Devarim 26:16).

However, to change the way we think (and act) to the extent that we have genuinely adopted a “new” approach is no less than a miracle. For if the definition of a miracle is an “unprecedented change in nature,” then a totally fresh outlook to Torah and Divine service also represents an unprecedented change in our nature—a personal miracle.

In order to help us perform this wonder on a daily basis, God gave us the gift of sleep. At first glance, sleep appears to be a total waste of time; for how is the purpose of creation advanced when we are lying in bed? Why did God charge us with a mission to improve and perfect the world, only to “handicap” us with the need to spend a significant portion of each day out of action?

In truth however, God made us need to sleep for a positive reason; for after a night’s sleep one feel like a new person who is able to break free from the limitations of yesterday. So, since God wanted the “words which Moshe spoke to all the Jewish people,” to be “new in your eyes every day,” He built into us a mechanism which makes the miracle of changing our nature a little bit easier.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Devarim 5750)
How does the Book of Devarim differ from the previous Books of Moshe?

OHR HACHAYIM: Moshe was not commanded by God to say the Book of Devarim. Rather, he said it of his own initiative, as our Sages taught (Megillah 31b). Thus, the book begins, “These are the words which Moshe spoke,” as if to say that from this point onwards, Moshe did not hear these words directly from God.

TOSFOS: They were nevertheless said with Divine Inspiration (ibid).

What did Moshe say to the Jewish People? (v. 1)

RASHI: These are words of rebuke, since all the places where they angered God are listed here. But, out of respect for the Jewish people, Moshe was vague with his words and he only hinted [at their sins, by mentioning the places where the sins occurred, and not the sins themselves]:

“In the desert”—he rebuked them for angering God in the desert when they said, “If only we had died in Egypt” (Shemos 16:3), etc.

Moshe’s Subtle Rebuke (v. 1)

Rashi’s comments to verse 1 prompt the following questions:

a.) What problem at the literal level was troubling Rashi, leading him to conclude that the list of locations in verse 1 was a subtle rebuke of the Jewish people?

b.) Why did Rashi need to stress, “All the places where they angered God are listed here”? Surely it is obvious that Rashi is speaking about our verse? Rashi could simply have written, “These are words of rebuke, since all the places where they angered God are listed.”

c.) Rashi writes, that “all the places where they angered God are listed here.” However, this does not appear to be the case, since the verse does not refer to the rebellions at Marah (Shemos 15:24) and Refidim (ibid. 17:2).

The Explanation

a.) Rashi was troubled: Why does the verse state, “These are the words which Moshe spoke to all the Jewish people on the bank,” without even mentioning what Moshe’s “words” were?

Rashi concluded that our verse must contain the actual words that Moshe said to the Jewish people. Thus, the list of locations at the end of the verse is not, as it first appears, a description of where Moshe spoke his words, but rather, they are Moshe’s words themselves.

This leaves us with the question: Why did Moshe list a series of locations? Rashi explains that this was a form of subtle rebuke, in which Moshe admonished the Jewish people for their various past rebellions. But out of respect, he did not rebuke them directly, but indirectly, by mentioning the locations of their various rebellions.
**Moshe’s Subtle Rebuke to the Jewish People**

I

These are the words (of subtle rebuke) which Moshe spoke to all the Jewish people in (the Plains of Mo’av, on the East) bank of the Jordan. (He mentioned the places where they rebelled against God): “in the wilderness, in the plain(s of Mo’av), at the Sea of Reeds, (in the wilderness) of Paran, between Tofel and Lavan, at Chatzairos and at Di-Zahav*.”

2 “From Choraiw (where the Torah was given) to Kadaish-Barne’a, (where the spies were sent out), by way of Mount Se’ir (normally) takes eleven days, (but you took just three days, because God was speeding your entry into the Land).”

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

**The Book of Devarim**

The Book of Devarim arose from a different form of prophetic revelation than the previous four Books of Moshe. For unlike the preceding books which were “dictated” directly by God, the Book of Devarim was a Divine revelation which Moshe phrased in his own words (see Ohr HaChayim & Tosfos).

At first glance, this would appear to be a disadvantage, for words arranged by God Himself are surely superior to those composed by Moshe. However, in truth, the Book of Devarim has its own advantage: that the words of God reached a higher level of compatibility with the human mind.

Moshe’s contribution to the Book of Devarim did not detract from the validity of the work, for Devarim remains part of the Chumash just as much as the other four books. But having passed through the “interface” of a human mind, the words of this book were fashioned in a manner that other human beings would find easier to absorb. Thus:

- The Book of Devarim was said to the generation which was about to enter the Land of Israel, where food would not be provided miraculously, and extensive interaction with the mundane world would be necessary. As a preparation for this, the Jewish people were given the Book of Devarim, which contained Godly wisdom that had been brought more “down to earth” by Moshe.

- As a Divinely inspired work of the human mind, the Book of Devarim sets the precedent for later prophetic works. It is also a form of precursor for Rabbinic law, which is humanly conceived and yet is an expression of the will of God.

- A ba’al teshuvah is one who returned to God through his own initiative, but God assists the ba’al teshuvah with Divine revelation to his subconscious soul. This is similar to the way the Book of Devarim was said: Consciously it was Moshe’s own words, but on a deeper level it was a product of Divine revelation. This similarity between teshuvah and the Book of Devarim is the inner reason why the book is characterized by “rebuke” (see Rashi), a way of helping another to do teshuvah.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 4, p. 1087fl.; vol. 19, p. 9ff.; vol. 36, p. 41ff.)

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b.) To stress the above point, Rashi writes, “All the places where they angered God are listed here,” i.e. the reader should not think that “the words which Moshe spoke” are recorded elsewhere. Rather, Moshe’s words are cited “here” in our verse.

c.) With the phrase, “He rebuked them for angering God in the desert when they said, ‘If only we had died [in Egypt] etc.,’ Rashi makes clear that he is not referring to one particular rebellion, but rather, to all the rebellions in the desert, beginning with the complaint in the Desert of Sin, “If only we had died [in Egypt].” I.e. Rashi’s use of the word “et cetera” indicates that Moshe was alluding here also to the complaints of the Jewish people that followed this one. Therefore, Rashi wrote, “All the places where they angered God are listed here.”

However, this begs the question: If all the desert rebellions had already been indicated by the word “et cetera,” then why does Rashi continue to specify the complaints about the manna, the sin of the spies and the incident with Korach? Surely these are also “desert rebellions” which were already indicated by the word “et cetera”?

It would seem, therefore, that when Rashi refers to the rebellions “in the desert,” he does not mean those incidents which occurred geographically in the desert, but rather, he is referring to the rebellions which occurred as a direct consequence of being in the desert. Thus, while the word “et cetera” alludes to the complaint in Refidim about a lack of water—a problem associated with being in the desert—it does not allude to the incidents of the spies, Korach, and the Golden Calf, which were caused by other factors.**

One problem that remains with this explanation is that Rashi’s “et cetera” was written after the verse which describes the Jewish people’s...

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**The Last Word**

When rebuking the Jewish people here, Moshe did not mention, or even allude to their sins. Rather, in order to maintain their dignity, he merely mentioned the places where they had sinned (see Rashi). This teaches us how careful we should be not to cause distress to another person. If, on occasion, it proves necessary to rebuke another Jew—even for serious sins, such as the ones which Moshe indicated here—we should nevertheless do so subtly and gently, while at the same time drawing the person close with warmth and love.

(Sichas Shabbos Parshas Devarim 5725)

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* See Sichas Shabbos Parshas Devarim 5725 (Sichos Kodesh 5725 vol. 2, pp. 309-311), where it is explained that even according to Rashi, “Tofel,” “Lavan” and “Di-Zahav” are names of actual places. However, see Likutei Sichos vol. 14, p. 1flf. for an alternative explanation. ** The complaint in the Desert of Sin was made because they had no food, which was a result of being in the desert. But the complaint about the manna itself (“our souls are disgusted by this insubstantial bread”) was not a direct consequence of desert life, but rather a complaint about the quality of the food which God was giving them. Therefore it was mentioned separately.
rebellion in the Desert of Sin (in Shemos 16:3). However, the rebellion at Marah (regarding the bitter, undrinkable water) occurred before this point, and thus does not appear to be included by Rashi’s “et cetera,” which only alludes to rebellions subsequent to that of the Desert of Sin. So how is the rebellion at Marah alluded to in Moshe’s words (in keeping with Rashi’s statement that “All the places where they angered God are listed here”?)

Upon closer examination of Rashi’s choice of words, this question fades away: Rashi writes, “All the places where they angered God are listed here.” But in the Torah’s description of the rebellion at Marah, it says, “The people complained to Moshe” (ibid. 15:24), suggesting that this was not a direct rebellion against God, but rather, against Moshe.

Thus, when listing “All the places where they angered God,” Moshe did not mention Marah, since Marah was a rebellion against Moshe’s own leadership, and not directly against God. So, while Moshe felt it appropriate to admonish the Jewish people for their sins against God, Moshe did not seek to defend his own honor by rebuking the people for rebelling against him.

(Classic Questions)

1. How did Moshe “explain the Torah”? (v. 5)
Rashi: He translated it into seventy languages.
Levush Ha’Orah: Moshe feared that perhaps not every person understood Hebrew.
Imrei Shefer: Moshe anticipated that the Jewish people would be exiled in the future, and he wanted to ensure that they could study Torah in any language that they might come to speak (27:8).

2. How were the people living “a lot” (“a lot”) by Mt. Sinai? (v. 6)
Rashi: This is to be interpreted literally [i.e. too much time].
The explanation of the Midrash Agadah is: I have given you much greatness and reward as a result of living at this mountain. You received the Torah. You appointed for yourselves a great deal of leaders over thousands and leaders over hundreds (Supreme Court), leaders over thousands and leaders over hundreds.

(Torah Menachem)

(Torah Menachem)
Surely the Torah should have written, “You have been living at Mount Sinai was inappropriate, when in fact they heard God speak? Unique Tabernacle, receiving the Torah, and appointing leaders. But surely the type of “greatness” that the Jewish people gained at Mount Sinai was to bring them immediately into the land without delay.

On the (East) bank of the Jordan, in the land of Mo‘av, Moshe began to explain the Torah (translating it into seventy languages), saying:

God, our God, spoke to us in Choraiv, saying, “You have been living too much (time) by this mountain.  Redirect yourselves (towards Arad and Charmah) and travel until you come to the Amorite mountain, and through its neighboring territories (Amon, Mo‘av and Mount Se‘ir), through the (forested) plain, on the mountain (of the king), through the lowlands (of the South), through (Gaza and Ashkelon)

__Leaving Mount Sinai (v. 6)__

Rashi’s comments to verse 6 prompt the following questions:

a.) What was troubling Rashi?

b.) What was lacking with Rashi’s first interpretation that led him to bring a second one, from the “Midrash Agadah”?

c.) In his second interpretation, Rashi explains that the Jewish people became great at Mount Sinai, and he cites the examples of building the Tabernacle, receiving the Torah, and appointing leaders. But surely the unique type of “greatness” that the Jewish people gained at Mount Sinai was the fact that they heard God speak?

__THE EXPLANATION__

Rashi was troubled why verse 6 states, “You have been living too much by this mountain,” which seems to imply that the length of time that the Jewish people had spent at Mount Sinai was inappropriate, when in truth every moment by Mt. Sinai was certainly valuable and essential. Surely the Torah should have written, “You have been living enough by this mountain” and not “too much”?

Apparantly, our verse cannot be rendered literally. Nevertheless, Rashi writes that, despite first appearances, “This is to be interpreted literally,” and a simple explanation can be found to solve this problem.

Rashi did not inform us what this “simple explanation” is, since he presumed that the reader could work it out for himself, by looking at the context of the verse and comparing it with one of Rashi’s earlier comments.

In verse 2, above, Moshe makes a rather cryptic statement: “From Choraiv (where the Torah was given) to Kadaish-Barne‘a, (where the spies were sent out) by way of Mount Se‘ir (normally) takes eleven days.”

Rashi clarifies: “Moshe was saying to them: ‘See what you caused! There is no shorter route from Choraiv to Kadaish-Barne‘a than by way of Mount Se‘ir, and even that is a journey of eleven days. But you covered it in three days!’...The Divine Presence exerted itself to such an extent to hasten your arrival at the land of Cana’an, but because you ruined things, He made you travel around Mount Se‘ir for forty years!”

In verse 2 itself, Moshe only hinted at this point briefly and subtly. But here in verses 6-8 Moshe spells out in more detail how God’s original plan was to bring them immediately into the land without delay.

In this context, the reader will understand why God said, “You have been living too much by this mountain,” for God was expressing the sense of urgency with which He desired the Jewish people to enter the Land of Israel, to the extent that “the Divine Presence exerted itself (so to speak) to such an extent to hasten your arrival to the land.”

__Rashi’s Second Interpretation__

However, in the final analysis, the term, “living too much by this mountain,” does suggest that the Jewish people had been doing something wrong in remaining in the same location. This is clearly not the case, since the camp only relocated under direct instructions from God (see Bamidbar 9:17-18).

Thus, Rashi felt it necessary to bring a second interpretation, from the Midrash Agadah, that our verse is to be rendered, “You have become great by living at this Mountain.”

At first glance, the unique “greatness” that the Jewish people acquired at Mount Sinai was that they heard God speak. However, Rashi rejected that this was the “greatness” to which our verse refers, as it does not fit into the context here.

The current passage was supposed to be a message to the Jewish people right before they entered the Land. Therefore, we can presume that the “greatness” mentioned here is something connected with the challenges of living an observant life alongside the other nations that the Jewish people were soon to face. In order to overcome these challenges successfully, the Jewish people needed to internalize the message, “You shall be to Me a kingdom of ministers and a holy nation” (Shemos 19:6).
How could the Jewish people “see” that the Land was “in their hands”? (v. 8)

RASHI: [Moshe was saying]: “You can see this with your own eyes! I am not telling you this out of speculation or from hearsay.”

NACHALAS YA’AKOV: Perhaps Moshe’s statement, “You can see this with your own eyes,” refers to the defeat of Sichon and Og, which had proven to be easy, despite the fact that they were powerful.

BE’ER BASADEH: The solution of Nachalas Ya’akov is untenable, since here Moshe is recounting God’s words at Mt. Sinai before the defeat of Sichon and Og. Rather, Rashi’s statement, “You can see this with your own eyes,” refers to the fact that God went ahead of the Jewish people to protect them, as is stated in Devarim 23:15.

PANE’ACH RAZA: God cast down the ministering angels of the nations and subjugated them before Moshe, as Rashi explains below (v. 8), that no weapons would be required for the conquest.

How were the Jewish people to “come and take possession of the Land”? (v. 8)

RASHI: [God was saying]: “No one will contest the matter, and you will not need to go to war.” If they had not sent the spies, [and had trusted God] they would not have needed weapons.

The Promise of Miraculous Conquest (v. 8)

Verses 8-9 describe God’s promise to the Jewish people concerning the conquest of the Land of Israel, which was communicated by Moshe before the incident of the spies.

Rashi explains that God was promising a totally miraculous conquest, without the need for weapons, but this was forfeited by the Jewish people, due to the incident with the spies.

Thus, the sound of God speaking, which they could not take with them into the Land, would be of limited assistance to them. Rather, Rashi writes, what would assist the Jewish people after they had entered the Land of Israel, would be the internalization and practical application of the Torah’s values into daily life; the Torah was observed among the communities of Israel.

(Rashi’s comments prompt the following questions:

a.) On the words, “See that I have put the Land before you” (v. 8), Rashi comments, “You can see this with your own eyes!” I.e. Rashi makes it clear that the Torah is not using a metaphor here, but that the verse refers to actual, physical sight. This begs the question: At this point, the Jewish people were still encamped by Mount Sinai (as stated in v. 6), so how would it be possible to see the Land of Israel and its conquest with their eyes?

b.) It is obvious that if one sees something with one’s own eyes, that no further confirmation is required. So why does Rashi add, “I am not telling you this out of speculation or from hearsay”?

c.) In his second comment to verse 8, Rashi writes, “If they had not sent the spies, they would not have needed weapons.” On what basis did Rashi conclude, at the literal level, that no weapons would be required?

The Explanation

In verse 7, the Jewish people are told the details concerning the conquest of the Land of Israel: “Redirect yourselves and travel until you
in the south and (Caesarea) by the seashore, (conquering) the land of the Canaanites, and the Lebanon, all the way until the great river, the Euphrates River. See that I have (already) put the Land (into your hands) before you! (All you have to do is) come and take possession of the Land which God swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov, that He would give (the Land to) them and their descendants after them. (Nobody will even oppose you).”

 Rebuke Concerning the Appointment of Judges

1:9 I said to you at that time—saying (only that which I had been told by God)—“I cannot carry (the burden of judging) you on my own, (for) God, your God, has made you great. You are (so great that you are everlasting like the sun which shines during) the day, and like (the moon and) the... come to...the land of the Canaanites, and the Lebanon, all the way until the great river, the Euphrates River.” Verse 8 then appears to state the general instruction to “come and take possession of the Land, etc.”

So Rashi was troubled: Why are the Jewish people given the details concerning the conquest of the Land, in verse 7, before the general command to conquer it, in verse 8? Rashi came to the conclusion that verse 8 is not merely an instruction to conquer the Land, but rather, that it is a further description to the Jewish people about how they would conquer the land (and the actual command is in verse 7).

Up to this point, the Jewish people were aware that they would eventually conquer the Land from two sources:

a.) They had heard from Moshe while they were still in Egypt, that “I will bring you...to the land of the Canaanites, the Hitites, the Amorites, the Perizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey” (Shemos 3:17), and “the people believed” (ibid. 4:31).

b.) After the miracles which occurred when leaving Egypt, and the splitting of the Reed Sea, where they sang about coming to the Land (ibid. 15:17).

Since the Jewish people were familiar with these two points, Rashi concluded that our verse must be confirming the conquest of the Land in an even more powerful manner. Thus Rashi stresses: I am not telling you this out of speculation—as you may have speculated yourselves after seeing God’s miracles when leaving Egypt—or from something I’ve heard—as I communicated to you God’s promises while you were still in Egypt. Rather: You’ll see it with your own eyes!, i.e. the Jewish people will see the proof themselves, with their very eyes, that the conquest of the Land was about to occur.

But what exactly were the Jewish people going to be able to see while still camped at Mount Sinai? And how did Rashi conclude that Moshe promised them a totally supernatural conquest? Rashi did not address either of these points directly, since the matter is self-understood from one of Rashi’s earlier comments:

In verse 2, above, Rashi writes: “There is no shorter route from Chorai to Kadaish-Barne’a than by way of Mount Se’ir, and even that is a journey of eleven days. But you covered it in three days!” (as Rashi continues to prove by a series of calculations). So, when reaching our verse—which was said by Moshe before the journey from Chorai to Kadaish-Barne’a (see v. 6)—the reader knows that the Jewish people were about to witness a phenomenal miracle, of completing an eleven-day journey in just three days. Therefore, Rashi did not need to explain how the Jewish people would be given visual confirmation of their imminent conquest (“You’ll see it with your own eyes!”), for the reader knows that the Jewish people were about to witness a miraculous beginning to their journey towards conquering the Land of Israel.

Similarly, Rashi did not need to bring any proof for his assertion, “No one will contest the matter, and you will not need to go to war,” to the extent that “they would not have needed weapons,” for the miraculous beginnings with which the conquest began suggested that the entire process would be totally supernatural.

What Went Wrong?

We can now explain a further difficulty with Rashi’s comment here: Rashi writes, “If they had not sent the spies they would not have needed weapons.” Now, at first glance, the problem here was not the actual sending of the spies but the fiasco which followed, where the Jewish people lost faith in God’s promises after the spies’ negative reports. So why did Rashi not write, “If it were not for the sin of the spies...”? However, based on the above we can understand why the sending of the spies alone was sufficient to forfeit God’s promises. For God had promised them (and had begun to show them) a totally supernatural conquest. Thus, as soon as they had sent out spies, which is a strategy only required for a natural conquest, the Jewish people had already demonstrated an open denial of the promise of supernatural conquest.

And this was Moshe’s rebuke here to the Jewish people forty years later, as they were about to enter the Land: the importance of absolute trust in God.

(Taras Menachem

The Last Word

Rashi stresses (v. 8) that if the Jewish people had trusted in God, nobody would have contested the Jewish people’s rights to the Land of Israel.

Likewise, in our times, when the Jewish people will trust in God, that the Land of Israel belongs unequivocally to them, and are willing to declare this openly to the nations of the world, then, “No one will contest the matter, and you will not need to go to war.” In fact, even weapons will prove unnecessary, as Rashi writes.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 1ff)
Who are “insightful” men? (v. 13)

Rashi: Those who can deduce one thing from another.

This is what Arius asked Rabbi Yosi: “What is the difference between wise men and insightful men?”

[Rabbi Yosi replied]: “A wise man is like a rich money changer. But when they don’t bring him anything, he goes out and does [business].

An insightful man, however, is like an enterprising money changer. When they bring him coins to examine, he examines them; but when they don’t bring him any, he sits and does nothing.”

Why did Moshe not pick any “insightful” men? (v. 15)

Rashi: [He said]: “I couldn’t find any insightful men.”

In his commentary to verse 13, Rashi cites the analogy used by Rabbi Yosi, which explains the distinction between “wise” and “insightful” men.

This presents us with the following problems:

a.) In Parshas Ki Sisa, the Torah states, “See, I have appointed Betzalel the son of Uri the son of Chur... I have filled him with the spirit of God, with wisdom, with insight etc.” (Shemos 31:2-3). Rashi comments: “Wisdom—that which a person hears from others, and learns. Insight—indipendently derived ideas that are concluded from things that one has been taught.”

So since Rashi has already derived ideas from the meaning of the term “insight,” in Parshas Ki Sisa, why does he repeat himself here?
(individual*) stars of the heavens, (so you would be an awesome responsibility to judge even if you were few, all the more so that you are*) many. 11 (In fact, in the future,) God, the God of your ancestors, will multiply your number a thousand times. He will bless you as He told you (He would, when He took Avraham outside his tent and showed him the stars).

SECOND READING

12 “If you argue that I should judge you alone, despite the responsibility and risk of punishment, God has forbidden me from doing so. For) how could I bear singlehandedly your (tactical legal) maneuvers (in court, the) burden of your (slander against me), and your disputes (with each other)? 11 (So prepare (righteous), wise and insightful men for yourselves, known among your tribes, and I will appoint them as your leaders.”

14 You answered me (disrespectfully) and said, “The thing which you have proposed to do is good (for us).”

15 I selected (and persuaded) wise and well known men from the leaders of your tribes, and I made them leaders over you—leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and police officers over your tribes.

TORAS MENACHEM

And if Rashi feared the reader might have forgotten this explanation, which was studied some time ago, and he felt it necessary to remind the reader, then he should have also reminded us here of the definition of “wisdom.”

b.) What is added by the analogy of the two money changers?

c.) Why does Rashi quote, “This is what Arius asked Rabbi Yosi”? Of what relevance is this at the literal level?

THE EXPLANATION

In his comment to verse 15, Rashi writes that Moshe did not actually appoint any “insightful” men as judges, because he simply was unable to find any.

But this seems to contradict what was stated earlier: It was possible to find “insightful men” for the construction of the Tabernacle—as the verse states, “Betzelal and Ohaliav should do (all the work) together with every wisehearted man into whom God had instilled wisdom and insight”—so why was Moshe unable to find any insightful men to appoint as judges?**

Sparks of Chasidus

When creating the forces of holiness and the forces of impurity, “God made one opposite the other” (Ecclesiastes 1:14), i.e. for each holy power, God made a diametrically opposed equivalent.

Arius (see Rashi) the Bishop (250-366 C.E.) embodied the wisdom (chochmah) of impurity—alluded to by the fact that the word Arius (אוריוס) in Hebrew contains within it the letters of the word דינא, which means “light,” and “light is chochmah” (Zohar I 30b). Since chochmah is the ability to perceive the absolute unity of God, we find that even the chochmah of impurity—embodied by Arius—came close to the unity of God. For Arius was a bishop who rejected some aspects of his religion which are incompatible with the unity of God (for which he suffered excommunication).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 15)

 Obviously, there were insightful men among the Jewish people, but the type of insight required to construct the Tabernacle was different from that required to be a judge:

One level of insight is where a person is able to clarify additional details on his own, after being given a general overview. This would have been sufficient for constructing the Tabernacle, since after hearing the general instructions from Moshe, there would have been certain details that the engineers would have had to deduce by themselves.

A judge, however, requires a much deeper level of insight, akin to “lateral thinking.” With this talent, a person is not only capable of filling in further details within the information transmitted to him by his teacher, but he is able to reapply what he has learned in a variety of other situations, and derive innovative, independent conclusions.

In order to clarify this distinction, Rashi cited the analogy of the two money changers:

The rich money changer only works with the materials he is given, analogous to a person who can calculate within the parameters of the information he is given. However, the enterprising money changer “goes out and does business with his own money”—corresponding to one who is able to extrapolate beyond the context of the information at hand.

Thus, by citing this analogy, Rashi has explained to the reader why Moshe was unable to find any “insightful” men suitable to be judges, whereas he was able to find insightful individuals to construct the Tabernacle—for the insight required to be a judge is a much rarer talent, of truly innovative, independent thinking.

ARIUS CHALLENGES RABBI YOSI

After fully explaining a verse at the literal level, Rashi sometimes feared that the highly astute reader might be troubled by a more subtle question. Since problems such as these were only relevant to a small portion of Rashi’s readership, he did not address these issues directly, but he would often hint to a solution. Rashi chose to do this by expressly mentioning the original author of the teaching cited, as if to say: Your subtle question can be answered by bearing in mind who authored this teaching.

In our case, the more astute reader may be left with the following question: If there were no individuals blessed with a sufficient degree of insight that a judge requires, then why did God trouble Moshe to look for

* See Likutei Sichos vol. 39, pp. 4-5.  **Particularly when we consider that these two series of appointments must have occurred at virtually the same time, since the instruction for both appointments was transmitted by Moshe on the same day—the day following Yom Kippur. See Rashi to Shemos 18:13; 30:16; 31:18; 33:11; 35:1. (Maharik answers that he found insightful men but they were lacking in other qualities required to be a judge. However, Rashi appears to write unequivocally, “I could not find any insightful men.”)
In response to this question, Rashi writes that the above analogy was taught by Rabbi Yosi, who was blessed with an outstanding degree of insight, as our Sages testified: "When Rabbi Yosi died, insight ceased"
16 On that occasion, I instructed your judges, saying, “Listen (patiently) to your brothers’ (claims, even if you have heard a similar case before), and judge righteously between a man and his brother who disputes him. 17 Do not show favoritism (and appoint judges who are not qualified, who will err) in judgment. You should listen (with equal interest) to (a case involving) a small (amount of money as you do to a case involving) a large amount. Do not fear any man (and show him favoritism, for this is as if one has exacted money from) God, (Who must correct) the judgment (and restore the money to its rightful owner). If a case is too difficult for you, bring it to me, and I will hear it.” 18 And, on that occasion, I gave you instructions about all the things you should do (in a monetary case and in a capital case).

### Rebuke for the Incident with the Spies

1:19  
We journeyed from Choraiv and went through that entire great and fearful desert (filled with the giant snakes and scorpions) that you saw, towards the Amorite mountain as God, our God, commanded us—and we arrived at Kadaish-Barne’a.

20 I said to you, “You have arrived at the Amorite mountain, which God, our God, is giving us!”

21 “Look! God, your God, has put the Land (into your hands) before you! (All you have to do is) go and take possession of it, as God, the God of your fathers, has told you! Don’t be afraid or demoralized!”

22 But you all approached me (in a rowdy mob) and said, “Let’s send men ahead of us who will search out the Land for us and bring us back (a report detailing which language the people use to speak their) word(s), which route we should follow, and which cities we should come to (first, to conquer).”

23 (I claimed that) it seemed like a good idea to me (hoping that this would convince you of the truth of my words, when you would see that I was ready to put them to the test, but you did not retract your demands). So I selected twelve men from (the finest among) you, one man for each tribe. 24 They set off and went up the mountain, until they came to the valley of Eshkol. Then, they spied out (the entire land).

25 They took some of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us. They brought us back a report and said, “The Land that God, our God, is giving us is good!”

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Jerusalem Talmud, end of Tractate Sotah. Therefore, it is understandable that Rabbi Yosi himself would have stressed the need for insightful judges, and that this quality should be sought after to the greatest extent possible.

In addition to Rabbi Yosi’s authorship, Rashi stressed further that, “This is what Arius asked Rabbi Yosi.” With these words, Rashi was hinting to his readership: “To accuse God of bothering Moshe in vain is not an entirely ‘kosher’ question, for it was one posed by Arius the bishop, to Rabbi Yosi!” Thus, even though Rabbi Yosi did endeavor to answer the question, and it was recorded in the Torah as an eternal teaching, Rashi nevertheless stressed to his more astute readership that questions of this nature are better not asked.

(Toras Menachem: Third Reading)

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 9ff.)
What was Moshe’s response to the claim that God “hated” the Jewish people? (v. 27)

Rashi: He loved you, but you hated Him, as in the common saying: What is in your heart about your beloved, is in his heart about you.

Be’er Mayim Chayim: In other words, since the Jewish people hated God, they imagined that God hated them too.

Nachalas Ya’akov: Thus, the “common saying” (“What is in your heart etc.”) is not in fact applicable to God, for He loved the Jewish people, even though they hated Him.

Devak Tov: Rashi was troubled by the question: What made the Jewish people think that God hated them?

Why did the Jewish people speak slanderously in their tents and not in public? (v. 27)

Ramban: When Yehoshua and Calev persisted in urging the people to go to war, the other spies met with the Jewish people in their tents to speak slanderously about the Land.

These meetings were held secretly in the tents in order to hide what was happening from Moshe.
26 But you did not want to go up (to the Land), and you rebelled against the word of God, your God. 27 You spoke slanderously in your tents. You said, “God took us out of the land of Egypt because He hates us! (He wishes) to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites and destroy us! 28 Where shall we go? Our brothers have demoralized us, saying, ‘(We saw) a people larger and taller than ourselves and enormous cities, fortified up to the heavens. And we have even seen giants there!’”

29 I said to you, “Don’t (let your spirits) be broken! Don’t be afraid of them! 30 God—your God, who goes ahead of you—will fight on your behalf, just as He did everything (on your behalf) in Egypt, before your eyes. 31 And as you have seen how God, your God, has carried you in the desert as a man carries his son, throughout your entire journey, until you arrived here. 32 But you do not believe God, your God about this statement (that He promised to bring you to the Land. 33 Yet you see that God) goes along the route ahead of you, to search out a place for you in which to encamp, and (He provides a pillar of) fire at night, to enable you to see while you travel, and a cloud (of protection) by day!”

34 God heard the sound of your comments and became angry. He swore, saying, “Not a single man from this evil generation will see the good Land, which I swore to give to your forefathers, except for Caleb the son of Yefuneh. He will see it, and I will give the land (of Chevron) which he trod upon to him and his children, because he followed God loyally.”

TORAS MENACHEM

The Jewish People’s Slander (v. 27)

In verse 27, Moshe rebukes the Jewish people for saying, “God took us out of the land of Egypt because He hates us!” Rashi’s explanation prompts the following questions:

a.) What was troubling Rashi? Devek Tov argues that Rashi was troubled why the Jewish people would think that God hated them. However, this is difficult to accept, since the Torah explains the Jewish peoples logic: “God took us out of the land of Egypt because He hates us, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites and destroy us!”

Since the Torah itself explains why the Jewish people thought that God hated them, why did Rashi need to explain anything?

b.) Be’er Mayim Chayim and Nachalas Ya’akov explain that the Jewish people hated God, so they imagined that God hated them too. Thus, Rashi’s common saying (“What is in your heart about your beloved, is in his heart about you”) is not meant literally here, because God did not hate the Jewish people as a result of the fact that they hated Him. However, if this is the case, why did Rashi not stress that his analogy was imaginary and not real? Surely Rashi should have written, “What is in your heart about your beloved, you think is in his heart about you”?

The Explanation

In Parshas Shelach, the Torah states explicitly that the spies spoke slanderously about the Land in public (see Bamidbar 13:32ff.). So, on reaching our verse, Rashi was troubled why the Torah states, “You spoke slanderously in your tents”? Rashi concluded that there must have been two types of slander spoken here. First, the spies disparaged the Land in public, and clearly the statements made in public had to be based on reality. In private, however, the people were prone to speak a type of slander which was totally untrue (cf. Ramban).

Thus, the slander which was spoken by the Jewish people in their tents was clearly not that which is expressed at the end of verse 27 (that God would “deliver us into the hands of the Amorites and destroy us!”), for this is an argument which did appear to have some basis to it, considering the formidable enemy that lay ahead.

Rather, the slander which they spoke in the tents was clearly limited to just the first half of the verse, “God took us out of the land of Egypt because He hates us!”—a slanderous claim which has no substance to it at all (as Rashi stresses at the beginning of his comment, that in truth, “He loved you”). Nobody could make this claim in public, as it would be quickly refuted.

I.e. Rashi’s innovation here is that the two statements in verse 27 refer to two different types of slander said on different occasions, in different locations.

In order to stress further the content of Moshe’s rebuke here, Rashi cited the saying, “What is in your heart about your beloved, is in his heart about you.” Moshe was stressing that not only did the Jewish people’s private slander have no basis, it was in fact the very opposite of the truth.

If they recognized the fact that they hated God, they would have no reason to complain about how He treated them. Instead, they claimed that they genuinely loved God but they felt that God hated them, despite their love for Him. In truth, however, the reverse was true: God loved the Jewish people, but they hated Him.

So Moshe said, “What is in your heart about your beloved, is in his heart about you,” i.e. the very same complaint that you have about Him, He has about you. You claim that you love Him despite His hatred for you, but in truth, He loves you despite your hatred for Him!

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 17ff.)

The Last Word

Even when the Jewish people lost faith in God, to the extent that they felt God hated them, Rashi writes that, in truth, “He loved you.” This teaches us that however low a person falls spiritually, he should know that God continues to love Him. In fact, the very awareness that God still loves the person, despite his lowly state, provides the person with the inspiration to return to God, so he can begin to reciprocate the love which has always been extended to him.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 23)
Was Moshe prevented from entering the Land due to the sin of the spies? (v. 37)

**Ramban:** No. Moshe was prevented from entering the Land for not sanctifying God’s Name at the waters of Merivah (BamidBar 20:12).

The reason why Moshe referred to this detail here is because he wished to list together all those individuals who had been prevented from entering the Land as a punishment.

Moshe also stressed that his own failure to sanctify God’s Name at the waters of Merivah had been caused by the Jewish people themselves (“Because of you, God also became angry with me”), for the event transpired because of the quarrels of the Jewish people.

The fact that Moshe was not destined to enter the Land also serves as an introduction to the following verse (38), which states that Yehoshua will lead the Jewish people into the Land of Israel.
Because of you, God also became angry with me, saying, “You will not come there (to the Land) either!”

“Yehoshua, the son of Nun, who stands at your side, will go there. Support him, for he will lead the Jewish people to inherit it.”

(Also,) your small children, about whom you said that they will be taken as captives, and your children, who do not yet know (the difference between) good and evil—they will come there (to the Land) and I will give it to them to inherit.”

You, (on the other hand), should turn yourselves around (180 degrees) and journey (back) through the desert, towards the Reed Sea (and then circle the South side of Mount Se’ir).”

You responded and said to me, “We’ve sinned against God! We will go up and we will fight, in accordance with all the instructions of God, our God.”

Each of you then equipped yourself with weapons, and you prepared yourselves to go up to the mountain.

God said to me, “Say to them, ‘Do not go up and do not fight, so you will not be struck down by your enemies, for I am not with you.’”

I spoke to you, but you did not listen. You rebelled against God’s command. You deliberately (ignored God) and went up to the mountain. The Amorites who lived in the mountain came out towards you and pursued you like bees. They struck you down from Se’ir to Charmah.

You came back and wept before God, but God would not accept your prayers. He wouldn’t (even) listen to you.

You stayed in Kadaish for a long time, as long as you stayed (in all the other desert encampments put together).

Nevertheless, since Moshe’s error here was unintentional, and the people’s sin was intentional, God did not punish Moshe with them.

Rather, when Moshe erred with the waters of Merivah, God punished him by preventing him from entering the Land, though really the punishment was a result of both the sin of the spies and the sin of the waters of Merivah.

MALBIM: The only two individuals from the generation that left Egypt to enter the Land of Israel were Calev and Yehoshua.

In reference to Calev the Torah states, “He will see” the Land (v. 36), whereas in reference to Yehoshua the Torah states, “He will lead the Jewish people to inherit it” (v. 38). Thus the reader will be troubled why Yehoshua was given a different role than Calev.

In order to preempt this question, the Torah included verse 37 (which states that Moshe was prevented from entering the Land) as a parenthetical statement, for it clarifies why Yehoshua was given the additional task of leading the Jewish people into the Land.

Moshe’s Punishment (v. 37)

The commentators discuss at length why Moshe mentioned that he was prevented from entering the Land of Israel in the middle of describing the sin of the spies (v. 37). The Torah states explicitly that this decree was passed upon Moshe due to the sin of the waters of Merivah—which occurred almost forty years later—and not the sin of the spies. In fact, Rashi makes this point explicitly in his comments to Bamidbar 27:13-14, (thus rejecting the argument of Abavbein, that Moshe’s punishment was given as a result of both sins).

Why did Rashi, who explains every problem that arises at the literal level, fail to address the above question?

The Explanation

At the literal level, Malbim’s explanation—that verse 37 is a parenthetical statement to explain why Yehoshua was rewarded more than Calev—is consistent with Rashi’s approach.*

Rashi did not feel the need to clarify this matter, since the reader is already familiar with the concept that the Torah will on occasion make a parenthetical statement, from a number of previous instances (such as above 1:16-17; Shemos 16:35, etc.). Thus, in cases such as these where Rashi felt the reader has enough information at hand to work out the solution with simple logic, Rashi chose not to “spoon-feed” the reader, but rather to challenge him to work out the solution for himself.**

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 14, p. 8ff.)

*Not all of Malbim’s statements regarding this matter are compatible with Rashi here, for Malbim also writes that the decree against Moshe was primarily a result of the sin of the spies, which is inconsistent with Rashi, as explained above. ** For Rashi was not merely a “commentator,” but a teacher who aimed to broaden the minds of his students and train them towards independent study (See Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5747, par. 25; see also sources cited in Klalei Rashi (Kehos 1991), page 72, rules 6-7).
השעיה המקובלת ברז'ו לשימור תכשיטים יוצרת הפרל בתוך הכסף. בחודש אוקטובר, ב'-10 מחוזותkerja עליה אלי נכסים.

好看的 המקובלת ברז'ו לשימור תכשיטים יוצרת הפרל בתוך הכסף. בחודש אוקטובר, ב'-10 מחוזותkerja עליה אלי נכסים.
We turned ourselves around (180 degrees) and journeyed into the desert towards the Reed Sea, as God told me, and we circled (the South side of) Mount Se’ir for a long time.

God spoke to me, saying, “You have circled this mountain long enough! Turn northward!”

Instruct the people, saying, ‘You are about to pass by the border of your brothers, the children of Eisav who live in Se’ir, and they will be afraid of you. Be very careful not to provoke them, because I will not give you any of their land—not even the right of passage (without their permission)—since I have given Mount Se’ir to Eisav as an inheritance. You can purchase food from them with money, so you can eat. You can purchase water from them with money, so you can drink. (Don’t be afraid to show them you have money, since you should be proud) that God, your God, has blessed you in everything that you do while you were wandering through this great desert for the past forty years. God has been with you, (so) you have lacked nothing.’”

We departed from our brothers, the children of Eisav who lived in Se’ir, by way of the plain which runs from Eilat and from Etzyon-Gaver, directing ourselves (northward) and traveling toward the Mo’av Desert.

God said to me, “Do not besiege Mo’av, and do not incite them to war, because I will not give you any of their land as an inheritance, since I have given (the land of Mo’av, also known as) Ar, to the children of Lot as an inheritance. Since the Aimim—a great and numerous people, tall like giants—lived there previously (before the Mo’avites, you might be under the impression that this is the land of the Refa’im, which I promised to Avraham, since the Aimim are also known as Refa’im. In truth, however, the Aimim that lived here are a totally different nation to the one promised to Avraham, and) they are also called Refa’im, because they are giants, but the Mo’avites call them Aimim. (The Mo’avites drove out the Aimim who lived there previously, and settled in it as their God-given land, just as) the Chorites originally lived in Se’ir, and the children of Eisav (gradually) drove them out, eliminated them from their presence, and settled in their place—and just as the Jewish people (will) have done to the land of their inheritance, which God gave them.”

At the Covenant of the Parts, Avraham was promised “the (land of the) Kenites, the Kenizites, the Kadmonites, the Chittites, the Perizites, the Refa’im, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites” (Bereishis 15:19-21). Rashi explains, “There are ten nations listed here, but He gave them only seven nations. The other three, Edom, Mo’av, and Amon, which are the Kenites, the Kenizites, and the Kadmonites, are destined to be our heritage in the future.”

Thus, here we read that the Jewish people were forced to circumvent these three lands, because, “I will not give you any of their land as an inheritance” (v. 9)—in the current era.

Why will the ownership of these three lands only take place in the future? The Mitteler Rebbe explains that the seven lands which the Jewish people already possess correspond to the seven emotional attributes of the soul, and that the three lands which will be acquired in the future correspond to the three intellectual faculties of the soul.

In the current era, God commands us primarily to “conquer” our emotional attributes—to coerce and ultimately transform our “animalistic desires” toward the service of God.

In the future however, when this “conquest” is complete, the main occupation of the Jewish people will be to develop the intellectual bond between man and God—i.e. the three intellectual faculties, represented by the three lands of Edom, Mo’av, and Amon.

Thus, in the last moments of exile, Chabad Chasidus has emerged, which brings knowledge of God to the three intellectual faculties of Chochmah, Binah and Da’as—a “taste” of what is soon to come.

Based on a public letter written by the Rebbe on the 3rd day of Selichos 5750
Who are the “Avim”? (v. 23)

RASHI: The Avim are part of the Philistine people, for they are listed together with them in the Book of Yehoshua, as the verse states, “The five Philistine lords: The Caizites, the Ashdodites, the Ashkelonites, the Gittites, the Ekronites, and the Avim” (13:3).

However, because of the oath which Avraham had sworn to Avimelech (Bereishis 21:23-24), the Jewish people were unable to take the land [of the Avim] away from them. So, I brought the Kaftorites against them, and they destroyed them and dwelt in their place. Now, you are permitted to take [the land of the Avim] from [the Kaftorites'] possession.

permitted to take [the land of the Avim] from [the Kaftorites’] possession. (13:3).
Now get moving and cross the Zered Brook!

So we crossed the Zered Brook. The time from when we left Kadaish-Barne’a until we crossed the Zered Brook was thirty-eight years, (sufficient time) for the entire generation of the men among the camp that were eligible for war to die out, as God had sworn to them. (So as not to delay the entry into the Land of Israel), the hand of God came to eliminate those among the camp (who did not die naturally during this time), until they were all gone.

Then, when all the men among the people who were eligible for war had all died, God spoke to me, saying, “Today you are going to cross the border of Mo’av (which is also known as) Ar. When you come near the Amonites, do not besiege them or incite them, for I will not give you any of the Amonites’ land as an inheritance, since I have given it as an inheritance to the children of Lot.” (Even though) this is also considered the land of the Refa’im (it is not the land of Refaim that I promised to Avraham, but rather, its name comes from a different group of) Refa’im that lived there before (the Amonites), whom the Amonites call Zamzumim. (They were) a great, numerous people, tall like giants, but God annihilated them before (the Amonites), who drove them out and settled in their place—just as He did for the children of Eisav, who live in Se’ir, when He destroyed the Chorites from before them, and (the children of Eisav) drove them out and settled in their place, (where they remain) to this day. The Avim, who lived in open cities as far as Azah (are descended from the Philistines whom the Jewish people are forbidden from conquering. However,) the Kaftorites came from Kaftor and destroyed them, and then settled in their place, (so the Jewish people may now conquer this land, as it no longer belongs to the Avim).”

Get moving and travel, and cross the Arnon Brook!” (said God).

“Look, I have delivered Sichon the Amorite, King of Cheshbon, and his land into your hand! Start driving him out, and provoke him to war! Today I am beginning to make all the

For a Jew, interaction with the physical world involves sifting out the sparks of goodness hidden within physicality (known as the process of birurim, or “refinement”), without becoming enticed and drawn in by physicality. Our daily interaction with the world is thus a form of “war” against the superficial, profane appearance of the world, in an attempt to “conquer” it for the side of holiness.

Some parts of this world, however, are simply too low to be “conquered” or spiritually refined, since their non-Godly veneer is too thick. Such things should be avoided by a Jew, as there is no chance of a successful conquest.

How then are these parts of the world to be refined? Rashi teaches us: “The Jewish people were unable to take the land [of the Avim] away from them”—because the Avim were too spiritually debased for the Jewish people to refine—“So, I brought the Kaftorites against them....Now, you are permitted to take [the land of the Avim] from [the Kaftorites’] possession” (See Classic Questions).

In other words, when the Jewish people follow God’s will, the non-Jewish world will assist in the task of global spiritual refinement, by preparing parts of the world for a spiritual conquest—parts that the Jewish people cannot elevate directly.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Devarim 5744)
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Why did Moshe send a “peaceful message” to Sichon (in v. 26) when God said to “provoke him to war” ? (v. 24)

RASHI: Even though God had not commanded me to make peace with Sichon, I learned to do so from what happened in the desert of Sinai, with the Torah that preceded the world. When God was about to give the Torah to Israel, He took it to Eisav and Yishma’el. Although it was clear to Him that they would not accept it, nevertheless, He started with them for the sake of peace. So too, I first called to Sichon with words of peace.

RAMBAN: The Torah states: “But from these (local) peoples’ cities, which God your God, is giving you as an inheritance, you may not allow any soul to live” (Devarim 20:16), which suggests that one is not allowed to make a peace treaty with the nations that occupied the Land. Nevertheless, Moshe would certainly not have transgressed this prohibition, and the fact that he sent a peaceful message here to Sichon indicates that it is a mitzvah to offer a peaceful settlement with the nations.

This point is proven from the fact that Yehoshua sent three letters to the Cana’ante nations before entering the Land, one of which offered a peaceful settlement (Devarim Rabah 5:13). Clearly then, it is a mitzvah to offer a peaceful settlement even with those nations which God commanded us explicitly to attack.

The only distinction between an obligatory war (where it is a mitzvah to conquer) and a non-obligatory war, is that in the former case, if they refuse to make peace it is a mitzvah to obliterate them entirely (including the women and children). In the case of a non-obligatory war, however, one should not annihilate the women and children, even if the nation refuses to make peace (Ramban to 20:10). This concurs with the view of Rambam in Laws of Kings, 6:1-5).

GUR ARYEH: The case of Yehoshua’s three letters is not a valid proof for Ramban’s argument that one should attempt to make peace even with a nation which God has commanded us to eradicate. For Yehoshua offered a peace treaty before he crossed the Jordan, when the war had not yet begun. (This view is also expressed by Ra’avad ibid.)
nations under the skies fear and dread you. When they hear of your reputation they will tremble and shudder because of you.”

I sent messengers from the Desert of Kedaimos to Sichon, King of Cheshbon, with a peaceful message, saying, “Allow me to pass through your land. I will only go along the main route. I will not veer to the right or the left. I will pay for food with money so I can eat, and I will pay for water with money so I can drink. I will only pass through on foot.” (Similar terms to this were agreed upon) with me by the children of Eisau, who live in Se’ir, and the Mo’avites who live in Ar. (I only require to pass through your land) until I cross the Jordan, to the Land which God, our God, is giving us.”

But Sichon, King of Cheshbon, did not wish to let us pass by his (land), for God your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, so that He could give (his land) into our hand, as it is today.

God said to me, “Look! I have begun to put (the ministering angel of) Sichon and his land (under) you! Start driving him out, so you can inherit his land!”

At Yahtzah, Sichon came out towards us to war. He was with all his people. But God, our God, gave him over to us. We destroyed him, his sons—(one of whom was as strong as him)—and all his people. On that occasion, we conquered all his cities, annihilating (the inhabitants of) each city, the

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**MOSHE’S PEACEFUL MESSAGE (v. 26)**

While it is universally agreed that before initiating a war which was not explicitly commanded by God there is an obligation to try to make peace (see Devarim 20:10ff.), the question whether one should do so before an obligatory war is disputed by the commentators.

Rashi maintains that there is no obligation to make peace, but it is permitted to do so. (Thus Moshe attempted to make peace with Sichon here in verse 26, “even though God had not commanded me.”)

Ramban, however, maintains that there is always an obligation to try to make peace before going to war, regardless of whether the war is obligatory or not.

Ramban cites proof from the case of Yehoshua, who attempted to make peace with the Cana’anites before going to war—for the conquest of Cana’an was certainly an obligatory war, requested explicitly by God.

Gur Aryeh argues, in Rashi’s defense, that Yehoshua offered to make peace before crossing the Jordan. After crossing the Jordan, however, Yehoshua did not attempt to make peace with the enemy, indicating that there is no requirement to do so.

However, at the literal level of Torah interpretation (to which Rashi always adheres), there is no indication that crossing the Jordan altered the requirement to eradicate the Cana’anites, and not to make peace with them, in any way.

How then, would Rashi respond to the argument of Ramban?

**THE EXPLANATION**

In Parshas Shoftim, where the mitzvah of making peace with the enemy is recorded, the Torah states, “When you approach a city to wage war against it, you should (first) make a peaceful proposal to it” (Devarim 20:10). Rashi (ibid.), writes, “The verse is speaking of a non-obligatory war,” indicating his stance that a “peaceful proposal” is only required in the case of a non-obligatory war.

However, note that the verse stresses, “When you approach a city to wage war against it, you should (first) make a peaceful proposal to it.” This suggests that, at the literal level, a mandatory peace proposal is only limited to the scenario of a non-obligatory war when one is actually in close proximity of the enemy. From a distance, however, a peace proposal would be permissible even in the case of an obligatory war, even according to Rashi.

And this explains why, in our case, Moshe was indeed permitted to propose peace to Sichon, since Moshe did not “approach a city to wage war against it,” but rather, he merely requested, “to pass through your land” (v. 27), without passing near any cities—“I will only go along the main route. I will not veer to the right or the left” (ibid.).

**MOSHE’S HALACHIC REASONING**

Having explained how it was permissible for Moshe to propose peace to Sichon, we can now address the question why he wished to do so, when no attempt at peace was requested by God.

Rashi writes that Moshe learned from the conduct of God, who first offered the Torah to the other nations, even though He knew they would reject it. So Moshe reasoned that he too should offer a gesture of peace to Sichon, even though he knew that God required the eventual annihilation of Sichon and his people.

In addition to this explanation, the following could be argued from a halachic perspective:

Rambam writes: “The lands which David conquered outside the Land of Cana’an...had an inferior status to the Land of Israel, because he conquered them before he conquered the Land of Israel....If he had seized the entire Land up to its borders and then afterwards conquered the other lands, then everything he conquered would have had the same status as the Land of Israel, in every respect” (Laws of Terumos 1:3).

Thus it could be argued that, likewise in our case, Moshe wished to conquer Cana’an before he conquered the lands ruled by Sichon and Og, so that these lands too would have the same halachic status as the Land of Israel. Therefore, he first requested merely to “pass through” Sichon’s territory, in order that the Land of Cana’an would be conquered first in its entirety, and then the Jewish people would return and conquer the Lands of Sichon and Og.  

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 14, p. 82, Sefer Hasichos 5750, vol. 2, p. 546, note 68)
The area of the royal palace," denoting that the area is called after its name.

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- What is יבֶל אָרָבָא? (v. 4)

**Rashi:** "The area of the royal palace," denoting that the area is called after its name.

**Talmud:** [According to one opinion], the superior oil [for meal-offerings] is from Tekoa [in the southern half of the Land of Israel]. Abba Sha’ul said, “The second best is from Regev [קרוב] in the Transjordan.” However, oil from all lands is valid (Menachos 85b).
We left no survivors.  
35 We only plundered the cattle for ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we had taken.  
36 (Throughout the entire land) from Aro'air, which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon, and the city in the valley, to Gilad, there was no populated city* too strong for us. God, our God, delivered them all before us.

37 (The) only (places that) you did not approach (were): the Amonite’s land, the entire area bordering the River Yabok, the cities of the mountain, and everywhere God, our God, commanded us (not to conquer).

THE WAR WITH OG, KING OF BASHAN

We changed direction and went up (northward) toward Bashan. At Edre’iy, Og, the King of Bashan, came out toward us at war. He was with all his people.

2 God said to me, “Do not fear him (even though he has the merit of having helped Avraham***), for I have given him, all his people, and his land into your hands. You will do the same to him as you did to Sichon, King of the Amorites, who lived in Cheshbon.”

3 God, our God, also delivered Og, the King of Bashan and all his people into our hands. We struck his (people) down until no survivors remained.  
4 On that occasion, we conquered all his cities. There was no populated city that we did not take from them: sixty cities, all the area of the royal palace—the (entire) kingdom of Og in Bashan.  
5 All these cities were fortified with high walls, double doors, and bolts, in addition to a large number of unwalled cities,  
6 but we destroyed them, just as we did to (the people of) Sichon, King of Cheshbon, annihilating the men, women, and young children of every city.  
7 We (reluctantly) took all the cattle and the spoils of the cities, as plunder for ourselves (since we already had plenty of plunder from the war with Sichon).

8 On that occasion we took over the land from the two Amorite kings who were on that side of the Jordan, from the Arnon Brook to Mount Chermon—the Tzidonites call Chermon, Siryon, and the Amorites call it Senir—all the cities of the plain, all of Gilad, and all of Bashan, up to Salchah and

TORAS MENACHEM

"There Was No Populated City Too Strong" (v. 36)

Chasidic thought explains that even the forces of evil become stronger by virtue of being united together. Thus, we find that the “Generation of Dispersion,” who rebelled against God, nevertheless understood the great power in being a totally harmonious community (See Sparks of Chasidus to Bereishis ch. 11).

Likewise, Sichon and Og were aware of the great spiritual power in communal harmony, which is why they specifically opposed the Jewish people entering the Land of Israel, where they would become a true Jewish community. Sichon and Og knew that their strongest force in opposing the Jewish people at war (from a spiritual perspective) was their own “populated cities,” i.e. places of communal harmony. Thus, the Torah stresses, “There was no populated city too strong for us...there was no populated city that we did not take from them” (2:36, 3:4), for this represented the dismantling of the spiritual—and consequently the physical—strongholds of Sichon and Og.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 29, p. 1f.)

"The Area of the Royal Palace" (v. 4)

Abba Sha’ul (in the Talmud) maintained that oil produced in Regev is second best to that produced in Tekoa in the Land of Israel. The first opinion, however, maintained that Regev cannot be called “second best.” Since it is outside the Land of Israel it cannot be mentioned together with Tekoa—even to be called “second best.” What was the underlying basis of their argument?

The first opinion viewed the holiness of the Land of Israel as being utterly unique, in that it is a Land in which God caused His Presence to dwell. To this, there can be no “second best,” and all the other lands are equally inferior by comparison. Abba Sha’ul however, maintained that the Transjordan does have some of the special sanctity of the Land of Israel, in that it became the eternal inheritance of the children of Gad and Re’uvin (upon their request—see Bamidbar 32:5). And this is the inner reason why Regev is called the “royal palace,” for it too has a glimmer of the Divine radiance of the Land of Israel.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 24, pp. 22-23)

* תרגי מגוריה (משנה לmışנה) מסכת צארכין 1א
** He was the “runaway” mentioned in Bereishis 14:13 who informed Avraham of Lot’s capture. See Rashi ibid.
Why were the tribes of Re'uvain and Gad told to go ahead of the other Jewish people into battle? (v. 18)

Rashi: They would go in front of the Jewish people to battle because they were mighty, and the enemies would fall before them, as the verse states, "He will tear off an arm (of his enemy in one blow, along) with the head" (Devarim 33:20).

Gur Aryeh: Rashi was troubled by the question: Why should the tribes of Re'uvain and Gad be required to lead the battle? It is understandable that they were required to join the battle, and not leave the rest of the Jewish people to fight while they relaxed in their newly acquired inheritance of land—but why should they be required to go first and put themselves in danger more than the others? Rashi answers this question by explaining that the tribes of Re'uvain and Gad went first, "because they were mighty."
Edre’iy, cities of Og’s Kingdom in Bashan. For only Og, King of Bashan, remained from the rest of the Refa’im (that were killed by Amrafeal and his colleagues*). His bed was a bed of iron, nine cubits long, and four cubits wide, according to the cubit of a (giant) man. It is found in the Amonite (city) of Rabah.

### The Lands of Re’uvain, Gad & Half the Tribe of Menasheh

I gave this land, which we acquired on that occasion—from Aro’air, which is by the Arnon Brook, half of Mount Gilad and its cities—to the tribes of Re’uvain and Gad.

13 I gave the remainder of Gilad, and the whole of Bashan—Og’s Kingdom—to half the tribe of Menasheh. (This included) the whole area of the royal palace and all of Bashan, which is called the land of Refa’im (which God gave to Avraham).

14 Ya’ir, the son of Menasheh, took the whole area of the royal palace until the Geshurite-Ma’achite border, and named (that part of) Bashan after himself: “Ya’ir’s Villages,” (a name that remains) to this day.

15 I gave Gilad to Machir.

16 I gave to the tribes of Re’uvain and Gad: from Gilad to the (area of the) Arnon Brook—including the middle of the brook and its bank, right up to the Yabok Brook on the Amonite border—17 the plain, the (width of the) Jordan and the area (beyond) its bank from Kineres to the Sea of the Plain, the Sea of Salt, under the waterfalls of Pisgah, eastward.

### Instructions For Battle with Cana’an

On that occasion, I commanded (the tribes of Re’uvain and Gad) saying:

“God, your God, has given you this land to take possession of it. (When Israel goes to battle) those of you who are in the army (should) pass over (the land) armed, in front of your brothers, the children of Israel, (for you are the mightiest tribe).”

19 “Only your wives, your young children, and your cattle—for I know that you have a lot of cattle—may live in your cities, which I have given you, 20 until God settles your brothers like you. Then they too will possess the land which God, your God, is giving them on the other side of the Jordan. (Only) then may each man return to (settle in) his inherited land, which I have given to you.”

### The Military Leadership of Reu’vain and Gad (v. 18)

Even after the explanation of Gur Aryeh, Rashi’s comment to verse 18 presents us with the following problems:

a.) It is commonly accepted that Yehudah (and not Re’uvain or Gad) is the strongest of the tribes. In Parshas Vayechi, Yehudah is described as a “lion,” which is the strongest of the animals, and Ya’akov promised Yehudah, that, “Your hand will be on the necks of your enemies” (Bereishis 49:8).

So how can Rashi write here that the tribes of Re’uvain and Gad were required to lead the battle “because they were mighty,” and not the tribe of Yehudah?

b.) In Parshas Matos (Bamidbar 32:17), Rashi writes that the tribes of Re’uvain and Gad were commanded to be “at the head of the invading armies,” suggesting they would join together with the other tribes’ armies at their head. However, here Rashi writes that they were required to “go in front of the Jewish people to battle,” indicating that the entire armies of Re’uvain and Gad were to go first, followed by the armies of the other tribes. What caused this change of plan?

### The Explanation

a.) To explain the verse, “Your hand will be on the necks of your enemies” (Bereishis 49:8), Rashi cites the parallel verse, “And of my enemies, you have given me the back of their necks” (Sam. II 22:41). This means that the enemy will “flee, so that I see the back of their necks” (Metzudas David ibid.). In other words, the unique might of the tribe of Yehudah is that they cause enemies to flee.

However, the conquest of the Land of Israel was an obligatory war in which the Jewish people were commanded, “You may not allow any soul to live” (Devarim 20:16, a verse already familiar to the reader from Rashi to Vajikra 25:44). So clearly in this case, where the Jewish people were required to obliterate the enemy, the ability to cause an enemy to flee was not ideal.

Therefore Rashi writes that the tribes of Re’uvain and Gad were chosen because “enemies would fall before them, as the verse states, ‘He will tear off an arm (of his enemy in one blow, along) with the head,’” i.e. they were effective in annihilating the enemy.

b.) If Moshe had led the Jewish people into the Land of Israel, we can presume that he would have enjoyed a totally miraculous victory,

* See Bereishis 14:1ff.
no different from all the other wars which Moshe fought that were won miraculously. Thus, the fact that Moshe did not merit to enter the Land with the Jewish people, and that they were led instead by Yehoshua, gave rise to the need to conquer the land within the natural order.

When Moshe instructed the tribes of Re’uvain and Gad in Parshas Matos, he was still confident that his prayers to enter the Land would eventually be accepted by God (see Rashi to Bamidbar 27:12), and that he would lead the Jewish people to a miraculous victory. Therefore he

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**Parshas Devarim contains 2 prohibitions**

1. Not to appoint a judge who is not learned in the laws of the Torah, even though he is learned in other areas [1:17].

2. A judge should not fear an evil man at a trial [1:17].
21 I commanded Yehoshua at that time (since he would be leading the battle*), saying, “Your eyes have seen all that God, your God, has done to these two kings. God will do likewise to all the kingdoms through which you will pass.”

22 (To the tribes of Re’uvain and Gad*, I said,) “Do not fear them, for it is God, your God, Who is fighting for you.”

THE HAFTARAH FOR DEVARIM IS ON PAGE 274.

instructed the tribes of Re’uvain and Gad merely to be “at the head of the invading armies.” Their presence was primarily symbolic, since their strength to fight a war within the natural order would not in fact be needed under Moshe’s miraculous leadership.

However, when speaking here in our Parsha, Moshe had already been told that his prayers to enter the Land had not been accepted (as Moshe related below, 3:26), so he was aware that the conquest would have to take place within the natural order. Therefore, he instructed the tribes of Re’uvain and Gad to “go in front of the Jewish people,” i.e. in front of all of the Jewish people, to utilize their effectiveness to the maximum extent.

(Toras Menachem)

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 9, p. 1ff.)
1. **Sinai to Kadaish-Barne’a**—The Jewish people departed from their encampment at Mount Sinai on 20th Iyar 2449 (Bamidbar 10:11-12). They spent 30 days in Kivros Hata’avah (ibid. 11:34), and 7 days in Chatzairos, waiting for Miriam to recover (ibid. 12:15). The final leg of the journey to Kadaish-Barne’a—a distance of 11 days travel—was completed miraculously in just three days, as a sign that God wished to bring the Jewish people into the Land of Israel speedily (Devarim 1:2 and Rashi ibid.).

2. **Wandering in the Desert**—At this point the original plan was to cross over the remaining part of Mount Se’ir northwards and enter the Land. However, at Kadaish-Barne’a the sin of the spies occurred, and it was decreed that the entire generation would die in the desert (Devarim 1:34-35). The people stayed in Kadaish-Barne’a for 19 years (ibid. v. 46 and Rashi). They then spent another 19 years circuiting the southern part of Mount Se’ir, camping at a series of locations (Devarim 2:1; Bamidbar 33:19-35), moving gradually eastwards across the entire southern border of Mount Se’ir as far east as Mo’av (Rashi to Devarim 2:1), before returning via Etzyon Gaver to Kadaish-Barne’a (Bamidbar 33:36; Rashi to Devarim 1:46).

3. **Journey to the Plains of Mo’av**—At this point, the Jewish people were ready to enter the Land of Israel, since the previous generation had died (Rashi to Bamidbar 20:22). Moshe requested permission from the King of Edom to pass northwards through the Land of Edom into the Land of Israel, but his request was denied (Bamidbar 20:14-21). Thus, they were forced to retrace the steps of their parents along the southern side of Mount Se’ir, heading east (Rashi to Bamidbar 1:4), circumventing the Land of Edom until they reached Mo’av. They crossed the Zared Brook (Devarim 2:13), but the King of Mo’av also refused them passage, so they traveled up the eastern side of Mo’av (Rashi to Bamidbar 34:3). They crossed the Arnon Brook (Devarim 2:24), and defeated Sichon at war in Yahtzah (ibid. 32-33). After defeating Og at war (ibid. 3:1ff.—not shown on map), the Jewish people settled in the Plains of Mo’av, where the Book of Devarim was said (Devarim 1:1 and Rashi ibid.). [See Appendix]
The word va’eschanan means “I requested,” referring to Moshe’s requests to enter the Land of Israel: “I requested from God...Please let me cross over and see the good land that is on the other side of the Jordan” (3:23-25).

Understandably, Moshe’s prayers to enter the Land would have been heartfelt and persistent. In fact, the Midrash states that the Torah’s use of the unusual term va’eschanan, which has the gematria (numerical value) of 515, alludes to the fact that Moshe made this petition no less than 515 times! (Devarim Rabah 11:10).

Eventually, however, “God became angry with me...and He did not listen to me. God said to me, ‘Enough of your (requests)! Do not speak to Me any more about this matter’” (v. 26).

Everything in the Torah must convey a practical lesson for our lives. But this account seems merely to convey a historical event. What does it mean for us?

The common perception of this incident is that Moshe’s prayers were not accepted by God, and that when God became angry, Moshe stopped his petition. However, we must keep in mind that Moshe was not only praying for himself, but for the entire Jewish people. Had he been the one to lead them into the Land, it would have immediately ushered in the Messianic Age for all time.

Therefore, Moshe could have followed the Talmudic directive, “Whatever the master of the house tells you, you must do, except [when he tells you to] leave” (Pesachim 86b). When God (the true “Master”) told Moshe to stop praying (i.e. to abandon the request for Mashiach, and to “leave” God’s presence), he was not required to follow the instructions of his Host, according to Talmudic Law.

So, despite the fact that Moshe was angering God with his persistent prayers, it is highly unlikely that Moshe actually stopped petitioning God, even after God said, “Do not speak to Me any more about this matter.” For Moshe was not praying for himself, but on behalf of the Jewish people—the generation that he took out of Egypt. And, as a true leader and lover of Israel, Moshe would surely have been willing to put himself at risk (by angering God), to make every possible effort on behalf of his people.

And this is the lesson for us: To continue to pray for Mashiach again and again, until we are finally answered! (Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Devarim 5751)
The image contains a page of a document written in Hebrew. Here is the translation:

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

*What type of request does signfiy? (v. 23)*

**RASHI:** is a derivative of the word פָּרָשָׁה, which always signifies [the request for] an unearned (מונע) gift. Even though the righteous could justify their requests based on their good deeds, [in their humility] they only request “unearned” gifts from God....

Another explanation: This is one of ten terms which denote prayer, listed in Sifri.

**MIDRASH:** Rabbi Yochanan said, “There are ten terms which can denote prayer, and they are: בְּעָשַׂה נָא בְעָשַַׇָ֛תָה הַכְּלָלָה, בְּעָשַׂה נָא בְּעָשַַׇָ֛תָה הַכְּלָלָה...” Of all these expressions,

**TORGAS MENACHEM**

**Moshe’s Requests (v. 23)**

Rashi cites two opinions concerning the nature of Moshe’s requests to enter the Land of Israel:

a.) That while Moshe could have insisted that God allow him to enter the Land of Israel because of his good deeds, he nevertheless did not do so. Rather, he asked God to allow him to enter the Land as one asks for an unearned gift.

b.) That Moshe prayed to God.

What is the difference between these two explanations? And why did need to bring two explanations?

**The Explanation**

Scripture states that God is “merciful to all His creations” (Psalms 145:9), indicating God’s intention to provide for the needs of everything that He created. A Jew has the further merit of being a descendant of the Patriarchs, through whom he has the rights to additional sustenance—as the Mishnah states, “Even if you prepare for them a meal like Shlomo’s banquet in his heyday, you will not have discharged your obligation to them, for they are the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov” (Bava Metzia 83a).

And by fulfilling God’s will, one has yet further rights to sustenance, as the verse states, “If you pursue (the study of) My laws (in order to) guard My commands and observe them, then I will give you rain at a (convenient) time, the Land will yield its produce etc.” (Vayikra 26:3-4).

Thus, in a normal situation when a person approaches God in prayer for his needs, he will be requesting something which he deserves, according to principles which God Himself has established.

But even though one is deserving, one is nevertheless required to pray to God, since that which a person deserves according to Torah is not a reserved for you. Much is the goodness that is kept for you [in the World to Come].”

* Of course, a person may be extremely wicked and not deserving of any sustenance, in which case he may still pray to God to support him even though he is undeserving. Nevertheless, in the normal scheme of things, a person should deserve God’s sustenance, as explained above.
Moshe’s Requests to Enter the Land

3:23 I requested from God, at that time, saying, 24 “God Almighty (Who is merciful in judgment)! You have begun to show Your greatness and Your strong hand to Your servant (with our victory over Sichon and Og)! For who is like God in heaven or on earth who can perform deeds and mighty acts like You? 25 Please let me cross over and see the good land that is on the other side of the Jordan, this good mountain (of Jerusalem) and the Levanon (i.e. the Holy Temple).”

26 But God became angry with me because of you, and He did not listen to me. God said to me, “Enough of your (requests)! Do not speak to Me any more about this matter.” 27 (If you want to see the debt owed to him by God. Rather, God chose to be merciful to His creations and He chose to give special treatment to the righteous etc. So, even that which a person deserves is ultimately given to him only because of God’s kindness. Therefore he should ask (and not demand) for it from God, in prayer.*

Rashi’s Two Explanations
With the above in mind, we can now turn to Rashi’s comments:

At first glance, the use of the unusual term va’eschanan in our verse seems to suggest that Moshe was not making a normal prayer or request. Therefore, Rashi explains that the term va’eschanan does not mean prayer at all, but rather that it “always signifies [the request for] an unearned gift.” i.e. Moshe did not pray to enter the Land of Israel, because the concept of prayer would indicate that he felt he deserved to enter (as explained above). Rather, “even though the righteous could justify their requests based on their good deeds, they only request ‘unearned’ gifts from God.”

However, this explanation is somewhat problematic at the literal level, because it does not appear to be consistent with other parts of the Torah. For we do not find that the righteous always request unearned gifts from God, but rather, we do find in a number of instances that they pray to God for their needs, as one prays for something that is deserved.

Therefore, Rashi brought a second interpretation that va’eschanan “is one of ten terms which denote prayer,” i.e. that Moshe actually prayed to God (because he felt that he deserved to enter the Land).

But Rashi considered this to be only a secondary interpretation, (even though it is more globally consistent) because:

i.) It fails to answer the main question, why our verse used the unusual expression va’eschanan for an ordinary prayer.

ii.) At the literal level, it is difficult to accept that Biblical Hebrew, the holy tongue used by God Himself, would have ten different words that mean the same thing.

The View of R’ Yochanan in the Midrash
In the Midrash, R’ Yochanan appears to offer a third, intermediate opinion. On the one hand, R’ Yochanan held, in accordance with Rashi’s second interpretation, that va’eschanan is indeed an expression of prayer, indicating that Moshe felt that he deserved to enter the Land. Nevertheless, R’ Yochanan maintained that outwardly, Moshe used “an expression that denotes asking for an act of grace,” rather than demanding that his request be granted based on his merits. This is because Moshe knew that “no creature has any worth to the Creator,” i.e. however great a person may be, his deeds are ultimately not needed by God.

According to the Midrash, Moshe felt he had many merits, but ultimately he was aware that his merits were not of any real value to God. In contrast, Rashi’s first (and primary) opinion maintained that Moshe did not feel that he deserved to enter the Land, as in his great humility Moshe felt that his merits were of no true worth. Thus, his request to God was not a prayer at all, but rather, “the request of an unearned gift.”

God’s Response (v. 26)
Based on the above, it appears that Rashi’s two explanations of God’s response (in v. 26), correspond directly to his two interpretations of Moshe’s request (in v. 23):

According to the first approach, that Moshe was requesting an “unearned gift,” there was no limit to how persistent Moshe could be, since in any case it was not dependent on him being deserving. God therefore responded, “[Request no more] so that people should not say, “How hard is the Master, and how obstinate and pressing is the disciple!”

However, according to the second approach, that Moshe was asking to be rewarded with entry into the Land due to his merits, God replied that his merits would be rewarded, but in another way—“More than this is reserved for you. Much is the goodness that is kept for you [in the World to Come].”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 28ff; Sichos Shabbos Parshas Va’eschanan 5748)

Sparks of Chasidus

Why did Moshe desire to enter the Land? Did he need to eat its fruit, or enjoy its delights? Moshe said, “The Jewish people have been commanded to observe many mitzvos which can only be observed in the Land of Israel. I will enter the Land so that all [the mitzvos] will be fulfilled through me” (Sotah 14a).

Moshe knew that the work of his hands was eternal. He knew that if he had led the Jewish people into the Land, the Temple would not have been destroyed and the Jewish people would never have been exiled.

Thus, Moshe did not say, “I will enter the Land so I can observe all the mitzvos,” for his agenda was not a personal one. Rather, he wanted to enter the Land so that “[the mitzvos] will be fulfilled through me,” i.e. that the mitzvos observed in the Land of Israel would be a result of Moshe’s leadership, and would thus be everlasting, without interruption or exile.

(Based on Sicha of the 4th night of Chol Hamo’ed Succos 5746)

* A person may wish to be rewarded with more than he deserves, in which case he must pray to God. Nevertheless, the concept of prayer in its normal context refers to a petition to God for one’s needs which are deserved by him.
לא ניתן לקרוא את התוכן המוצג בתמונה זו.
Land), go up to the top of the hill and lift up your eyes westward, northward, southward and eastward, and see (it from there) with your eyes, for you will not cross this (River) Jordan. Command Yehoshua (about the burdens of leadership). Strengthen him and encourage him (that he will not be punished because of the Jewish people, as you were), because (I assure you that) he will cross over (the Jordan) ahead of the people, and he will bring them to inherit the Land which you will see.”

29 We were living (at that time) in the valley opposite Beis-Pe’or (where you had worshiped idols. Unlike me, you were forgiven by God and He allowed you to enter the Land).

**Moshe Reiterates Principles of the Faith**

4 **Now Israel, listen** to the suprarational commands and to the rational commands which I am teaching you to perform, in order that you may live. Come and possess the Land which God, the God of your forefathers, is giving you.

2 Do not add (any additional clauses) to the word(s of Torah law) which I am commanding you, nor take away (any clauses) from it*, in order to preserve the commandments of God, your God, which I am commanding you. 3 Your eyes have seen what God did at Ba’al Pe’or, for God, your God, has eliminated every man who went after Ba’al Pe’or from among you, but you—who remain attached to God, your God—are all alive today.

5 Look! As God, my God, commanded me, I have taught you suprarational commands and rational commands to observe within the Land which you are going to enter and possess. You should preserve (the laws by studying them) and perform them. For this is your (key to having) wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations, who will hear all these laws and say, “Only this great nation is a (truly) wise and understanding people.” Which (other) nation is so great that it has a god so close to it, as God our God is (near to us) whenever we call Him? For, whenever we call upon Him (in prayer He answers). And which nation is so great that it has suprarational commands and rational commands which are fair, like all (the laws) in this Torah (of ours), which I am presenting before you today?

9 Just be careful and keep track of yourself well, so that you do not forget the things that your eyes saw (at Sinai). Do not let these things depart from your heart, all the days of your life. You should inform your children and your children’s children about the day you stood before God, your God, at Choraiv

TORAS MENACHEM

**Sparks of Chasidus**

“**Now Israel, Listen...**” (4:1)

If a person hears that his country is ruled by a powerful king who is surrounded by ministers that tremble in his presence, then the person is likely to follow the king’s orders. However, an individual who actually sees such a powerful king will be affected much more profoundly by the experience than merely hearing about him—for “seeing is incomparable to hearing” (Mechila, Yisro 19:9).

Moshe’s perception of Godliness was on the level of “seeing.” Therefore, he wanted to be the one to lead the Jewish people into the Land of Israel, to lift them to the level of “seeing” Godliness within the Land. Thus he said, “Please let me cross over and see the good land” (3:25).

However, God did not grant his request, so Moshe began to address the Jewish people with the words, “Now Israel, listen” (4:1). This was because Moshe recognized that he would only be able to inspire the Jewish people towards an awareness of God on the level of “hearing” and not “seeing.”

However, with the coming of Mashiach, Moshe’s request will be finally granted. For Mashiach will lift the Jewish people to an awareness of God at the level of “seeing”—as the verse states, “I will show you wonders” (Micha 7:15).

In fact, the Godly experience which Mashiach will show the Jewish people will be even more profound than that which Moshe had in mind. For then we will not only experience a metaphorical “seeing” of spirituality with the “eye” of the intellect. Rather, even our physical bodies will see Godliness—the glory of God will be revealed and all flesh will see together” (Isaiah 40:5).

(Based on Sefer Hama’amorim 5711-3, pp. 78-9; ibid. 5732-3, p. 163ff.)
How should you “look after yourselves very well” ? (v. 15)

RAMBAM: Having a totally healthy body is among the paths of [serving] God, for it is impossible to have understanding or knowledge [of God] when one is sick. Therefore, a person must distance himself from things that harm the body (Laws of Moral Conduct 4:1).
(and saw the flames and the sounds. For) God said to me then: “Assemble the people for Me. I will let them hear My words, so that they will learn to fear Me all the days that they live on the earth, and so that they will teach their children (what they heard and saw).” 11 You approached and stood at the foot of the mountain. The mountain was burning with fire up to the heart of the heavens (and there was) darkness, a cloud, and fog. 12 God spoke to you from the fire. You were hearing the sound of the words, but you did not see any image—only sound.

13 He told you His covenant, which He commanded you to observe—the Ten Commandments—and He wrote them on two stone tablets. 14 On that occasion, God commanded me to teach you (the Oral Torah, which explains the) suprarational commands and rational commands, so that you would observe them in the Land to which you are (now) entering, to take possession of it.

15 Look after yourselves very well (and remember) that you did not see any image on the day God spoke to you at Choraiv from the fire, 16 in order that you will not lapse and make a statue for yourselves, or an image of any form: the shape of a male or female, 17 the shape of any animal that is on the earth, the shape of any winged bird that flies in the skies, 18 the shape of anything that crawls on the ground, the shape of any fish that is in the waters, beneath the earth. 19 (Be careful if you) lift up your eyes to the skies, and see the sun, the moon, the stars, and all the hosts of the skies—which God, your God has given (to provide illumination) under the skies for all the nations—not to be drawn astray to bow down to them and worship them. 20 God took you and brought you out of the iron melting pot, from Egypt, to be His heritage nation, as (you are) today.

21 God was angry with me, because of you(r actions), and He swore that I would not cross the Jordan and that I would not come into the good land that God, your God, is giving you as an inheritance. 22 For I

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

**Mezritcher Magid:** A tiny hole in the body causes a big hole in the soul (Hatamim 7:28).

**Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch:** One may not strike one’s fellow, even if he gives permission, because a person does not have rights over his body at all, whether in relation to hitting it, embarrassing it, causing it any pain, or even withholding food or drink from it—unless this is done as part of the process of teshuvah, in which case it is for his benefit, to save his soul....Therefore it is permissible to fast his body through fasting, in the process of doing teshuvah (see Classic Questions).

**Zohar:** The weakness of the body is the strength of the soul (1 180b).

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

**“Look After Yourselves Very Well” (v. 15)**

- So much of physical health depends on spiritual health. If in olden days emphasis was placed on ‘mens sana in corpore sano’ [a sound mind in a healthy body], in our days, it is a matter of general conviction that even a small defect spiritually causes a grievous defect physically; and the healthier the spirit and the greater its preponderance over the physical body—the greater its ability to correct or overcome physical shortcomings; so much so, that in many cases even physical treatments, prescriptions and drugs are considerably more effective if they are accompanied by the patient’s strong will and determination to cooperate.

- Note that Rambam stresses how “having a totally healthy body is among the paths of [serving] God,” a point emphasized further by the Mezritcher Magid (see Classic Questions).

- Since physical health depends on spiritual health, a person who becomes ill, God forbid, should search his past deeds to try to identify what shortcoming may have caused the illness. However, this approach should be taken only regarding his own lack of physical health. When one sees that another person is sick, one should not think that this was caused by a spiritual shortcoming, since one is told, “Do not judge your fellow until you have stood in his place” (Avos 2:4; see Tanya, chap. 38). One’s first reaction to a sick person should be, to the contrary, that his sickness may well have been caused by physical health, as he may have weakened his body through fasting, in the process of doing teshuvah (see Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch).

- The statement of the Zohar, that “the weakness of the body is the strength of the soul,” does not mean to say that a weakening of the body itself brings about spiritual growth. Rather, the intent of the Zohar is that the desire for physicality, for its own sake, is counterproductive to a person’s spiritual growth.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol 6, p. 326; Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5739)
will die in this land (and even my bones) will not cross the Jordan. You, however, will cross, and you will take possession of this good land.

23 Be careful not to forget the covenant of God, your God, which He made with you, and make for yourselves a statue, an image of anything, which God, your God, has commanded you (not to make).

24 For your God, is a consuming fire, a jealous God (Who settles His score against idol-worshipers).

25 If you have children and grandchildren, and you grow old in the Land, and you lapse and make an idol, an image of anything, and (thereby) do evil in the eyes of God, your God, to provoke His anger,

26 I call the skies and the earth to be witnesses against you today, that you will be eliminated speedily from the Land which you will (soon be) crossing the Jordan to take possession of. You will not live a long time upon it, for you will be utterly destroyed. 27 God will scatter you among the nations, and you will remain few in number among the nations where God will lead you. 28 (Through being subjugated to idol-worshippers) there (it will be as if) you are worshiping (their) gods—man’s handiwork, wood and stone, that neither sees, hears, eats, nor smells.

29 From there you will seek God, your God, and you will find Him—if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30 At the end of days when you are in distress, and all these things (have) happened to you, then you will return to God, your God, and obey Him. 31 For God, your God, is a merciful God. He will not loosen (His connection with) you or destroy you. He will not forget the covenant of your fathers, which He swore to them.

32 (If you want proof of this*) inquire now about the earliest times that were before you, from the day that God created man on the earth! (Inquire from the creatures that are found) from one extremity of the skies to the other extremity of the skies! Was there ever such a great thing, or even a rumor like it, 33 that a people should hear God’s voice speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you heard, and survive?

34 Or has any deity performed miracles, coming to a nation and taking it for himself out from another nation, with proofs (of true power), signs (of God’s direct involvement), wondrous (plagues), with a war (fought by God Himself), a strong hand, an outstretched arm, and with awesome acts—like everything that God, your God, did for you in Egypt, before your eyes?

C hasidic thought teaches that in order for any entity to exist at all, God must renew it continually, by enlivening it with a spark of His own Existence. Without being connected to God—the True Existence—the entity is unable to exist. Thus, even the forces of evil must contain a Godly spark that enables them to exist.

But why, then, is it possible for the forces of evil to conceal this presence of Godliness within them? The answer is: To make possible the amazing elevation that can be reached through teshuvah. When a person has regressed to a very low spiritual state, the Torah teaches us that “from there (i.e. from amid the forces of evil) you will seek God.” This teaches us that the Godly revelation which a person reaches through teshuvah is disproportionate to the effort involved, like “finding” a previously hidden treasure, as the verse states, “and you will find Him.”

*(Based on Ma’amor s.v. Ani Ledodi, Shabbos Parshas Re’eh 5747)
Why did Moshe separate three Cities of Refuge? (v. 41)

Rashi: Fearfully, Moshe set his heart to the matter of setting them aside. Even though they were not to serve as Cities of Refuge until the three in the land of Cana'an were set aside, it was a form of participation in the mitzvah. Since a mitzvah has come to my hand, I will do it.”

Rambam: The three [cities] in the Transjordan did not serve as a haven until the three in the land of Cana'an were set aside.

Why then did [Moshe] set them aside? He said, “Since a mitzvah has come to my hand, I will do it” (Laws of a Murderer and the Protection of Life 8:3).

Moshe's Three Cities (v. 41)

The Cities of Refuge only became a haven for accidental murderers upon the Jewish people's entry into the Land of Cana'an (as Rashi stresses here; see Bamidbar 35:10). Thus, so long as Moshe was hopeful that he would enter the Land, there was no need for him to begin setting aside these cities, as he would have expected to fulfill this mitzvah only when it would become relevant—i.e. after entering the Land of Cana'an.
(When the Torah was given) you were shown (the seven heavens), in order (for you) to know that God is God. There is none other besides Him. From the skies, He let you hear His voice, to educate you. He showed you His great fire upon the earth, and you heard His words from the fire.

(He did all of this) because He loved your forefathers, and He chose their children after them. He brought you out of Egypt (like a father who leads his son) ahead of him, with His great strength. (His intention was) to clear nations that are greater and stronger than you out of your way, so as to bring you and give you their land as an inheritance—as (you see He is doing) today.

Today, you should know and take to your heart, that God is God in heavens above, and on the earth below. There is no other. You should observe His suprarational commands and His (other) commandments, which I am commanding you today, so that He will be good to you and your children after you. Then you will remain for a long time in the land that God, your God, is giving you eternally.

**Separation of Cities of Refuge in Transjordan**

At that time, Moshe separated three cities on the (east) side of the Jordan where the sun rises, so that (at a later time, when the cities would become active) a murderer might flee there. (If a person) murders his fellow unintentionally, provided he did not hate him yesterday or the day before, he may flee to one of these cities and live:

Betzer in the desert, in the flatlands of (the tribe of) Re’uwain.

Nevertheless, Rashi stresses that Moshe did so “fearfully,” since:

a.) The mitzvah of setting aside the cities had not yet begun, so Moshe feared that his actions were premature; and,

b.) This mitzvah might be intrinsically connected with entering the Land of Cana’an, and since God had decreed that Moshe was not permitted to enter the Land, Moshe feared that this mitzvah was not meant for him to observe.

However, we are still left with the question: What did Moshe accomplish by performing a mitzvah before its time?

**The Explanation**

Moshe’s early separation of Cities of Refuge in the Transjordan could be approached in one of two ways:

a.) It was merely a non-halachic preparation for the mitzvah which was to be performed at a later date; or,

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

**“There is None Other Besides Him”** (v. 35)

In truth, even the creations do not exist as entities in their own right, as it appears to our eyes. We perceive it that way because we do not see Godly energy. However, from the perspective of the Godly energy which enlivens us, our existence is totally nullified into absolute nothingness, like a ray of light inside the globe of the sun.... Thus it follows that there is no existence at all outside that of God.”

(Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Achdus Hashem ch. 3)

Even in the current period immediately preceding the true and complete redemption, the way a Jew acts in day-to-day life should resemble life as it will be during the actual Messianic Era.

“One of the most fundamental aspects of the future era is that there will be the fullest expression of the verse, ‘You were shown (the heavens), in order (for you) to know that God is God. There is none other besides Him.’ I.e. it will be revealed throughout the entire world that ‘there is none other besides Him’—that there is no existence other than God.”

“It is this kind of feeling which is required too in one’s daily lives now: A person should feel literally, in every part of his life, that ‘there is none other besides Him.” In other words, not only should one’s worldly pursuits be done for the sake of a Godly purpose—i.e. that one feels the dichotomy between the ‘worldly’ and the ‘Godly,’ but that one nevertheless dedicates his worldly activities to a higher purpose. Rather, one should feel the Godly identity of the worldly matters themselves. Consequently, he will not even become aware of any existence other than that of God, since he feels that ‘there is none other besides Him.”

(Freely translated from Sichas Simchas Torah 5752)

* Concerning the difference between the two statements “There is none other besides Him” (v. 35) and “There is no other” (v. 39)—see Likutei Sichos vol. 4, pp. 1334-5; ibid. vol. 25, p. 202, note 84, and sources cited loc cit; Sefer Hasichos 5752, vol. 2, p. 349, note 46.
b.) Moshe performed the actual halachic designation of these cities. The cities were then “activated” as functional Cities of Refuge when the mitzvah became applicable, when the other cities were designated in the Land of Canaan.*

A practical difference between these two approaches would be whether the Transjordanian cities would have to be re-designated (by Yehoshua) after the three cities had been designated in the Land of Canaan.

According to the first approach ‘a,’ Moshe’s designation was not halachically effective, so the cities would indeed have to be redesignated; but according to approach ‘b’ this had already taken place.

It appears that Rashi and Rambam differ over this matter:

Rashi stresses that Moshe said, “Since it is possible to do a mitzvah, I will do it,” suggesting that Moshe actually observed the mitzvah (halachic requirement) of separating the cities—i.e. approach ‘b’ above.

* Or, perhaps it could be argued that when the three cities were designated in the Land of Canaan, the three Transjordanian cities retroactively attained the status of fullyfledged Cities of Refuge since the time when Moshe designated them (See Tzalnas Pane’ach al Hatorah to 3:25).
The following is the law which Moshe put before the children of Israel. These are the (same) testimonies, suprarational commands and rational commands which Moshe told the children of Israel when they went out of Egypt, (and he repeated them now, while they were) on the (east) side of the Jordan area (in the plains of Mo‘au), in the valley opposite Beis-Pe‘or. (It was) the land of Sichon, King of the Amorites, who lived in Cheshbon, whom Moshe and the children of Israel defeated, after they left Egypt. They took possession of his land, and the land of Og, King of Bashan—the two Amorite kings, who were on the (east) side of the Jordan, where the sun rises—from Aro‘air, which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon, to Mount Siyon, which is (Mount) Chermon, and all the plain across the Jordan eastward as far as the Sea of the Plain, under the waterfalls of Pisgah.

Moshe called all Israel and said to them:

Listen, Israel, to the suprarational commands and rational commands which I am speaking in your ears today! Learn them, and be careful to observe them!

1. God our God made a covenant with us in Choraiv. 2. God did not make this covenant (only) with our ancestors, but with us, all of us who are here alive today. 3. At the mountain, God spoke with you from the fire face to face. 4. On that occasion, I stood between God and you, to tell you the word of God, since you were afraid of the fire, and you did not go up on the mountain.

(God spoke to you,) saying:

6. “I am God, (the) God (of every one*) of you, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

7. “You shall not (possess an idol) of other deities (so long as I exist).”

8. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image or any picture of that which is in the heavens above, which is on the

Rambam however, writes that Moshe only said, “Since a mitzvah has come to my hand, I will do it.” This suggests that it was not in fact possible to observe the mitzvah itself, and it is only that “the mitzvah has come to my hand,” i.e. Moshe could participate in some way with the mitzvah, but that his action had no significance from a halachic point of view.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 39, p. 14ff.)

The two approaches concerning Moshe’s involvement in the designation of Cities of Refuge (see Toras Menachem) could be explained from a spiritual perspective, as follows:

The view of Rambam, that Moshe had no halachic involvement in this mitzvah, teaches us that Moshe was on such a high spiritual level, that even accidental sin (for which Cities of Refuge are built) was not compatible with his standing.

The view of Rashi, that Moshe did perform part of this mitzvah, comes to teach us that even though Moshe was, of course, well beyond the very notion of inadvertent sin, he nevertheless “set his heart to the matter,” for the sake of the Jewish people. Being a true leader, he catered to the needs of the people, even if this required him to “fearfully” extend himself to a spiritual domain which was beneath his own standing.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 39, pp. 20-21)
Our Sages learned from this verse that the voice of God, at the giving of the Torah, had no echo (Shemos Rabah, ch. 28). An echo is caused when soundwaves encounter a hard substance that cannot absorb the sound, causing it to be deflected. Thus we would expect there to have been an echo at the giving of the Torah, especially since it was a “great voice” which would bring a great echo. In truth, however, God gave the Torah in a manner that it was absorbed even into our physical makeup—and thus there was no substance from which to deflect, so there was no echo to be heard.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 4, p. 1092f.)
You shall not bow down before them nor worship them, for I, God, your God, am a God Who is zealous (to exact punishment), Who visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons, upon the third and the fourth generation of those who (continue in their fathers’ ways to) hate Me. 10 But I act kindly to those who love Me and to those who keep My commandments for two thousand generations.”

11 “You shall not take the name of God, your God, in vain, for God will not absolve anyone who takes His name in vain.”

12 “Guard the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as God commanded you (at Marah, before the giving of the Torah). 13 Six days may you work and perform all your labor, 14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to God, your God. You shall perform no labor, neither you, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, your ox, your donkey, nor all your (other) animals, and your convert who is within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest like you. 15 You should remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that God, your God, took you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm (in order that you serve Him). Therefore, God, your God, has commanded you to make the Sabbath day.”

16 “Honor your father and your mother, as God commanded you (at Marah), in order that your days will be lengthened on the land that God, your God, is giving you.”

17 “You shall not murder.”

18 “You shall not commit adultery.”

19 “You shall not steal (people, i.e. kidnap).”

20 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

18 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. You shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, his manservant, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, or whatever belongs to your neighbor.”

God spoke these words to your entire assembly at the mountain from the fire, the cloud, and the fog, with a great voice, which did not stop (for breath). He inscribed them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

Sparks of Chasidus

The Repetition of the Ten Commandments

Chasidic teachings elaborate upon God’s purpose in creating the world—that there should be a fusion of spirit and matter. Since God created the world in a manner that it is predominantly material, our task—generally speaking—is to infuse it with a higher purpose, and to reveal the inner, spiritual core which pulsates within every one of God’s creations.

There is, however, a danger in “overdosing” the world with too much spirit, beyond that which it can comfortably absorb. We must never forget that the goal is a unity of matter and spirit, where the physical world is “at home” with its Creator. We must invigorate and inspire our world, and not burn or blind it with a light that is too intense.

From where do we derive the strength and the sensitivity to achieve this difficult balance?

The answer is: from the two accounts of the Ten Commandments written in the Torah. The first account (in Parshas Yisro) where God’s voice shattered the heavens and the earth, gives us the ability to break through the barriers between spiritual and physical, and infuse the mundane world with Divinity. The repetition of the Ten Commandments, here in Parshas Va’eschanan, was said by Moshe, and was thus articulated in more human terms. This gives us the strength to bring Divine revelation to the world harmoniously, respecting the limitations that exist and yet gradually inspiring the world to overcome its limitations and become a “home for God below.”

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Yisro 5752)
Then, when you heard the voice from the darkness, and the mountain was burning with fire, all the heads of your tribes and your elders approached me and said, “Look! God, our God, has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we heard His voice from the fire. We saw today that God speaks with man, and (yet) he can still live. But why should we now die? For if we continue to hear the voice of God our God any longer this great fire will consume us and we will die! What (mortal of) flesh (and blood) has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the fire, as we have, and lived? You should approach (God) and listen to everything that God, our God says, and then you can tell us everything that God, our God, tells you. We will listen and obey.”

God heard what you said when you spoke to me. God said to me, “I have heard what the people said when they spoke to you. Everything that they said to you is good. If only their hearts would remain like this, fearing Me and keeping all My commandments eternally, so that things would be good for them and their children forever! Go and say to them, ‘Return to your tents.’ You, however, must remain here with Me, and I will tell you the entire body of commandments, the suprarational commands and the rational commands, which you will teach them, so that they can observe them in the Land which I am giving them to possess.”

Be careful about observing them, as God, your God, has commanded you. Do not deviate to the right or to the left. Follow along the complete path which God, your God, has commanded you, so that you will live and prosper, and your days will be lengthened in the land that you will possess.

This is the body of commandments, the suprarational commands and the rational commands, that God, your God, commanded (me) to teach you, to be performed in the land which you are about to enter and possess. (This is) so that you should fear God, your God, and keep all His suprarational commands and His commandments that I am commanding you, all the days of your life—(both) you, your son, and your son’s son—in order that your days be lengthened. You should listen, Israel, and be careful to do what is good for you, so that you will increase greatly, just as God, the God of your fathers told you (that He would give you) a land flowing with milk and honey.
Who are “your sons”? (v. 7)

Rashi: These are your students. We find universally that students are termed “sons.”

Sifsei Chachamim: The requirement to teach one’s son has already been mentioned above: “(This is) so that you fear God, your God, and keep all His suprarational commands and His commandments that I am commanding you, all the days of your life—(both) you, your son, and your son’s son” (6:2). Our verse appears to be an unnecessary repetition of the requirement to teach one’s son. Therefore, Rashi concluded that it refers to students.

Your Sons—Your Students (v. 7)

Rashi expounds verse 7 non-literally, explaining that the requirement to teach “your sons” actually refers to “your students.”

Sifsei Chachamim explains that Rashi was troubled as to why the Torah instructs us to teach our sons here in verse 7, when this precept was already taught in verse 2 above: “(This is) so that you fear God, your God, and keep all His suprarational commands and His commandments that I am commanding you, all the days of your life—(both) you, your son, and your son’s son.”

However this explanation is difficult to accept since verse 2 appears to be referring, not to a requirement resting upon the father towards his son, but rather, to an obligation resting on the children themselves. Furthermore, the verse does not refer to teaching Torah, but rather, the observance of mitzvos in general.

Thus, it would appear that Rashi was troubled by a different problem, arising from one of his earlier comments, in Parshas Vayechi:

On the verse, “I will separate them from Ya’akov, and I will scatter them throughout Israel” (49:7), Rashi writes: “There are no paupers, scribes, or teachers of children except from the tribe of Shimon, so that they should be scattered.”

Now, if our verse here in Parshas Va’eschanan were taken literally—that a father is obligated to teach his own child Torah and he may not delegate this responsibility to another—then “teachers of children” would only be required for orphans, or for one whose father is totally ignorant and is unable to teach him. Clearly, these are minority cases, so the reader will be troubled: Why does the Torah indicate that an entire tribe will be devoted to teaching children (and to be scribes) when the need for teachers is so rare?

In fact, even disregarding the above, a child who is learning Chumash for the first time—for whom Rashi wrote his commentary—would be troubled: Why does the Torah indicate that an entire tribe will be devoted to teaching children (and to be scribes) when the need for teachers is so rare?

Thus, in response to these problems Rashi explained: “These are your students. We find universally that students are termed ‘sons.’”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 9, p. 33ff.)
6:4-9

* Both the head and arm tefillin contain the same four scriptural passages. In the head tefillin these four passages are written on four different scrolls which are housed in four different compartments. In the arm tefillin the four passages are written on a single scroll which is housed in a single compartment. **Shemos 13:1-10 and ibid. 11-17 mention the Exodus; Devarim 6:4-9 and ibid. 11:13-21 do not. ***Furthermore, if the verse in Parshas Bo did stipulate a requirement for four passages, then it would turn out that the Jewish people could not fulfill the mitzvah of tefillin until forty years later, when the two passages in the Book of Devarim were given; and, from a literal reading of Parshas Bo, it appears that the Jewish people were being given a mitzvah that was to be performed immediately. ****Thus, according to this interpretation of Rashi, two compartments remained empty for the first forty years of the observance of this mitzvah.
What is the importance of mezuzah? (v. 9)

Rambam: Every person is obligated to be extremely cautious about mezuzah since it is a universally binding obligation. Then, every time that a person enters or leaves he will encounter the Unity of God, the holy Name of God....Our Sages said that any person who wears tefillin on his head and arm, has tzitzis on his garment, and has a mezuzah on his door, is assured that he will not sin....” (End of Laws of Mezuzah).

The Mezuzah (v. 9)

How are we to understand the following:

a.) Why does Rambam write here that, “Every person is obligated to be extremely cautious about mezuzah,” and not “...cautious about the mitzvah of mezuzah”? Indeed at the end of his Laws of Tzitzis, Rambam is particular to write, “A person should always be careful with the mitzvah of tzitzis.”

b.) The promise that “any person who wears tefillin on his head and arm, has tzitzis on his garment, and a mezuzah on his door, is assured that he will not sin,” was taken by Rambam directly from the Talmud in Tractate Menachos (43b). However, the Talmud quotes an additional verse to prove this point: “a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Why did Rambam omit this verse?

c.) In Rambam’s Halachic Code, the Mishneh Torah, the Laws of Tefillin precede the Laws of Mezuzah, and the Laws of Tzitzis follow later. Since the above assurance is the combined effect of all three mitzvos, why did Rambam not cite it after completing all three sets of laws, at the end of the Laws of Tzitzis (or, at the first opportunity—the Laws of Tefillin)?
• Write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your (public) gates.

**Warning Not to Forget God**

6:10 When God, your God, will bring you to the Land He swore to your fathers—Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov—that He would give you, (you will find) great and good cities that you did not build, houses full of all good things that you did not fill (them with), reservoirs (in the rock) that you did not carve out, vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and you will eat and be satisfied. But beware not to forget God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

13 You should fear God, your God, worship Him, and (only on this condition may you) swear by His Name.

14 Do not go after other gods, the gods of the nations who are around you, so that the anger of God, your God, does not become kindled against you, leading Him to destroy you off the face of the earth. For God, your God Who is among you, is a jealous God.

• Do not test God, your God, as you tested Him in Masah.

17 You should always be careful to observe the commands of God, your God, His testimonies and His suprarational commands, which He has commanded you. You shall do what is proper and good in the eyes of God, in order that you prosper, and so that you will come and possess the good land which God swore to your forefathers, driving out all your enemies from before you, as God has said.

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**The Explanation**

There are two quite distinct halachic obligations concerning the mezuzah. First, there is the requirement to affix a mezuzah to any appropriate doorpost on one’s property.

A second, entirely different obligation that one fulfills with the mezuzah, is not the consequence of an effect which the person has on the mezuzah (its affixment), but rather, an effect that the mezuzah has on him. Namely, that when the person passes in or out of a door upon which a mezuzah is affixed, the person becomes aware to think about God whose holy Name is written inside.

It is this second aspect which Rambam is speaking of here at the end of Hilchos Mezuzah, as he states: “Every time that a person enters or leaves he will encounter the Unity of God, the Holy Name of God.” Therefore, it would be incorrect to refer to this aspect of mezuzah as the “mitzvah of mezuzah,” since, technically speaking, the mitzvah of mezuzah is its affixment, and here we are speaking of the effect of the mezuzah on the person. So Rambam writes that one should be “extremely cautious about mezuzah” without any reference to it being a “mitzvah” at all.

Nevertheless, he writes that “a person is obligated to be extremely cautious about mezuzah,” stressing that there is indeed a halachic obligation here for a person to make himself aware of the content of the mezuzah as he enters or leaves a room, allowing himself to be affected by it (see Tax to Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah, beg. ch. 285).

Based on the above we can now answer the other two questions posed earlier (‘b’ and ‘c’):

Rambam mentioned the assurance against sinning (through observing the precepts of tefillin, mezuzah and tztitzis) specifically in his Laws of Mezuzah for, of these three precepts, mezuzah makes the most powerful contribution to the assurance. This is because the effect that tefillin and tztitzis have of reminding a person about God (thus deterring him from sin) are secondary effects of these mitzvos, whereas in the case of mezuzah, it is the mezuzah object itself that arouses an awareness of God:

In the case of tefillin, Rambam writes: “The holiness of tefillin is great, and so long as a person has tefillin on his head and his arm, he will be humble and God-fearing” (Laws of Tefillin 4:25). I.e. it is not “encountering” the actual tefillin itself that deters a person from sin, but rather the holiness which the tefillin emanates (a secondary effect).

Likewise in the case of tztitzis, it is not “encountering” the tztitzis object itself that deters a person from sin, but rather, seeing the tztitzis (merely) reminds a person of the fact (by various allusions**) that “the Torah equated it to all the mitzvos” (end of Laws of Tztitzis). And this will lead a person not to sin.

However, in the case of mezuzah, it is the mezuzah itself that affects a person, and not merely the holiness it emanates or the message it projects (which are secondary qualities). And that is why Rambam chose to stress the assurance against sinning specifically in his Laws of Mezuzah.

For this same reason, Rambam also omitted the Talmud’s reference to the verse, “a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” For this verse stresses that the three mitzvos protect a person collectively, with each mezuzah having a similar effect; and the verse also indicates that it is the mitzvos themselves that provide the protection. So, since Rambam did not rule in favor of any of these points, he omitted the verse from the Laws of Mezuzah.

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*According to Rambam, this is one of the 613 mitzvos of the Torah (see his glosses to Sefer Hamitzvos of Rambam). See also Sefer Hamitzvos of the Tzemach Tzedek (Derech Mitzvossecha) page 45b. **For example: a) A person ties knots to remind him of things, so too the tztitzis are knotted to remind a person of the mitzvos (Tur, Orach Chaim 24); b) The Hebrew word tztitzis has the gematria (numerical value) of 600, which when added to its 5 knots and 8 strings alludes to the 613 Biblical mitzvos (Rashi to Menachos 43b); c) The rechailes (blue coloring) in the tztitzis reminds a person of the sea, which resembles, the sky, which reminds a person of the Throne of Glory (Menachos ibid.)
For a Jewish person to marry a non-Jew is one of the greatest calamities, and not only from the religious viewpoint. Nor is it entirely a personal matter affecting the person involved, for it concerns the whole Jewish people, and there are few transgressions which affect the whole Jewish people as an intermarriage, God forbid. It is a transgression also against one's elementary honesty, for it is exceedingly unfair to the other party, from the viewpoint of each, and it is also unfair to the respective good friends, who wish to see their near and dear one lastingly happy, and not otherwise.

It has often been pointed out that marriage in general, even between two persons of similar backgrounds, entails a certain risk as to eventual adjustment and compatibility. Even if the two had been acquainted for some time, it is not a sure criterion as to what the relationship will be when the acquaintance is turned into a marriage.
In the future, when your son asks you, saying, “What are the testimonies, the suprarational commands, and the rational commands, which God our God has commanded you?”

You should say to your son, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and God took us out of Egypt with a strong hand. God enacted great and terrifying signs and wonders upon Egypt, Pharaoh, and his entire household, before our eyes. He brought us out of there, in order that He might bring us to the Land which He swore to our fathers, and give it to us. God commanded us to perform all these suprarational commands, to fear God, our God, so (He could) give us good all the time, and keep us alive, as (we are) today. It is a merit for us that we are careful to observe all these commandments before God, our God, as He has commanded us.”

When God, your God, brings you into the Land which you are going to enter and possess, He will drive away many nations from before you: the Chitites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Cana’anites, the Perizites, the Chivites, and the Jebusites—seven nations more numerous and powerful than you.

- God, your God, will deliver them to you, and you will defeat them. You must destroy them completely. Do not make a treaty with them. Do not admire them (in any way).
- You must not intermarry with them. You must not give your daughter to their sons, and you must not take their daughters for your son. For (one of their sons) will turn away your (grand)son from following Me, and they will worship other gods. Then God’s anger will be kindled against you, and He will quickly destroy you.

This is what you should do to them: You should demolish their altars, smash their monuments, cut

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* See also Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 376.
How does God pay a person who hates Him “to his face”? (v. 10)

Rashi: He rewards him in his lifetime for the good [he has done], so as to cause him to perish from the World to Come.

Why does the verse stress that we should observe the mitzvos “today”? (v. 11)

Rashi: For “tomorrow,” in the World to Come, you will take the reward [for observing] them.

Rewards in This World and the Next (v. 10-11)

In his commentary to verse 11, Rashi explains that in the World to Come, “you will take the reward,” for observing the mitzvos.

Be’er Mayim Chayim and Sefer Hazikaron explain that Rashi’s comment here is a continuation of his explanation to the previous verse.
down their idolatrous trees, and burn their statues in fire. 6 For you are a holy people to God, your God. God, your God, has chosen you from all the peoples upon the face of the earth to be His treasured people. 7 God did not desire you and choose you because you are more numerous than all the other nations, for you are (in fact) the smallest of all the nations. 8 Rather, God took you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, because of God’s love for you, and because He is keeping the oath that He swore to your forefathers.

9 You should know that God, your God, is the Almighty God, the faithful God, Who upholds the covenant and (rewards acts of) kindness to those who (observe) His (commands out of) love and (those who) keep His commandments (out of fear) for a thousand generations. 10 He causes (each of) those who hate Him to perish (in the World to Come) by paying (him fully in this world) to his face (for any good that he has done). He will not delay (payment to) the one who hates Him. He will repay him to his face.

11 You should keep the body of commandments, the suprarational commands and the rational commands, which I am commanding you to observe today.

THE HAFTARAH FOR VA’ESCHANAN IS ON PAGE 276

However, at the literal level it is difficult to accept that there is no reward in this world for the observance of mitzvos, since we find numerous verses promising rewards for the observance of the mitzvos (including the very next verse, at the beginning of Parshas Eikev).

How then, is this to be reconciled with Rashi’s statement that only “tomorrow,” in the World to Come, you will take the reward [for observing] them”?

THE EXPLANATION

The key emphasis of Rashi’s comment to verse 11 is that “tomorrow,” in the World to Come, you will take the reward [for observing] them.”

I.e. in contrast to this world, where reward is merely received for observing the mitzvos, in the future the reward will be taken. In other words, a person does indeed “receive” reward for observing mitzvos in this world, but in the World to Come, the manner in which a person will obtain his rewards will change—he will “take” them.

The disadvantage of having to “receive” a payment is that, even when a reward is owing, the recipient is at the mercy of his debtor. Thus, it is feasible that the payment may be delayed due to a secondary reason, and the recipient simply has to wait until he is paid.

If however, he has the ability to “take” what is owed to him, then there need be no delay, since he can help himself.

Based on the above we can now explain the flow of logic between verses 10 and 11, according to Rashi:

In verse 10 we first learn that God pays the wicked in this world: “He causes (each of) those who hate Him to perish (in the next world) by paying (him fully in this world) to his face (for any good that he has done).” The verse then continues that this payment will not be delayed: “He will not delay (payment to) the one who hates Him. He will repay him to his face.”

From here the reader will understand that the wicked are always paid in this world; but that the reward to the righteous is sometimes delayed. The following verse therefore adds, “to observe today”—that tomorrow, in the World to Come, you will take the reward [for observing] them.” I.e. the notion of a person’s reward being delayed is a phenomenon unique to this world, as in this world we merely “receive” our reward. However, in the World to Come, “you will take the reward,” without any delay at all.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 29, p. 41ff.)

There are two ways of understanding the mechanism by which rewards are given for observing the mitzvos:

a.) That the reward comes “naturally,” i.e. God created the world in such a manner that the observance of a mitzvah will automatically open spiritual channels which will bring the person reward.

b.) That the reward comes “miraculously,” i.e. the mitzvah and its reward are not in a “cause and effect” relationship. Rather, the reward must be generated independently—rather like rewards from one human being to another, which are awarded willingly (and not automatically).

The first approach (‘a’) is the method by which we receive rewards in the current era. Since they come “automatically,” they are simply “received” by their recipients (see Toras Menachem).

However, the rewards of the future era will not be a natural consequence of our deeds, but rather, like a separate “miracle” that is generated by God. Thus, since the process of reward is an additional activity by God, it will require an additional act from ourselves, that of “taking” the reward (see Rashi).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 29, pp. 46-7)
Parshas Va’eschanan contains 8 positive mitzvos and 4 prohibitions

1. Not to desire what belongs to a fellow Jew [5:18].
2. [To believe in] the unity of God [6:4].
3. To love God [6:5].
4. To study Torah [6:7].
5. To recite the Shema every morning and evening [6:7].
6. To tie tefillin on the arm [6:8].
7. To place tefillin on the head [6:8].
8. To affix a mezuzah on the doorpost of our houses [6:9].
9. Not to test a true prophet unreasonably [6:16].
10. To kill the seven nations that occupied the Land of Israel [7:2].
11. Not to have positive feelings for idol-worshipers [7:2].
12. Not to marry non-Jews [7:3].
The Name of the Parsha

The word Eikev literally means “because” or “as a result of,” as in the opening verse of our Parsha: “As a result of your listening to these laws....”

A further meaning of the word Eikev is “heel.” In the context of our verse, this has two implications:

a.) That we should be careful in observing even the relatively “minor” commandments, which we might be tempted to “trample with one’s heels” (Rashi ibid.).

b.) Our Sages referred to the period immediately preceding the coming of Mashiach as “the ‘heel’ of Mashiach.” Thus, explained the Tzemach Tzedek, our verse alludes to the pre-Messianic period when the Jewish people will eventually “listen to these laws” and return to God (Ohr Hatorah).

What is the connection between these two interpretations?

The absence of the Holy Temple clearly has a detrimental effect on the spiritual “health” of the Jewish people. In Temple times, the spiritual core of Judaism was easily accessible, and people found it simple to maintain an inspired and meaningful connection to their Creator. In times of exile, however, it is a struggle merely to sustain a basic observance of the mitzvos, never mind attaining a spiritual appreciation of them.

Nevertheless, there is actually a unique advantage to our relatively “uninspired” exile-Judaism which the spiritually nourished people of the Temple era did not possess. For ultimately, it is we who demonstrate true commitment to Jewish values, for we remain dedicated to God despite the fact that we are not easily inspired to love Him and fear Him. We do not see God, or feel God, for our generation is merely the “heel” of spiritual sensitivity. But that is also our advantage: We serve God, independent of our own feelings of inspiration—and that is the hallmark of genuine commitment.

Thus, having reached “the ‘heel’ of Mashiach,” we no longer wish to “trample” upon the minor commandments; for the distinction between “minor” and “major” is only significant for those who appreciate and understand the true worth of the mitzvos, like the Jews of the Temple era.

Our greatness, however, is our simple faith. Our unsophisticated approach to Judaism connects us to the very core of God’s Essence, which is simple and devoid of any multiplicity at all.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 9, p. 71ff.)
Rewards for Observing the Mitzvos

7:12
And what will happen is, as a result of your listening to (even the most neglected of) these laws, and your care in their observance, God, your God, will keep (His promise) to you: the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your fathers. He will love you, bless you and multiply you. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your soil, your grain, your wine, your oil, your cattle’s offspring and the best of your flocks, in the Land which He swore to your forefathers to give to you. You will be blessed above all nations. There will be no sterile male or barren female among you or among your cattle. God will keep every sickness away from you. He will not give you any of the diseases of Egypt which you experienced, (rather), He will give them to all your enemies.

You should annihilate all the nations which God, your God, delivers to you. Do not let your eye pity them, and do not worship their gods, for this is a tempting trap for you.

Not to Fear the Nations

7:17
You might say to yourself, “These nations are more numerous than us! How will we be able to drive them out?” Do not fear them! You should always remember what God, your God, did to Pharaoh and to the whole of Egypt: the great proofs (of true power) that your eyes saw, the signs (of God’s direct involvement), the wondrous (plagues), the mighty hand (of God that brought disease to Egyptian cattle), and the outstretched arm (that killed the firstborn), with which God, your God, brought you out. God, your God, will do likewise to all the nations whom you fear.

God, your God, will also send hornet swarms upon them, until the survivors and those who hide from you are destroyed.

Do not be demoralized by them, because God, your God—a great and awesome God—is among you. Little by little God, your God, will drive away those nations from before you. You will not be able to destroy them quickly, for then there might be too many wild animals for you to contend with.

God, your God, will deliver them to you, and He will drive them crazy until they are destroyed. He will deliver their kings into your hand, and you will eradicate their names from beneath the skies. Nobody will stand up against you, until you have destroyed them.

Classic Questions

Why does the Torah use the term Eikev, which can also mean “heel”? (v. 12)

Rashi: [The verse is suggesting]: If you will heed the minor commandments which a person tends to trample with his heels, [then “God will keep (His promise) to you”].

Midrash: David said, “Master of the Universe! I do not fear the important precepts of the Torah, because they are [obviously] important. Rather, I fear the minor precepts, perhaps I was lax with them because they are minor, and you said: Be careful with a minor precept just like an important one.”

Thus the verse says: “In keeping them there is great reward (לְֽהַלְּֽךְּ שָרְדֶּהָ תִּסְבַּהַה לְֽהַלְּֽךְּ שָרְדֶּהָ תִּסְבַּהַה)” (Psalms 19:12). And it is also written, “Oh how great (כְּֽהַגְּדָּדָה) is your goodness, which you have laid up for those who fear you” (ibid. 31:20). This refers to the reward for observing “minor” precepts (Tanchuma, Eikev 1).

The Reward for Observing “Minor” Precepts (v. 12)

The Midrash appears to suggest that observing the “minor” precepts of Judaism brings an even greater reward than that which is bestowed for observing the “important” precepts.

How is this to be reconciled with the principle, that “Be careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one, for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvos” (Avos 2:1)?

The Explanation

The reward for mitzvos is of two kinds:

a.) The reward for the very nature of the precept performed, where the relative importance of the various mitzvos is not accounted for; and

b.) A special reward dependent upon specific conditions, i.e., the nature of the person performing the precept, the kind of performance, and the circumstances of time and place involved.
C L A S S I C Q U E S T I O N S

What is meant by “all the commandment(s)” ? (v. 1)

Rashi: The term “all the commandment(s)” is to be taken literally.

[Another interpretation:] According to the Midrash Agadah [the verse is teaching]: If you have started a mitzvah, finish it, because only the one who completes it is credited with [the mitzvah]. As the verse states, “And they buried the bones of Yosef, which the Jewish people had brought up from Egypt, in Shechem” (Joshua 24:32). Was it not the case that Moshe alone took care of this [mitzvah of taking the bones, and not the Jewish people]?

However, since he did not complete it, it is accredited to the Jewish people, who did complete it.

Bartenura: Rashi was troubled why the Torah states כל המצוות (literally: “all the commandment,” in the singular), rather than כולם המצוות (“all the commandments” in the plural).

Rashi answers that the verse can be interpreted literally—that the Torah uses the singular when it really means the plural—but since this is somewhat difficult to accept, Rashi adds an explanation from the Midrash Agadah. This explains how the term “all the commandment” can be taken literally, [i.e. one must fulfill a mitzvah in its entirety to receive credit for it.]

Chizkuni: The term כל המצוות (literally: “all the commandment”) is written in the singular because it refers to the previously mentioned command (7:25) not to covet idols.

To illustrate point 'b':

Two people buy the same kind of esrog, pay the same amount of money, and make the same blessing. But one of them could less afford to pay the price. This person is performing the mitzvah at greater sacrifice. He is deserving of greater reward.

Or take the case of a heavy smoker who stops smoking before Shabbos and abstains from smoking throughout Shabbos. He is deserving of a greater reward than one who is less addicted to smoking.

Or the case of a “self-made” man, who never had occasion to take orders from anybody, and grew up with the idea of exceptional self-reliance. When such a person puts his own strong will aside and accepts the guidance and leadership of a spiritual leader in Israel, he is deserving of a greater reward than the person who has been brought up since childhood in the spirit of self-abrogation and submission to the wishes and guidance of the Rabbi.

Likewise, keeping even the “minor” precepts is in a way, a greater test of our devotion to the Torah, and therefore brings a greater reward.

(Based on a letter written by the Rebbe, dated August 26, 1948)

“All The Commandment(s)” (v. 1)

Rashi’s comments to verse 1 prompt the following questions:

a.) What was troubling Rashi? Bartenura writes that Rashi was troubled as to why the Torah used the expression כולם המצוות (“all the commandment(s)” in the singular), rather than the more appropriate כולם המצוות (“all the commandments”) in the plural.

However, it is difficult to accept that this is what prompted Rashi’s comment here, for in previous cases where the Torah used the expression כולם המצוות (in the singular), such as 5:28 and 6:25 above, Rashi did not comment on the fact. So apparently, the use of the singular in such instances did not trouble Rashi.
Eradication of Idolatry

25 You should burn the statues of their gods in fire.
- Do not covet the silver or gold that is on them and take it for yourself, so that you are not tempted to idolatry by it, for it is an abomination to God, your God.
- Do not bring any abominable idol into your house, for then you will become liable to destruction, like it.
You should utterly detest it, and utterly abhor it, for it is something to be destroyed.

Remembering the Forty Years in the Desert

You should safeguard the observance of all the commandment(s) that I am commanding you today, so that you will live, multiply, and come to possess the Land that God swore to your forefathers. You should remember the entire path along which God, your God, led you these forty years in the desert, in order to afflict you. It was to test you, to find out what is in your heart: Would you keep His commandments (without questioning Him) or not? He afflicted you and let you go forth so that you might keep His commandments, and you might possess the Land.

The Explanation

At the time when Moshe said this Parsha to the Jewish people, as they were about to enter the Land of Israel, the prohibition against coveting idols was not yet practically relevant. For it is only after “He will deliver their kings into your hand” (7:24), that it would become possible to “covet the silver or gold that is on them and take it for yourself” (7:25).

On the other hand, our verse clearly refers to mitzvos that could be performed before the entry into the Land of Israel: “You should safeguard the observance of all the commandment(s) that I am commanding you today, so that you will live, multiply, and come to possess the Land that God swore to your forefathers.”

Therefore, Rashi rejected the interpretation of Chizkuni, that our verse refers to not coveting the idols of the non-Jewish nations (mentioned in 7:25 above), since, at the literal level, our verse must be speaking of a mitzvah that was (or were) possible for the Jewish people to observe while they were still in the desert, before entering the Land.

Thus, Rashi was faced with a problem: It was only possible to observe all the 613 mitzvos of the Torah after the Jewish people had entered the Land, since many of the commandments depend on being in the Holy Land. So why does the Torah stress here, “You should safeguard the observance of all the commandment(s) that I am commanding you today, so that you will live, multiply, and come to possess the Land”? How could the Jewish people be told to keep all the mitzvos in order that they should enter the Land, when they could not possibly keep all the mitzvos until after they had already conquered it?

In answer to this question, Rashi brings two solutions:
- “The term ‘all the commandment(s)’ is to be taken literally,” i.e. notwithstanding the above problem, the verse could still be understood literally. Moshe was telling the people that they should safeguard “all the commandments” that they were in a position to observe at that time, and this would guarantee them a successful conquest of the Land.
- However, since this interpretation is clearly not ideal (as the verse seems to suggest that they should observe all the commandments literally), Rashi cited a second interpretation: “If you have started a mitzvah, finish it, because only the one who completes it is credited with [the mitzvah].”

In other words, the Torah’s use of the somewhat unusual term here, mitzvah, is suggestive of the Midrashic teaching that the one who completes a mitzvah is credited with having performed the whole mitzvah (for could be translated “the whole mitzvah”).

Thus, Moshe was telling the Jewish people that even though mitzvos had been performed over the last forty years, there was a special significance to the mitzvos that the Jewish people were performing at that precise point. For these last few deeds would complete the entire body of commandments which the Jewish people had been performing in the desert, and in the merit of this “completion,” they would “live, multiply, and come to possess the Land that God swore to your forefathers.”

The Last Word

The lesson that one who completes a mitzvah is credited with it (see Rashi), is particularly apt for our generation. For according to all the signs which were given by our Sages, we are presently in the last generation of exile, which will become the first generation of redemption. Thus, it is greatly encouraging to know that, despite the fact that the Torah study and observance of mitzvos in previous generations greatly surpassed that of our more humble efforts, nevertheless, one who completes a mitzvah is credited with it. Mashiach will come in the merit of our mitzvos, which are performed in the last moments of exile.
The Last Word

"That Great and Awesome Desert..." (v. 15)

Wandering through the desert before entering the Land of Israel—"that great and awesome desert, where there were snakes, serpents and scorpions, and thirst but no water"—is comparable to the current exile, which precedes the final redemption. This spiritual "desert" has the following properties:

"Great"—A person's spiritual decline begins when he thinks that the "desert" is "great," i.e. that the secular world around him is large and powerful.

"Awesome desert"—This leads him to think that the secular world is so overpowering that it leaves no room for Jewish values.

"Where there were snakes"—The hot venom of the snake represents heat and enthusiasm in worldly matters.

"Serpents"—This leads to a state where a person's enthusiasm for Torah and mitzvos is totally "burned" away, alluded to by the Hebrew term for serpent (עפר) which literally means "burnt."

"Scorpions"—The cold poison of the scorpion alludes to a subsequent state of total coldness and apathy in spiritual matters.

"And thirst but no water"—The person is ultimately so far removed that even when his soul thirsts for Judaism, he does not realize what he needs.

To eliminate all these symptoms, we need to address the initial cause: A Jew should be proud of the greatness of the Torah, and not the apparent "greatness" of his non-Jewish, secular surroundings.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 2, p. 371ff.)
hungry. He fed you with manna, which you had never experienced, nor had your fathers experienced, to make you realize that man does not live by bread alone, but rather, that man lives from all the utterances of God’s mouth. For these (past) forty years, your clothing (was kept miraculously and) did not become worn (with age) upon you, (and you always had shoes, so) your feet did not become swollen.

3 You should know in your heart that just as a person reprimands his son, so too God, your God, will reprimand you. You should keep the commandments of God your God, to go in His ways, and to fear Him. For God your God is bringing you to a good land, a land with streams of water, of springs and underground water that flows into valleys and mountains, a land of wheat, barley, vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of oil-(producing) olives and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without poverty (and) you will lack nothing in it, a land whose stones are (rich in) iron, and from whose mountains you will quarry copper.

4 You will eat and be satisfied. You must (then) bless God, your God, for the good land He has given you.

**Not to Take the Credit for Prosperity**

Be careful not to forget God*, your God, failing to keep His commandments, rational commands and suprarational commands, which I am commanding you today. 12 You might then eat and be satisfied, build good houses and live in them, as your herds and your flocks will increase, your silver and gold accumulate, and everything that you have prospers. As your heart becomes arrogant you (might) forget God, your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, Who led you through that great and awesome desert, where there were snakes, serpents and scorpions, and thirst but no water; Who brought you water out of solid rock; Who fed you with manna in the desert, which your forefathers never experienced, in order to afflict you and test you—though it

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

- **“He Fed You With Manna”** (v. 3)

The manna failed to provide satisfaction, and it actually left people hungry. Chasidic thought explains that this was because, being a food permeated with spirituality, manna gave people a taste of the infinite. When consuming a finite food, such as “bread from the earth,” a person will eventually become satisfied, since it is impossible to develop an infinite appetite for a limited taste. Manna, on the other hand, cultivated a person’s inner appetite for spirituality which can never be satisfied.

Eating the manna was thus an appropriate preparation for entering the Land, where the Jewish people would be challenged by various constraints—be they the trials of poverty, or (more preferably) the trials of wealth. Because our physical desires limit us; our spiritual desires—like those developed by the manna—liberate us.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 4, p. 1098ff.)

- **“You Will Eat and... Bless God”** (v. 10)

Why was the text of Grace After Meals, which was composed by Moshe, incorporated into the text that we use today (see Brachos 48b), when Moshe was thanking God for manna—bread from heaven—whereas we thank God for “bread from the earth”?

In truth however, Moshe’s words are applicable now as well, because it is not the physical efforts of working the land alone that causes the land to yield produce. Rather, man’s efforts merely create a “vehicle” into which God places His blessings, and it is the Divine blessing which provides us with sustenance. Therefore, even the food which grows from the ground is in fact “food from heaven,” so it is indeed appropriate—even nowadays—to thank God for our nourishment with a text which was composed in praise of “bread from heaven.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, pp. 178-9)

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* According to Smag, this is one of the 613 mitzvos. See Hisvaduyos 5747, vol. 4, p. 204, note 85.
לא ניתן לقرأ את התוכן המוצג בתמונה.
was for your benefit in the end— and you will say in your heart, “My own ability and the strength of my own hand has accumulated this wealth for me!” Then you must remember God, your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to make wealth, in order to establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, to this day.

What will happen is, if you forget God, your God and follow other gods, and worship them, and prostrate yourself before them, I testify to you today, that you will be destroyed again and again. You will be destroyed just like the nations that God (is now going to) destroy before you, since you did not listen to the calling of God, your God.

Not to Be Self-Righteous

Hear, O Israel! Today, you are about to cross the Jordan to come and take control of nations that are (even) greater and stronger than you, great cities fortified up to the skies, a great and tall people, the children of giants, whom you know and (about whom) you have heard (it said), “Who can stand against the children of a giant?” You should know today, that God, your God Who is passing (into the Land) before you is a consuming fire. He will destroy them, and He will subjugate them before you. You will evict them and destroy them quickly, just as God said to you.

When God, your God, has driven them from before you, do not say in your heart, “God has brought me to possess this land because of my righteousness,” and God (also) drove them out from before you because of the wickedness of these nations. It is not because of your righteousness or the integrity of your heart that you are coming to possess their land, but rather, it is because of the wickedness of these nations (alone) that God, your God is driving them out from before you. (It is also) in order to keep the word which God swore to your fathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov. You must realize that God, your God, is not giving you this land as a possession because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people.

Remembering The Golden Calf

Remember—do not forget—how you angered God, your God, in the desert. From the day that you went out of the land of Egypt, until you came to this place, you have been rebels against God.

At Chorav, you angered God, and God was furious with you and wanted to destroy you:

When* I went up the mountain to receive the stone Tablets—the Tablets of the testimony which God made with you—I was delayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights. I did not eat bread or

The Last Word

“My Own Ability...Has Accumulated This Wealth For Me!” (8:17)

Society teaches our children that: “My own ability and the strength of my own hand has accumulated this wealth for me!” A child is led to believe that, being a clever boy, he should use his brain to obtain whatever he desires. If he desires his friend’s sandwich, he will steal it. And, being clever, he is unafraid of the authorities, for he will devise a way of concealing his theft. No one can tell him what to do!

One effective way to correct the present situation is to institute a “moment of silence” in every public school, devoted to thinking about God, at the beginning of the school day, before studies begin. This will help a student to utilize his studies for worthy purposes, for justice and righteousness. He will then act both on his own behalf and for the public good, and he will come to understand that the public benefit outweighs his personal benefit.

(Based on Sichas 12 Tamuz 5744)

* Concerning the following see Shemos 31:18ff.
Why did Moshe "take hold" of the Tablets if he was already holding them? (v. 17)

OHR HACHAYIM: Until Moshe saw that the Jewish people had sinned, the Tablets hovered in the air above his hands ("upon my two hands"—v. 15). When he witnessed their sin, the Tablets lost their holiness, and he had to take hold of them and support them.

MIDRASH: The Tablets were a total of six tefachim (handbreadths) long. Moshe was holding two tefachim and God was holding two tefachim at the other end, leaving two tefachim unsupported. Moshe strengthened his grip, grabbed the Tablets and broke them.

Thus God said to Moshe, "It was you who broke them" (Tanchuma 11).

Why did Moshe break the Tablets? (v. 17)

MIDRASH: What can this be compared to? To a nobleman who wished to marry a woman through an agent. The agent went and found that the woman had been promiscuous with another man.

What did the agent—who was totally innocent—do? He took the marriage document that was given to him by the nobleman, and tore it up. He said, "It is better that this woman be judged as a single woman and not as a married woman!" And this is precisely what Moshe did. When he saw what the Jewish people had done, he took the Tablets and broke them, [so he could argue] that if the Jewish people had seen the punishment for idol worship [written there], they would not have sinned (Shemos Rabah 43:1).
drink water. 10 God gave me two stone Tablets, written with the finger of God. On them were all the words that God said to you on the mountain, from the fire, on the Day of Assembly.

11 What happened was, at the end of the forty days and forty nights, when God gave me the two stone Tablets, the Tablets of the testimony, 12 God said to me, "Get moving, and go down quickly from here, for your people, whom you have brought out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have rapidly abandoned the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molten statue!"

13 God then spoke to me, saying, "I have observed this people and—look!—they are a stiff-necked people (who do not like being rebuked). 14 Leave Me, and I will destroy them. I will obliterate their name from beneath the skies, and I will make you into a mightier and more numerous nation than them."

15 I turned and came down from the mountain. The mountain was burning with fire and the two Tablets of the testimony were upon my two hands. 16 Then I saw—look!—you had sinned against God, your God, you had made yourselves a molten calf. You had rapidly abandoned the way which God had commanded you. 17 So, I took hold of the two Tablets, cast them out of my two hands, and shattered them before your eyes.

18 I prayed to God about all your sins that you had committed—doing evil in the eyes of God to anger Him—for forty days and forty nights (on the mountain), as before. I did not eat bread or drink water. 19 For I was frightened of the anger and fury with which God had shown His discontent with you, wanting to destroy you, but God listened to me also on that occasion.

To Whom Did the Tablets Belong? (v. 17)

In addition to the solutions of Ohr haChayim and the Midrash, the reason why Moshe needed to "take hold" of the Tablets can be understood by first addressing the following question:

Presumably, the Tablets were public property, since they were given to Moshe in order to be placed into the Ark (which belonged to the public), together with all the other parts of the Tabernacle (see Rosh Hashanah 7a; Yoma 35b). This begs the question: How could Moshe break the Tablets if they did not belong to him. Surely, Moshe was vandalizing public property!

Did the Tablets Have Any Value?

At first glance, we might argue that the Tablets were in fact worthless, since in the desert, stone has no market value, as houses are not built there. Therefore, Moshe was not guilty of causing any damage, since the Tablets were of no real value.

However this solution is clearly unacceptable, because:

a.) Even if they are not used for building, stones do have some value, e.g. they can be used as simple furniture (cf. Shemos 17:12).

b.) According to our Sages, the first Tablets were made of sapphire, which is tremendously valuable (Tanchuma, Ki Sisa 26).

c.) In any case, since the first Tablets were formed by God Himself, they obviously had immense value.

"Damage" for the Public Good

Another possible approach to explain why Moshe was not guilty of damaging public property would be to argue that breaking the Tablets was actually for the public benefit. For, as the Midrash explains, Moshe broke the Tablets so as to reduce the punishment for which the Jewish people would be liable, due to worshiping the calf. Thus, it is only logical that the public would wish its own property to be damaged, for the sake of a public benefit.

Alternatively, we might argue that the public did not enjoy normal rights of ownership over the Tablets, since no person was allowed to use them or benefit from them in any way. Thus, in breaking the Tablets Moshe was not denying the public any privileges of ownership.

However, both of the above arguments fail to take into account that the breaking of the Tablets ultimately appears to have been an act of theft. For even if we accept the argument that Moshe did not damage public property because he acted for the sake of the public good, or that he did not deny the public any privileges of ownership, we are nevertheless left with the problem that the unauthorized use (or abuse) of another’s property is theft. And, in the case of theft, the law is that one may not steal another person’s object, even if it is for the owner’s benefit (e.g. one intends to replace it with a superior item—See Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 359:2); and likewise, one may not steal another’s property even if the owner does not enjoy any privileges of ownership (See Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, Kuntres Acharon 435:2).

Furthermore, the argument that the Jewish people had no privileges of ownership of the Tablets is simply not true, since the Tablets were given “to instruct” the Jewish people (Shemos 24:12), and Divine instruction is surely a tremendous privilege indeed.

Joint Ownership of the Tablets?

Clearly, the Tablets were not public property, otherwise Moshe would have had no right to break them.

Perhaps then it could be argued that they were in fact private property in which each member of the Jewish people had their own share. This notion would appear to be supported by the teaching that when saying the Ten Commandments, God addressed the Jewish people in the singular, rather than the plural, since He was speaking to every single Jew directly and personally (Pesikta deRab Kahana, end of Parsha bachodesh hashalishi; Tanchuma (Buber) Yisro par. 17). Thus, the Tablets themselves, which contained the Ten Commandments, likewise belonged to each and every Jew individually.

* The distinction between damage and theft is that damage means reducing the value of another person’s property, whereas theft is unlawful possession or use. Thus, one could be exempt from charges of damage if he could argue that he acted in the owner’s best interests, whereas the mere use of another’s property represents a transgression in itself, regardless of whether the owner benefits or not.
This opens a new argument in defense of Moshe's breaking of the Tablets. However, in the final analysis, this argument is untenable, because:

1. According to the view (cited above) that the Tablets were made of sapphire, it is likely that there was at least a prutah of value for every prutah. It is only in the case of remission (below, 5) that a prutah of value would have been negligible, so it could not be said that Moshe was guilty of theft.

2. In any case, the Torah forbids a person to steal even less than a small coin. Since a breaking of the Tablets is not a case of theft, it is not a case of stealing.

For a person to steal an item whose value is less than a prutah, it is necessary that the item be of some value. Since the Tablets were made of sapphire, they were not of negligible value. Therefore, it is impossible for a person to steal the Tablets even if they were of less than a prutah of value.

According to our view, it is not possible for Moshe to have broken the Tablets even if they were of less than a prutah of value. Therefore, it is not possible for Moshe to be guilty of theft.

In conclusion, our view is that Moshe was not guilty of theft. Therefore, it is not possible for Moshe to have broken the Tablets.
20 God was very angry with Aharon (whom you misled) and wanted to destroy his (children). So I prayed for Aharon too on that occasion (but only two of his children were saved).
21 I took your sinful object which you had made—the calf—and I burned it in fire. I crushed it, grinding it well, until it was fine dust, and I cast its dust into the brook that descends from the mountain.

— 22 (Since then) you (also) provoked God’s anger at Tavairah*, at Massah**, and at Kivros-Hata’avah***. 23 (Furthermore), when God sent you from Kadesh Barne’a, saying, “Go up and possess the Land I have given you,” you defied the word of God, your God, and you did not believe Him, nor did you obey Him****. 24 You have been rebels against God since the day I became acquainted with you! —

25 So I prayed before God. I prayed for forty days and forty nights, because God said He would destroy you. 26 In my prayers to God I said, “God Almighty! Do not destroy Your people, Your inheritance which in Your greatness You have redeemed and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand! 27 Remember Your servants, Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov! Do not react to this people’s stubbornness, to their wickedness or to their sin, 28 so that the nation from which you brought us out won’t say, ‘Because of God’s inability to bring them to the Land which He told them about, and because of His hatred toward them, He took them out to slaughter them in the desert.’ 29 They are Your people and Your inheritance, which You brought out with Your great strength and with Your outstretched arm!”

** THE SECOND TABLETS **

At that time***** (after forty days), God (forgave the Jewish people, and) said to me, “Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones, and come up to Me onto the mountain. And make for yourself a wooden ark. 2 On the Tablets I will write the words that were on the first Tablets, which you broke, and you should place them into the ark.”

3 I made an ark of acacia wood. I carved two stone Tablets, like the first ones, and I went up the Jewish people, he feared that his outright ownership of the Tablets (and the accompanying right to break them) had become somewhat confused. So, before breaking the Tablets, Moshe “took hold” of them once again, in order to establish his ownership of them unequivocally. (Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 51ff.)

[The Last Word]

Moshe “took hold of the two Tablets” (v. 17), acquiring them as his personal property, before he cast them out of his hands and broke them. For, being a true leader and lover of Israel, Moshe wanted to take sole responsibility for the breaking of the Tablets, without incriminating the Jewish people at all. (Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 56)

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1. The Talmud actually stresses that God gave Moshe the “words of Torah” as a gift. However, this included the Tablets themselves, on which the words of Torah were written, as the verse itself stresses, “He gave Moshe the two Tablets of testimony.” This point is further stressed in a number of places in scripture. See Shemos 24:12, Devarim 5:19, ibid. 9:9-11.
2. In the case of the second Tablets we indeed find a view that they belonged to Moshe in their entirety (Tanchuma, Eikev 9), though there are dissenting opinions that only the waste chippings belonged to Moshe (Nedarim 38a, Tanchuma ibid; Jerusalem Talmud, Shekalim 5:2; Shemos Rabah 46:2). The innovation here is that according to all opinions the first Tablets belonged to Moshe, in their entirety.
Why is Aharon’s passing—which occurred forty years after the breaking of the Tablets—mentioned here? (v. 6)

Rashi: Moshe juxtaposed this rebuke [about Aharon’s passing] with the breaking of the Tablets to indicate that the death of the righteous is as difficult for God as the day the Tablets were broken.

Divrei David: The Talmud states, “No righteous man departs from this world before another like him is created,” as the verse states, “The sun goes up and then the sun goes down” (Ecclesiastes 1:5; Yoma 38a). This is stressed by the Torah here, that after “Aharon died,” immediately, “Elazar his son was appointed as priest in his place.” Since Aharon was replaced by another righteous person, one would think that this minimizes the tragedy of his passing for the Jewish people.

Therefore, Rashi stresses that this does not soften the blow and “the death of the righteous is as difficult for God, as the day the Tablets were broken.” For just as the breaking of the first Tablets remained a tragedy even after they were replaced by the second Tablets, so too, the passing of a righteous person is particularly tragic, even though God replaces him with another righteous person.

Aharon’s Passing (v. 6)

In his comment to verse 6, Rashi explains the reason why “Moshe juxtaposed this rebuke [about Aharon’s passing] with the breaking of the Tablets.”

But why, then, is the mention of Aharon’s passing recorded here, amid the description of how the second Tablets were given, and not immediately after the breaking of the first Tablets?

The Explanation

The Torah records the passing of Aharon here, within the discussion of the second Tablets, because it only became clear that the breaking of the first Tablets was a genuine tragedy when the second Tablets were given. Until that point, there was a hope that the second Tablets would have been a perfect replacement for the first Tablets, which would have minimized the earlier tragedy. The second Tablets, however, proved to be inferior to the first Tablets, since the first Tablets were made entirely by God, whereas the second Tablets were made by Moshe, and only written by God. Thus, only when the second Tablets were given did it become evident that the loss incurred through the breaking of the first Tablets was irreparable.

Consequently, the Torah chose to teach, “the death of the righteous is as difficult for God, as the day the Tablets were broken,” here within the account of the second Tablets, for likewise, the genuine tragedy of Aharon’s passing only became apparent when “Elazar his son was appointed as priest in his place,” since Elazar could not fully replace his father, who was a much greater person than himself [cf. Divrei David].
mountain with the two Tablets in my hand. He wrote on the Tablets the same thing that was written on the first ones: the Ten Commandments, which God said to you on the mountain, from the fire, on the Day of Assembly. God then gave them to me.

I turned around and came down from the mountain. I placed the Tablets in the ark which I had made, and they remained there, as God had commanded me.

Rebellion in the Desert

— (Later on you did another sin which, in my eyes, was as bad as the Golden Calf. It was when forty years later) Aharon died (in Hor Hahar) and he was buried there, and Elazar his son was appointed as priest in his place. (A rebellious group from) the children of Israel (arose, planning to lead the Jewish people back to Egypt). They journeyed (backwards from Hor Hahar, where Aharon died,) through the wells of Benay Ya’akan to Mosairah (at which point a group of Levites, who were chasing them, caught up with them and defeated them). After mourning Aharon’s death while they were still there (in Mosairah), they journeyed from there (and returned to the camp at Hor Hahar, first passing) Gudgod, and from Gudgod to Yatvasah, an area with flowing brooks. —

The Uniqueness of Aharon’s Passing

One further problem with Rashi’s comment is why the Torah chose to teach us that “the death of the righteous is as difficult for God etc.,” for the first time here, in connection with the passing of Aharon? The student of scripture has already learned about the passing of a number of righteous individuals (the Patriarchs, the fathers of the tribes, etc.), and yet it is only with Aharon’s passing, forty years after the Exodus, that we are taught for the first time why the passing of a righteous man is so tragic!

The Explanation

In Parshas Bereishis, the Torah informs us that the ten generations between Adam and Noach lived extraordinarily long lives, but God then became angry with man and decreed that a normal lifespan would be 120 years (Bereishis 6:3).

The fact that we that find the subsequent generations between Noach and Avraham also enjoyed lengthy lifespans, is due to the continued, but diminishing impact of the earlier generations. Thus, in the days of Avraham, the average lifespan decreased to around 120 years (see Rashi, Bereishis 17:17).

Still, we find that all of the Patriarchs lived much longer than 120 years*, but this is hardly inconsistent with the rest of their lives which were filled with numerous miraculous occurrences, (and even Yishma’el lived a long life of 137 years (Bereishis 25:17), in the merit of Avraham and Yitzchak, and through their blessings). Similarly we find that Levi, Kehos and Amram lived well in excess of 120 years (see Shemos 6:16, 18, 20), but again, this is not surprising when we consider their exceptional merits.

The first** righteous person to be recorded in the Torah as having passed away at the “normal” age of around 120 years is Aharon***. Therefore the Torah hints here that, “the death of the righteous is as difficult for God as the day the Tablets were broken.” For in the case of those righteous individuals who lived more than a normal lifespan, it is obvious that their passing is particularly tragic, since having broken free from God’s decree of a 120-year lifespan, we would have expected them to live on indefinitely****. In normal cases, however, we might think that passing away at around 120 years is not especially tragic, as this is the age at which God had decreed man was to pass away. Thus, since Aharon was the first such “normal” case, it would appear at first glance that the tragedy was not as great as in the case of the Patriarchs, etc. Therefore, the Torah teaches us here that “the death of the righteous—at whatever age—is as difficult for God, as the day the Tablets were broken.”

However, this begs the question: If God Himself decreed that a person should pass away at 120 years, then why is it that the death of the righteous is as difficult for God as the breaking of the Tablets? Surely God should not be pained by something which He Himself orchestrates?

To answer this question, Rashi stresses, “The death of the righteous is as difficult for God, as the day the Tablets were broken.” In other words, while the passing of the righteous person was indeed decreed by God, the fact that it occurred on this particular day indicates that it is a “difficult” day for God.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Eikev 5730 & 5745)

Sparks of Chasidus

Why is a tzadik (righteous person) compared to the Tablets (see Rashi)?

The writing on the Tablets represented the “soul” of the Tablets, and the Tablets themselves, their “body.” The fact that the Ten Commandments were engraved into the Tablets, and not merely written onto them, means that the words and the Tablets (“soul” and “body”) became one single, indivisible entity.

Likewise in the case of a tzadik, it is not merely that his soul interacts with his body, but that the tzadik’s physical life is totally at peace with his soul such that “the life of the tzadik is not a physical life, but a spiritual life” (Igeres Hakodesh 27).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 14, pp. 32-34)

* Avraham lived 175 years (Bereishis 25:7), Yitzchak 180 years (ibid. 35:28), and Ya’akov 147 years (ibid. 47:28). **Miriam’s death is recorded before Aharon’s, but the Torah does not mention her age explicitly. ***Of course, it is not a question why Aharon and Moshe did pass away at the age of (or around) 120 years, since this was God’s decree upon all mankind. The question is only regarding those individuals who lived to well over 120 years after the decree had been passed, as explained above. ****cf. Toras Menachem to 32:48, below.
**Why did the tribe of Levi not receive a portion of the Land?** (v. 8-9)

**Rashi:** Because they were singled out for the service of the altar, and therefore were not free to plow and sow.

**Rambam:** Why did the tribe of Levi not merit part of the Land of Israel or its plunder?

Because they were singled out to work for God and serve as His ministers, and to teach the public about His morally upright ways and fair laws—as the verse states, “They will teach your laws to Ya’akov and your Torah to Israel” (Devarim 33:10). Therefore, they were separated from worldly matters: They do not join the army as the rest of the Jewish people, they do not inherit, and they cannot acquire things for themselves by a physical act. They are the army of God....

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

But this is not exclusive to the tribe of Levi. Rather, any type of person from among all the inhabitants of the world, whose spirit inspires him, and he resolves in his mind to set himself apart from worldly pursuits, to stand before God and serve as His minister, to teach the public about His morally upright ways and fair laws—as the verse states, “They will teach your laws to Ya’akov and your Torah to Israel”—he will attain the holiness of the Holy of Holies, and God will be his portion and his inheritance for all eternity. Even in this world, he will merit to receive his material needs, in a similar manner to the priests and Levites, as we see that David [who was not from the tribe of Levi] said (Psalms 16:5), ‘God is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup. You support my lot!’ (Rambam, end of Laws of the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years).

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**The Last Word**

**“GOD SEPARATED THE TRIBE OF LEVI” (v. 8)**

Rambam appears to contradict himself (See Classic Questions). First he writes that the tribe of Levi was “singled out to work for God and serve as His ministers,” suggesting that this role is exclusive to the tribe of Levi. But then he continues, “This is not exclusive to the tribe of Levi,” and it is achievable by “any type of person, from among all the inhabitants of the world”?

Rambam’s point, however, is that the tribe of Levi was appointed from above by God to be His ministers, and was blessed with the natural ability to do so. The Torah, however, grants the power to any individual person who wishes to avail himself or herself of the challenge, to become a true servant and minister of God, by making the effort (from below) to be “morally upright,” despite social pressures in the opposite direction.

Rambam also stresses:

- This is achievable by “any type of person from among all the inhabitants of the world,” which clearly includes non-Jews.
- That any person who dedicates himself or herself properly to God “will attain the holiness of the Holy of Holies,” i.e. the exalted spiritual greatness of the High Priest (for only the High Priest is permitted to enter the Holy of Holies).
- Clearly, however, Rambam’s assertion is that such a person achieves an equivalent spiritual greatness, but that he or she would not have the actual legal status of a Levite or priest.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Emor 5749 & Korach 5750, and Sichas Acharon Shel Pesach 5750; Likutei Sichos vol. 8, p. 325**).
Appointment of the Tribe of Levi*

10:8

At that time (after the sin of the Golden Calf), God separated the tribe of Levi (who did not participate in the sin), to carry the Ark of the testimony of God. (He separated the priests) to stand before God and serve Him, and to (make the priestly) blessing in His Name, which continues to this day. (Since they were set aside for holy service, and would not have time for agriculture) therefore, a (priest, who is from the tribe of) Levi, has no portion or inheritance (in the Land) with his brothers. His inheritance (comes directly from) God’s house, as God, your God told him.

Moshe’s Third Period on the Mountain

10:10

I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights (when I went to receive the second Tablets, and God was appeased) like the first (period of forty) days (when I was on the mountain), for God listened to me also at that time and God did not wish to destroy you.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Why did Moshe remain on the mountain for forty days and forty nights? (v. 10)

Rashi: To receive the second Tablets.

Targum Yonason: Moshe prayed for forty days and nights. God accepted his prayers that the Jewish people should not be destroyed.

● How was the third forty-day period “like the first (period of forty) days”? (v. 10)

Rashi: Just as those days were with [God’s] goodwill, so were these with [God’s] goodwill. But the middle [forty-day period], when I stood there to pray for you, was amid [God’s] anger.

WHAT DID MOSHE DO FOR FORTY DAYS? (v. 10)

Moshe ascended Mount Sinai a total of three times. Initially, he went up for forty days and nights to receive the first Tablets (above 9:9-11), and then, after breaking the Tablets, Moshe ascended the mountain for a second time, when he prayed for the Jewish people to be forgiven (ibid. v. 18-19, 25-29).

Forty days later, God informed Moshe that the Jewish people were forgiven (10:1 and Rashi ibid.). He then instructed Moshe to carve out two replacement Tablets, and bring them back up the mountain (Moshe’s third ascent), following which God inscribed the Ten Commandments onto them (ibid. v. 2-4). Finally, we read that Moshe came down from the mountain with the two Tablets (v. 5).

One detail omitted from this account is how long Moshe’s third stay on the mountain lasted. Therefore, after digressing to discuss various other matters (in verses 6-9), the Torah returns here in verse 10 to inform us that Moshe’s third stay on the mountain also lasted forty days and nights.

However, this begs the question: Why was Moshe required to stay forty days and nights on the third occasion? The first occasion clearly required a lengthy stay, since Moshe was taught the entire Torah; and the second occasion required forty days and nights of intense prayer to secure God’s forgiveness for the Jewish people. But why were forty days and nights required merely for God to inscribe the Ten Commandments on the two Tablets? After all, even a human being would not need to take so long to engrave 620 letters onto two stones!

Targum Yonason explains that during Moshe’s third stay he prayed for the Jewish people not to be destroyed, which would also explain why a long stay was required. However, Rashi clearly rejected this interpretation, since:

a.) He mentions only that Moshe’s third trip was “to receive the second Tablets,” and not to seek forgiveness.

b.) Rashi writes, “Just as those days were with [God’s] goodwill, so were these with [God’s] goodwill,” indicating that no appeasement was required during Moshe’s third stay.

So what is the reason, according to Rashi, that forty days and nights were required?**

THE EXPLANATION

Verse 10 stresses, “I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights like the first (period of forty) days (when I was on the mountain),” i.e. that Moshe’s first and third periods on the mountain were the same in

Sparks of Chasidus

When the first Tablets were given, the Jewish people were on the level of tzadikim (righteous), whereas when the second Tablets were given, they were on the even higher level of ba’alei teshuvah (penitents). Thus, it follows that God’s “goodwill” (see Rashi) when Moshe received the second Tablets, was even greater than His goodwill at the time the first Tablets were given.

(Based on Sichas Rosh Chodesh Elul 5742)

* See below 18:1-6. ** One cannot argue that the forty days and nights were required to give Moshe the Torah “as a gift” for a second time, since God’s initial “gift” (see Rashi to Shemos 31:18) was presumably taken away when Moshe was “brought down from his exalted position” after the sin of the Golden Calf (see Rashi ibid. 32:7)—for why would forty days be required to give a gift? In fact, it could be argued that it is due to this problem that Rashi found it necessary to bring a second interpretation in his commentary to Shemos 31:18.
Rashi explains: “Just as those days were with [God’s] goodwill, so were these with [God’s] goodwill.” i.e. that God was not angry with the Jewish people at all during the last forty days.

Consequently, Rashi did not need to explain why forty days were required to receive the second Tablets, since he had already stressed that the second Tablets were received in equally positive circumstances to the first Tablets. And if Moshe were to have stayed any less than forty days, he would not have reached as high a spiritual level as the first time, and the second Tablets would have been received in a inferior manner. Therefore, forty days and nights were required for Moshe’s third stay too.

However, this explanation presents us with another problem. Above, Rashi explained that it was only when Moshe came down from the mountain after his third stay, on Yom Kippur, that, “on that very day God was joyfully reconciled with the Jewish people....Therefore it was designated as a time of pardon and forgiveness” (Rashi to 9:18, above).

So how can Rashi write that the entire forty days and nights of Moshe’s third stay on the mountain were “with [God’s] goodwill,” when God only became reconciled with the Jewish people when Moshe came down from the mountain?

In truth, however, God had completely forgiven the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf after Moshe’s second stay on the mountain, and the third stay was genuinely “with [God’s] goodwill.” A further accomplishment which occurred on Yom Kippur was that “God was joyfully reconciled with the Jewish people.” i.e. when Moshe finally presented the Tablets to the Jewish people, bequeathing them the Torah joyfully reconciled with the Jewish people.” I.e. when Moshe finally presented the Tablets to the Jewish people, bequeathing them the Torah joyfully reconciled with the Jewish people. After passing over a hurdle; and since the relationship between the Jewish people and God had been in jeopardy, the moment when all obstacles had been overcome and the Jewish people finally received the Torah was a true moment of joy for the Almighty.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Eikev 5733)
God said to me, “Get going! Lead the people in their journeys to come and take possession of the land I promised their forefathers to give them.”

### Moshe Encourages the People to Serve God

Now, O Israel, (even though you sinned) what does God, your God, demand of you? (Because He still has compassion on you and He still loves you, He does not punish you, but asks you) only to fear God, your God, to follow all His ways, to love Him, to serve God, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of God and His superrational commands, which I command you today—(and even this) is for your own benefit (because you will receive reward).

God, your God, (has the choice of everything in) the lower and upper skies, the earth and all that is on it. But God desired only to love your forefathers, and He chose their descendants after them—(i.e.) you—out of all nations, (a choice which) remains until today.

You should “circumcise” the “foreskin” of your heart (which blocks you from serving God), and you should stop being stiff-necked. For God, your God, is God of gods and the Master of masters, the great, mighty and awesome God, who does not show favor and will not accept a bribe. (Yet) He (is sensitive) to enact judgment for the orphan and widow. And he loves the convert and gives him bread and clothing.

- You should love the convert, because you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

### Classic Questions

**How could God possibly “accept a bribe” ? (v. 17)**

**Midrash:** It is written in Your Torah, “Do not accept a bribe” (Shemos 23:8)...but You do accept bribes, as the verse states, “He will take a bribe from a wicked man’s bosom [to turn the roads of justice]” (Proverbs 17:23)? What is the “bribe” that God accepts? He accepts teshuvah (repentance) and good deeds from the wicked in this world. God says to the Jewish people, “My children! So long as the gates of teshuvah are open, I will accept bribes in this world. But when I sit in judgment in the World to Come, I will not accept bribes, as the verse states (ibid. 6:35), ‘He will not regard any ransom’” (Yalkut Shimoni, Psalms, Remez 670).

**“Bribing” God (v. 17)**

Taking bribes is an explicit prohibition of the Torah (Shemos 23:8; Devarim 16:19), because it may cause a judge to make a ruling which is not in accordance with the law. So how could any person possibly think that God might take bribes, to the extent that the Torah needs to inform us here in verse 17 that, in fact, He does not?

Furthermore, our verse appears to contradict the statement in Proverbs that “He will take a bribe from a wicked man’s bosom, to turn the roads of justice” (17:23). Rashi (ibid.) comments, “The Holy One, blessed be He, accepts words of humility and appeasement from the bosom of the wicked [i.e. in secret, between Him and them,] to overturn His verdict from evil to good.”

The Midrash explains further that the “bribes” which God takes are the teshuvah and good deeds of the wicked who return to Him.

In this respect, we can understand that the verse, “God...will not accept a bribe,” must be speaking of mitzvos in general, which are not sufficient to “bribe” God to annul one of His decrees. Teshuvah, on the other hand, is capable of doing just that, so the verse in Proverbs states, “He will take a bribe from a wicked man’s bosom,” if He is bribed with teshuvah.

It nevertheless remains to be understood why the Torah compares teshuvah to bribery, which is a perversion of justice?

### The Explanation

Rambam describes the process of teshuvah as follows:

“The following are part of [going on] the path of teshuvah: The repenter should cry out persistently to God with tears and supplications. He should give charity to the extent of his ability, and he should distance himself as much as possible from the matter with which he sinned. He should change his name, as if to say, ‘I am a different person. I am not the same person who did those things.’ He should change all of his actions for the better to follow an upright path. He should exile himself [from his hometown], since exile atones for sins, and it causes one to be submissive, humble and meek” (Laws of Teshuvah 2:4).

All these steps need to be carried out if a person wishes to be forgiven for his sins completely. Nevertheless, the basic principle of teshuvah is very simple indeed, as the Alter Rebbe writes:

“The commandment of teshuvah, as required by the Torah, is simply the resolution of abandonment of the sin” (Igeres Hateshuvah, ch. 1).

I.e. the mere resolution in a person’s mind not to perform the sin again is sufficient to fulfill “the commandment of teshuvah, as required by the Torah.”

Thus, even before a person has carried out the entire process mentioned by Rambam above, he is considered to have repented.
What, then, is the need to "cry out persistently to God with tears and supplications," and, "change all of his actions for the better etc.," if he has already fulfilled "the commandment of teshuvah as required by the Torah" by abandoning the sin?

This is because the moment he resolves to abandon the sin represents the mere "conception" of his teshuvah, but his new identity has not yet been "born." From the moment of "conception" a lengthy process must occur, during which the person cries out to God persistently for the nine months of development which follow. And it is this process of development which is described in the above passage of Rambam.

Thus, "the commandment of teshuvah as required by the Torah," (which the Alter Rebbe speaks of), which occurs in an instant, forms the core and the foundation from which the person’s teshuvah grows—in a similar way to the moment of conception of a child, which forms the basis for the nine months of development which follow. And it is this process of development which is described in the above passage of Rambam.

A further distinction between the "conception" and the "birth" of the repenting Jew is the difference between how God perceives the person, and how he perceives himself.

From the person’s perspective (and likewise, the perspective of a Jewish court), he cannot be considered free of sin until all of its effects, both on himself and his environment, are eradicated. Thus, it is not until he is "born" as a tzadik that he can be confident that his sin is atoned for.

However, from God’s perspective, as soon as the person resolves in his mind not to sin again, the seed of a potential teshuvah is sown, and the key part of his repentance has already taken place. From this point on, it is only a matter of time until the genuine emotions that have surfaced will materialize into the changes of lifestyle that will eradicate the sin.

Thus, from God’s perspective, as soon as the sinner resolves in his mind not to sin again, God forgives him.* But this forgiveness is to a certain extent “unjust,” as the person has not yet completed the process of teshuvah and therefore, according to the letter of the law, he should not yet be forgiven. Nevertheless, as explained above, since the seed of his

* I.e. the person is forgiven because God perceives how the initial phases of remorse will eventually blossom into full repentance. The effects of the sin itself on the world cannot be atoned for, however, until a complete teshuvah is carried out.

For further discussion of this distinction, see Toras Menachem to Vayikra 16:20-22.
20 You must fear God, your God.
You must serve Him.
You must cleave to Him.
(If you do all the above, then you may) swear by His Name.

21 He is your praise and He is your God, Who did these great and awesome things for you, which your eyes have seen. 22 Your forefathers went down to Egypt with seventy souls, and now God, your God, has made you as numerous as the stars of the skies.

II So you should love God, your God, keep what He has entrusted to you: His suprarational commands, His rational commands, and His commandments, for all time.

2 You should now realize, (by focusing your heart to take my rebuke), that (I am) not (speaking) with your children, who (could claim that they) did not know and did not see God, your God, reprimand (us).

— (They did not see) His greatness, His mighty hand, His outstretched arm, His signs (of Divine Providence), and His deeds, which He performed within Egypt, to Pharaoh, King of Egypt and to his entire land. 4 And what He did to Egypt’s army, to its horses and chariots, how He swamped the waters of the Red Sea upon them when they pursued you. God destroyed them (and they cease to exist) to this day. 5 (They did not see) what He did for you in the desert, until you arrived at this place, and what He did to Dasan and Aviram, sons of Eliav, Re’uwan’s son, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up: them, their households, their tents, and all the possessions (that kept them on) their feet, in the presence of all Israel —

Classic Questions

• How were Dasan and Aviram swallowed up? (v. 6)

Rashi: “Wherever one of them fled, the earth split under him and swallowed him up”—these are the words of Rabbi Yehudah.

Rabbi Nechemiah said to him: But is it not written above, “the earth opened its mouth” (Bamidbar 16:32), and not, “its mouths” [suggesting that the earth opened up in only one place]?

[Rabbi Yehudah] said to him: How, then, does one explain [the emphasis that this occurred]: “in the presence of all Israel,” [suggesting that the earth opened up throughout the Jewish camp]?

[Rabbi Nechemiah] replied to him: The earth began to slope like a funnel, and wherever one of them would be, he rolled down until he reached the place where the earth was split.

Rabbi Yehudah & Rabbi Nechemiah (Rashi v. 6)

In his commentary to verse 6, Rashi cites a dispute between Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Nechemiah concerning the manner in which Dasan and Aviram were swallowed up by the ground.

At first glance, Rabbi Nechemiah’s criticism of Rabbi Yehudah’s argument seems to be valid, indicating that the interpretation of our verse, at the literal level, follows Rabbi Nechemiah.

However, if Rashi did indeed maintain that our verse is to be interpreted in accordance with Rabbi Nechemiah, and not Rabbi Yehudah, then he would have just cited Rabbi Nechemiah’s opinion alone. For Rashi’s commentary is aimed at explaining the literal meaning of scripture as concisely as possible, so if Rabbi Yehudah’s opinion were not valid at the literal level, Rashi would simply have omitted it. Rather, it appears that Rashi found both interpretations acceptable.

However, this leaves us with the following questions:

a.) Why did Rashi deem it necessary to bring two interpretations?
b.) Why did Rashi cite the names of the Sages who authored these interpretations—Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Nechemiah? Of what relevance is this to understanding the verse at the literal level?

c.) According to Rashi, Rabbi Yehudah said, “Wherever one of them fled, the earth split under him and swallowed him up.” However, this detail (of Dasan and Aviram fleeing) is not mentioned in any of the source texts from which Rashi may have cited this teaching (Bamidbar Rabah 18:13; Tanchuma Buber, addendum to Korach 4; Yalkut Shimoni, Korach, Remez 752). What led Rashi to conclude that this was indeed Rabbi Yehudah’s intention?
The Explanation

Rashi was troubled by the following problem:

In the desert, each tribe camped separately (see Bamidbar 2:1f). Dasan and Aviram would have resided in the camp of the tribe of Re’uvain, to which they belonged (ibid. 16:1). Thus, when reading in our verse that Rashi was troubled: How could Dasan and Aviram were swallowed up, occurred in just one camp, the camp of Re’uvain?

To answer this question, Rashi cites the teaching of Rabbi Yehudah, that, “Wherever one of them fled, the earth split under him and swallowed him up.” I.e. when the earth began to split under the feet of Dasan and Aviram in the camp of Re’uvain, they fled, running throughout all the camps, as they were chased by an expanding hole in the ground which ultimately swallowed them up. Thus, by the time they were consumed, all of the Jewish people had witnessed the miracle.

(Consequently Rashi found it necessary to stress, that “Wherever one of them fled, the earth split under him and swallowed him up” – even though this detail is not stated explicitly in the source texts – since this clarifies how “all Israel” witnessed this miracle.)

Nevertheless, this interpretation is somewhat flawed, as Rabbi Nechemiah pointed out: “But is it not written above, ‘the earth opened its mouth’ (Bamidbar 16:32), and not, ‘its mouths,’” suggesting that the earth opened up at only one place?

Thus, Rashi cited a second interpretation, from Rabbi Nechemiah: “The earth began to slope like a funnel, and wherever one of them would be, he rolled down until he reached the place where the earth was split.”
The Last Word

"The Eyes of God Almighty are Continually Upon It..." (v. 12)

Many Jews, including frum [observant] Jews, naturally tend to see all the good qualities of Eretz Yisrael, which is indeed ‘a desirable and good land’ (Text of Grace after Meals). However, one often overlooks the essential thing about Eretz Yisrael, which is that all its physical beauty is as nothing in comparison to its essential nature—that of being the Holy Land, a land of which the Torah says that ‘the eyes of God Almighty are continually upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.’ This essential nature of Eretz Yisrael should inspire in everyone a tremendous sense of reverence, which should be expressed in increased efforts to bring one’s everyday conduct into accord with the holiness of Eretz Yisrael. The impact must be strong enough to be of a lasting nature, so that a visit to the Holy Land should have a permanent effect on one's whole outlook and the resulting daily conduct.

However, if a visit to Eretz Yisrael is confined to sightseeing and the taking of photographs and slides of the beautiful places and the landscape, etc., then Eretz Yisrael becomes no more than a tourist attraction, one land among many. Such a visit contributes little to the real future and destiny of Eretz Yisrael, of which we say in our prayers, 'Because of our sins we have been exiled from our land' (Text of Additional Prayer for Festivals). The immediate conclusion should be, therefore, to eliminate all those causes which have deprived us of Eretz Yisrael, and to strengthen all those factors which will firmly and permanently restore Eretz Yisrael to us.

(Excerpt from a letter written by the Rebbe in 5729 [1969])
What is unique about God's promise, “I will grant... rains of your land at their proper time”? (v. 14)

Rashi: [God says:] “You have done what is incumbent upon you, so I will do what is incumbent upon Me.”

Mizrachi: Rashi was troubled by the question: Why does the Torah stress the reward for keeping mitzvos here more than in other places? For example, in Parshas Bechukosai the Torah states simply, “I will give you rain (at a convenient) time” (Vayikra 26:4), without entering into details, whereas here the Torah specifies many additional blessings in verses 14-15.

Rashi answers that God is saying, “You have done what is incumbent upon you, so I will do what is incumbent upon Me,” i.e. since the Jewish people have done everything that God could possibly have wanted, therefore God will respond with every possible blessing that they may need.

The Blessings of Rain (v. 14)

In the second paragraph of the Shema, the Torah promises “rains in their proper time,” if, “you always listen to My commandments that I am commanding you etc.” (v. 13-14).

Mizrachi comments that the promise of rain here is more substantial than the similar promise at the beginning of Parshas Bechukosai, since the Torah specifies here that there will be “early and late rains... grain, wine, and oil... grass in your field for your livestock... you will be satisfied.”

Thus, according to Mizrachi, Rashi is explaining the unique quality of the blessings recorded here: “You have done what is incumbent upon you, so I will do what is incumbent upon Me,” as if to say: “Since you have fulfilled what is required of you in every detail, likewise I will reward you in every detail.”

However, Mizrachi’s argument—that the blessings here are superior to the blessings in Parshas Bechukosai—is difficult to accept. Since Parshas Bechukosai mentions the supernatural promise that “non-fruit bearing trees will bear fruit,” which clearly exceeds any of the natural blessings offered here.

What, then, is the meaning of Rashi’s comment?


**SECOND PARAGRAPH OF THE SHEMA**

11:13

What will happen is:

—If you always listen to My commandments that I am commanding you, (regarding them as if you heard them) today.

- (And you keep them, not for personal gain, but rather out of) love for God, your God.
- And you serve Him (in prayer)
- (And, as a community, you serve Him) with all your heart and with all your soul.

14 Then I will grant the early and late rains of your land at their proper time, and you—(not your enemies)—will gather in your grain, wine, and oil. 15 I will provide grass in your field for your livestock (so you do not have to take them to pasture at a distance. When) you will eat, you will be satisfied.

16 (But when you are in a state of satisfaction) beware not to let your heart be lured away (from the Torah, causing you to) go astray and worship other (strange) gods, and prostrate yourselves before them.

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**THE EXPLANATION**

In Parshas Bechukosai, the Torah stresses “I will give you rain” (literally, “I will give your rains”), indicating that the blessing is being bestowed to the Jewish people. In contrast, the Torah states here, “I will grant the... rains of your land,” indicating that the blessing is being bestowed to the land itself.

The practical distinction between these two approaches is that if the rain is bestowed according to the Jewish people’s merits, then they will receive the rain that they deserve, regardless of whether or not this is possible within the natural order. But if the rain is bestowed to the land (as in our Parsha) then it will come according to the limitations of nature.

The reader will thus be troubled: Why is the Torah offering here a natural reward for keeping the mitzvos that is inferior to the supernatural reward which has already been promised in Parshas Bechukosai? Rashi answers: “You have done what is incumbent upon you, so I will do what is incumbent upon Me.” The reason why an inferior reward is offered is because the Torah speaks here of a person who only did what was incumbent upon him, and no more. Therefore God responds in a similar fashion (“I will do what is incumbent upon Me”), blessing the Jewish people for their observance of the mitzvos, but without “extending” Himself to do so in a supernatural fashion.

By contrast, Parshas Bechukosai speaks of a person who “toils in the study of Torah” and the observance of mitzvos (Rashi, Vayikra 26:3), beyond his natural tendencies and abilities. Consequently, God responds to such a person (not merely with “what is incumbent upon Me,” but) with blessings that break through the limitations of nature.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 19, p. 115ff.)

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

**THE SECOND PARAGRAPH OF THE SHEMA**

While the second paragraph of the Shema appears to be little more than a repetition of the first paragraph (above 6:4-9), with various additions and changes, Chasidic thought explains that the two paragraphs are fundamentally different.

The first paragraph of the Shema is speaking from the realm where Godliness is visibly present. (Thus it is found in Parshas Va’eschanan, where Moshe requested, “Please let me cross over and see the good land”—3:25). The second paragraph, however, speaks to a Jew who is devoid of open Godly revelation from Above; (thus it is found in Parshas Eikev, which means “heel,” a particularly “uninspired” part of the human body).

Consequently:

- The first paragraph speaks of loving God (not only “with all your heart and with all your soul,” but) “with all your might” (6:3), alluding to an unlimited form of love, which is granted to a person by revelation from Above. In the second paragraph however, one is commanded to serve God only “with all your heart and with all your soul,” since no further Divine assistance is available.
- At the level of the first paragraph, where Godliness is revealed, a person will fulfill the mitzvos naturally, without needing to be warned of the consequences of non-observance. In the second paragraph, however, where Godly revelation is absent, it is necessary to mention punishments (v. 16-17).
- Despite the apparent superiority of the first paragraph (Godly revelation), there is nevertheless an advantage to the second paragraph of the Shema. For the second paragraph represents the universal relevance of Torah to every time and circumstance, even when Godly revelation is absent. Thus, Rashi stresses here that Torah is relevant not only to those capable of studying it, but also: “As soon as the child knows how to speak, teach him Torah” (Rashi to v. 19).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 9, p. 79ff.)
Are the mitzvos of tefillin and mezuzah obligatory at all times? (v. 18)

Rashi: Even after you go into exile, make yourselves distinctive with My commandments: Put on tefillin and make mezuzos, so that they will not be new [and unfamiliar] to you when you return—as the verse states, “Set up markers for yourself” (Jeremiah 31:20).

Mizrachi: Rashi was troubled why the observance of these mitzvos is mentioned immediately after the threat of exile in verse 17.

Gur Aryeh: How can Rashi claim that this verse is required to teach us that the mitzvos of tefillin and mezuzah apply “even after you go into exile,” when these are personal obligations which are not dependent on living in the Land of Israel?

The answer is, that during the exile one might think that the Jewish people would indeed be exempt from tefillin and mezuzah. The worries of the exile would exempt a person from mezuzah, which require total concentration; and, as a wandering nation, the Jewish people would not purchase any property which would obligate them in mezuzah.

This verse teaches us that during exile a person should clear his mind of worry to ensure that he is obligated in tefillin, and purchase a house so that he will be obligated in mezuzah.

Observing the Mitzvos While in Exile (v. 18)

Rashi’s comment to verse 18 prompts the following questions:

a.) What was troubling Rashi?

b.) Tefillin and mezuzah are not mitzvos that are dependent on residing in the Land of Israel, so why does the verse need to tell us that even after being exiled, the Jewish people are still obligated in tefillin and mezuzah [as Gur Aryeh asks]?

c.) In addition to tefillin (v. 18) and mezuzah (v. 20), the current passage also mentions (between the above two verses) the mitzvah of teaching one’s child Torah (v. 19). Why did Rashi mention only tefillin and mezuzah, and omit the mitzvah of teaching Torah?

The Explanation

a.) At first glance, it would appear that Rashi was troubled by the question: Why does the Torah repeat the mitzvos of tefillin and mezuzah here when they have already been commanded in the first paragraph of the Shema (6:8-9)?

However, if this problem alone was troubling Rashi he could have explained the repetition more simply, in a similar fashion to his comment on verse 13 above: “Has scripture not already stated ‘with all your heart and with all your soul’ (Devarim 6:5)? That was addressed to the individual, and this is addressed to the community.”

Likewise, in our case, if Rashi was troubled by repetition alone, he could have answered that the mitzvos are repeated here as a warning to the community.

Therefore, it would appear that, in addition to the repetition, Rashi was troubled why the mitzvos of tefillin and mezuzah were written here immediately after the threat of exile [as Mizrachi writes].

Rashi thus answers, “Even after you go into exile, make yourselves distinctive with My commandments,” for this explains both, i.) The repetition of the mitzvos here; and ii.) The juxtaposition to the threat of exile.

b.) The reason why (at the literal level) we might imagine that tefillin and mezuzah would not be obligatory outside the Land of Israel is because: When introducing the first paragraph of the Shema (where the mitzvos of tefillin and mezuzah are commanded), the Torah states, “This is the body of commandments, the suprarational commands and the rational commands, that God, your God, commanded (me) to teach you, 
17 Then the anger of God will be kindled against you! He will close up the skies, and there will be no rain. The ground will not yield its produce, and you will perish quickly from the good land that God is giving you.

18 (Even after you go into exile) you should (continue to) place these words of Mine upon your heart and upon your soul. You should bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they should be “totafos” between your eyes. 19 (From infancy) you should teach these (words) to your sons to (be accustomed to) speak of them, when you sit in your house and when you walk on the way, when you lie down (at night) and when you rise up (in the morning)...

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

• Is a woman obligated in Torah study? (v. 19)

TALMUD: How do we know that a woman is not obligated to teach herself Torah?

Because the verse states בֹּקֶט בָּלָק אֶל-ם (“you should teach”) [which is identical to the word בֹּקֶט אָמ (“you should study”—Devarim 5:1) [with different vocalization. From here we equate teaching with studying, indicating that] one whom others are commanded to teach is commanded to teach oneself, but one whom others are not commanded to teach, is not commanded to teach oneself.

And from where do we know that there is no obligation to teach a woman? From the verse: “You should teach these (words) to your sons,” which excludes teaching “your daughters” (Kidushin 29b).

ALTER REBBE’S SHULCHAN ARUCH: Women are required to recite the blessings made on Torah study, for they are obligated to study the mitzvos which are incumbent upon them, in order to know how to perform them, and in order to [know how to] refrain from all the prohibitions of the Torah which they are warned against transgressing to the same extent as men (Orach Chaim 47:10, from Sefer Ha’agur, ch. 2).

to be performed in the Land which you are about to enter and possess” (6:1). This might lead a person to think that the mitzvos of tefillin and mezuzah are only obligatory when the Jewish people possess the Land of Israel, but that when they are exiled, the obligation ceases. Therefore, our verse is required to confirm, “Even after you go into exile...put on tefillin and make mezuzos.”

c.) As for the question why Rashi did not mention the continued requirement of Torah study during exile, there are a number of possible explanations:

i.) The Torah is a guide as to how to observe the mitzvos. Thus, the continued requirement to observe the mitzvos in exile logically includes a requirement to study the Torah.

ii.) If the requirement to study Torah did indeed apply only in the Land of Israel, then it would not be productive to continue studying Torah in exile, so that the Torah “will not be new [and unfamiliar] to you when you return.” For human nature is such that new subject matter actually enhances study, since people generally find repetition and review tedious. So if there was no obligation to study Torah outside the Land of Israel it might be better to stop studying while in exile, so that upon returning to the Land, the Torah could be studied with fresh excitement.

In the case of practical mitzvos, however, such as tefillin and mezuzah, observance actually becomes easier by continued practice, without interruption.

iii.) The requirement to study Torah that is recorded here is not a repetition of the mitzvah written in the first paragraph of the Shema. For, the first paragraph teaches the requirement to teach our students (Rashi to 6:7), whereas here we are commanded to teach our children (Rashi to v. 19).

Thus, the fear that a person might think that teaching Torah does not apply outside the Diaspora does not apply in this case, as this fear only applies to mitzvos taught in the first paragraph of the Shema (which is introduced with the words “This is the body of commandments...to be performed in the land”). The requirement to teach our children, however, was not taught in the first paragraph, and is thus being learned here for the first time. So there would be no reason to suspect that we would be exempt from teaching our children Torah outside the land, and consequently, Rashi omitted this case.

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Re’eh 5729; Likutei Sichos vol. 9, p. 80, notes 6 & 9)

A Woman’s Requirement To Study Torah (v. 19)

Concerning the applicability of the mitzvah of Torah study to women, we find a seemingly paradoxical statement in Jewish Law:

On one hand, it is clearly ruled that a woman is not obligated in the mitzvah of Torah study*, based on the Talmud.

It is thus difficult to understand, on the other hand, why Jewish Law mandates that women should make the morning blessings on the study of Torah.

ALTER REBBE’S SHULCHAN ARUCH explains (based on the commentary of Sefer Ha’agur) that a woman makes these blessings, despite her exemption from the mitzvah of Torah study, because women “are obligated to study about the mitzvos which are incumbent upon them.” However:

a.) According to this logic, the study incumbent upon women is not a mitzvah in itself, but a means to an end. I.e. her study is not “Torah study” in its own right, but rather, a preparatory phase of her observance; being that a woman is required to observe many mitzvos, and refrain from prohibitions. The blessings on Torah study, however, are to thank God for the requirement of study for its own sake.**

b.) According to the above logic, once a woman knows all the laws applicable to her, she no longer has a requirement to study Torah. So how can the Alter Rebbe write unequivocally, “Women are required to

* See also Rambam, Laws of Torah Study 1:1; ibid. 13; Tur and Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 246:6; Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Laws of Torah Study 1:14. **It would appear that she could recite the first blessing on Torah study (“Blessed are You...who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us about the words of Torah”), since a woman is indeed “commanded” to study the laws applicable to her. The question concerns the second blessing recited daily (“Blessed are You...who has chosen us from among all the nations and given us His Torah. Blessed are you God Who gives the Torah”) for a woman was not “given” the privilege of Torah study as a mitzvah in its own right. (See Likutei Sichos vol. 14, p. 150, note at foot of the page; ibid. p. 39, note 29).
The Explanation

The Mishnah teaches: “A sacrifice can be invalidated [through an error] in any one of the four procedures: ‘slaughtering’, ‘receiving’ [the blood in a sacred vessel], ‘conveying’ [it to the Altar] and ‘throwing’ [it onto the Altar].”

“Rabbi Shimon permits a sacrifice [if the error occurs] during ‘conveying,’ for he used to say: ‘It is impossible to offer a sacrifice without slaughter, receiving and throwing; but it is possible to offer one without conveying. For one could slaughter right next to the Altar and throw [the blood from there]’” (Zevachim 13a).

Rabbi Shimon’s logic is that “conveying” the blood is not a full-fledged service in its own right, but merely a “means to an end.” Therefore, an error in this procedure would not render the sacrifice invalid, since it is a procedure which could have been dispensed with.

What, then, is the reason why the first opinion in the mishnah maintains that a sacrifice is invalidated by an error during “conveying,” if the entire process of conveying is not really necessary?

The Rogatchover Ga’on writes that this teaches us a profound principle of Jewish law: That when halachah requires a procedure to take place, even if it appears to be no more than a means to an end, it becomes an end in itself.

Thus, in the above case, even though “conveying” the blood is not an “end” in itself (as is evidenced from the fact that it could be dispensed with), nevertheless, when the need for it arises, it becomes a full-fledged service in its own right, which can invalidate the entire sacrifice if performed incorrectly (see Tzafnas Pane’ach al Hatorah, Bamidbar 33:2 and sources cited loc. cit.; Tzafnas Paneach leMoreh Nevuchim I:72*).
and when you get up (in the morning). 20 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your (public) gates. 21 (All this is) in order that your days and your children’s days will be prolonged upon the land which God swore to your forefathers to give them, so long as the skies will be above the earth.

**Mitzvos: Key to Conquest of the Land**

For if you will always be careful to keep these commandments which I am commanding you to keep, to love God, your God, to follow all His ways, and to cleave to Him, 23 then God will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will take over nations that are greater and stronger than you. 24 Every place upon which the soles of your feet will tread will be yours. Your boundary will be from the desert and the Lebanon, and from the river, the Euphrates River, until the western sea. 25 No man will stand before you. God your God will cast the fear and dread of you upon all the land where you will tread, just as He said to you.

**The Last Word**

While in times gone by, women and girls were not taught Torah at all (see Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:13), nowadays it is not only permissible to teach women even the deepest parts of the Torah, but it is an absolute necessity to do so. For, in the modern world, women are no longer confined to the home and they are highly exposed to the “marketplace” of secular ideas. Thus, if the policy of not teaching women Torah at an advanced level is upheld, the result will be that a girl’s sophisticated worldly knowledge—which is likely to harbor many ideas that are antithetical to Torah—will be insubstantially compensated for by her rudimentary Torah knowledge.

Furthermore, it goes without saying that Chasidic teachings should be taught to women and girls, as this provides a person with the tools to “know the God of your father, and serve Him with a perfect heart” (Chronicles 1:28:9), in which their obligation is identical to men and boys.

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**Footnotes:**

*Nevertheless, she does not fulfill the mitzvah of Torah study, since she is not commanded directly to study Torah. Rather, her obligation to study stems indirectly from her obligation to observe the mitzvos. However, she may still make the blessing. “Blessed are You...who has given us His Torah,” since women were indeed given the privilege of Torah study (indirectly), as an obligation which stems out of the mitzvos in which they are obligated. The woman is also enjoined to support her husband and sons in Torah study (See Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:13), even though she can study Torah herself, since a man’s (direct) obligation—and the accompanying merit—is greater, and thus by supporting them she shares some of this greater merit.**

**For an explanation of this teaching, see Likutei Sichos vol 14, p. 44, note 57; Sichos Shabbos Parshas Naso 5730.**

***Indeed, if not related to the Noachide Laws, he is prohibited to study Torah (Sanhedrin 59a).***
Parshas Eikev contains 6 positive mitzvos & 2 prohibitions

1. Not to derive benefit from the ornamentation of an idol [7:25].
2. Not to possess an object of idol-worship or to derive benefit from it [7:26].
3. To bless God after eating bread [8:10].
4. To love converts [10:19].
5. To fear God [10:20].
6. To pray to God [10:20].
7. To associate with and attach oneself to Torah scholars [10:20].
8. To swear by God’s Name when taking an oath [10:20].
Re‘eh means “See!” as in the opening verse of our Parsha: “See! I am giving to you today a blessing and a curse.”

Broadly speaking, a person’s observance of the precepts of Judaism could fall into one of three categories:

a.) Plain obedience. At this level, a person is willing to observe the mitzvos because he is aware of a Higher Authority. However, his observance is not inspired by an understanding or appreciation of the Torah; he simply “accepts the yoke of heaven.”

b.) Intellectual appreciation. A higher level is where a person not only observes the precepts of the Torah out of deference to a Higher Authority, but he also has an intellectual appreciation of the importance of observing the mitzvos, and he understands the rewards that mitzvah-observance brings.

However, even this person has not yet reached perfection. For intellectual conviction alone—while immensely powerful—still leaves room to explore other avenues, so it does not represent an absolute commitment.

Thus, the highest level of mitzvah observance is:

c.) Vision. At this level, one does not merely appreciate the value of keeping the Torah’s precepts, one sees it. I.e. the necessity and positive results of observing the mitzvos become as clear and self-evident as seeing a physical object with one’s eyes.

And it is this third level which our Parsha commands—and spiritually empowers—every Jew to reach, with the words: “See! I am giving to you today a blessing and a curse.”

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Re‘eh 5743)
blessings and curses which are later to be given at Mount Gerizim and Mount Aival." (This sequence is then described in verses 29-30.)

If you still argue that perhaps the blessings and curses were indeed said by Moshe here, and that they were merely repeated at Mount Gerizim and Mount Aival—two responses could be given:

a.) It is unreasonable to suggest that the blessings and curses would have been repeated in such a short time of less than two months.

b.) The Torah makes no reference to Moshe issuing any specific blessings or curses here, and in Parshas Ki Sasso, no indication is given that the blessings and curses are merely being repeated.

● What does בקיה mean? (v. 26)

ONKELOS: “A blessing and a Curse.”

TARGUM YONASON: “A blessing and its substitute.” (See “Sparks”)

“A Blessing and a Curse” (v. 26)

Upon reading the opening of our Parsha, Rashi was troubled why the verse states, “I am giving to you today a blessing and a curse,” when we do not find that any blessings or curses are given here at all.

Rashi answers that the blessings and curses were indeed given by God to the Jewish people here in Parshas Re’eh, but that they were not actually said [until a later date] at Mount Gerizim and Mount Aival.” At first glance it is somewhat perplexing that God should give a blessing and a curse here, when they were not actually uttered until a later date. However, Rashi felt that it was unnecessary to discuss this point, since the reader will already be familiar with the idea that precepts can be given well before they become applicable, as we find for example in the case of

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● What is the blessing and curse mentioned here? (v. 26)

RASHI: Those [blessings and curses] which were said at Mount Gerizim and Mount Aival (See 27:15-26 below).

MIZRACHI: At first glance, the “blessing and curse” mentioned in our verse were given here, as the verse stresses, “I am giving to you today a blessing and curse.”

Rashi informs us, however, that the “blessing and curse” were not actually given here, but rather, that this refers to the later event detailed in Parshas Ki Sasso, where blessings and curses were recited at Mount Gerizim and Mount Aival.

Thus, when our verse states that the “blessing and curse” were given “today,” it does not mean that the blessings and curses were actually given here in Parshas Re’eh. Rather, the verse is to be understood: “See! I am giving to you today the precise sequence of blessings and curses which are later to be given at Mount Gerizim and Mount Aival.” (This sequence is then described in verses 29-30.)
11:26

See! I am giving to you today a blessing and a curse.

— 27 The blessing (is being given) on the basis* that you will listen to the commandments of God, your God, which I am commanding you today. 28 And the curse (will come) if you do not listen to the commandments of God, your God, and go astray from the way I am commanding you today, to follow other gods, which are unacquainted to you—

29 What will happen is, when God, your God, will bring you to the Land which you are going to come and take possession of, you should place (the people who will recite) the blessing (facing) towards Mount Gerizim, and (when they recite) the curse (they should turn so that they face) towards Mount Aibal.**

30 (These mountains) are to be found well beyond the other side of the Jordan, (to the west) where the sun sets, in the land of the Canaanites, who dwell in the plain, far from Gilgal, near (Shechem in) the plains of Moreh.

31 When you cross the Jordan (you will see miracles that will be a sign for you that you are going) to come and take possession of the Land which God, your God, is giving you. You will take possession of the many mitzvos that are dependent upon living in the Land of Israel, which were given well before the Jewish people entered the Land.

In the final analysis, we see that Rashi explains how our verse can be understood literally: “I am giving to you today a blessing and a curse,” since the blessings and curses were indeed given to the Jewish people at this point.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Re’eh 5748)

The Last Word

“A BLESSING AND A CURSE...” (v. 26)

The Almighty did not want the soul to eat “bread of shame,” (i.e. sustenance given gratuitously, without having been earned by the recipient); He therefore made it possible for man to serve Him in a meaningful way with toil of body and soul. Through our endeavors in avoda [service of God] we are Divinely enabled to earn all manner of goodness....

The difficulties, trials, and tests of life are themselves the means by which we are to attain our ultimate objective—that the soul achieve the lofty spiritual level it once possessed before it descended into the body: “The soul that you have given me is pure” (Text of Morning Prayer). The purpose of life is for the soul to regain that level of original “purity” and even transcend it—for one hour of teshuvah [repentance] and good deeds in this world is worth more than all the lifetime of the spiritual World to Come.

So you see that life’s trials, tragedies and difficulties actually bring us closer to our goal, our raison d’etre; they are part of the divine system of toil and endeavor enabling us, finite mortals, to reach the highest levels of rewards and goodness—which can only be earned by meaningful “labor” and effort. It follows that one must not allow the difficulties of life’s trials (or even one’s failure from time to time) to overcome the double joy of being God’s children and of having received His promise, “Your people are all righteous” (Isaiah 60:21).

(Excerpt from a letter written by the Rebbe)

Sparks of Chasidus

How could God, who is the very essence of good, issue a curse (v. 26)? Are we not taught, “No evil thing is issued from Above” (Bereishis Rabah 51:3)?

In truth, however, God does not issue curses at all, and only blessings are “issued from Above.” The problem lies “below,” in our ability to receive God’s blessings. If a person is not a fitting receptacle for the goodness which God bestows upon him, he will simply be unable to accommodate God’s blessings. The result will be that after its downward path through the spiritual worlds, the blessing is received in a way that appears, to our human eyes, as a curse (See Shaloh, Re’eh 374b).

At least that is how it appears in the spiritually dampened moments of exile. Thus Onkelos, who authored his work amid the Babylonian exile, interpreted the word כursed as “curse” (See Classic Questions). However, Targum Yonason wrote his commentary in the Land of Israel during Temple times, when even the average person could easily appreciate that “no evil thing is issued from Above.” Thus, he rendered כursed as “substitute” (Neal), indicating that God Himself only issues blessings, but that His blessings may later become “substituted” by something else.

And this also explains why, in the Messianic Era, we will not only forgive God for the sufferings of exile, but we will thank Him (see Isaiah 12:1), for then it will be evident how even God’s “curses” were in fact blessings in disguise.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 133ff.; vol. 4, p. 1091)

* See Rashi here, explained in Likutei Sichos vol. 14, pp. 119-120. ** See 27:15-26 below.
it and settle in it. So be careful about observing all the suprarational commands and rational commands that I am presenting before you today.

**MITZVOS TO BE OBSERVED UPON ENTERING THE LAND**

12 These are the suprarational commands and rational commands that you should be careful to perform in the Land which God, the God of your fathers, is giving you as a possession for all the days that you live on the earth:

- From all the places where the nations—that you will take over—performed acts of worship, upon the high mountains, the hills, and under every lush tree, you should progressively destroy their gods (until nothing remains of them). You should demolish their altars, smash their monuments, burn their idolatrous trees with fire, cut down the graven images of their gods, and spoil the names (of their gods with ridicule, ensuring they have no respect) from that place.

**THE UNIQUENESS OF SHILOH & JERUSALEM**

12:4 You should not do any (act of sacrificial worship) to God, your God, other than at the site where God, your God, will choose, to place His Name there, from amongst all your tribes. You should seek out His dwelling (place in the Tabernacle at Shiloh) and come there. You should bring there your burnt-offerings, and your (obligatory peace-)offerings, your tithes, (your first fruits—which are) lifted from your hand (by the priests)—your vows, your pledges, and the firstborn of your cattle and of your sheep (which are to be given to the priests). It is there that you should eat (your sacrifices) before God, your God. Then you and your households will rejoice in all the work of your hands. (You should bring offerings according to the means with) which God, your God, blesses you.

8 (When you cross the Jordan, for the first fourteen years, before the Tabernacle at Shiloh is established) you should not (erect private altars to) carry out all the (obligatory sacrifices) that we are currently offering (in the Tabernacle. At that time, private altars will be permitted only for) all (the voluntary sacrifices) which each man sees fit (to offer). Obligatory sacrifices will be prohibited at that time), for you will not yet have come to the resting place (at Shiloh) or to the eternal abode (in Jerusalem), which God, your God, is giving you.

10 You should cross the Jordan, (apportion) the Land that God, your God, is giving you as an inheritance (and) settle in it. Then, (after the conquest and apportionment), He will give you rest from God's choice of Shiloh & Jerusalem (V. 4ff.)

In contrast to the Tabernacle in the desert, which wandered from place to place, the Tabernacle at Shiloh was a permanent structure fashioned from stone. Thus, at Shiloh, the Divine Presence which dwelt in the Tabernacle became associated with a particular location for the first time. So Shiloh is referred to by the Torah—according to Rashi—as God's “chosen site.”

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* When the Jewish people entered the Land of Israel in 2488, they erected a Tabernacle at Gilgal, which stood for fourteen years, until they had conquered and divided the Land. Then they built the Tabernacle at Shiloh, a stone structure with an animal-skin roof which stood for 369 years, until 2871. They then constructed a Tabernacle at Nov, which stood until Shmuel the prophet died in 2882. This was followed by another Tabernacle in Givon, which stood until the construction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem in 2928.
This, however, begs the question: Why do we find that the term, God’s “chosen house” (נוֹהַל מְנַחֶם [toras menachem]) is used only in reference to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and not the Tabernacle at Shiloh, if Shiloh is also God’s “chosen site”?

The Explanation

There are two possible ways of understanding the concept that God “chose” a particular place to be the exclusive location where sacrifices are offered:

a.) That the emphasis is primarily on the negative: He does not want sacrifices to be offered in any place other than this; or

b.) That he positively desires this site, (and inevitably this precludes the use of any other site).

It could be argued that this is the distinction between God’s choice of Shiloh, and His choice of Jerusalem:

When introducing the prohibition of offering a sacrifice outside Shiloh, the Torah stresses the negative (precluding other sites) before the positive...
all your enemies surrounding you, and you will dwell securely. 11 Then (you will build the Holy Temple) in the place in which God, your God, will choose to make His Name rest there.

- (Only) there should you bring everything that I am commanding you: your burnt-offerings, your (obligatory peace-)offerings, your tithes, (your first fruits—which are) lifted from your hand (by the priests)—and all your vow-offerings which you will vow to God (from your) choicest (quality produce).

- 12 You should rejoice before God, your God: you, your sons, daughters, servants and maidservants, and the Levite who lives in your town, for he has no portion or inheritance with you.

- 13 Be careful not to offer up your burnt-offerings in any place you see (fit to do so. 14 This must be done) only in the place God will choose in (the territory of) one of your tribes. (Only) there may you offer up your burnt-offerings, and there you should do everything that I am commanding you.

- 15 (If a blemish develops in a holy offering and you) desire with all your soul (to eat its meat):
  - You may slaughter (it in any place) and eat (its) meat in all your cities, for God, your God, is giving it to you as a blessing, (but you may not make use of its fleece or milk).
  - (You may) only (redeem it and slaughter it if it is a permanent blemish that will not heal).
  - (Even though the animal was originally a holy offering which may not become ritually impure, after it has been redeemed) a ritually impure person and a ritually pure person may eat it (together on the same plate).
  - (The foreleg, jaw and end-stomach do not need to be given to the priest), as if (you were slaughtering) a deer, or a gazelle.
  - 16 Even though (the blood of this animal is exempt from being thrown on the Altar) you may not eat the blood. You should spill it on the ground like water (and you do not have to cover it).

- 17 You may not eat (the following) within your (own) cities: your grain, wine, or oil tithes, the firstborn of your cattle or of your sheep, any of your vow-offerings that you will vow, your pledge-offerings, or (your first fruits—which are) lifted from your hand (by the priests). 18 Rather,

(exclusivity of Shiloh): “[4] You should not do any (act of sacrificial worship) to God, your God, [5] other than at the site where God, your

God, will choose, to place His Name there.” This indicates that God’s intent in “choosing” Shiloh was primarily for the sake of excluding other locations, and not because God had an intrinsic “desire” that His sacrifices should be offered at Shiloh in particular.

However, in the case of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the Torah stresses the superiority of the site itself first: “Then (you will build the Holy Temple) in the place in which God, your God, will choose to make His Name rest there” (v. 11), before outlining the prohibition of offering elsewhere, “(Only) there should you bring everything that I am commanding you” (ibid.). This indicates that God positively desired Jerusalem as a place of sacrificial worship, not as a means to an end. The prohibition of offering a sacrifice in any other location thus follows as a secondary logical necessity.

And it is for this reason that only the Holy Temple in Jerusalem can truly be called God’s “Chosen House.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 79ff.)
Why is the requirement of ritual slaughter mentioned here, shortly before entering the Land? (v. 21)

_Talmud:_ Rabbi Yishma’el says: “Originally, it was prohibited to eat non-sacrificial meat. When they entered the Land of Israel, non-sacrificial meat was permitted to them.” Rabbi Akiva says: “Originally, they were permitted to eat meat from an animal that was not ritually slaughtered. When they entered the Land, non-ritually slaughtered meat became forbidden to them” (Chullin 16b-17a).

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

_When a Jewish person eats food and it subsequently becomes incorporated into his body, the food becomes “elevated” from its prior state—be it animal, vegetable or mineral—and it attains the special holiness of a Jewish person. In the case of meat, which is a material luxury, this spiritual elevation is more difficult, so the special procedure of shechitah (ritual slaughter) is required. Thus, the precept of (non-sacrificial) shechitah was only given to the Jewish people as they entered the Land of Israel. For in the desert, they were removed from worldly matters, but upon entering the Land, the Jewish people were charged with the mission to interact with, and spiritually elevate, the material world._

_Both Rabbi Yishma’el and Rabbi Akiva (in the Talmud, see Classic Questions) agreed with the above reasoning—that “elevation” of non-sacrificial meat was spiritually “irrelevant” to the unwordly mode of Divine service in the desert. Where they differed was regarding the practical implication of this spiritual “irrelevance”:_

_Rabbi Yishma’el maintained that God would not have empowered the Jewish people to do something which is spiritually “irrelevant.” Therefore, he maintained that non-sacrificial meat was forbidden._

_But Rabbi Akiva maintained that, since eating meat was spiritually “irrelevant” to the Jewish people, the Torah would not have legislated any rules regarding its consumption. Thus it could be eaten freely._

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 4, p. 1108ff.)
you should eat them before God, your God, in (Jerusalem, which is) the place God, your God, will choose. You (should eat them along with) your son, daughter, servant, maidservant, and the Levite who lives in your town, and you should rejoice before God, your God, in all the work of your hands.

- Be careful not to abandon the Levite, all your days upon your Land.

**Consumption of Non-Sacrificial Meat**

- When God, your God, extends your boundary, as He said to you, and you say, “I want to eat meat,” because your soul desires to eat meat, then you may eat as much meat as your soul desires. If the place where God, your God, chooses to put His Name is far from you (so you cannot bring peace-offerings every day), you may (eat) from your cattle and sheep, which God has given you, (provided that you first) slaughter (them, as) I have commanded you (in the Oral Law). Then, you may eat (meat) in your (own) cities, as much as your soul desires.

- You may eat them just as a deer or a gazelle is eaten, (i.e.) a ritually impure person may eat together with a ritually pure person. However, (unlike in the case of a deer or a gazelle, their sacrificial fats are not permitted).

- However, be strong not to eat the blood, for the blood is the soul, and you may not eat the soul with the flesh.

**Classic Questions**

- Why must one be “strong not to eat the blood”? (v. 23)

  **Rashi**: “From the statement ‘be strong,’ you can infer that [the Jewish people] used to eat blood excessively. Therefore, the Torah found it necessary to say, ‘be strong’”—these are the words of Rabbi Yehudah.

  Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai says: “This statement comes only to caution you and to teach you the extent to which you should strengthen your observance of the mitzvos. For if the Torah needed to ‘strengthen’ you to observe the prohibition of eating blood—which is easy to guard oneself against, because a person has no desire for it—then how much more so [must one strengthen oneself to observe] all other commandments!”

  **Rashbam**: Blood becomes absorbed into all the organs of the body. Therefore, the Torah warns us to be especially careful not to eat it.

  **Bachaye**: Eating blood strengthens the body. Therefore, the Torah promises that a person will be strong even if he does not eat blood.

- **Be Strong!** (v. 23)

  In his comments to verse 23, Rashi explains why the Torah chose to stress, “Be strong not to eat the blood,” rather than stating simply, “Do not eat the blood.” However, Rashi’s comments prompt the following questions:

  a.) Why did Rashi cite two explanations, and not deem one sufficient?

  b.) Why did Rashi cite the authors of these comments, Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai, in contrast to his usual practice not to provide references?

- **The Explanation**

  The prohibition against eating blood does not appear for the first time here, in Parshas Re’eh. (Indeed, Rambam (Sefer Hamitzvos, Shosheh 9) maintains that this prohibition is mentioned no less than seven times in the Torah!) So Rashi was troubled: Why does the Torah stress here the additional need to be “strong” not to eat blood, rather than in one of the previous instances when the prohibition is mentioned? And since the Jewish people learned the practice of eating blood in Egypt (see Rambam cited in Classic Questions to Vayikra 17:10-12), why is the prohibition emphasized here again, forty years after the Jewish people left Egypt?

  This led Rashi to conclude that even here, some forty years later, the Jewish people still “used to eat blood excessively,” and, “therefore, the Torah found it necessary to say, ‘be strong,’” here in Parshas Re’eh.

  Nevertheless, Rashi was not satisfied with this answer alone, because:

  a.) It still does not explain why the Torah failed to stress the need to “be strong” when mentioning the prohibition of blood on the first occasion (the primary source for this prohibition).

  b.) It is unreasonable to suggest that the Jewish people ignored repeated warnings against eating blood, and that they still “used to eat blood excessively,” after forty years.

  c.) Furthermore, at this point, the generation that left Egypt had already died. So why should their children, who were not directly influenced by Egyptian culture, have such a strong desire to eat blood and ignore God’s repeated warnings not to do so?

  Due to these difficulties, Rashi brought an additional explanation, the teaching of Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai, that the Jewish people were not actually eating blood at this point at all, and, “This statement comes only to caution you and to teach you the extent to which you should strengthen your observance of the mitzvos.”
However, Rashi cited this only as a secondary explanation, since it has an even greater drawback than Rabbi Yehudah’s interpretation. For, at the literal level, it is difficult to accept that the very command to, “be strong not to eat the blood,” is actually a universal principle that applies to all the mitzvos of the Torah.

Furthermore, the fact that the prohibition against eating blood is mentioned here in a passage which speaks about the “desire” to eat meat (see v. 20-21) suggests that the Jewish people did desire to eat blood—contrary to what Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai suggests.

Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai

In order to indicate to the more advanced student why these two divergent opinions arose, Rashi cited their respective authors: Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai.

In contrast to some Rabbinic opinions that allow a “loose” rendering of scripture, where clauses and conditions may be extrapolated beyond the precise case in which they are recorded, Rabbi Yehudah maintained that “the words of scripture are to be interpreted exactly as they are written.” (Pesachim 21b). Consequently, we can appreciate why, in our case, Rabbi Yehudah rejected Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai’s extrapolation of the clause “be strong” to apply to all the mitzvos of the Torah.

Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai, on the other hand, was famous for teaching, “Run to perform an easy mitzvah” (Avos 4:2). So we can appreciate why Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai was sympathetic to an interpretation of our verse which stressed how the prohibition of blood is an “easy mitzvah” (“because a person has no desire for it”) and how nevertheless the Torah highlights its importance (“be strong not to eat the blood”).

Furthermore, Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai used to say, “One mitzvah leads to another” (ibid.), which explains why he taught, in our case, that additional care with the prohibition of eating blood would lead to additional care in the case of other mitzvos too.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 14, p. 45ff.)
• 24 You may not eat (the blood which trickles out of an animal). Spill it on the ground, like water.
25 You should not eat (the blood within internal organs), for your own benefit, and for your children after you, because you will be doing what is proper in the eyes of God.

• 26 (Although I have permitted you to sacrifice non-sacred animals), however, your holy offerings and voluntary offerings which you will have should be carried and brought to (the Holy Temple), the place that God will choose. 27 (If they are) burnt-offerings, the meat and the blood should go upon the Altar of God, your God. (If they are peace-)offerings, their blood should be poured upon the Altar of God, your God, and you should eat the meat.

28 Safeguard and listen to all these words that I am commanding you, which are for your benefit and that of your children after you, for all time, because (God benefits you) when you have done what is good in the eyes of God, your God, and proper (in the eyes of man).

29 When God, your God will cut off the nations (from the Land) where you are (soon) to come and drive them out from before you, and you (succeed) in driving them out, and settle in their Land, 30 be careful not to be lured into following (their ways, especially) after (you witness how) they have been

Classic Questions

How does one “safeguard all these words”? (v. 28)

Rashi: This refers to study of the law, which you must guard in your heart*, so that it should not be forgotten, as the verse states: “For it is pleasant that you guard them in your heart” (Proverbs. 22:18).

Why does the verse stress the need to safeguard “all these words”? (v. 28)

Rashi: This means that a minor mitzvah should be as precious to you as a major one.

Safeguarding the Torah (v. 28)

At first glance, verse 28 appears to be a straightforward reminder to safeguard all the mitzvos. Why did Rashi find it necessary to make any comment at all on this verse?

Furthermore:

a.) Why did Rashi need to cite a scriptural source to prove that Torah is forgotten if it is not studied? Surely, even the child studying Chumash for the first time understands this fact, without the need for proof?

The Last Word

“Be Careful Not to Be Lured to Follow (Their Ways)” (v. 30)

Finding themselves a small minority and encountering certain difficulties, which are largely unavoidable in all cases of resettlement, some parents had the mistaken notion, which they injected also into their children, that the way to overcome these difficulties is to become quickly assimilated with the new environment, by discarding the heritage of their forefathers and abandoning the Jewish way of life. Finding the ensuing process somewhat distasteful, as such a course is bound to be full of spiritual conflict, some parents were resolved that their children would be spared the conflict altogether. In order to justify their desertion and appease their injured conscience, it was necessary for them to devise some rationale, and they deluded themselves, and deluded their children, by the claim that in their new surroundings the Jewish way of life, with the observance of the Torah and Mitzvos did not fit. They looked for, and therefore also “found,” faults with the true Jewish way of life, while in their non Jewish environment everything seemed to them only good and attractive.

By this attitude the said parents hoped to assure their children’s existence and survival in the new environment. But what kind of existence is it, if everything spiritual and holy is traded for the material? What kind of survival is it, if it means the sacrifice of the soul for the amenities of the body?

Moreover, in their retreat from Yiddishkeit, they turned what they thought was an “escape to freedom” into an escape to servitude, pathetically trying to imitate the non Jewish environment, failing to see that such imitation, by its caricature and inferiority complex, can only call forth mockery and derision, and can only offend the sensibilities of those whose respect and acceptance they are so desperately trying to win....

The dire consequences of this utterly false approach were that thousands upon thousands of Jews have been removed from their fountain of life, from their fellow Jews and from their true faith....

It is one of the vital tasks of our time to exert all possible effort to awaken in the young generation, as also in those who are advanced in years but still immature in deeper understanding, a fuller appreciation of the true Jewish values, of Torah-true Yiddishkeit, a full and genuine Yiddishkeit; not of that which goes under a false label of misrepresented, compromised, or watered-down “Judaism,” whatever the trademark. Together with this appreciation will come the realization that only true Yiddishkeit can guarantee the existence of the individual, of each and every Jew, at any time, in any place, and under any circumstances....

(Excerpt from a public letter written by the Rebbe on 11 Nissan 5717)

* Literally “in your innards.” See Rashi to Proverbs ibid.
"They also burned their sons and daughters in fire to their gods" Isn’t the word “also” superfluous? (v. 31)

Rashi: The word “also” (בָּאָלָךְ) alludes to their fathers and mothers [whom they burned also]. Rabbi Akiva said, “I saw a heathen who bound his father before his dog [which he worshiped as a god], which then devoured him.”

Why does the observance of these mitzvos require an extra effort?

Rashi answers this question by citing a verse, “For it is pleasant that you guard them in your heart.” I.e. since these mitzvos are connected with something especially “pleasant” to, and cherished by, the Jewish people (entering into the Land of Israel) their study and observance will need to be guarded with extra special care and devotion.

The result, continues Rashi, is that, “A minor mitzvah should be as precious to you as a major one” i.e. since these mitzvos are especially precious to the Jewish people, they will keep them with extra care.

Rashi mentions that this applies both to a “minor mitzvah” and “a major one,” since we find both of these cases in the current chapter. At the opening of the chapter we are commanded to “progressively destroy their gods,” i.e. the elimination of idolatry, one of the Ten Commandments, which is a “major” mitzvah. And near the end of the chapter we read of the prohibition against eating blood which is, as Rashi comments, “easy to guard oneself against, because a person has no desire for it.”

Thus, when our verse stresses, “Safeguard and listen to all these words that I am commanding you,” this means the words of the current chapter, and Rashi notes that this includes both “a minor mitzvah,” and “a major one.”

(Responsum to Sichos Shabbos Parshas Re’eih 5742)

Rabbi Akiva’s Testimony (v. 31)

In his comment to verse 31, Rashi explains the significance of the superfluous word “also,” which indicates that the idolatrous nations not only sacrificed their sons and daughters to their gods, but that they offered their fathers and mothers too.

Rashi then adds: “Rabbi Akiva said, ‘I saw a heathen who bound his father before his dog, which then devoured him.’”

What is the purpose of this addition? What does it add to our understanding of the verse at the literal level?
destroyed from before you (for their degenerate behavior). Be careful not to inquire about their gods, saying, “How did these nations serve their gods? I will do likewise!”

31 Do not do this to God, your God. For they worshiped their gods with all the abominable methods which God hates. They also burned their sons and daughters in fire to their gods.

**Preserving the Precepts of the Torah**

Be careful to observe everything which I am commanding you (no matter how trivial it may seem):

- Do not add to it.
- Do not detract from it.

**Classic Questions**

- How might one add to the Torah? (v. 1)

  **Rashi:** Tefilin with five “totafos,” five species for the lulav, or four blessings for the priestly blessing.

  **Ramban:** Rashi limits the prohibition of adding to the Torah to adding a detail within a given mitzvah. However, in my opinion, the prohibition also forbids adding an entirely new mitzvah (4:2).

**Toras Menachem**

At first glance, we might argue that Rashi added Rabbi Akiva’s testimony because he feared that the reader might simply not believe that any person could possibly sacrifice their father or mother to their god. However, it is difficult to accept that this was Rashi’s reasoning, for why would the reader find the notion of sacrificing parents any less credible than the sacrificing of children? Yet Rashi did not deem it necessary to prove that heathen people sacrificed their children (which could have been proven from scripture—see Kings II 16:3).

Why, then, did Rashi cite Rabbi Akiva’s testimony?

**The Explanation**

The concept of idol-worship has been mentioned in the Torah on numerous occasions prior to this point, including the idea that a person might use his child as a tool of idol-worship. Here, however, is the first instance where we learn that heathens would utilize even their parents in acts of idol-worship. Thus, the reader will be troubled: Why did the Torah omit the example of idol-worship that is most remote?

And why was this detail not mentioned explicitly in the Torah, but rather by means of adding the superfluous word “also”?

To answer these questions, Rashi cites the testimony of Rabbi Akiva: “I saw a heathen who bound his father before his dog, which then devoured him.” This indicates that such a practice must have been very rare indeed, and that even Rabbi Akiva (who traveled extensively throughout the world) only witnessed this once.

Thus, being a highly unusual practice, the reader will appreciate why the Torah never mentioned it up to this point, and only alluded to it here by the inclusion of a superfluous word.

(Seasonal Notes: Shabbos Parshas Re’eh 5735)

**“Do Not Add To It”** (v. 1)

Rashi explains that the prohibition, “Do not add to it,” refers to adding details within one of the mitzvos of the Torah, such as “Tefilin with five ‘totafos,’” rather than four, etc. This prompts the following questions:

a.) Why did Rashi reject the more simple explanation [of Ramban] that the Torah comes here to prohibit a person from adding an additional mitzvah (and not merely a detail within a particular mitzvah)? Surely, it is a much more likely scenario that a person may, due to additional piety, want to add extra precepts to the Torah? The notion of corrupting one of the existing mitzvos by adding additional details seems much more remote.

b.) Why did Rashi bring three examples: tefilin, lulav and the priestly blessing?

c.) In Parshas Va’eschanan, on the words, “Do not add to the word(s of Torah law)” (4:2), Rashi comments, “For example, tefilin with five scriptural passages, five species for the lulav, or five tzitzis.” Yet here, in Parshas Re’eh, Rashi omits the example of tzitzis, swapping it instead for the priestly blessing. Furthermore, in Parshas Va’eschanan, Rashi writes, “tefilin with five scriptural passages,” whereas here he alters this to read, “tefilin with five ‘totafos.” What are the reasons for these changes?

**The Explanation**

Let us begin by addressing Rashi’s comments in Parshas Va’eschanan, and then we will proceed to clarify his explanation here, in Parshas Re’eh: Rashi could not accept that the prohibition against adding to the Torah means that it is forbidden to add an additional mitzvah, because Rashi

**The Last Word**

Why does the Torah state first, “Do not add to it,” and only afterwards, “Do not detract from it” (13:1)? Surely, detracting from the Torah is the more serious crime, and should have been stated first?

The yetzer hara (evil inclination) knows that if it will tell a pious person to “detract from the Torah,” the person will simply not listen. Therefore, the yetzer deceptively encourages a person to “add” to Judaism, in the hope that this will begin to corrupt the person, eventually leading him to “detract” from observance. So, the Torah warns us of the yetzer’s ploy, by warning us first of all not to add to the Torah.

(Based on Sicha of the third of Tamuz 5742)
wrote his commentary primarily for the child who is studying Chumash for the first time, and:

a.) The child knows that the Sages did add additional mitzvos, such as the observance of Purim and Chanukah.*

b.) Rashi stated previously (Bereishis 26:5) that Avraham observed "precautionary measures on top of the prohibitions in the Torah, such as the prohibition to marry 'second-degree' relations and the Rabbinic prohibitions concerning Shabbos." From this the reader will already be familiar with the idea that one may—and indeed should—add precautionary measures "on top of" the Torah's precepts.

Therefore, Rashi concluded that our verse does not refer to an additional mitzvah, but to an addition within one of the mitzvos of the Torah.

**Two Types of Addition**

An added detail within a mitzvah could be either relevant or irrelevant to the overall theme of the mitzvah.

If we were simply told not to add details to a mitzvah, without being informed whether this refers to a prohibition against "irrelevant" or "relevant" details, we would presume that it is only forbidden to add irrelevant details and not relevant details. Thus, when the Torah prohibits adding details to a mitzvah for the first time, in Parshas Va’eschanan, the reader will presume that it is only forbidden to add "irrelevant" details within a mitzvah, because it makes sense that we should not introduce "alien" features into the mitzvos. However, we would not have any basis to assert that the Torah forbids the addition of details which are relevant to the theme of the mitzvah.

To illustrate this point, Rashi in Parshas Va’eschanan cites three examples of additions to a mitzvah which are irrelevant to the theme of the mitzvah:

"Tefilin with five scriptural passages"—There are only four passages in the Torah which mention tefilin. Thus, if a fifth passage was added, it would contain no mention of tefilin and would thus be "irrelevant."

"Five species for the lulav"—The Torah specifies only four species which cause a person to "rejoice before God, your God, for a period of seven days" (Vayikra 23:40). Thus, adding another one will not cause further joy, so it would be irrelevant to the theme of the mitzvah.

"Five tzitzis"—In Parshas Shelach, Rashi writes: "On the four corners—but not on a garment with three, or with five. This corresponds to the four expressions of redemption which were stated in Egypt (Shemos 6:6-7): 'I will take you out...I will save you...I will redeem you...I will take you'" (Rashi to Bamiyvr 15:41). Since there are only "four expressions of redemption," adding a fifth tzitzis would be irrelevant to the mitzvah.

**Rashi’s Comment in Parshas Re’eh**

In our Parsha, the Torah repeats the prohibition against adding details to a mitzvah, "Do not add to it." Rashi understood that this is an additional prohibition against adding even a thematically relevant detail to a mitzvah—and he cited three examples of such an addition:

Tefilin with five ‘totafos’—Earlier, Rashi explained that ‘totafos’ refers to the compartments of the tefilin (Rashi to Shemos 13:16). The significance of the compartments is that, being externally visible, "whoever sees them tied between the eyes will remember the miracle and speak about it" (Rashi). Thus, adding compartments ("totafos") to the tefilin would indeed be thematically relevant to the mitzvah, since it would magnify their impact when people would see them.

Five kinds for the lulav—Here, Rashi points out that even if we found a species that causes joy (and is therefore thematically relevant to the mitzvah), it would still be forbidden.

Four blessings for the priestly blessing—Rashi could not bring the example of tzitzis here, as there is no way of making a thematically relevant addition to this mitzvah. Rather, he cites the example of "four blessings for priestly blessing," since there are numerous blessings in the Torah which could be added here. And clearly any such blessing would be a thematically relevant addition.

* Many commentators maintain that the verse in Parshas Va’eschanan does prohibit adding an extra mitzvah, and they explain why the additional mitzvos added by the Sages are not a contradiction. Nevertheless, these solutions are halachic in nature, and thus could not be employed here by Rashi, who limited his commentary to the interpretation of scripture at the literal level.
God, the Torah may record a command in one of three ways: specific mention that the command was issued by God. God told Moshe to transmit this instruction to the Jewish people. Therefore, one might argue that in the case of a record of God’s private conversation with Moshe. While all the mitzvos of the Torah were received by Moshe directly from God, the Torah may record a command in one of three ways:

a.) Moshe’s words alone. A command given through Moshe, without specific mention that the command was issued by God.

b.) The words of God and Moshe. The verse mentions explicitly that God told Moshe to transmit this instruction to the Jewish people.

c.) God’s words alone. A command whose details we know from a record of God’s private conversation with Moshe.

Generally speaking, God’s words in the Torah are briefer than those of Moshe. Therefore, one might argue that in the case of a mitzvah which we learn from Moshe’s words, we cannot add any details, because Moshe would have explained all the details thoroughly. But, we might argue, God did leave room for additions, since His words were so brief. On the other hand, we could take the opposite point of view, that God’s words are absolutely precise and cannot be added to in any way; whereas Moshe’s words do not enjoy the same degree of precision, and additions could be made.

In order to refute both of these arguments, Rashi cited three examples of prohibited additions: Tefillin, which is given over in Moshe’s words (see Devarim 6:6; ibid. 11:13); Lulav—which stresses the words of God and Moshe (Vayikra 23:33); and the priestly blessing, which was said privately by God to Moshe (Bamidbar 6:22).

(Taken from: Likutei Sichos vol. 9, p. 53, note 24)

Why Three Examples?

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(Taken from: Likutei Sichos vol. 9, p. 53, note 24)
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why are several family members listed here? (v. 7)

Rashi: Scripture specifies those who are dear to you, and how much more so does this apply to others!

Why is incitement described as being “in secret”? (v. 7)

Rashi: The Torah speaks of that which usually occurs, since an inciter speaks in secret.
• "That prophet, or that person who had a vision in his dream should be put to death because he spoke falsehood about God, your God—who brought you out of the land of Egypt, who redeemed you from the house of bondage—to lead you astray from the path in which God, your God, commanded you to go. (By killing him) you will eliminate the evil from your midst.

**Incitement to Idol Worship**

• "If you are incited in secret by your (paternal) brother, (or) your mother’s son, your son or your daughter, your wife who is one with you, your friend, (or your father) who is as (dear to you) as yourself, and are told, “Let us go and worship other gods!”—(gods) which are unacquainted to you and your ancestors, from among the gods of the peoples around you, (whether) near to you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth:
  
  • You should not feel affection for him.
  • You should not listen to him (when he pleads forgiveness for his life).
  • You should not pity him (if he is in a life-threatening situation).
  • You should not have mercy upon him (to turn justice in his favor).
  • You should not withhold evidence (that may lead to) his (conviction).
  • Rather, you should (try his case) repeatedly (until he is sentenced) to be killed.
  • (The victim’s) own hand should be the first against him, to put him to death, and afterwards the hands of all the people.
  • You should pelt him with stones until he dies, because he sought to lead you astray from God, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

All Israel should hear (of it) and be afraid, so they should no longer do such an evil thing in your midst.

**A City of Idol Worshipers**

• If, in one of your cities which God, your God, is giving you as a place to live, you hear a report, "Reckless men, from among you, have gone and led the inhabitants of their city astray, saying, ‘Let’s go and worship other gods, which are unacquainted to you!’":

**The Inciter (v. 7)**

When describing those who might incite a person to idol-worship, the Torah cites a series of close relatives. Rashi explains, “Scripture specifies those who are dear to you, and how much more so does this apply to others!”

Since the list appears to be comprehensive, why are the cases of mother and sister omitted?

**The Explanation**

On numerous occasions, Rashi repeats the principle, “the Torah speaks of that which usually occurs.” (See Rashi to Shemos 21:28; 22:17, 21, 30. This principle is also cited by Rashi here, see Classic Questions.)

Thus when describing the “typical” victim of incitement to idol worship, the Torah depicts here an adult male, with a wife and children, since the very young are unlikely to have the intellectual maturity to see anything tempting in idol worship, and the very old are not easily influenced by new ideas.

A married person is strongly influenced by his wife and children, with whom he lives on a daily basis and has a strong emotional bond. This close relationship between a man and his wife and children renders him susceptible to their influence.

Outside the home, a man’s outlook tends to be influenced by his father and brothers even after he has married and has a family. Therefore they are also included by our verse as likely inciters.

However, after a man is married, his mother and sisters do not tend to be major contributors to his outlook and philosophy. And since he no longer lives under the same roof with them, it is also unlikely that the closeness of their relationship will be strong enough to sway him to idol worship. Therefore, the verse omitted the case of mother and sister, since “the Torah speaks of that which usually occurs.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 148ff.)
After the witnesses have been examined (v. 15) what is done before executing the inhabitants of the city? (v. 16)

Rambam: Two Torah scholars are sent to the city to warn them and to encourage them to do teshuvah (repent). If they do teshuvah, then all is well and good. But if they persist in their foolishness...then even after being "warned" by the Torah scholars.

Ra’avad: Teshuvah cannot help [to annul the court’s sentence] after a person has already been warned, and committed a sin (ibid.).

Kesef Mishneh: In response to Ra’avad’s criticism of Rambam: The general warning of the Torah scholars to the inhabitants of the city is not a full-fledged halachic warning, since it was not administered to each person individually. Therefore, the city can still be exonerated through teshuvah even after being “warned” by the Torah scholars.

Tzafnas Pane’ach: When Rambam writes that the city is exonerated through teshuvah, he does not mean to say that no punishment is administered at all. Rather, he means that the city is exonerated from being judged as a “city of idol-worshipers,” but that the individual idol-worshippers would nevertheless be punished by stoning (Tzafnas Pane’ach al Hatorah, Bereishis 18:21).

The City of Idol Worshippers (v. 13-19)

Ra’avad criticized Rambam’s opinion that a city of idol-worshippers is exonerated if they do teshuvah, since the ruling of a Beis Din (Jewish Court) cannot be reversed even if the convicted person repents after his sentence has been passed.

Both Kesef Mishneh and Tzafnas Pane’ach defend Rambam’s ruling, but with different solutions. Kesef Mishneh argues that in this case the sentence can be reversed, since the inhabitants of the city were not given a full-fledged halachic warning. On the other hand, Tzafnas Pane’ach suggests that the teshuvah does not annul the punishment entirely, but rather that, it exonerates the “public crime” of a city of idol-worshippers, and replaces it instead with the “private crime,” of personal idol worship.

However, both these solutions do not appear to address Ra’avad’s main contention here. The primary reason why a court’s sentence cannot be reversed through repentance is because there is no way that a court can evaluate whether or not teshuvah has actually taken place, since teshuvah is an internal/emotional conviction of the heart (see Sha’alos Vatishu vos Noda Biyehudah, Orach Chaim, Mehadurah Kama, responsum 35). So why is the case of a city of idol-worshippers an exception to this rule?
15. You should interrogate, probe, and question (the witnesses) thoroughly.

If indeed the matter is confirmed to be true, that this abomination has occurred in your midst:

16. (If possible) you should kill the inhabitants of that city by sword, (but otherwise just) kill (them by any means). Wipe out (the city) together with all that is in it, (killing) its livestock by sword.

17. You should gather all its spoil into its main square, and burn the city with all its spoil completely with fire, for (the sake of) God, your God. It should remain a heap of destruction forever, never to be rebuilt.

18. Nothing that is doomed to destruction should remain in your hands.

(The city must be destroyed) in order for God’s anger to cease, and (only then) will He have mercy on you. (When) He will have mercy on you He will cause you to multiply, as He swore to your forefathers.

So you should listen to the voice of God your God, and keep all His commandments which I am commanding you today, so as to do that which is proper in the eyes of God, your God.

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

**The Explanation**

In order to resolve this problem, let us first pose another question:

The *Talmud* states that if a person commits an act which involves two different transgressions, rendering him liable for the death penalty twice over, and each punishment requires him to be executed by a different method, then we administer the more severe form of execution (*Sanhedrin* 81b; Rambam, *Laws of Sanhedrin* 14:4).

Now, an ordinary individual who worships idols is liable for death by stoning, whereas the punishment for a person who merely lives in a city of idol worshipers is decapitation by the sword (*Sanhedrin* 111b). Of these two punishments, death by stoning is the more severe.

So an inhabitant of a convicted city of idol-worshipers who worships idols, appears to be liable for the death penalty twice over: stoning for his personal idol worship, and decapitation for being a citizen of a city of idol worshipers. Why then is he not administered the more severe of these two punishments, that of stoning?

Or, to put it more graphically: A city of idol worshipers is only sentenced to execution by the sword if the majority of its inhabitants worship idols. Otherwise, the minority of idol-worshipers are executed by stoning, and the rest are not punished at all (see Rambam cited in Classic Questions). Now, picture the scenario where a city is one person short of a majority of idol worshipers, and one individual then proceeds to worships idols. He has now reduced the sentence of all those who were liable for stoning, and replaced it with the less severe sentence of death by the sword! How could this be the case?

In fact, however, he has not “reduced” the sentence at all. What has happened, is that the idol-worshipers have ceased to exist as individuals, and have now merged identities to become a community of idol worshipers. Thus, it is not the case that they are guilty of a private crime (personal idol worship) and a public crime (being a citizen of a city of idol worshipers). Rather, their new identity as a community of idol-worshipers has replaced their prior identity as private idol-worshipers. Therefore, they are only liable for one punishment: death by the sword.

(This also explains why all members of the city—even those who did not worship idols (v. 16)—are punished by death, and even their possessions are burned (v. 17), since the judgment is upon the entire community as a single unit.)

If the inhabitants of the city were then to do teshuva, a very unusual phenomenon would occur. If we bear in mind that the “community of idol-worshipers” only became united as a single unit through their sins, then if the sins are wiped away through teshuva, the cohesive force (of sin) that is responsible for forming the community’s very identity will no longer be present, and the “community” will cease to exist. Consequently, the death sentence on the community is annulled (not through a legal technicality, exemption or immunity, but rather) because the convicted party—the community of idol-worshipers—no longer exists.

Thus we have not violated the principle that a court’s sentence cannot be reversed through repentance, since it is not the case here that the sentence of the convicted party was legally reversed. Rather, the case was simply “thrown out of court,” since the convicted party was no longer to be found.

**Rambam’s Source**

Based on the above, we can answer a problem concerning Rambam’s source for the ruling that (through teshuva) a city of-idol-worshipers is exonerated. According to Tzafnas Pane’ach (ibid.), Rambam’s source was from the case of Sodom, which God promised not to destroy if its inhabitants would repent (see Onkelos to Bereishis 18:21), because Sodom had the status of a “city of idol worshipers.”

This begs the question: There is a principle that “we cannot derive a law from events before the giving of the Torah” (Jerusalem Talmud, Mo’ed Katan 3:5, cited in Tosfos, Mo’ed Katan 20a). So how can Tzafnas Pane’ach assert that Rambam’s source is from the destruction of Sodom, an event that occurred before the Torah was given?

However, based on the above, we can appreciate that what Rambam derived from the case of Sodom was not a point of Jewish Law, but rather, the definition of what constitutes a community—when it comes into existence and when it is dissolved. (The law governing such a community is then derived from our Parsha, which was said after the giving of the Torah).

And certainly, the events recorded before the giving of the Torah can act as a source text for factual information, such as the definition of what constitutes a “community”—just as Rambam rules in our case.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 9, p. 106ff.)*
To which “abomination” does verse 3 refer?

Rashi: Anything that I have declared to be an abomination to you. [E.g.] if one made a cut in the ear of a firstborn [animal], in order to [be permitted to] slaughter it in the country, [outside the Temple]. This is something that I have declared as an abomination for you—

“It should not have any blemish in it” (Vayikra 22:21). Here scripture teaches that one may not slaughter [the firstborn] and eat it because of that [deliberately made] blemish. [Another example is] if one cooked meat in milk, which is a thing that I have declared as an abomination to you. Here scripture warns against eating it.

“YOU MAY NOT EAT ANY ABOMINATION” (v. 3)

Verse 3 prohibits the consumption of “any abomination.” Rashi gives two examples: i.) a firstborn animal which was intentionally mutilated in order to avoid slaughtering it in the Holy Temple. ii.) Cooked milk and meat. This prompts the following questions:

a.) Why did Rashi need to offer examples here of an “abomination” which is forbidden to eat? The reader is already familiar with many forbidden foods which the Torah refers to as an abomination—such as forbidden fat, blood, pigul and nosar—so why is any comment from Rashi needed here?

b.) When citing an example of an abominable food, why did Rashi pick the unusual case of a mutilated firstborn animal, which only applies to those who own flocks that produce an unblemished firstborn male, in unusual case of a mutilated firstborn animal, which only applies to those who own flocks that produce an unblemished firstborn male, in
c.) Eating milk cooked in meat is already prohibited by the verse, “Do not cook a tender young animal in its mother’s milk,” which “is written in three places in the Torah: One for the prohibition of eating meat with milk, one for the prohibition of deriving any benefit from meat with milk, and one for the prohibition of cooking meat with milk” (Rashi to Shemos 23:19).

What then is added by our verse?

Rashi answers that this refers to “anything that I have declared to be an abomination to you.” I.e. this verse is referring to eating something which in itself has not yet been forbidden by the Torah, and it has only become forbidden to the person due to something “abominable” which that person has done—it is “an abomination to you.”

In other words, the Torah can prohibit the consumption of a food substance in one of two ways: a.) By rendering the food itself an intrinsically abominable and forbidden substance; or b.) By prohibiting the person from eating this food, for whatever reason.

Rashi explains that our verse is speaking of the latter case, where a food that is intrinsically permitted became prohibited because of something a person did—it became an abomination, not in itself, but “to you.”
To illustrate what this means, Rashi brings the unusual example of a person who mutilated a firstborn animal so as to avoid taking it to Jerusalem. Torah law normally permits the consumption of a firstborn animal which became blemished naturally, but in this case, since the person has committed a deceptive and abominable act, our verse prohibits him alone from eating the animal.

**Rashi’s Second Example**

Rashi then cited a second example to teach us an even greater innovation of our verse:

Up to this point we have understood that a food substance can either be intrinsically forbidden (as in most cases), or alternatively, the Torah can decree against a person not to eat a particular food due to his actions (as in our verse).

Now, we might think that if a food is already intrinsically forbidden, then there would be no point in the Torah adding a prohibition on the person (even if he did something abominable with it), since the food is intrinsically abominable in any case.

Therefore, Rashi adds a further example which indicates that this is not
the case and that the Torah can prohibit a food-substance simultaneously for both reasons:

“[Another example is] if one cooked meat in milk, which is a thing that I have declared as an abomination to you. Here scripture warns against eating it.”

Meat cooked in milk is intrinsically forbidden as an abomination by the Torah, regardless of who cooked it. Our verse adds that if a person cooks meat in milk himself, then (in addition to the existing, intrinsic prohibition against eating this food substance) the Torah adds a further prohibition upon the person who did the abominable act of cooking this food, from eating it.

And from the negative, we can learn the positive: That God allowed the Jewish people to eat only the most spiritually refined food, since “you are a holy people to God, your God, and God has chosen you to be a treasured people for Him, out of all the nations that are upon the earth” (v. 2).

(Excerpt from public letter of 6th Tishrei 5733—Free Translation)
What happens if a person exchanges his second tithe for money, and spends it on food outside Jerusalem? (v. 24-26)

Rambam: If second tithe is exchanged for money, and that money is used to buy fruits, they may not be exchanged back for money while one is still distant [from Jerusalem]...rather, the fruits themselves must be taken to Jerusalem and eaten there.

Shitah Mekubetzes: The Torah permitted a person to exchange his second tithe for money so as not to burden him with a heavy load on his journey to Jerusalem: “If the journey is great for you...[and] you are unable to carry it, then you should exchange it for money” (v. 24-25). Thus, if a person purchases fruits with this money before reaching Jerusalem, he indicates that the burden of carrying them does not bother him. Therefore, the Torah does not permit him to exchange them again (Zevachim 49a).

Tosfos: The second tithe may be exchanged for money at a distance from Jerusalem, in order to use that money to purchase produce in Jerusalem. But if the person used the money to buy fruits outside Jerusalem, he may not exchange them again for money, just as fruits bought within Jerusalem may not be exchanged once again for money (ibid., s.v. veharai ma’aser).

TORAS MENACHEM

Exchanging the Second Tithe For Money (v. 24-26)

After a person has separated the second tithe from his crops, he is required to take it to Jerusalem, and eat it there (v. 23). Since the produce may be quite heavy, and he may have some distance to travel, the Torah gives him the option to exchange the second tithe for money at home, take the money to Jerusalem, and use that money to purchase produce in Jerusalem (v. 24-26).


- 24 If the journey is great for you, because the place which God, your God, will choose to make His Name rest there, is too far from you and God has blessed you (with so much produce) that you are unable to carry it, 25 then you should exchange it for money, bind up the money in your hand, and you should go to the place that God, your God, will choose. 26 You should use the money to buy whatever your soul desires—cattle, sheep, wine or beer, or whatever your soul desires—and you should eat there before God, your God, and you should rejoice, (both) you and your household.

- 27 Do not abandon the Levite who lives in your town (by failing to give him the first tithe), for he has no portion or inheritance with you.

\[\text{Disposal of Undistributed Tithes & Tithe for the Poor}\]

- 28 At the end of three years, you should take out all the (undistributed first and second) tithes from your crop, (before the end) of that year, and put it in a public place.

- 29 The Levite (will come and take the first tithe) because he has no portion or inheritance with you.

- (That year you will not separate the second tithe and take it to Jerusalem. Instead, you will give the poor man's tithe, so that the destitute) converts, orphans, and widows, who are in your cities, will come and eat. (You must give them enough to) be satisfied.

(Do this) in order that God, your God, will bless you in all the work of your hand that you will do.

\[\text{Toras Menachem}\]

icates that the burden of carrying them does not bother him. Therefore, the Torah does not permit him to exchange them again.”

Tosfos offers a different explanation: “If the person used the money to buy fruits outside Jerusalem, he may not exchange them again for money, just as fruits bought within Jerusalem may not be exchanged once again for money.”

Rambam himself offers a further insight into this law: “This is an instance where we treat fruits bought with money exchanged for the second tithe more stringently than the second tithe itself.”

What is Rambam adding with this statement?

And did Rambam accept the logic of Shitah Mekubetzes? Or did that of Tosfos? Or did he have a different reasoning?

\[\text{The Explanation}\]

The Torah’s “permission” to exchange the second tithe for money could be interpreted in three different ways:

a.) It is a dispensation for those who are unable to bring their actual second tithe fruits to Jerusalem, due to the burden of the load and the distance involved. However, the preferable way to observe this mitzvah is by carrying the produce itself to Jerusalem.

b.) It is not a dispensation at all. Rather, redeeming the second tithe produce for money, and using that money to purchase produce in Jerusalem, is an equally acceptable way of eating the second tithe in Jerusalem, as transporting the actual second tithe fruits themselves.

c.) Exchanging one’s second tithe for money is not merely a (totally acceptable) means of eating the second tithe in Jerusalem, but rather, it is an independent precept in its own right, which a person who lives outside Jerusalem may perform. When a person later takes the exchange money to Jerusalem to buy produce and eats it there, his eating is distinct from the precept of exchanging the second tithe for money.

Shitah Mekubetzes adopted the first approach (‘a’) that exchanging the second tithe for money is a dispensation granted to a person to relieve him of a burden. Consequently, “if a person purchases fruits with this money before reaching Jerusalem, he indicates that the burden of carrying them does not bother him,” i.e. he has shown that he does not need the dispensation, and, that “therefore, the Torah does not permit him to exchange them again.”

\[\text{Sparks of Chasidus}\]

It is true, that man and his deeds are finite, and that God is the source of holiness and infinitude. But nevertheless, we are taught that, “He desires the work of your hands” (Job 14:15), i.e. the ultimate purpose of creation is that holiness and goodness should be brought into the world via man’s efforts, and not by God alone.

This principle is hinted to in the concept of the second tithe, and its exchange for money (see verses 24-26 & Classic Questions):

When the second tithe is separated, God confers holiness on the produce (and it must be eaten in Jerusalem).

However, when a person exchanges the second tithe into money, and then exchanges the money back into produce, it is the person’s act which renders the produce holy.

Rambam comments: “We treat fruits bought with money exchanged for the second tithe more stringently than the second tithe itself”—i.e. man’s actions (“fruits bought with money”) are cherished by God most, and are thus more central to the purpose of creation (more “stringent”) than something made holy by God alone (“the second tithe itself.”)

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 80)
Toras Menachem

Tosfos adopted the second approach (‘b’), that the exchange of second tithe produce into money is an equally acceptable substitute for taking the second tithe produce itself. But, on the other hand, Tosfos maintained that exchanging the second tithe into money is not a precept in its own right, but only a means to an end, to “relocate” the produce to Jerusalem.

Thus, according to Tosfos, there is a single “process of exchange,” which takes place in two phases: i.) Exchanging the second tithe for money (v. 25), and, ii.) “Use the money to buy whatever your soul desires” (v. 26), i.e. exchanging the money back into produce. Once the person has bought the produce, the whole process of “exchange” as described by the Torah is complete, and no further exchanges are allowed. Thus, “fruits bought within Jerusalem may not be exchanged once again for money,” and likewise, the same law applies to fruits bought outside Jerusalem.

Rambam, however, took the third approach (‘c’), that exchanging the second tithe for money is an independent precept in its own right.

Therefore, Rambam could not accept Tosfos’s argument that exchanging the money back into fruits completes the “process of exchange,” because, according to Rambam, the initial exchange of the second tithe into money is an independent process in its own right, which is not “completed” by a further act.

To clarify this point Rambam writes: “This is an instance where we treat fruits bought with money exchanged for the second tithe more stringently than the second tithe itself.” For this stringency is in regard to the first precept—the exchange of produce for money, which can be done only with the second tithe itself. It is for this reason that Rambam adds this statement: By pointing out that there is a stringency in regard to the exchange of produce for money, he clarifies that it is not merely a “means to an end,” but an independent precept.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 75ff.)
**ANNULMENT OF LOANS**

- 1 At the end of (the) seven-year (cycle) you must annul (all loans). 2 These are the terms of the annulment: Every creditor should release from his hand the debt which he can claim from his fellow. He may not demand payment from his friend or his brother, because the time of God’s annulment has arrived.

- 3 You should demand payment from a gentile (who owes you money), but your hand should release whatever (claim) you have against your (Jewish) brother.

4 (So long as you perform the mitzvos), there will no longer be any destitute people among you, for God will bless you repeatedly in the Land God, your God, is giving you as an inheritance and a possession. 5 However, (this is only) if you listen to the voice of God, your God, and are careful to observe every commandment, which I am commanding you today. 6 For God, your God, has blessed you, as He has told you: You will lend to many nations, and you will not borrow. You will rule over many nations, and they will not rule over you.

**CHARITY & LOANS TO THE POOR**

- 7 If there will be a destitute person—(especially) from among one of your (own paternal) brothers, (or from) one (of the residents) in your (own) town—in the Land that God, your God, is giving you, you must not harden your heart or shut your hand from your destitute brother.

8 Rather, you must repeatedly open your hand to him, and give him (charity—and if he will not take a gift, then) give him a loan—sufficient to fulfill his requirements that he is lacking.

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- How many times should you “open your hand”? (v. 8)
  
  **RASHI:** Even many times.
  
  **MIDRASH:** “In the morning sow your seed and in the evening do not withhold your hand, for you do not know which will succeed—this one, or that one, or whether both of them will be equally good” (Ecclesiastes 11:6). Rabbi Yehoshua says: “If a poor man comes to you in the morning, give to him. [If he comes again] in the evening, give to him. For you do not know on account of which one God will inscribe you for—this one, or that one; or if both are ‘equally good’” (Bereshis Rabah 61:3).

**TORAS MENACHEM**

**The Last Word**

**“YOU MUST ANNUL (ALL LOANS)” (v. 1)**

When Hillel the Elder saw that people refrained from lending to the poor for fear of their debts being remitted by the Sabbatical year, he innovated the transfer of debts to the court, which may collect them despite the Sabbatical year (called pruzbul). Since the requirement to annul one’s loans is still in force, even in the diaspora, it is highly recommended for every person to make a pruzbul at the end of the sixth year of the Sabbatical cycle*, on the eve of Rosh Hashanah. This can be done simply by declaring in front of three people: “I hereby transfer to you all debts that are owed to me so that I may collect them whenever I wish.”

(See Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 316ff and sources cited loc. cit)

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* See Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Laws of Loans, 35-6. Some also have the custom to make a further pruzbul at the end of the seventh year on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, in order to satisfy all halachic opinions. (This was the Rebbe’s practice on Erev Rosh Hashanah 5748—See Shvach Hamoadim by Rabbi S. Hurwitz (1992), p. 10, note 11.)
emphasis is that the recipient should actually receive the money, then clearly the person has not fulfilled the mitzvah. But if the main emphasis is the goodwill of the giver, then perhaps it could be argued that the mitzvah was carried out.

A further practical ramification would also appear to be the reverse case: where the recipient received funds, but there was no intended act of giving at all, e.g. if a person unwittingly dropped money on the floor, and it was found by a poor person.

At the literal level, the Torah appears to stress both these elements.

First we read: "If there will be a destitute person... you must not harden your heart or shut your hand... Rather, you must repeatedly open your hand to him" (v. 7-8). Here the Torah stresses primarily the goodwill of the giver, and his need to overcome internal barriers ("you must not harden your heart... your hand...").

However in verses 9-10, the Torah stresses the second aspect discussed above, the actual transfer of funds to the poor man: "Be careful that a reckless thought should not enter your heart... and you look begrudgingly upon your destitute brother and do not give him... (Rather) you should give him repeatedly."
• "Be careful that a reckless thought should not enter your heart, saying, “The seventh year, the year of cancellation (of loans) is approaching,” and you look begrudgingly upon your destitute brother and do not give him—then he might cry out against you to God, and it will be an (even more serious) sin for you. (Rather) you should give to him repeatedly, and your heart should not feel bad when you give to him. For God, your God, will bless all your work and everything you do, as a result of (the promises you made to the poor and the money you gave to them). There will never cease to be destitute people within the Land, and therefore I am commanding you, as follows: you should repeatedly open your hand to your poor brother and to your destitute (resident) in your Land.

Gifts To Jewish Slaves Upon Their Release

• If one of your brethren—a Hebrew man or woman—is sold to you (by the courts), he should work for you for six years, and in the seventh year you should send him away, free from you.

Toras Menachem

Sparks of Chasidus

The Unique Quality of Tzedakah

“By giving tzedakah a person’s mind and heart become refined one thousand times” (Torah Ohr, Bereishis 1b)

Our Sages praised the greatness of tzedakah considerably, equating it with all the other mitzvos together (Bava Basra 9a). Throughout the Jerusalem Talmud, charity is called simply the “Commandment,” since that used to be the normal way to refer to tzedakah—because charity is the most important of the practical mitzvos, and surpasses them all.

For the purpose of all the [mitzvos] is simply to elevate one’s vitalizing soul [which animates the physical body] to God, since it is this vitalizing soul alone that is responsible for performing them... and you will find no other mitzvah in which the vitalizing soul is elevated to the same extent as in the mitzvah of tzedakah.

For, in the case of all other mitzvos [which require action from just one part of the body] only one aspect of the vitalizing soul becomes involved, and even this one faculty is only involved in the mitzvah at the moment when the mitzvah is being performed. However, in the case of tzedakah, a man gives away “the toil of his hands,” and certainly all the faculties of his vitalizing soul were immersed in doing his manual work, or other business through which he earned this money. So when he gives it to charity, it turns out that his entire vitalizing soul is elevated to God.

And even one who does not earn a living from his “toil,” could nevertheless have used this money that he gave to tzedakah to buy life-sustaining necessities for his vitalizing soul, so in giving tzedakah he is actually giving his soul’s life to God.

Therefore, our Sages said that [tzedakah] brings the redemption nearer (ibid. 10a). For one act of charity brings about the elevation of so much of the vitalizing soul. The elevation of so many of its faculties and characteristics would not have been achieved through the observance of [even] numerous practical mitzvos.

Material & Spiritual Tzedakah

Every Jew should be an “animator of living” (Yoma 71a)—to instill vitality into living Jews, and do so in a way that not merely adds more vitality (quantitatively), but also new life (qualitatively), as when breathing life into an inanimate object...

Inasmuch as the essential thing is the deed, the capacity of “animating the living” must express itself in concrete terms, beginning with the mitzvah of tzedakah [charity]—for tzedakah is in effect an act of life-giving, by sustaining the life of the poor man and his family.

In tzedakah itself there is the ordinary aspect, namely, sustaining the life of the needy person, and also a higher level, that of resuscitation, as it were, when the poor man is in a desperate situation, not knowing “whence shall my help come?” (Psalms 121:1), and the benefactor helps him graciously, cheerfully, and wholeheartedly, which is in the category of instilling new life into the one who had despaired of hope.

And from material tzedakah to spiritual tzedakah, especially bearing in mind that, as is well known, every physical thing has its spiritual root and source from which it evolves and derives its existence and vitality (Likutei Torah, Shelach, s.v. Inyan Hanesachim).

Spiritual tzedakah, in the sense of “animating the living,” is exemplified in the teacher-disciple relationship, as our Sages say, “He who teaches his friend’s son Torah is deemed as if he had given birth to him” (Sanhedrin 19b), and “disciples” is synonymous with natural “children” (Rashi to 6:7, above).

Here “disciples” is not meant in terms of years, but includes also one who is mature in years but a disciple in the acquisition of his knowledge of Torah and mitzvos.

The mitzvah of spiritual tzedakah makes it the duty of every Jew, man or woman, to work for the creation of opportunities for all Jews—young and old—to learn Torah and fulfill its mitzvos.

Through the practices of tzedakah materially and (even more so) spiritually—and tzedakah is typical of all the mitzvos—a Jew becomes an “animator of living” in actual fact.

(Excerpt from public letter of “Days of Selichos,” 5736—Free Translation)


CLASSIC QUESTIONS

To whom is one obligated to give severance gifts? (v. 14)

TALMUD: "When a slave who sold himself [into slavery] goes free, he is not given severance gifts. But when a slave who was sold by the courts goes free, he is given severance gifts."

Rabbi Elazar says: "Both of them are given severance gifts."

What is the rationale of the first opinion, that a slave who sells himself is not given severance gifts? The Torah states, "[If one of your brethren...is sold to you (by the courts)...when you send him away] you should give him many gifts" (v. 12-14). This suggest that you should give only to "him" [who was sold by the courts], and not to one who sells himself.

The other opinion [Rabbi Elazar] interprets the word "him" as meaning "him and not his heirs" (Kidushin 14b-15a).

RAMBAM: One who sells himself is not given severance gifts. One who is sold by the courts is given severance gifts (Laws of Slaves 3:12).

When is the mitzvah of giving severance gifts in force?

SEFER HACHINUCH: Only in Temple times, because the laws of Hebrew slaves are only practiced when the Jubilee year is observed. Nevertheless, even today, "Let the wise man hear and increase in learning" (Proverbs 1:5)—if one hires a Jewish person who serves for a long period of time, or even a short period, he should be given gifts when he leaves him (Mitzvah 483).

MINCHAS CHINUCH: Sefer Hachinuch argues that, even today, a person should give severance gifts to one’s employees out of a sense of decency. However, according to the first view in the Talmud, severance gifts are surely not given for reasons of decency, since decency would dictate that all of a person’s staff should be given severance gifts, and the first view of the Talmud is selective in who should receive the gifts.

Since Rambam rules in favor of the first opinion in the Talmud (that the gifts are given selectively), it turns out that, according to Rambam, there is no basis to give severance gifts today.

However, in the final analysis, this is somewhat difficult to accept, since the Sefer Hachinuch rarely deviates from a ruling of Rambam, without stating so explicitly.

Are severance gifts a type of earnings?

PNEI YEHOUSHUVA: Yes (Kidushin 16b, s.v. ve’iy iysa).

SHACH: No. The gifts are a form of charity (Choshen Mishpat 86:3).
13 When you send him away, free from you, you should not let him go empty-handed.

14 You should give him many gifts from your flock, your threshing floor, or from your wine vat, (or) you should give him from whatever God, your God, has blessed you with.

15 Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt, and that God, your God, redeemed you. Therefore, I am commanding you today to do this thing.

16 In the event that he says to you, “I will not leave you,” because he loves you and your household, since it suits him to be with you, then you should take a pointed tool and put it through his ear and into the door, and he will then be a servant to you permanently (until the Jubilee year).

17 You should give him many gifts from your flock, your threshing floor, or from your wine vat, (or) you should give him from whatever God, your God, has blessed you with.

18 Let it not seem difficult in your eyes when you send him away free from you, for he has served you (day and night) for six years, twice as many (hours) as a salaried worker (who only works by day). God, your God, will bless you in all that you do.

**Sanctity of Firstborn Animals**

- You must sanctify every firstborn male, from your cattle or your flock, to God, your God (by declaring it sacred as a firstborn).

- You must not work the firstborn of your ox, or shear the firstborn of your flock (or vice-versa).

**Seventh Reading**

- You must sanctify every firstborn male, from your cattle or your flock, to God, your God (by declaring it sacred as a firstborn).

**TORAS MENACHEM**

According to the first opinion in the *Talmud*, severance gifts are not given to a person who sells himself into slavery. The legal dynamics of this ruling could be understood in one of two ways:

a.) Logic dictates that there is no necessity to give severance gifts. The Torah prescribes that severance gifts should be given only to a slave sold by the courts. A person who sells himself into slavery is therefore not eligible for severance gifts; or

b.) In principle, all slaves should receive severance gifts, but the Torah made a specific exception in the case of the person who sells himself into slavery, and disqualified him from receiving them.

A practical difference between these two approaches (to this first opinion in the *Talmud*) is whether the concept of severance gifts of slaves in the Temple era could act as a moral basis on which to recommend severance gifts today:

According to the first approach (‘a’), the Torah only teaches us one isolated case that is eligible for severance gifts (that of a slave sold by the courts). Thus, we have no basis on which to extend the principle to other cases. However, according to the second approach (‘b’), the concept of severance pay applies in principle to all cases (and it is only that the Torah made a special exception in the case of the slave who sells himself). Consequently, it could be argued that the principle is relevant today too.

Rambam rules in accordance with the first opinion of the *Talmud*. Therefore, if we can ascertain whether Rambam adopted approach ‘a’ or approach ‘b,’ we could clarify whether Rambam would concur with the view (of Sefer Hachinuch) that severance gifts are given even today.

**The Last Word**

- It would be wise to heed the advice of Sefer Hachinuch (see Classic Questions) that, even today, a person should offer severance gifts to a Jewish employee that is dismissed. This would apply even if he or she is dismissed due to unsatisfactory work.

- Generally speaking, the lesson from the mitzvah of severance gifts is that people should be given more than what is appropriate for them to receive. For example, a teacher should attempt to give his students, not only simplified ideas that the students are naturally capable of understanding, but the teacher should also try and convey some of his own deeper understanding of the subject matter. This will stimulate the student’s growth such that he may eventually attain the knowledge and level of his teacher.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 19, pp. 155-6)

**Sparks of Chasidus**

“GOD WILL BLESS YOU IN ALL THAT YOU DO” (v. 18)

The Torah view is clear. It rules that “one should not rely on a miracle” (Jerusalem Talmud, Yoma 1:4), but at the same time it requires every Jew to be permeated with complete faith that God acts through nature, and also “above” nature. This is also the plain meaning of the posuk [verse]: “And God, your God, will bless you in all that you do” (v. 18). It is necessary to do (not rely on miracles), yet ultimately the blessing comes from God. To think otherwise would also be contradictory to the three daily tefilos [prayers]. The blessings of Shemoneh Eserei [the standing prayer] are clearly based on the conviction that God can interfere with nature, e.g., heal the sick and bless the crops, etc., even where the natural factors are unfavorable.

(Excerpt from a letter written by the Rebbe)
The Legal Basis of Severance Gifts

The legal basis on which severance gifts are granted could be understood in one of two ways:

1.) The severance gifts are given as a charitable donation (as Shach rules) and a display of kindness.

2.) The severance gifts are given as a type of earnings awarded to the worker as a bonus on his departure [as Pniy Yehoshua writes], over and above what he earned; or

It could be argued that these two views are commensurate with the two approaches (‘a’ and ‘b’) above:

Approach ‘a’ understands that, in principle, nobody deserves to be given severance gifts. This corresponds to view ‘1,’ that the gifts are given as a type of earnings, since a person cannot be said to deserve “earnings” after he has already been fully paid for his work. The Torah therefore teaches us, as an exception, that a slave sold by the courts is given gifts.

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On the other hand, approach ‘b’ maintains that, on the contrary, everybody really deserves severance gifts. This corresponds to view ‘2’, that severance gifts are a type of charity, and charity should be given to everyone. It is only that the Torah made a special exclusion in the case of a person who sells himself into slavery.

In his Sefer Hamittzvos, Rambam codifies the precept of severance gifts (not among the laws of slavery, but rather) immediately adjacent to the mitzvah of giving charity (commands 195 & 196; prohibitions 222 & 223), which suggests that Rambam perceived severance gifts as a type of charity.

Thus, Rambam would have sympathized with approach ‘b’ (that, being a type of charity, everybody deserves severance gifts) which means that—according to the above logic—the precept of severance gifts is a model which can be extended, by the dictates of decency, to apply to all employees even today.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 153ff.)
20. In the same year (it is born) you should (give it to the priest who will) eat it before God, your God, in the place God will choose. You, (the priest, should eat it) with your household.

21. If there is any blemish in it, whether it is lame, blind, or has any defective blemish, you should not offer it to God, your God:

22. You may eat it within your (own) cities.

(Even though the animal was originally a holy offering, after it has been redeemed) a ritually impure person and a ritually pure person may eat it (together on the same plate).

(The foreleg, jaw and end-stomach do not need to be given to the priest,) as if (you were slaughtering) a deer, or a gazelle.

23. Only, you may not eat its blood. You should spill it on the ground like water (and you do not have to cover it).

**Pesach**

1. Ensure that the month of (Nissan occurs in) springtime—(by declaring a leap-year if necessary, so that the produce will have ripened by Nissan, allowing the Omer offering to be brought)—and offer the Pesach sacrifice (then) to God, your God. For in the month of springtime, God, your God, brought you out of Egypt, at night.

2. You must slaughter the Pesach offering to God, your God, (from the) flock, and (the festival sacrifices from the) cattle, in the place where God will choose to place His Name.

3. You may not eat leaven with it. (Rather,) because of it, eat matzos for seven days. (This is) a bread (which reminds you of) affliction since you went out of the land of Egypt in haste (and did

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**The Last Word**

**“You Went Out of the Land of Egypt in Haste” (v. 3)**

One of the important details of the exodus from Egypt is the haste with which the exodus took place. When the hour of liberation struck, the Jewish people left Egypt at once, losing not a moment, or, as our Sages express it—not even a wink of an eye (Mechilta, Shemos 12:41-2). They add, moreover, that if the Jewish people had tarried and missed that auspicious moment, the opportunity for liberation would have been lost forever.

This seems incomprehensible, for it was already after the ten plagues, which had prompted the Egyptians to virtually expel the Jews from their land. The situation was thus “well in hand.” Why, then, was the haste of the moment so important? And how is one to understand the statement of our Sages that if that moment had been missed, the whole liberation would have been in jeopardy?

The explanation is as follows: When the end of the road of exile is reached, and the moment of liberation from the “abomination of Egypt” arises, the opportunity must be seized at once. There must be no tarrying, even for an instant—not even for “the wink of an eye.”

The danger of forfeiting the opportunity lay not in the possibility of the Egyptians changing their minds, but in the possibility that some Jews might change their minds, being loath to leave their accustomed way of life in Egypt, to go out into the desert to receive the Torah.

The practical lesson for every Jew, man or woman, young or old, is that the exodus from Egypt, as it is to be experienced in day-to-day life, is the personal release from subservience to the dictates of the body and the animal in man. It is the release from the passions and habits within, as well as from the materialistic environment without....As at the time of the first liberation, true freedom is conditioned upon the acceptance of the Torah and mitzvos.

This call for freedom never ceases. The exodus from Egypt must be achieved every day; each day the opportunity beckons anew....

May God grant that every Jew and Jewess seize the extraordinary opportunity of the present moment, to achieve self-liberation and to help others in the same direction. And may they be liberated from all manner of bondage, internal and external, and above all, liberation from the most dismal bondage of all—the idea of “Let’s be like the rest.”

May they return to the way of the Torah and mitzvos in the fullest measure, and thus merit the fulfillment of the promise: When the Jewish people return, they are redeemed at once, with the true and complete redemption through our righteous Mashiach.

(Excerpt from a public letter written by the Rebbe on 11 Nissan 5723)
The Last Word (v. 2-7)

The liberation from Egypt was not merely the liberation of numerous individuals; it was the liberation of a People. Accordingly, one would have expected that the Korban Pesach [Pesach Offering] would emphasize the “nation” motif, the idea of community. Actually the approach and instruction was exactly the reverse.

True, all the “congregation” was enjoined to offer the Korban Pesach, but the instructions were explicit: each home had to have its own Korban Pesach; each Jew was individually singled out and counted for the purpose of sharing in it; each one had to be confined to his particular home or company for the duration of the Korban Pesach repast.

Herein the Torah teaches us that the way to accomplishment, even if it is intended for the community as a whole, and even if it concerns the very “liberation” of the community, must nevertheless begin with concentration on the self, and on the members of one’s family and immediate circle, even though the call must necessarily go out to the whole community.

Moreover, attention should be directed not towards general considerations and all-embracing resolutions, but towards applying the main concern and energy in the realization, in the daily life, of the various “small” duties. For it is precisely this approach that will eventually bring the deliverance of the individual as well as of the community as a whole.
not have time for the bread to rise. Eat the matzah) in order to remember all the days of your life, the day when you went out of the land of Egypt.

- No leaven may be seen with you within all your borders for seven days.
- You may not leave over any of the flesh that you slaughtered on the preceding day, in the afternoon, (uneaten) until the morning.
- You may not slaughter the Pesach offering in any of your cities, which God, your God, is giving you, except in the place which God, your God, will choose to place His Name. You should slaughter the Pesach offering there, in the afternoon (after the sixth hour).
- (You must eat it after) the sun comes down, (and you must burn any meat that is left uneaten past) the precise time that you went out of Egypt.
- You should cook it (by roasting) and eat it in (Jerusalem), the place which God, your God, will choose.
- (You must stay in Jerusalem the night following the festival) and in the morning you may depart and go to your homes.
- For you should eat matzos six days, and on the seventh day there should be a holiday to God, your God, when you may not do any manual work.

COUNTING THE OMER & SHAVUOS

- Count for yourself seven weeks. From when the sickle is first put to the standing crop (and the Omer is reaped), you should begin to count seven weeks.
- And you should make the festival of Shavuos to God, your God. Offer as many gift-offerings (and invite as many guests) as you can afford, according to how God, your God, blesses you.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

- Why does the Torah not tell us to rejoice on Pesach (v. 1–8), as it does on Shavuos (v. 11) & Succos (v. 14-15)?

TZOR HAMOR: When the Jewish people came out of Egypt, on Pesach, the Torah had not yet been given. Therefore, the Torah does not stress the concept of rejoicing. Furthermore, the Jewish people did not see the Egyptians drown until the seventh day of their departure, and it was only at this point that they rejoiced.

BA’AL HATURIM: On Pesach, the crops have not yet been harvested, so the Torah does not mention rejoicing at all.

- Rejoicing on Pesach (v. 1-8)

Rashi does not suggest any of the explanations offered by the commentators as to why the Torah does not command us explicitly to rejoice on the festival of Pesach.

However, since Rashi explains every difficulty that arises at the literal level, we can presume that Rashi was silent here, as he wanted the reader to work the answer out for himself, with simple logic and knowledge of Rashi’s earlier comments. So what is Rashi’s “explanation” of this matter?

A further question concerns the Torah’s statement in verse 12, at the end of the section of Shavuos: “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt.” Since remembering the slavery in Egypt is the key motif of the festival of Pesach, why does the Torah state, “You should remember that you were slaves in Egypt,” in connection with Shavuos and not Pesach?

THE EXPLANATION

On the verse, “When you take the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain” (Shemos 3:12), Rashi writes, “As for what you asked: ‘What merit do the Jewish people have that they should go out of Egypt?’ I have a very good reason to bring them out, for they are going to receive the Torah on this mountain, three months after they go out of Egypt.”

From here the reader will already be aware that the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah are two phases of a single process, because God took the Jewish people out of Egypt in order to receive the Torah.
**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

**How should one rejoice on a festival (v. 14)?**

**Rambam:** Throughout the seven days of Pesach, the eight days of the festival [of Succos] and the other festival days...a person is obligated to be happy and of cheerful spirit, both he and his wife, his family, and all those who share his company, as the verse states, “Rejoice on your festival” (v. 14).

Despite the fact that the rejoicing mentioned in the verse refers to the peace-offering, as we explained in the Laws of Festival Offerings, nevertheless, included within that requirement to rejoice [with the peace-offering] is also the requirement for the person to rejoice himself, along with his children and family, making each person happy in a way that is suitable for them.

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

Thus, the reader will not be surprised here that the Torah only tells us to “rejoice before God, your God,” and to “remember that you were slaves in Egypt,” in connection with Shavuos, and not Pesach. For it is obvious that these commands apply to both Pesach and Shavuos, and that the Torah needed only to mention these concepts once—at the end of the passage dealing with both festivals—since the reader already knows that Pesach and Shavuos celebrate two phases of a single process.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Re’eh 5733)

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**How is this carried out?**

Children are given roasted grains, nuts and sweets. Women are bought new clothes and jewelry, according to the person’s financial ability.

Men should eat meat and drink wine, for rejoicing can only be achieved with meat and wine (Laws of Festivals 6:17-18).

**Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch:** Throughout the seven days of Pesach, the eight days of the festival [of Succos] and the festival of Atzeres [Shavuos], a person is obligated to be happy and of cheerful spirit, both he and his wife, his family, and all those who share his company. This rejoicing is a Biblical requirement, as the verse states, “Rejoice on your festival—you, your son, your daughter etc.” (v. 14).

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**Rejoicing on a Festival (v. 14)**

Verse 14 states: “Rejoice on your festival—you, your son, your daughter, etc.” One detail that is not clear in this verse, is what exactly the term “festival” refers to: Does it refer specifically to the “festival offering,” i.e. the special peace-offering which was sacrificed in honor of the festival? Or, does it refer to the festival in general, suggesting that a person should carry out all sorts of activities that will bring him to a mood of rejoicing?
Two approaches could be taken:
a.) When the Torah uses the words “rejoice on your festival,” it is referring specifically to the spiritual joy of bringing and sacrificing the peace-offering. The requirement to rejoice with physical pleasures is secondary, and thus was not referred to by the Torah directly, to indicate its lesser importance.

This appears to be the view of Rambam who stresses, "The rejoicing mentioned in the verse refers to the peace-offering.” Thus it is only “included within that requirement...the requirement for the person to rejoice himself, along with his children and family, making each person happy in a way that is suitable for them.”

Consequently, according to Rambam, when the peace-offering cannot be brought (in the current era), we are unable to carry out the primary mitzvah of rejoicing on a festival at all. Nevertheless, the secondary (physical) aspect can be carried out even now, and it does not suffer from the destruction of the Temple.

b.) Alternatively, it could be argued that when the Torah uses the phrase “rejoice on your festival,” it is referring generally to all the rejoicing that is carried out during the period of the festival. Thus, there are not two separate requirements here (spiritual and physical), but one single obligation to rejoice. This appears to be the view of the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, which makes no mention that verse 14 is speaking about the peace-offering in particular, indicating that, in his view, the rejoicing is not limited to the peace-offering. Nevertheless, if one does eat meat on the festival one still performs a mitzvah since, after all, we are told to rejoice on the festival, and since we are unable to rejoice through the main method, through eating the meat of the peace-offering, we therefore use other methods of rejoicing (Orach Chaim 529:6-7).

How is this rejoicing carried out?

Children are given roasted grains and nuts. Women are bought new clothes and jewelry, according to the person’s financial ability. As for men, at the time when the Holy Temple stood they would eat the meat of the peace-offering in order to rejoice. Now, that the Temple does not stand we are only able to fulfill our obligation through drinking wine—as the verse states, “wine satisfies the heart of man” (Psalms 104:15)—since in the current era there is no legal requirement to eat meat, as we no longer have the peace-offering. Nevertheless, if one does eat meat on the festival one still performs a mitzvah since, after all, we are told to rejoice on the festival, and since we are unable to rejoice through the main method, through eating the meat of the peace-offering, we therefore use other methods of rejoicing (Orach Chaim 529:6-7).
requirement is that of general rejoicing. Therefore, he suggests that being of “cheerful spirit, both he and his wife, his family,” is part of the Biblical requirement mentioned in the verse (“This rejoicing is a Biblical requirement, as the verse states, ‘Rejoice on your festival’”).

According to this view we are able to carry out the mitzvah of rejoicing on a festival as it is specified in the Torah even in the current era, after the destruction of the Temple. The only drawback is that the most effective method of carrying out the mitzvah (the peace-offering) is not available, but we are still able to use all the other methods (such as eating meat, etc.), which achieve the same effect, but to a lesser degree.

Contemporary Connection to the Peace-Offering

A further innovation that arises from this stance of the Alter Rebbe is that even in the current era, when we eat meat on a festival, we are observing a mitzvah which is actually connected with the sacrifices:

According to Rambam, the sacrificial part of the mitzvah (the primary element) and the physical rejoicing are totally separate. Therefore, in the current era, when the former element has ceased, there is no practical connection between our rejoicing and the sacrifice itself.

However, according to the Alter Rebbe, who perceived the spiritual and physical dimensions as one single precept, it turns out that even today, when we eat meat on Yom Tov, we perform an act which is halachically connected with the mitzvah of eating the peace-offering.

Nevertheless, both views agree that:

1.) We can observe at least some aspects of the Biblical requirement to rejoice on Yom Tov, even in the current era.

2.) This occurs on some level when men eat meat and drink wine, when women wear new clothes, and when children are given candies.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 33, p. 62ff.)
He may not appear before God empty-handed (without animals for the festival offerings). Each man (must bring sufficient animals to feed the people) that he supports, according to the blessing of God, your God, which He has given you.

Every Jewish person possesses both a Godly soul, which yearns to be close to its Creator, and an Animal Soul, which is the source of physical desires. Both Rambam and the Alter Rebbe (see Classic Questions) agree that in order to be complete, rejoicing on a festival must involve not only the Godly soul but the Animal Soul too. Where they disagree is to what extent the Animal Soul is to be involved:

Rambam understood that rejoicing through the peace-offering (i.e. with the Godly soul) is primary, whereas eating meat and buying new clothes (to please the Animal Soul) is secondary (see Toras Menachem). This is because Rambam perceived the Animal Soul as an obstacle in Divine service, which needs to be "appeased" with food and clothes, to prevent it from disturbing the true rejoicing of the Godly Soul.

On the other hand, the Alter Rebbe maintained that the spiritual and physical celebrations take equal priority, for he perceived that the Animal Soul is not an obstacle, but a tool in the service of God. Thus, on a festival, the Animal Soul itself also rejoices equally in its Creator, by means of things which the Animal Soul can appreciate—meat, wine, clothes and candies.

In fact, the difference of opinion between Rambam and the Alter Rebbe reflects their conflicting viewpoints about the future era: Rambam maintained that, eventually, in the ultimate stage of existence (the World to Come) there will be nothing physical, for the most perfect form of existence is a soul without a body (Laws of Teshuvah 8:2). Consequently, he understood that on a festival, the main emphasis should be the rejoicing of the (Godly) soul, whereas the Animal Soul and body take second place.

The Alter Rebbe, however, ruled (in favor of Ramban’s opinion in Sha’ar Hagemul) that the climax of spiritual perfection in the World to Come is existence as souls within bodies (Likutei Torah, Tzav 15b). Therefore, on a festival he perceived it to be equally important to rejoice with both the Godly and Animal Souls.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 33, pp. 69-70)
1. To destroy places of idol-worship [12:2].
2. Not to erase holy writings, the written Names of God, or destroy places of worship which bear His Name [12:4].
3. To bring all obligatory offerings and voluntary offerings which a person has vowed, at the first pilgrim festival that occurs after the person's vow [12:5-6].
4. Not to sacrifice offerings outside the Temple [12:13].
5. To sacrifice all offerings in the Temple, and not anywhere outside it [12:4].
6. To redeem animals consecrated for offerings which have become blemished [12:15].
7. Not to eat the Second Tithe of grain outside Jerusalem [12:17].
8. Not to consume the Second Tithe of wine outside Jerusalem [12:17].
9. Not to consume the Second Tithe of oil outside Jerusalem [12:17].
10. Not to eat an unblemished firstborn animal outside Jerusalem [12:17].
11. Not to eat the meat of a sin-offering or a guilt-offering outside the Temple [12:17].
12. Not to eat the meat of a burnt-offering [12:17].
13. Not to eat the meat of offerings of lesser holiness before their blood is sprinkled on the Altar [12:17].
14. The priests should not eat first-fruits before they are placed down in the Temple Courtyard [12:17].
15. Not to neglect the Levites by failing to give them their due gifts, especially at the time of a festival [12:19].
16. To ritually slaughter an animal before eating its meat [12:21].
17. Not to eat a limb taken from a living animal [12:23].
18. To bring an animal offering that one is obligated to offer to the Temple, even from the Diaspora [12:26].
19. Not to add to the mitzvos of the Torah [13:1].
20. Not to detract from any of the mitzvos of the Torah [13:1].
21. Not to listen to anyone prophesying in the name of an idol [13:4].
22. Not to have affection for an inciter to idol-worship [13:9].
23. Not to lessen our hatred for an inciter to idol-worship [13:9].
24. Not to rescue an inciter to idol-worship from death [12:9].
25. A person who is incited should not speak in favor of an inciter to idol-worship [13:9].
26. A person who is incited should not refrain from criticizing an inciter to idol-worship [13:9].
27. Not to incite a Jew towards idol-worship [13:12].
28. To examine witnesses thoroughly [13:15].
29. To burn a city which has strayed and worshiped idols, together with all its contents [13:17].
30. Not to rebuild a city which has strayed and worshiped idols to its former condition [13:17].
31. Not to derive any benefit from the wealth of a city which has strayed and worshiped idols [13:17].
32. Not to gash oneself like idol-worshippers do [14:1].
33. Not to uproot the hair of the head in grief over the dead [14:1].
34. Not to eat holy animal offerings that became disqualified [14:3].
35. To examine the signs of a bird to see if it is kosher [14:11].
36. Not to eat non-kosher locusts, or any winged insects [14:19].
37. Not to eat the meat of any domestic or wild animal that died by itself [14:21].
38. The Second Tithe [14:22].
39. The Tithe for the Poor, given instead of the Second Tithe in the third year [14:28].
40. Not to demand payment of a loan over which the Sabbatical year has passed [15:2].
41. To collect full payment for a loan made to a non-Jew [15:3].
42. To relinquish debts owed in the Sabbatical Year [15:3].
43. Not to refrain from supporting a poor person and giving him what he needs [15:7].
44. To give charity [15:8].
45. Not to refrain from lending money to the poor because the Sabbatical Year will cancel the loan [15:9].
46. Not to send away a Hebrew slave empty-handed when he goes free [15:13].
47. To give a severance gift to a Hebrew slave when he goes free [15:14].
48. Not to work an animal which has been consecrated as an offering [15:19].
49. Not to shear an animal which has been consecrated as an offering [15:19].
50. Not to eat chametz (leavened bread) after midday on the day before Pesach (Passover) [16:3].
51. Not to leave over any flesh of the festival offering, slaughtered on the fourteenth day of Nisan, until the third day [16:4].
52. Not to offer up a Pesach offering on a private altar [16:5].
53. To rejoice on the pilgrim festivals [16:14].
54. To appear at the Temple on the pilgrim festivals [16:16].
55. Not to go up to Jerusalem for a pilgrimage festival without an animal offering [16:16].
At the beginning of our Parsha there is a command to “appoint judges (shoftim) and police officers (shotrim) for yourself.”

The Midrash stresses the need for both of these roles: “Without the policeman, there is no judge. For if the court finds a person guilty, once he leaves [the courtroom], the judge is powerless unless the policeman takes control” (Tanchuma, Shoftim, 2).

Why then is the Parsha simply called “Judges,” without any reference to the police, if “without the policeman, there is no judge”?

In his prophecy of the Messianic Era, Isaiah mentions judges, but not police: “I will restore your judges as they were at first, and your advisers as they were in the beginning” (Isaiah 1:26). This is because the Messianic Era will witness the disappearance of evil and selfishness (see Zechariah 13:2), so there will be no need for policemen who force people to be righteous. However, there will remain a requirement for judges who will pass laws, study Torah, and provide practical direction to the Jewish people in matters of Torah and its commandments.

Thus, in truth, policemen are secondary assistants to the judges. Only in a case where the judge is incapable of enforcing justice, must one resort to policemen, who work with the “stick and the whip,” forcing the guilty party to accept the judge’s decision.

Therefore, our Parsha is simply entitled “Judges,” as the appointment of policemen is not a separate commandment, but a subcategory within the command to appoint judges. Policemen are not an intrinsic legal necessity, and in a time when people are respectful, such as the Messianic Era, they will be rendered redundant.

However, since all aspects of Torah are eternal, there will be a role for police even after the Redemption, only then it will be a positive one—to announce and make public the affairs of the Judges and to assist the people in fulfilling the directives of the courts.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shoftim 5751)
What is the difference between judges (שופטים) and police officers (שוטרים)? (v. 18)

**Rashi**

Shoftim are judges who decide the law, and police officers are those who impose authority over the people in accordance with the judges’ decision. They strike and bind people with sticks and whips, until they accept the judges’ ruling.

**Gur Aryeh**

Rashi wished to explain why the Torah mentions the need for police officers. Therefore he stressed that judges “decide the law,” as if to say, “they decide the law and nothing more than that.” Consequently, police are required to enforce the law.

**Bartenura**

Why did Rashi need to explain the words “judges” and “police officers,” when their meaning is straightforward? Because in Parshas Devarim, the Torah states that Moshe appointed, “police officers over your tribes” (1:15), but no mention is made of judges. Therefore, one might think that if no judges are to be found, one should simply appoint police, without judges.

To counteract this notion the Torah stresses here that both judges and police officers are needed, as Rashi clarifies that the police officers serve only to enforce the rulings of the judges. Thus, if there were to be no judges, there would be no police either.

How must judges be placed “in all your gates”? (v. 18)

**Rashi**

“In all your gates,” means in every city.

**Shach Al Hatorah**

The term “gates” here alludes to the “gates” of the body: the two eyes, the two ears, the nose, the mouth, etc. The verse teaches us that a person should place “judges” and “police” over all his bodily “gates” to ensure that only positive and kosher influences enter his body.

Judges and Police-officers (v. 18)

Why did Rashi deem it necessary to define the terms “judges” and “police officers”?

**Gur Aryeh**

writes that Rashi wished to stress the unique role of police officers in law-enforcement, so he contrasted this with the role of judges, who merely “decide the law” without implementing it at all. However, this is somewhat difficult to accept, because:

1.) If Rashi merely wished to inform us of the role of police officers, he could have done just that, without touching upon the issue of judges.

2.) In his commentary to Parshas Devarim, Rashi has already explained the role of police officers as implementers of the law: “I appointed police officers over you, for your tribes. These are the ones who bind a person and strike him with a whip, at the judges’ order” (Rashi to 1:15 above).

So why did Rashi need to clarify the role of police officers again here?

Bartenura argues that the Torah’s innovation here is that police would be useless in the absence of judges, a point we would not have automatically deduced from Parshas Devarim, which does not mention judges.

However, this is difficult to accept, because Parshas Devarim does mention the appointment of judges: “I selected wise and well known men from the leaders of your tribes, and I made them leaders over you” (ibid.).

We are thus left with the question: What is the need for Rashi’s comment here, when the meaning of “judges” is obvious, and the meaning of “police officers” has already been explained by Rashi in Parshas Devarim?

The Explanation

The process of law enforcement by the police contains two elements: a.) The execution of the law, i.e. ensuring that the appropriate punishments are administered; and b.) Deterring people from crime by
16:18

- **18** You should appoint judges and police officers for yourself—for each of your tribes—in all your (city) gates that God, your God, is giving you.
- (Appointment expert judges so that) they should judge the people correctly.
- **19** Do not pervert justice, do not show favoritism, and do not take a bribe (even to judge correctly), for bribery blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts legitimate words.
- **20** Pursue justice, (by seeking a high quality court of) justice.

(In the merit of appointing judges) you will live and settle upon the land God, your God, is giving you.

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**The Last Word**

"**Bribery Blinds the Eyes of the Wise**" (v. 19)

The Yetzer-hara [Evil Inclination] is an expert in his trade, an extraordinary specialist, particularly when he injects a most effective "bribe"—the person's natural self-love.

One of the accuser's tricks is to delude a person into thinking that he is unavoidably prevented from performing a mitzvah, bolstering this delusion by various arguments and "proofs," giving no respite.

And since a person tends to be partial to himself, and it is very difficult to be objective in a matter concerning his own self, a person must always be aware that what seems to him a case of being a victim of circumstances, is not necessarily so in actual fact.

Therefore, in order to clarify his true position, he must turn to a person** who is beyond such bribery and corruption...one who is permeated by the spirit of the Torah of Truth, and truth brooks no compromise.

For only such a person can evaluate the situation and determine whether it is indeed a case of unavoidable constraint, or delusions stemming from the Yetzer-hara....

(Excerpt from a letter written by the Rebbe in the “Days of Teshuvah” 5732)

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

"**Appoint Judges...In All Your Gates**" (v. 18)

A city gate is its opening, so the Torah is requesting here that even the incomprehensible and seemingly unacceptable rulings of the judges should penetrate “your gates,” that they should enter into your way of thinking. In other words, when a person learns a new Torah directive, it should penetrate all his faculties until he feels that it is good advice.

In light of the explanation of Shach Al Hatorah (that “your gates” represent the organs which form the interface between a person and his environment), “You should appoint judges...in your gates,” means that the senses (one’s “gates”) should be controlled by judgment from the Godly soul.

As the Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya (ch.13): “The evil inclination is no more than, for example, a judge or advocate who offers his legal opinion, but nevertheless...it is challenged by the second ‘judge,’ which is the Godly Soul....The final verdict follows the ultimate arbitrator, God Himself, who assists the good inclination...by means of a Godly revelation to the Godly Soul, so that it may gain the upper hand....”

(Quoted from Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shoftim 5751)
Thus in our Parsha, where the Torah refers explicitly to “judges,” Rashi could not describe the police as having exclusive rights to the execution of punishments, as this was a role shared by the judges. Consequently, Rashi wrote that the police provide additional help to the judges, to enforce the law.

In Parshas Devarim, however, the Torah does not refer explicitly to judges (but to “wise and well known men”), so Rashi did not have the above limitation. Thus, he was able to describe the police officers as the exclusive administrators of justice, thus making a clearer distinction between the judges and police.

2.) At the literal level, there is a distinction between details cited in the course of a narrative, and instructions that are issued as a direct command. In the case of a narrative, there is no basis (at the literal level) to presume anything more than is implied by the narrative. But in the case of a command, which has a specific goal, one might logically include any detail that is necessary for the achievement of that goal.

Thus, when we read of the appointment of judges as a narrative in Parshas Devarim, Rashi was unable to suggest more than a minimal role for the police officers (as those who execute judgments of the court, and no more), since the Torah gives no indication of any additional role.

However, here in our Parsha where we read of the command to appoint police officers, Rashi was able to expand the role of the police to include the more general task of law-enforcement and promotion of the law.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, pp. 98ff.; Sichos Hashabbos Parshas Shoftim 5748)
21 You should not (even) plant for yourself an idolatrous tree (let alone worship it).
22 You should not set up for yourself a monument (consisting of a single stone), which God, your God hates.
1 You should not offer to God, your God, an ox or a sheep that has in it a blemish, or (one that is slaughtered with) any incorrect statement (of intention), for that is an abomination to God, your God.

If there is found among you—in one of your cities which God, your God is giving you—a man or woman who does what is evil in the eyes of God, your God, and violates His covenant, 3 by going and worshiping other gods—or the sun, the moon, or any heavenly body which I have not commanded (you to worship)—and he prostrated himself before them. 4 Then when you are informed (by witnesses), and you hear (the case), investigating (them) thoroughly, you see that the(ir) statements (of testimony) are consistent and true, and that this abomination has occurred in Israel:

5 You should bring that man or that woman who has committed this evil thing, outside the (city) gates, and you should pelt them—the man or the woman—with stones, and they should die.
6 The one liable to death should be put to death only by the testimony of two witnesses, or three witnesses. He should not be put to death by the testimony of one witness.

Is a person executed if he admits guilt? (v. 6)

Rambam: It is a scriptural decree that the court does not execute a person or administer lashes to him as a result of his own admission, but only “by the testimony of two witnesses” (Laws of Sanhedrin 18:6).

Radvaz: This “scriptural decree” is somewhat rational, because a person’s soul does not belong to him, but to God, as the verse states, “all souls are Mine” (Ezekiel 18:4). Thus a person’s admission will not help to cause damage to something that is not his...A person’s money, however, does belong to him. Therefore, [in monetary cases] we rule that a defendant’s admission is equivalent to the testimony of a hundred witnesses (Gittin 40b) ....Nevertheless, I agree that this is a decree of God which we cannot fully fathom (Laws of Sanhedrin ibid.).

A person’s soul is not his own possession, but rather, an article of value that was deposited with him by God for safekeeping. But in the case of money, while it is true that the Creator does maintain the ultimate rights of ownership over “the earth and everything in it”; nevertheless, He does allow a person to possess his own property—“He gave the earth to man” (Psalms 115:16).

And while this is fundamentally a “decree of God,” nevertheless, it is “somewhat rational”: For while everything ultimately belongs to God, there exists from man’s perspective a difference between the soul, which is obviously sacred, and money, which does not openly reveal God’s presence. Consequently, the Torah allowed us to acquire that which appears to be ownerless because its True Owner remains hidden; but we were not granted the right to possess something which clearly belongs to an existing Owner.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 106ff.)

Sparks of Chasidus

Radvaz writes that a person is not executed as a result of his own admission, “because a person’s soul does not belong to him, but to God” (see Classic Questions).

But surely, a person’s money also belongs to God, as the verse states, “The earth and everything in it belongs to God” (Psalms 24:1), and, “Silver is Mine and gold is Mine,” says God,” (Haggai 2:8). So why is there a difference between a person’s admission in criminal and financial cases?

A person’s soul is not his own possession, but rather, an article of value that was deposited with him by God for safekeeping. But in the case of money, while it is true that the Creator does maintain the ultimate rights of ownership over “the earth and everything in it”; nevertheless, He does allow a person to possess his own property—“He gave the earth to man” (Psalms 115:16).

And while this is fundamentally a “decree of God,” nevertheless, it is “somewhat rational”: For while everything ultimately belongs to God, there exists from man’s perspective a difference between the soul, which is obviously sacred, and money, which does not openly reveal God’s presence. Consequently, the Torah allowed us to acquire that which appears to be ownerless because its True Owner remains hidden; but we were not granted the right to possess something which clearly belongs to an existing Owner.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 106ff.)
The Last Word

"You Should Come to...The Judges Who Exist at That Time" (v. 9)

It is axiomatic to Chasidic thought that the completeness of the redemption is "dependent on our actions and effort to serve God throughout the period of Exile, since the reward for a commandment is [the result] of the commandment itself" (Tanya, chap. 37). Everything that is bestowed from Heaven is carefully meted out according to the actions which elicit it, and therefore a person’s actions must be somewhat similar to the desired result.

Thus, in order to reach and relate to the Messianic Era when “I will return your Judges as they were at first, and your advisors like they were in the beginning” (Isaiah 1:26), a Jew has to incorporate this dimension in his life now. Judaism must have for him two dimensions: “Judges”—submission to the directives of Torah (even if they are not logically understood), and “Advisors”—the internalization and appreciation of these directives, (as he understands and appreciates receiving good advice).

This preparation has been achieved throughout history, by following the “Judges” and “Advisors” of the generation. Therefore, we are taught: “You should come to...the judges that exist at that time. You should question them, and they will tell you words of judgment” (v. 9).

(Excerpt from Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shoftim 5751—Free Translation)

Surely it is self-evident that one can only consult the judges who “exist at that time”? (v. 9)

RASHI: Even if they are not like the other judges who preceded them, you must listen to them, for you have only the judges of your time.

TALMUD: The judge in each generation is like Shmuel in his generation...and like Moshe in his generation (Rosh Hashanah 20b).
17:8 If a point of law eludes you(r local court)—be it the distinction between (pure) blood and (impure) blood, between a verdict (of innocence) and a verdict (of guilt), or between a (pure) lesion and an (impure) lesion, (resulting in) conflicting rulings (among the sages) in your city:

- You should make the journey up to (the Holy Temple), the place that God, your God, will choose. You should come to the priests, (who are from) the (tribe) of Levites, and to the judges who exist at that time. You should question them, and they will tell you words of judgment.
- You must obey the words that they will tell you—from the place God will choose. You should carefully obey everything they instruct you. You should act in accordance with the teachings that they instruct you, and according to the judgments they issue to you.
- You must not divert from the words they tell you, (even if they tell you that) right (is left) and left (is right).
- (If) any man intentionally disobeys and fails to listen to the priest who is standing and officiating there before God, your God, or to the judge, that man must die. Thus you will eliminate this evil from Israel.
- (They should wait until the next festival to execute him, so that) all the people will hear (of it) and be afraid, so they will no longer disobey intentionally.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

- How does one fulfill the command not to “divert” from the words of the Sages? (v. 11)
  
  Rambam: There are additional mitzvos which were introduced after the giving of the Torah, that were fixed [as Jewish law] by the Prophets and the Sages, and they were adopted by the entire Jewish people, such as reading the Megilah, the Chanukah lights, the fast of Tisha b’Av, the principle of the Eruv, and the washing of the hands etc. All of these mitzvos that were introduced at a later date are obligatory for us to accept and observe, as the verse states: “You must not divert from the words, etc.” (Introduction to Mishneh Torah).

TORAS MENACHEM

- The Nature of Rabbinic Law (v. 11)

The above statement of Rambam presents the following problem:

It is generally accepted that there are seven Rabbinic mitzvos, namely:

Of course, there are literally thousands of other Rabbinic laws, but all those apart from the above are extensions or enhancements of Torah law. The above seven mitzvos are unique among the vast body of Rabbinic law in that they are: 1.) Mitzvos in their own right, that require a blessing beforehand. 2.) They are all positive commands (and not prohibitions). 3.) They are not an extension of existing Torah law. Thus, the common consensus is that there are just seven Rabbinic “mitzvos,” and many thousands of additional Rabbinic enactments and decrees that serve to protect Torah law.

However, Rambam makes no mention here of the fact that there are seven Rabbinic mitzvos. Furthermore, of the five mitzvos that he does mention, one of them—the fast of Tisha b’Av—is not generally considered to be one of the seven Rabbinic mitzvos, for it is not a positive command, and it is not a mitzvah on which a blessing is made.

Why did Rambam not enumerate the Rabbinic mitzvos here, in his introduction to the Mishneh Torah, in the same way as he listed the 613 mitzvos of the Torah? And why did he disregard the common consensus that there are seven Rabbinic mitzvos?

The Explanation

The number of Biblical mitzvos is an absolute, fixed sum. There are precisely 613 mitzvos, and it is categorically forbidden to add any further mitzvos, or annul any of the existing laws (as Rambam writes in his Laws of Foundations of the Torah, chap. 9).

However, according to the principles of Jewish law, Rabbinic mitzvos are not limited to any particular number, because the Sages are permitted to add mitzvos, enactments and decrees as they see fit. As time passes and new problems arise, they are charged with the task of adding further laws or, under certain circumstances, modifying or abolishing previously existing law. So, by its very nature, Rabbinic law is dynamic and constantly evolving with the times.

Of course, nowadays the Rabbis do not have sufficient authority to modify the existing Rabbinic law, so the number of Rabbinic mitzvos and decrees has become static. But this is purely a technical limitation. In essence, however, the body of Rabbinic law may be modified, provided there are Rabbis of sufficient authority (and in the Messianic era, we are
the children and grandchildren forever, provided the son’s wisdom and fear of God equal that of the father.

Once David was anointed, he earned the rights to the “Crown of Kingship.” Thus, the monarchy belongs to him and his male descendants forever....However, this right was only transferred to his righteous descendants....Nevertheless, God promised him that the monarchy would never cease from his descendants....” (Laws of Kings 1:7).

RABBINIC LAW TODAY

Furthermore, it could be argued that, even today, new Rabbinic precepts may be introduced, even before the Sanhedrin is re-convened.

Rambam writes in his introduction to the Mishneh Torah: “All of that which is written in the Babylonian Talmud is legally binding on the whole Jewish people...since the entire content of the Talmud was agreed upon universally by the Jewish people.”
When you come to the land God, your God, is giving you, and you take possession of it and settle in it, you will (eventually) say, “I will set a king over myself, like all the nations around me”:

15 You should always set a king over you, one whom God, your God, chooses.
16 The king that you appoint over yourselves must be from among your (Jewish) brothers.
17 You may not appoint a gentile over yourselves, one who is not your brother.
18 However, he may not acquire many horses for himself (more than he needs for his chariot).
19 (This is) so that he will not bring the people back to Egypt, in order to get more horses, for God said to you: “You should never return on that road again!”
20 He should not take too many wives for himself, so his heart will not be led astray.

After he is already sitting upon his royal throne, he should write two copies of this Torah scroll for himself, in the presence of the priests, the sons of Levi.

(One copy should be placed in his treasury, and the other) should remain with him, and he should read from it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear God, his God, to carefully guard the observance of all the words of this Torah, and its suprarational commands. (This is) so that his heart will not be arrogant over his brothers, and he will not veer away from (even) the (smallest) commandment, either to the right or to the left, in order that he will reign for a long time over his kingdom—he and his sons—among Israel.

Now, there are many Rabbinic laws in the Talmud which were introduced after the Sanhedrin ceased to function, and yet, Rambam writes that they are legally binding on the basis that these laws were “agreed upon universally by the Jewish people.” Therefore, it would seem that, according to Rambam, any enactment or custom which becomes universally accepted among the entire Jewish people actually acquires the full legal status of a Rabbinic mitzvah, even in the current era.

(Toras Menachem)

Inheritance of the Monarchy (v. 20)

From Rambam’s words in the above law, the distinction between an ordinary Jewish king and one who is descended from King David is not immediately obvious. Both types of monarchy seem to be passed via inheritance (provided that the son is a worthy candidate), so why does Rambam write a separate law in reference to King David, repeating the same idea? And what does he mean with the words, “Once David was anointed, he earned the rights to the ‘Crown of Kingship’...”?

The Explanation

There are two different ways of understanding the concept of a king:

a.) He is a monarch by virtue of his task of ruling the nation and carrying out the duties appointed to him; or

b.) The king is naturally engendered with the qualities of kingship. Such a person is inherently “cut out” for the job.

When Rambam writes that King David “earned the rights to the ‘Crown of Kingship’...for him and his male descendants forever...,” he is not recording a Divine promise, but rather, he is defining the quality of Davideic Kingship. Namely, that King David and his descendants are not merely functioning as kings, but they are essentially ingrained with the qualities of nobility and illustriousness that a king must possess. It is thus guaranteed that monarchy will not cease from King David’s descendants (not only due to the Divine promise, but) as a natural consequence of the fact that they are born with the attributes of sovereignty. Non-Davideic rulers must acquire the necessary talents that are needed to be a king, but in the house of David, they possess them naturally.

Sparks of Chasidus

“The king is the heart of the entire congregation of Israel”

(Rambam, Laws of Kings 3:6)

The heart has no role unto itself, and it merely serves the rest of the body. It moves constantly, as its entire purpose is the service of the other limbs.

In contrast, the brain is “distant” from the rest of the body. It is the coordinator of all the energetic activity which occurs in the body, but it itself remains somewhat aloof. Therefore, it does not move (like the body), illustrating its quality of aloofness.

For this reason, a king is compared specifically to the heart, since he is totally devoted to the people and involved with their needs.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 165ff.)
This affects the way that monarchy is inherited. In non-Davidic lines, the son of a king inherits precedence to the throne, i.e. he is given the first opportunity to attempt to acquire the skills that are needed to be a king and make a success of the monarchy.

But with a child descended from King David there is no need to prove this point, as the suitability for kingship is a fact of birth. Thus, sovereignty is inherited automatically, forever. (Of course, it is only the potential for these royal qualities that is inherited. They must be nurtured and brought to expression in order for the son to be fit to rule. Thus Rambam stresses that “this right was only transferred to his righteous descendants.”)

KING DAVID AND KING SHLOMO

Based on the above, we can explain the account in Kings (I 1:1-48), that Shlomo was anointed as king in the lifetime of King David. At first glance, this seems to contradict the Talmud’s statement that God told King David:

“The time of your son Shlomo's monarchy has come, but one monarch will not overlap the other, even by a hairsbreadth” (Shabbos 30a); and in general, there is the rule that “two kings cannot use the same crown” (Chullin 60b). So, how are we to explain the fact that Shlomo was anointed as king in the lifetime of his father?

Based on the above, we can understand that in the case of ordinary (non-Davidic) kings, the monarchy merely represents the seat of power (not a natural quality). Since it is only possible for one person to be the final authority, it follows that there can only be one king at any given time, for the king has the final authority.

However, a king from the House of David possesses the “Crown of Kingship,” as an inherent, personal quality. Therefore, the concept of kingship could be revealed in two people at the same time, even though only one of them is the practical ruling authority.
The priests (who are from) the (tribe of) Levites shall have no portion (from the spoils of war).

Nor (shall they have any) inheritance (of the land) with the (rest of) the Jewish people.

(This applies to) all (the priests who are from) the tribe of Levi (regardless of whether they are fit to serve in the Temple, or not).

(Rather, the priest and Levite) will eat God’s fire-offerings (terumah and tithes) that He bequeathed (to them).

But (the priest) will have no (territorial) inheritance among his brothers. God is his inheritance, as He told (Aharon).

These are the priests’ rights from the people:

When any ox or sheep is slaughtered, the priest should be given the foreleg, the jaw (with the tongue), and the end-stomach.

You should give him (terumah, which is) the first portion of your grain, your wine, and your oil.

You should give him the first (shearings) of the fleece of your sheep.

For God, your God, has chosen him out of all your tribes, to stand and serve in the Name of God—he and his sons—for all time.

If a (priest, a member of the) Levite (tribe), comes from any one of your cities throughout Israel where he lives, he may come whenever his soul desires, to the place God will choose, and he may minister in the Name of God, his God, just like all his (priestly) brothers, (from) the (tribe of) Levites, who stand there before God.

“The priests, the Levites...all the tribe of Levi” refers to whom? (v. 1)

RASHI: “The priests, the Levites” means the priests, who are members of the tribe of Levi (Rashi to 17:9, above). “All the tribe of Levi” means all the priests of the tribe of Levi, regardless of whether they are fit to serve in the Temple or not.

RAMBAM: The entire tribe of Levi is prohibited from inheriting part of the land of Canaan, and they are also prohibited from taking a portion of the spoils of war, as the verse states: “The priests, the Levites, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion nor inheritance” (Laws of the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years 13:10).

Who is the “Levite” that “may minister in the Name of God” in verses 6-7?

RASHI: With the words, “If a Levite comes,” one might think that scripture is referring to an actual Levite [and not a priest]. To teach us otherwise the verse states, “and he may minister” (v. 7), which excludes Levites, who are not eligible to minister in the Temple.

RAMBAM: The verse states, “and he may minister in the Name of God, his God, just like all his brothers, the Levites” (v. 7).

Which service is “in the Name of God”?

RAMBAM: The verse states, “and he may minister in the Name of God, his God, just like all his brothers, the Levites” (v. 7).

It is the singing [of the Levites] (Laws of Temple Apparatus 3:2).

The anointing of Shlomo in his father’s lifetime was a process which catalyzed the fruition of Shlomo’s inherent kingly qualities, so that his ingrained nobility should no longer remain latent and should be revealed in the form of actual sovereignty. Therefore, after the anointing had taken place, he could now be termed a king (despite the fact that he was not ruler), as the anointing had already brought out his royal attributes from “potential” to “actual.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 97ff.)
There are two ways of understanding the distinction between priests and Levites:

a.) Priests and Levites are two independent classes.

God separated the priests from the rest of the Jewish people to perform a specific task in His service, and likewise, He separated the Levites for their function. Each has their own unique status which is totally independent of the other.

b.) Priests and Levites are different levels within the same class structure.

God first separated the entire tribe of Levi from the rest of the Jewish people as an elite group which would be entirely devoted to His service. Then, from among the Levites themselves, He selected a further, super-elite group of priests, for an even higher level of service.

A difference that arises from these approaches is whether or not Levites are considered to be full-time ministers of God. If we adopted the first approach, that priests and Levites are totally separate classes, then it follows that Levites are not direct ministers of God, because it was the priests—and the priests alone—who were separated by God to perform His services in the Temple. Then, in order to provide assistance to the priests, God made a second, totally separate class of helpers, the Levites. However, if we adopted the second approach (that the entire tribe of Levi were separated first, and then an upper sub-class of priests were formed from among the Levites), then it turns out that all the Levites are actually ministers of God, since when God made that first separation, he was distinguishing the entire tribe of Levi as His personal servants, or ministers.

The Contention Between Rashi and Rambam

At the literal level, scripture appears to stress the first approach (that the priests and Levites are two independent classes). First we read of the selection of priests in Parshas Tzateach: "You should draw Aharon your brother close to you together with his sons, (separating them) from the children of Israel, to serve Me as priests" (Shemos 28:1), and it is only much later that the Levites are appointed (see Bamidbar 3:6).

This suggests that, at the literal level (followed by Rashi), the entire tribe of Levi was not separated as ministers of God. Rather, the priests alone were selected, and the Levites were added later, as their assistants.

However, Rambam writes, "All the descendants of Levi were separated to serve in the Temple....The priests were separated out from among the Levites for the task of offering sacrifices" (Laws of Temple Apparatus 3:1, 4:1), which indicates that Rambam follows the second approach described above.

Based on this, we can now explain why Rashi and Rambam took different approaches to the current passage:

Verse 1 seems to equate the status of priests and Levites: "The priests, the Levites, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance."

This "equality" fits Rambam’s view, since he understood, "All the descendants of Levi were separated to serve in the Temple," so priests and Levites are essentially members of the same class.

But Rashi perceived the priests as being the only true ministers of God (and Levites as being a supplementary group added at a later time), so he could not explain that our verse was “equating” priests and Levites. Consequently, Rashi explained that the verse is speaking of priest alone.
8 They should eat equal portions (of the hides and meat of the festival offerings), except for (the tamid offering, the additional offering of Shabbos and voluntary offerings, for which the priests) were (divided into “watches,” whose rights were) sold by their ancestors.

**Prohibitions Against Fortune-Telling**

When you come to the land God, your God, is giving you, you must not learn to do the abominable practices of those nations. 10 There must not be found anyone among you who:

- Passes his son or daughter (between two) fires (to Molech),
- Practices stick divination,
- Acts on the basis of fortuitous times,*
- Divines (on the basis of strange occurrences), *
- Practices sorcery,*
- Divines with animals,
- Turns to (the sorcery) of Ov or Yidoni,*
- (Raises and) consults with (spirits of) the dead.

12 For whoever does these things is an abomination to God, and it is because of these abominations that God, your God is driving out these (nations) before you.

13 (Do not probe into the future, but) be simple-hearted with God, your God.

**How is one to be simple-hearted with God? (v. 13)**

**Rashi:** Walk with Him simple-heartedly (לְחָיִים קָדֶשֶׁת) and look forward to what He has in store. Do not probe the future, but rather accept whatever happens to you simple-heartedly. Then, you will be with Him and His inheritance.

**Ramban:** The word לְחָיִים means “perfect.” Thus, after the Torah warns us not to follow those who predict the future in verses 10-11, we are then told to be perfect in our faith that the future is in God’s hands, rather than seeking fortune-tellers who are not always correct.

**Classic Questions**

The word לְחָיִים has appeared on numerous occasions in the Torah up to this point, and its translation is always “perfect.” For example we find in numerous instances that the Torah requires a sacrifice to be לְחָיִים, which means perfect and without blemish (for example: Vayikra 1:3, 10; 3:1, 9; 4:3, 23; 5:15, 18, 28). Furthermore, we also find that the word לְחָיִים suggests a perfection of character: Noach is described as a לְחָיִם, one who was perfect in his dedication to God (Bereishis 6:9), and Avraham was told by God, “Come close to Me in worship and be perfect (לְחָיִים),” (ibid. 17:1).

Why, then, did Rashi veer from this interpretation in our verse (which is suggested by Ramban), and write instead that לְחָיִים means, “Walk with Him simple-heartedly”?

**The Explanation**

Rashi could not accept that the meaning of לְחָיִים in verse 13 is “perfect,” as it is inconsistent with the context of the verse:

In verses 9-12 we read of various prohibitions of fortune-telling and divining. The Torah then concludes by saying that instead of doing “these abominations” (v. 12), we should be לְחָיִים with God. So being לְחָיִים is clearly a specific response to the desire to do these particular sins (“these abominations”). Thus, Rashi could not accept that לְחָיִים means “perfect”...

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* Passes his son or daughter (between two) fires—see Vayikra 18:21; acts on the basis of fortuitous times — ibid. 19:26; divines (on the basis of strange occurrences)—ibid; practices sorcery—see Shemos 22:17; one who turns to (the sorcery) of Ov or Yidoni—see Vayikra 19:31.
Is Prophecy Not a Form of “Fortune-Telling”?  

An apparent problem with Rashi’s approach is that it appears to apply equally to prophecy:

According to Ramban, who saw fortune-telling as being false and unreliable, it makes sense why God gave us prophecy as a reliable alternative.
18:14 FIFTH READING

While these nations, which you are about to take possession of, listen to diviners of fortuitous times and stick diviners, in your case however, God your God has not given you things like these, (but rather, genuine prophets and the Urim v’Tumim).

- 15 God, your God, will establish a prophet like me, from among you, from your brothers, and you must listen to him.

16 This is what you asked from God, your God, at Choraiw, on the Day of Assembly, saying, “I don’t want to hear the voice of God, my God any more, or see this great fire, so that I will not die!”

17 God said to me, “They have spoken well! 18 I will establish for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put My words into his mouth, and he will tell them everything that I command him.

19 And then, if anybody does not listen to My words that he speaks in My name, I will punish him (with death from heaven).”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

How does a person become a prophet? (v. 15)

Talmud: God only allows His presence to rest on a person who is strong, wealthy, wise and humble. All of these requirements are derived from Moshe”. (Nedarim 38a).

Rambam: It is one of the principles of faith to know that God communicates to man via prophecy. In order to receive prophecy a person must be extremely wise, a master of his emotions, and unperturbed by his evil inclination in worldly matters. He must constantly control his evil inclination with his mind, and he must have an extremely broad and fine mind. (Laws of Foundations of the Torah, 7:1).

Kesef Mishneh: Why did Rambam omit the requirements of strength, wealth and humility mentioned by the Talmud?

Rambam understood this passage of Talmud to be speaking about prophecy on a permanent basis, which requires these three additional criteria. However, here in the Mishneh Torah, Rambam was describing the qualities required for prophecy on a temporary basis, and for this, strength, wealth and humility are not required.

Turei Even: Rambam was forced to reject the requirements of strength and wealth for a prophet, on the basis that we find that many of the prophets in history were neither wealthy nor strong.

TORAS MENACHEM

A Prophet’s Qualifications (v. 15)

Kesef Mishneh asks why Rambam omitted the requirement, mentioned in the Talmud, that a prophet must be “strong, wealthy...and humble.”

Kesef Mishneh answers that Rambam is speaking of a person who becomes a prophet temporarily, whereas the Talmud is listing the criteria required to become a prophet on a permanent basis.

However, this answer is difficult to understand, since:

a.) Why should the spiritual qualities of wisdom and self-control be required for a lower level of (temporary) prophecy; and yet to achieve a higher level of (permanent) prophecy, the more physical qualities of wealth and strength are needed?

b.) How could we accept the notion that Rambam limits himself to a discussion of temporary prophecy, omitting the phenomenon of permanent prophecy? Especially, when we consider that most instances of prophecy described in the Torah are of the permanent kind.

Turei Even suggests that Rambam was forced to reject some of the Talmud’s criteria, since we find that many of the prophets in history were neither wealthy nor strong.

* See Likutei Sichos vol. 14, p. 68.

** Raised letters upon the gems of the High Priest’s breastplate which answered questions. (See Rashi to Shemos 28:30; Rambam, Laws of Temple Apparatus 10:11-12).
However, this still does not explain why Rambam omitted the requirement of humility.

**The Explanation**

At first glance, we might have presumed that Rambam’s intention here when codifying this law, was to list all of the qualities that a prophet requires.

But, at the very outset, Rambam makes clear that this was not his intention. He writes, “It is one of the principles of faith to know that God communicates to man via prophecy...”, i.e. Rambam is codifying here only those details which are required knowledge for every Jew, as part of the principles of faith. He is not making a comprehensive list of all the criteria required for a budding prophet, but rather, the facts about prophecy that every person needs to know.

Rambam understood that there are two elements to the prophetic process:

1. Factors which establish the phenomenon of prophecy. In order to receive prophecy, a person must have an extremely refined and pure intellect. Then God’s prophecy is revealed and enclosed within the prophet’s mind, thereby uniting him with God.

2. There must be no disqualifying factors. If a person is weak, poor or lacking in humility, despite the fact that he possesses an appropriate mind for prophecy, he is disqualified on other grounds.

When Rambam came to codify the facts which every person must know in order to understand the “principle of faith” known as prophecy, he only listed the factors which establish the phenomenon of prophecy, as these details are crucial to an understanding of the concept. The disqualifying factors, which render a person unfit to be a prophet, are irrelevant to Rambam’s discussion here.

So, in the final analysis, it is not humility that makes a person into a prophet. A trace of arrogance would disqualify an otherwise suitable
20 But if a prophet intentionally utters a word in My Name, which I did not command him to say, or he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet must be (put to) death.

21 If you will say to yourself, “How will we know if a declaration was not said by God?” (The answer is):

22 If the prophet (claims to) speak in the name of God, and the thing does not occur and (you see that it will) never come about, then it is a declaration which God did not say. The prophet has spoken it (to deceive you) intentionally. Do not be afraid of him.

Cities of Refuge

When God, your God, cuts off the nations, whose land God, your God, is giving you, and you inherit them, and settle in their cities and in their houses:

2 You should separate three cities for yourself within your land, which God, your God, is giving you as a possession.

3 Prepare (signs to indicate) for yourself the route (to these cities), and (position the) three (cities so that they) are equally spaced across the expanse of your land, which God, your God, is giving you as an inheritance. They will be (available) for every (accidental) murderer to flee there.

4 These are the terms upon which the murderer may flee there in order to live:

TORAS MENACHEM

The Spiritual Significance of Cities of Refuge (19:1-3)

Any sin shares qualities with murder itself, since the abuse of energy for the purposes of evil is like the spilling of blood (Likutei Torah, Bamidbar 13c). However, a sin is only like accidental murder, since the true intention of every Jew is, as Rambam testifies, “To fulfill all the commandments and to avoid any sins” (Laws of Divorce, ch. 2). Furthermore, the act of sin is considered to have been done “unintentionally,” (v. 4) for “a person does not commit a sin unless he is possessed by a spirit of folly” (Sotah 3a).

The atonement for this is to study Torah, which is analogous to the escape to a city of refuge—because, “the words of Torah protect” (Makos 10a). In other words, just as a city of refuge is a haven to protect accidental murderers from “avengers of the blood,” (relatives of the deceased who seek revenge), so too, Torah is a refuge from one’s personal “avenger of the blood,” the evil inclination (Bava Basra 16a).

Furthermore, Torah study is effective in achieving atonement for the “spilled blood,” since one’s energies become re-devoted to holiness and Torah, which is described as the “Torah of life.”

However, in the Messianic Era, the Cities of Refuge will fulfill a different purpose altogether:

Despite the perfect global refinement which will occur in the future, the first stage of the Messianic Era will not witness a total elimination of evil, since the possibility of evil occurring will still remain. (Only afterwards, in the period of resurrection, will God completely eliminate the existence of evil from the world, when “I will cause the spirit of impurity to depart the earth,” Zechariah 13:2).

Consequently, Cities of Refuge will be required as a mechanism to eliminate even the possibility of sin, which will exist as a result of the residual evil within the world (similar to the state of the world before Adam’s sin, when there was no actual evil—just the potential for sin).

This prevention of the possibility of evil will be achieved by the introduction of a new type of city of refuge, the three new cities (v. 9)—which allude to a new dimension of mystical knowledge which will provide protection against even the possibility of evil.

(Based on Sicha of the 2nd Day of Shavuos 5751)

* In addition, strength and wealth are qualities that bring about people’s respect, and will thus cause the prophet’s words to be held in esteem (Drashos Haran).
Does the Torah suggest that the victim of an accidental murder should have his blood avenged? (v. 6)

**SIFRI:** It is a mitzvah for the avenger of the blood to chase and kill the accidental murderer.

**RAMBAM:** If he [the accidental murderer] intentionally leaves the city of refuge he is allowing his own death, for the avenger of the blood is permitted to kill him (Laws of a Murderer and the Protection of Life 5:10).

**ALSHICH:** The cities might be used to provide refuge for acts committed before the Redemption.

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**Cities of Refuge in the Future (v. 8-10)**

The Torah promises: “When God, your God, will expand your borders...and He gives you the entire land...You should add for yourself three more cities, in addition to these three, so that innocent blood will not be shed within your land which God, your God, is giving you for an inheritance, and you will be responsible for his blood” (v. 8-10).

But why should there be a need for Cities of Refuge in the Messianic Era at all? Surely, in that time, there will not be any murder, neither by Jew nor gentile, as the verse promises, “One nation will not lift a sword at another” (Isaiah 2:4)? True, the main function of these cities is to act as a refuge for accidental murderers, but even accidental murder will not occur in the future, as we are promised that evil will be eliminated.

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

**When will the three further cities be added? (v. 8-10)**

**RAMBAM:** In the days of King Mashiach, three additional [Cities of Refuge] will be added (ibid. 8:10).

**MINCHAS CHINUCH:** This is a scriptural decree. Logically there will not be a need for Cities of Refuge in the future, as then there will be only peace, truth and good (mitzvah 520).

**ALSHICH:** The cities might be used to provide refuge for acts committed before the Redemption.
swings with the ax to cut down the tree, and the iron flies off the handle, and it happens (to hit) his fellow, and he dies—he should flee to one of these cities in order to live.

- (I instructed you to signpost these cities clearly and place them at equal distances) in case an avenger of the blood pursues the killer, while his heart is hot, and he (manages) to catch up with him, because of the long road, and he strikes him to death. (For) being that (the murderer) had not hated (the victim) yesterday or the day before, he did not deserve (to be punished) with death. Therefore, I am commanding you, saying, "You should separate three cities for yourself."

When God, your God, will expand your borders, as He swore to your forefathers, and He gives you the entire land which He told your forefathers He would give, as a result of your safeguarding and observing all these commandments which I am commanding you today—to love God, your God, and to walk in His ways for all time:

- You should add for yourself three more cities, in addition to these three, so that innocent blood will not be shed within your land which God, your God, is giving you for an inheritance, and you will be responsible for his blood.

However, if a man hates his fellow, lies in wait for him, rises up against him, and issues him a fatal blow and he dies, and then (the murderer) flees to one of these cities:

- The elders of his city should send (representatives) and take him from there, and allow him to die at the hands of the avenger of the blood.

- Do not have pity on him. You should eliminate from Israel (one who sheds) innocent blood, and you will benefit from it.

**TORAS MENACHEM**

*Minchas Chinuch* argues that this is a suprarational decree of scripture, but this explanation is difficult to accept since a “scriptural decree” would be written without any rationale. In our case, however, the Torah does give the reason for the three new cities: “so that innocent blood will not be shed within your land which God, your God, is giving you for an inheritance” (v. 10).

We could argue, as *Alshich* suggests, that the cities will function as a refuge for accidental murders that took place prior to the redemption, in the time of exile. And since these murderers might well be spread over an extended geographical area when the redemption begins, there will be a need for a large number of Cities of Refuge.

However, this only explains how there could be an accidental murderer. The problem still remains: how could there be an extended geographical area when the redemption begins, there will be a time of exile. And since these murderers might well be spread over an extended geographical area when the redemption begins, there will be a need for a large number of Cities of Refuge.

According to *Sifri*, this problem does not arise, since *Sifri* maintains that it is a command of the Torah to avenge the blood of the deceased. The relative’s motivation is then not revenge, but rather the desire to perform a mitzvah, which will certainly exist in the future.

*Rambam*, however, did not accept this argument, because he maintained that the relative’s vengeance is only an option, not an obligation (see Classic Questions). Therefore, in an era when there will be no jealousy and “the whole world will be occupied with the knowledge of God,” why should one man seek vengeance from another when there is no mitzvah to do so, even if it is permitted?

We might argue that the cities will exist in the future for a spiritual purpose, merely as an atonement, but that there will be no need for refuge from avengers of the blood. However, this cannot be the case, since the Torah clearly states that the cities will exist to avoid actual spilling of blood (v. 10).

Furthermore, if the cities were only sites of atonement and did not provide actual havens of escape, then there would be no need for additional cities to make the escape route shorter.

**THE EXPLANATION**

When the Torah presents the possibility of avenging the blood of the deceased, it is not providing an outlet for man’s vicious nature. If the accidental murderer did not deserve the death penalty, the Torah would not permit his execution. Rather, the concept of “avenging the blood” provides a method by which the *Torah itself* exacts the death penalty.

In other words, the death penalty can be administered in one of three ways: a.) Capital punishment which is carried out by the court, with witnesses and a prior warning of the defendant; or b.) In certain cases, the Torah prescribes a punishment of “death at the hands of Heaven”; or c.) In our case, the death penalty of an accidental murderer is prescribed not by a court, or by Heaven, but by the relatives—similar to the case of Pinchas, who was not directly commanded to kill Zimri, but nevertheless, fulfilled God’s will by doing so (see Rashi, Bamidbar 25:7).

Therefore, even according to *Rambam*, who rules that avenging the blood is optional, the “vengeance” has a logic within the Torah system (of atonement), and is not mere personal vengeance. The relative’s act is therefore not incompatible with the Messianic Era, and creates the need for Cities of Refuge to protect those who killed accidentally before Mashiach arrived.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 107ff.)
Is the testimony of a single witness ever accepted? (v. 15)

Rambam: A judgment is never issued based on the testimony of a single witness, neither in cases of financial law nor in cases of capital punishment, as the verse states: “A single witness cannot incriminate another person for any sin or for any type of fraud” (v. 15). Oral tradition teaches that a single witness is sufficient to oblige another to take an oath. The Torah accepts the testimony of one witness in two instances: in the case of a sotah, so she does not drink the bitter waters (see Bamidbar ch. 5); and in the case of a calf whose neck is broken (below ch. 21), to prevent its neck from being broken (Laws of Witnesses 5:1-2).

The Single Witness (v. 15)

The reason why the Torah considers the testimony of a single witness to be invalid could be understood in one of two ways:

a.) Because the testimony of two witnesses is in a different class altogether from that of one witness—it is of a completely different quality; or
b.) One witness provides testimony of the same quality as two witnesses, but there is simply not enough of it; i.e. a lack of quantity.

These two approaches would also differ in understanding why a single witness is sufficient to obligate a person to take an oath, but not to make him pay money (see Rambam). Take, for example, the case where a single witness testifies that X owes Y money, but X denies the claim. Since there is only one witness, the law is that X does not have to pay Y, but he does have to swear an oath that he does not owe Y any money.

Now, if we will accept that a single witness cannot incriminate a person due to a qualitative deficiency in his testimony, then it turns out that the witness did not manage to establish that X owes any money to Y, since a single witness’s testimony is not of sufficient quality to incur any financial obligation upon another person. All the witness has managed to achieve is the lesser obligation of an oath for X, as for this, the lesser quality of a single witness’s testimony is sufficient.
You should not move back your neighbor’s boundary (marker) that the initial (settlers) will fix as borders in your inherited (land), which you will inherit in the land that God, your God, is giving you as a possession.

A single witness cannot incriminate another person for any sin (for which a person is liable for lashes or death) or for any type of fraud. An allegation must be confirmed by the verbal testimony of two witnesses, or three witnesses.

If a false witness attempts to incriminate a person (who has given testimony in court), by claiming that he was not present (to witness the act that he testified he had seen):

The two men should stand before God, before the priests and the judges who will exist in those days, together with (the litigants) who have the (original) dispute.

The judges should cross-examine him thoroughly, and if the witness is (proven to be) a false witness who has testified falsely against his brother, then you should do to him as he plotted to do to his brother. You will thus eliminate this evil from among you.

(The court should announce the verdict publicly so that) those who remain will hear (what happened) and be afraid, and they will never commit any such evil thing in your midst again.

Why does the Torah stress, “You should do to him as he plotted to do to his brother”? (v. 19)

Rashi: [Do to him] as he plotted, but not as he did. From here our Sages derived that if they [the false witnesses] already caused the death of the defendant [by their false testimony, and are only exposed afterwards], they are not put to death.

Ramban: If, by Divine Providence, the witnesses were found to be false before the defendant was executed, it proves that the defendant was genuinely innocent, so the witnesses deserve death for trying to kill an innocent person.

If however, by Divine Providence, the witnesses were only found to be false after the defendant’s execution, then in truth the defendant must have been guilty. For God would certainly not have allowed the Sanhedrin to issue the death penalty unnecessarily. The false witnesses are therefore not punished.

How will “those that remain hear and be afraid”? (v. 20)

Rashi: From here we derive the law that a public announcement is required: “Mr. X and Mr. Y are executed for having been discovered by the court to be false witnesses.”

On the other hand, if we were to understand that the single witness is only disqualified on the basis of a quantitative deficiency (that there is not enough evidence), then it turns out that a single witness can incriminate another person, but not to a sufficient degree that the Torah deems the matter to have been fully resolved. Thus, the single witness has, to a certain extent, made X liable to pay Y the money, and X is required to swear an oath to exempt himself from payment.

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shemos 5747)

The Public Announcement of False Witnesses (v. 20)

The crime of giving false testimony is deemed to be so serious by the Torah that not only are the false witnesses punished, but their crime has to be publicized by the court, so that “those who remain will hear and be afraid, and they will never commit any such evil thing in your midst again.”

At first glance, making an effective public announcement appears to be a logistical impossibility. For how could the court effectively publicize this crime to every single Jew, in every Jewish community? In the days when the Sanhedrin was in existence, it was only viable to send messengers to larger communities and synagogues; so how could one be sure that all the people who were actually contemplating giving false testimony “will hear and be afraid”?

The Explanation

Ramban explains that when the Jewish Court comes to a verdict, it does so under special Divine Providence that ensures that the punishment
21 You should not have pity (on the false witness). He must (pay with his) life for (attempting to end a) life. (Or he must pay the value of) an eye for (a false testimony about) an eye, (the value of) a tooth for (false testimony about) a tooth, (the value of) a hand for (false testimony about) a hand, (and the value of) a foot for (false testimony about) a foot.

Preparation for a War

1 If you go out to war* against your enemies, and see a horse and chariot, a people (which appears to be) more numerous than you—you should not be afraid of them! For God is with you, your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

2 Then, when you (have left your land and) are close to the battle, the (specially anointed) priest should approach and speak to the people (in Hebrew). He should say to them:

“Hear, O Israel! Today you are coming close to the battle against your enemies. Do not let your hearts become faint (from the noise of their horses)! Do not be afraid (when they bang their shields together)! Do not panic (when they sound their trumpets), and do not be terrified of them (when you hear them shout)! For (the Holy Ark of) God, your God, is going with you, to fight your enemies for you, (and) to save you!”

5 Then the officers should speak to the people and say:

“Is there any man who has built a new house and did not begin to live in it? Let him go back home, in case he dies at war and another man will begin to live in it!

6 “Is there any man who has planted a vineyard, and has not yet rendered it fit for ordinary use?** Let him go back home, in case he dies at war, and another man will render it fit for use!

7 “Is there any man who has betrothed a woman and has not yet taken her? Let him go back home, in case he dies at war, and another man will take her!”

8 The officers should speak to the people further and say:

“Is there any man who is fearful or fainthearted? Let him go back home, so he will not cause his brothers’ hearts to melt, like his heart (has melted)!”

What does “fearful” and “fainthearted” mean? (v. 8)

Rashi: Rabbi Akiva says: “This is to be taken literally, that he cannot stand at the front line of battle and look upon a drawn sword.”

Rabbi Yosi Hagalili says: “It means one who is afraid [to go to war] because of his sins. Therefore, the Torah gives a person the pretext of returning home because of his house, vineyard, or wife (v. 5-7), so as to cover up for those who return because of their sins. For nobody will know that they are sinners, and anybody seeing such a person would say, ‘Perhaps he has built a house, or planted a vineyard, or betrothed a woman.’”

The “Fearful or Fainthearted” (v. 8)

At the literal level, the meaning of “fearful” and “fainthearted” is self-understood. It is also obvious that any member of the army who is “fearful or fainthearted” should “go back home,” in order that he not “cause his brother’s hearts to melt, like his heart (has melted)” (v. 8). So why did Rashi need to make any comment at all on this verse?

*Sifri and the Talmud (Sotah 44b) both maintain that this passage refers exclusively to a non-obligatory war. However, Rashi’s silence here suggests that, at the literal level, the Torah is speaking here of any type of war, be it obligatory or non-obligatory (see Likutei Sichos vol. 14, p. 80 note 18). **See Vayikra 19:24-25.
To answer this question, Rashi offered two explanations:

Rashi states: “This is to be taken literally, that he cannot stand at the front line of battle and look upon a drawn sword.” I.e. this was not only an exemption for those members of the army who felt fainthearted at that moment, but rather, it was also for those who would be struck by terror later—at the front line of battle, or after seeing, “a drawn sword.”

Since this was a case that would only arise much later, when the army reached the front line, it was mentioned last.

However, Rashi was not satisfied with this answer alone, because leaving this warning until last would not have made any practical difference, since the army did not travel until all the announcements had been made. Thus, by leaving the warning about being fainthearted at the...
Then, when the officials finish speaking to the people, they should appoint disciplinary officers for
the troops at (both) ends of the people, (to ensure that nobody flees).

**MAKING A PEACEFUL PROPOSAL**

If you approach a city to wage (a non-obligatory) war against it:

- You should (first) make a peaceful proposal to it.

What will then happen is:

- If it responds to you peacefully, and it opens (its gates) up to you, then all the people found in it
  should give you a (monetary) tribute, and serve you.
- But if it does not make peace with you, it will (eventually) wage war against you. So you
  should besiege it, and God, your God, will (eventually) deliver it into your hands.
- You should strike down all its males by the sword, but you may take for yourself the women,
  the children, the livestock, and everything that is in the city, all its spoils. You should eat the spoils
  of your enemies, which God, your God, has given you.

That is what you should do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not among the cities
of these (local) nations.

But from these (local) peoples’ cities, which God, your God, is giving you as an inheritance:

- You may not allow any soul to live. Rather, you should utterly destroy them—the Chittites,
  the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizites, the Chivites, and the Jebusites—as God, your
  God, has commanded you, so that they will not teach you to copy all their abominable acts
  that they have performed for their gods, causing you to sin against God, your God.

If you besiege a city for many days in order to wage (a non-obligatory) war against it, to capture it:

- You should not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them. You may eat from them, but you
  may not cut them down.
In what respect is man compared to a tree? (v. 19)

Talmud: If a Torah scholar is respectable, one may “eat” [= study Torah] from him and one should not “cut” [= shun] him. But if he is not, one should “destroy” [= keep away from] him and “cut him down” [= shun him] (Ta’anis 7a.).

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Sparks of Chasidus

“Is The Tree of the Field a Man...?” (v. 19)

What is the connection between man and a tree? (See Talmud)

The unique quality of a tree, which no animal possesses, is that it is firmly and deeply rooted in its source of life and energy, the ground. And due to this firm rooting, the tree grows taller and stronger than any member of the Animal Kingdom.

Thus, the “tree” within man is that part of his make-up which is: a.) the most deep-rooted in the soul; and consequently, b.) it is the most powerful. And this is: his character and emotions.

While at first glance, the intellect would appear to be a man’s most expressive and “personal” faculty, Chasidic thought teaches that one’s emotions and character are in fact more deep-rooted in the soul. For this reason our emotions tend to be powerful and uncompromising, like a tall tree, because their deep “roots” unleash the inner wellsprings of the soul directly into the conscious arena.

Intelect, on the other hand, has no fixed roots (rather like members of the Animal Kingdom which are not fixed to one particular place). So we are able to be intellectually involved in all sorts of matters with which we have no personal connection, since the intellect is not so deeply rooted in the soul that it will passionately “take offense” to something which runs contrary to a person’s make-up.

Likewise, changing one’s mind is relatively easy, whereas changing one’s personality—from miserly to generous, or from evil to good—is no easier than uprooting a tree and planting it somewhere else.

Nevertheless, the Torah wishes us to do exactly that: to change our character and emotional traits for the good. In this way we bring perfection to even the innermost aspects of the soul, where the “roots” of our emotions reach.

And it is in this vein that the Talmud warns us only to study Torah from “a respectable Torah scholar” i.e. one whose knowledge “bore fruit” in the form of good deeds and fine character. For a person should seek a teacher who has both intellectual and emotional refinement, who will provide a living example of how to cultivate his “arborous” side.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 115ff.)
21

If a murder victim is found lying in the field in the land which God, your God, is giving you as a possession, (and) it is not known who killed him:

1. Your senior judges should go out (from the Sanhedrin), and they should measure (the distance from where the corpse is lying) to the cities around the corpse (in each direction).

2. What will happen is, that (from) the city closest to the corpse:
   - The elders of that city should bring the calf down to a rock-hard valley, which was never tilled or sown, and there in the valley, they should break the (back of the) calf’s neck.

   - The calf’s neck should be broken with a hatchet. God says: “A calf which in its first year, which has not yielded any fruit, should come and be decapitated in a place that does not yield fruit (see v. 4), to atone for the murder of this man, whom they did not allow to yield fruit.”

   - The elders of that city should take a female calf which has never been used for work, one that has never drawn a yoke.

   - The calf brought for purposes of atonement at the Temple*; and c.) via the specialized procedure of ritual slaughter and sprinkling the animal’s blood on the altar, etc.

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CLASSIC QUESTIONS

- Why is the distance to the nearby cities measured? (v. 2)
  
  **Rashi:** In order to find out which is the nearest.

  **Mizrahi:** Rashi is teaching us that measuring is not an absolute requirement, but rather a means to locate the nearest city. Thus, in a case where the corpse was found near one city, and it was obvious that this city was the closest, no measurement is required.

  **Rambam:** Even if the corpse is found adjacent to a city such that it is clear that this city is the closest, it is nevertheless a mitzvah to measure (Laws of a Murderer and the Protection of Life 9:1).

- How is the calf’s neck broken, and why? (v. 4)
  
  **Rashi:** He breaks its neck with a hatchet. God says: “A calf which in its first year, which has not yielded any fruit, should come and be decapitated in a place that does not yield fruit (see v. 4), to atone for the murder of this man, whom they did not allow to yield fruit.”

  **Rambam:** The city that is nearest to the victim brings the calf, and in most cases the murderer comes from that place....Generally speaking, the investigation, the procession of the elders, the measuring and the taking of the calf, become the subject of much talk, and by making the event public the murderer might be discovered....Furthermore, since the place where the neck of the calf is broken may never be cultivated or sown, the owner of the land will not cease in his investigations until he identifies the murderer, in order that the calf not be killed and his land not become forbidden to him forever (Guide for the Perplexed 3:40).

- Where is the calf’s neck broken? (v. 4)
  
  **Rashi:** In a hard valley (דיי מיל) that was never tilled.

  **Rambam:** יִדְי הַר means a river that flows strongly (ibid. 2).

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THE DECAPITATED CALF (21:1-9)

Rashi’s commentary was written exclusively to explain the literal meaning of scripture, as Rashi himself declared, “I am coming only to explain the literal meaning of scripture” (Rashi to Bereishis 3:8). It is not Rashi’s declared intention to explain the reasons behind all the mitzvos and how these themes take expression in the various procedures which any given mitzvah entails.

Why then did Rashi elaborate upon the reasons for the mitzvah of breaking a calf’s neck?

A further peculiarity in Rashi’s comment is his use of the unusual expression, “God says”: Why did Rashi need to stress here that the rationale for breaking a calf’s neck was said by God? Surely, here is not the place to emphasize the basic tenet that the mitzvos were given directly by God?

THE EXPLANATION

Verse 8 states that the purpose of breaking the calf’s neck is to “atone for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, O God!” In all cases up to this point when the Torah has required an animal’s life to be sacrificed in order to achieve atonement, there has always been a requirement for the animal to be offered: a.) by a priest; b.) in the Holy Temple*; and c.) via the specialized procedure of ritual slaughter and sprinkling the animal’s blood on the altar, etc.

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An exception to this rule appears to be the scapegoat of Yom Kippur whose life is sacrificed by casting it off a mountain in the desert (see Vayikra 16:21). However, it could be argued that in this case atonement is actually achieved in the Temple itself when the High Priest “places” all the sins of the Jewish people upon it (ibid. 10), and recites the confession (ibid. v. 21), and the scapegoat is only cast into the desert to “dispose” of the sins which it is “carrying.” The Red Heifer, which is sacrificed outside the Jewish Camp (Bamidbar 19:3), is of course not brought for purposes of atonement at the literal level, but rather, to ritually purify a person so that he may enter the Temple; (although according to the Midrashic interpretation of R’ Moshe Hadarshan—cited by Rashi to Vayikra ibid. 22—the Red Heifer does atone).
So when Rashi read that a calf’s life is sacrificed in order to atone for an unsolved murder, outside the Temple by a non-priest breaking its neck, Rashi was troubled: Surely this runs contrary to the procedure followed by all animal sacrifices that secure atonement?

Rashi came to the conclusion that the Torah is introducing us here to a totally unprecedented form of animal sacrifice. Therefore he began, “God says…” as if to say that in this passage we are hearing something new that we have not heard before.

**Three Types of Atonement**

In order to appreciate Rashi’s assertion here—that the novel procedure of this mitzvah indicates a totally different type of atonement—we first need to examine some of the explanations given for breaking a calf’s neck (see Classic Questions on previous page):

**Rambam**

writes that the unusual procedure of the delegation of elders serves to publicize the unsolved murder, thereby assisting the process of discovering the perpetrator of the crime.

According to Rambam, there is simply no reason for this mitzvah. It is a suprarational decree of scripture.*

Rashi, however, did offer a logical explanation: “A calf which is in its first year, which has not yielded any fruit, should come and be decapitated in a place that does not yield fruit, to atone for the murder of this man, whom they did not allow to yield fruit.”

It could be argued that the underlying basis of the differing opinions of Rambam and Ramban revolves around the question of which element of the murder is atoned for by breaking the calf’s neck—the agent, the act, or the effect of the sin:

Ramban maintained that the mitzvah atones for the agents of the sin, in this case the people of the nearest city, who became associated with this crime. Consequently, Rambam emphasized that the matter becomes publicized through the involvement of the city’s elders, who do everything within their power to help find the perpetrator of the crime, and this atones for the apparent connection between the city and the crime.

Ramban, however, understood that this mitzvah atones for the act of murder itself, like an animal sacrifice which atones for a sinful act. Consequently, Ramban perceived the mitzvah of breaking a calf’s neck as being in the same category as the scapegoat of Yom Kippur, which defies logic.

Rashi took the third approach, that this mitzvah atones for the effect of the sin, i.e. the fact that the premature death of the victim has prevented him from “yielding fruit.” Therefore: “A calf which is in its first year, which has not yielded any fruit, should come and be decapitated in a place that does not yield fruit.”

Consequently, “God says,” this is a totally unprecedented type of sacrifice, since all other animal sacrifices atone for the agent or act of a sin, whereas this one atones for its effect.

**Practical Ramifications**

The above distinction between the opinions of Rashi, Rambam and Ramban has the following practical ramifications:

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* This is also the view expressed by Ramban in his Mishneh Torah (end of Laws of Misappropriation). The above cited explanation of Rambam is found in his Guide for the Perplexed (3:40).
MAFTIR

1. The priests, the sons of Levi, should then draw near—for God, your God, has chosen them to serve Him, to issue blessings in the Name of God, and to pass judgment on every controversy and lesion.

2. All the elders of that city, which is closest to the corpse, should wash their hands over the calf that was decapitated in the valley. They should announce and proclaim, “Our hands did not (do anything that might have indirectly caused) this bloodshed, nor did our eyes see (this crime).”

3. (The priests then say): “Atone for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, O God! Do not place (the liability of) innocent blood among your people, Israel.”

The blood will thus be atoned for them.

4. (If the murderer is later found) you should (execute him and) eliminate the (shedding of) innocent blood from among you, and you will thus do what is proper in the eyes of God.

THE HAFTARAH FOR SHOFTIM IS ON PAGE 282.

TORAS MENACHEM

a.) Measuring the distance from the corpse.

According to Rashi (as explained by Mizrachi—See Classic Questions to v. 2 above) the requirement to measure the distance from the corpse to its surrounding cities is purely a practical one, in order to ascertain which city is the closest. Therefore, in a case where it is obvious which city was the closest, no measuring would be required.

Rambam, however, maintained that the requirement of measuring is a Biblical requirement which cannot be dispensed with.

Again, this appears to be a reflection of the underlying difference between the views of Rambam and Rashi, whether this mitzvah serves primarily to atone for the agent of the crime or its effect:

According to Rambam, the mitzvah atones primarily for the agent of the crime (the people of the nearest city), by publicizing the crime to the greatest extent possible. Therefore, since the measuring of the corpse would add to this publicity, it cannot be dispensed with.

(Similiarly, we would presume that according to Ramban, who perceived the mitzvah to be a suprarational decree of scripture, none of its details could be dispensed with).

However, according to Rashi, the key emphasis here is the atonement of the loss of life suffered by the victim (effect). Consequently, the measuring is not a crucial component of the atonement, and could be dispensed with if there was no logical need for it.

b.) The location of the mitzvah.

According to Rambam, the calf’s neck is to be broken in a fertile valley that contains a river, whereas Rashi maintained that the location should be a hard, non-fertile valley that was never tilled (see Classic Questions to v. 4).

At first glance Rambam and Rashi are merely arguing over the translation of a scriptural term (רכוב בגד). However, based on the above explanation, it appears that their respective interpretations reflect their overall understanding of the atonement achieved via this mitzvah:

Rambam maintained that the main emphasis here was the atonement of the local city, which was achieved by doing everything possible to find the murderer. Rambam adds (see Classic Questions ibid.) that these attempts were further enhanced by the efforts of the owner of the land where the mitzvah takes place, who would be most eager to identify the murderer so that the calf’s neck would not be broken and his land would not be outlawed. Consequently, Ramban understood that the breaking of the neck took place on extremely fertile land, which explains why the owner would be so eager to ensure that his land not become prohibited.

But Rashi, who stressed the negative theme of this mitzvah ("A calf... which has not yielded any fruit, should come and be decapitated...to atone for the murder of this man, whom they did not allow to yield fruit") likewise stressed the negative connotation of the location: “a place that does not yield fruit.” And this new concept (of offering a sacrifice in an inferior location, in contrast to all other sacrifices which were offered in the choicest of locations), was yet a further expression of Rashi’s innovative stance here, that this mitzvah provided a new method of atonement for the Jewish people.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 121ff.)

The Last Word

The appointment of “judges and police” mentioned at the beginning of our Parsha is intended to prevent undesirable events from occurring, such as the case of a “corpse found in the field,” mentioned here at the end of the Parsha. If such an event does occur—even though it occurs in a field, beyond the boundary of their city—it is the “judges” of that city who must perform the service necessary to bring about atonement.

From here we learn that every Jew must take responsibility for his brethren who are lost spiritually “in the fields.” Even the great leaders and judges must go out of the city, into the field, in order to share the beauty of Judaism with others.

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shoftim 5749; Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 131)
Parshas Shoftim contains 14 mitzvos and 27 prohibitions

1. To appoint judges and officers in every Jewish community [16:18].
2. Not to plant a tree by the Altar [16:21].
3. Not to erect an idolatrous pillar [16:22].
4. Not to offer a blemished animal, even if it is a temporary blemish [17:1].
5. To listen to the Jewish Supreme Court in every generation [17:10].
6. Not to disobey the word of the Jewish Supreme Court [17:11].
7. To appoint a Jewish king [17:15].
8. Not to appoint a Jewish king who is not a native Israelite [17:15].
9. A king should not amass horses beyond his needs [17:16].
10. Not to live in the land of Egypt [17:16].
11. A king should not have too many wives [17:17].
12. A king should not amass excessive gold and silver [17:17].
13. A king should write a Torah scroll, in addition to the one which every Jew is required to write [17:18].
14. The Levites should not inherit land in the Land of Israel [18:1].
15. The Levites should not share of the booty during the conquest of the Land [18:1].
16. To give the shoulder, jaw and end-stomach of an animal-offering to the priest [18:3].
17. To separate terumah (the priest’s portion) from produce [18:4].
18. To give the first shearing of the fleece to the priests [18:4].
19. Priests should work at the Temple in watches, and at festival times they should work in unison [18:6].
20. Not to practice divination [18:10].
21. Not to practice sorcery [18:10].
22. Not to use charms [18:10-11].
24. Not to consult a yidoni (wizard) [18:10-11].
25. Not to seek contact with the dead [18:10-11].
26. To listen to every prophet in the generation, provided he does not add or detract from the Torah [18:15].
27. Not to issue false prophecy [18:20].
28. Not to issue prophecy in the name of an idol [18:20].
29. Not to refrain from putting a false prophet to death, and not be afraid of him [18:22].
30. To prepare six Cities of Refuge [19:3, 6].
31. Not to have mercy on a person who inflicts mortal injury, in a capital trial [19:13, 21].
32. Not to falsely adjust one’s boundary [19:14].
33. Not to pass judgment on the word of just one witness [19:15].
34. To do to false, scheming witnesses as they intended to do to their victim through their testimony [19:19].
35. Not to be afraid of an enemy in battle [20:3; 7:21].
36. To anoint a priest for war [20:5-7].
37. To act in an optional war according to the rules of the Torah [20:10ff.].
38. Not to allow any of the seven nations that inhabited the Land of Israel to live [20:16].
39. Not to destroy fruit-bearing trees during a siege, nor cause purposeless destruction [20:19].
40. To break the neck of the calf in a riverbed [21:1].
41. Not to plow or sow in the riverbed where the calf’s neck was broken [21:4].
Although the ideal of peace is so prominent in the Torah, God designed and created the world in such a way that it leaves man subject to an almost constant inner strife, having to wage relentless battle with his evil inclination.

In fact, the Zohar (III 188b) points out that the Hebrew word for bread—*lechem*—is derived from the same root that denotes “war.” This symbolizes the concept of the continuous struggle between the base and sublime natures of man, whether he eats his bread as a glutton, in the manner an animal eats its food, or on a higher level—to keep the body healthy in order to be able to do what is good and right in accordance with the Will of the Creator.

One source of inspiration to help a person succeed in overcoming these challenges, is to reflect upon the source of his soul. Our Sages taught that Jewish souls actually preceded the rest of creation (*Bereishis Rabah* 1:4), and were even “consulted” by God when the “decision” was being made whether or not to create the world—and the souls gave their full consent (*Rus Rabah* 2:1). Thus, from the elevated vantage point of the soul in its primary source, every aspect of this world was seen as conducive to serving God, for otherwise the soul would not have consented to its creation. At that moment, the soul appreciated how things that we perceive now as a negative influence or an “enemy” (because they attempt to deter us from observing God’s Will) are in truth an *aid* to Divine Service—for they enable us to serve God out of our own *free choice*, rather than as mere robots. Therefore, even the creation of our “enemies” had the soul’s full consent.

A soul never forgets. Even after it comes down into a body, facing the ongoing struggle between the base and the sublime, the soul retains an unbreakable inner strength and imperviousness to anything that may deter it from its mission.

And this is the message of our Parsha: “If you go out (*Ki Seitzei*) to war”—when the soul “goes out” of its heavenly setting into a body, to fight a war between the material and the spiritual, it never loses sight of the fact that every obstacle is surmountable. Through meditating upon this point, we can always be “upon your enemies,” i.e. *transcending* every material “adversary,” and sanctifying this physical world with goodness and spirituality.

(Based on *Sichos* of 10th Elul and Shabbos Parshas *Ki Seitzei* 5751; Letter of 26th Teves 5742)
"What kind of war does verse 10 refer to?"

RASHI: The verse here is referring to a non-obligatory war, for in reference to the [obligatory] war of conquering the Land of Israel, the Torah would not stress, “and you seize their captives,” for it has already stated [regarding the Land’s inhabitants], “you may not allow any soul to live” (Devarim 20:16). The term לְכָּכֵּב יָדָיו ([“and you seize their captives”]) thus comes to permit [the capture of] Canaanites who are part of [a nation being fought through a non-obligatory war], even though they are from the seven nations [that inhabit the Land].

RAMBAM: A king may not wage other wars before obligatory wars. What constitutes an obligatory war? A war against the seven nations [who occupied the Land of Canaan], the war against Amalek, or a war fought in defense against an enemy that attacks Israel. Afterwards [when the obligatory wars have been won], he may wage a non-obligatory war, which is a war fought with other nations in order to expand the borders of Israel, and to magnify its greatness and reputation (Laws of Kings 5:1).

"If You Go Out To War"? (v. 10)

Rashi writes that verse 10, which introduces the laws of female captives of war, refers to “a non-obligatory war,” i.e. a war which is not required by Jewish law, but one that was fought to expand the borders of Israel.

Rashi proves this from the fact that our verse mentions the taking of captives (“and you seize their captives”), which surely would not arise in the case of an obligatory war, in which none of the enemy may be left alive, as the Torah commands, “you may not allow any soul to live” (Devarim 20:16).

However, Rashi’s assertion seems to be problematic for a number of reasons:

a.) The command not to “allow any soul to live,” refers to the conquest of the Land of Israel. However there is a type of obligatory war where it is not a mitzvah to annihilate the enemy completely, and that is a war fought in defense against an enemy that attacks Israel (see Rambam). In such a war, it would be permissible to take captives*, so how can Rashi prove that our verse “is referring to a non-obligatory war,” merely because it mentions the taking of captives?

b.) At the literal level, our verse does not actually refer to the taking of captives from the enemy population, but rather, the seizure of those whom the enemy captured in a previous war (“and you seize their captives”). Thus, it appears that our verse could indeed be referring to a war against the seven nations that inhabited the Land of Canaan, because even though the seven nations themselves must be obliterated in their entirety (“you may not allow any soul to live”), people from other nations who were held captive by the seven nations would not have to be killed. So how can Rashi prove that our verse is referring to a non-obligatory war from the words “and you seize their captives”?  

* While there is an obligation in Jewish law for an individual to kill any person who seeks his life (see Rashi to Shemos 22:1), which would mean that there would be a requirement to totally obliterate any attacking enemy, nevertheless, this would presumably not apply to the women and children of the enemy nation, who are not actively fighting (see Likutei Sichos vol. 14, p. 88, note 16).


**FEMALE CAPTIVES OF WAR**

21:10

*If you go out to (wage a non-obligatory) war upon your enemies, and God, your God, delivers them into your hand, and you seize their captives, \(^{11}\) and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you desire her:*

- You may take her for yourself as a wife (even if she is married).
- \(^{12}\) You should bring her into your home. She should shave her head and let her nails grow (to make her repulsive), \(^{13}\) and she should remove from herself the (attractive) clothing in which she was captured.
- She should stay in your house (so you see her at her worst), and weep for her father and her mother for a full month.
- After that, you may come to her and be intimate with her, and she will be your wife.
- \(^{14}\) What will happen is, if you do not desire her, then you should send her away to do as she wishes. But you should not sell her for money, or keep her as a slave, because you have afflicted her.

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**THE EXPLANATION**

Verse 10 stresses, “If you go out to war,” referring to a situation where the Jewish people are settled in their homeland, and “go out” of that land for the purpose of conquering other nations. It could not refer to the Jewish people’s situation at that time, in the desert, which is not an inhabited land from which one “goes out” to war.

Therefore*, Rashi concluded, “The verse here is referring to a non-obligatory war.”

[Consequently, when Rashi continues to explain, “In reference to the [obligatory] war of conquering the Land of Israel, the Torah would not stress, ‘and you seize their captives,’ etc.” Rashi is not bringing a proof that our verse is speaking of a non-obligatory war—for the proof is from the verse itself (“If you go out to war”). Rather, Rashi is merely indicating that the Torah chose to stress the idea of taking captives here in the case of a non-obligatory war, where it is most common. There would, however, be some instances where captives could be taken even in an obligatory war against the seven nations, as explained above.]

However, this leaves us with another problem, that the words, “and you seize their captives” now seem to be superfluous. For it is obvious that we are speaking of a case when captives are taken, from the following verse, “and you see among the captives...”

[Beforehand we did not have this question, since we presumed that the words “and you seize their captives” were needed as proof that our verse speaks of a non-obligatory war. Now, however, that it has been established that the proof is from the words, “if you go out,” the words, “you seize their captives,” appear to be redundant.]

Therefore, Rashi continues to explain that the extra words, “and you seize their captives,” come to permit the capture of Canaanites who are themselves captives of the nation that is being conquered during this non-obligatory war, even though they are from the seven nations which we are normally obligated to obliterate.

*(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ki Seitzei 5748)*

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

“**SHE SHOULD WEEP...FOR A FULL MONTH**” (v. 13)

Parshas Ki Seitzei is always read during the month of Elul, which is a time of teshuvah (repentance), when a person makes a spiritual stock-taking of the year that has passed, and resolves to come closer to God in the year to come.

The Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, 1534-1572) taught that this month of repentance is alluded to in our Parsha:

The “beautiful woman” of verse 11 alludes to the soul. Her capture from the enemy (v. 10-11) alludes to the release of the soul from the desires of the body (the “enemy”), at the outset of the month of Elul.

And then, “She should...weep,” i.e. return to God out of a spirit of remorse and contrition, “for a full month”–for the entire month of Elul.

*(Likutei Torah of the Arizal, cited in Sichas Shabbos Parshas Re’e’eh 5746)*

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* We could not prove that our verse is speaking of a non-obligatory war on the basis of the verse, “If you go out to war,” suggesting that such a war might not necessarily occur—because the term “if” could be referring to the second half of the verse, “you seize their captives,” i.e., if (when you go out to war) you seize their captives.
“If a Man Commits a Sin... You Should Hang Him on a Gallows” (v. 22)

The Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, 1534-1572) used the above verse to eulogize Ramak (Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, 1522-1570):

"when a man has a sin for which he is sentenced to death and he is put to death." However since the word און ("sin") can also mean "deficiency," the Arizal rendered: "When a man is lacking any cause to be sentenced to death, then why is he put to death?"

It is put to death.

However, the term "hang" (קולה) can also be translated as "blame." Thus the Arizal explained, when a person devoid of sin, such as Ramak, passes away: “you should blame it on the גもない," i.e. not on his own sins, which are lacking, but to the tree of knowledge (עץ ידיעת כל בתי), which caused death to be decreed upon the world.

In other words, the passing of such a saintly person is devoid of any negative cause at all. In such a case, it is simply that God willed to enjoy the spiritual elevation that occurs when passing from one world to another.
**Rights of a Firstborn Son**

21:15 If a man has two wives, one whom he loves and the other whom he hates, and both the one whom he loves and the one whom he hates bear him sons, and the firstborn son is from the one whom he hates, what will happen is:

- On the day (the father) bequeaths his property to his sons, he will not be able to give the son of the one whom he loves birthright precedence over the son of the one whom he hates, the firstborn son.
- Rather, he must acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the one whom he hates, and give him a double share in all that he possesses, because he was (conceived) in his prime. He has the firstborn rights.

**The Rebellious Son**

21:18 If a man has a deviant and rebellious son, who (steals, eats meat and drinks wine excessively and) does not listen to his father or mother’s voice—and when they reprimand him (legally) he does not listen to them:

- His father and his mother should take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gates (of justice) in his locality.
- They should say to the elders of his city, “This son of ours is deviant and rebellious! He does not listen to our voice! He is a binger and a boozzer!”
- All the people of his city should pelt him to death with stones, and you will eliminate the evil from among you.
- (The court should publicize what has happened so that) all Israel will hear (what happened) and be afraid.

**Hanging & Burial**

22 If a man commits a sin for which he is sentenced to death (by stoning), and he is put to death, you should hang him on a gallows (afterwards).

23 You should not leave his body on the gallows overnight.

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

The Rights of the Firstborn (v. 15-17)

The Midrash teaches that God’s initial choice to the appointment of priesthood, to serve as His ministers in the Holy Temple, were the firstborn. But when the firstborn sinned with the Golden Calf, God instead chose His priests from among the tribe of Levites who did not worship the calf (Bamidbar Rabah 6:2).

Thus, the Tzemach Tzedek (the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, 1789-1866) concluded that in the Messianic Era, when any remnant of the sin of the Golden Calf will finally be eradicated, the rights of priesthood will return to the firstborn (Ohr haTorah, Mikeitz p. 344a).

And this, explains the Tzemach Tzedek, is consistent with the kabalistic principle that in the future era, the “feminine” aspects of spirituality will transcend the “masculine aspects,” for then the firstborn (from the mother’s womb) will become greater than the Levites (whose identity is determined by the father).

However, the Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, 1534-1572) differed on this matter, writing: “Those who are currently Levites will be the priests in the future era” (Likutei Torah, cited in Tanya ch. 50).

Thus, what will actually happen remains yet to be clarified....

(Based on Sichas Erev Shabbos Parshas Ki Seitzei 5751, note 16; 20th Av, note 37)
The Last Word

“An Article of Men’s Clothing May not be Worn by a Woman” (v. 5)

The goal of the “Women’s Liberation” movement appears to be based on noble values: that a woman should not be given an inferior role to a man, for she too was created in the “image of God” (Bereishis 9:6), no less than man. In truth, however, “women’s lib” has brought about the degradation of women, by demeaning the unique talents and worth of women, suggesting that the only worthwhile choice is to act like someone else.

This is highlighted by the Torah’s commandment, “An article of men’s clothing may not be worn by a woman,” (and vice-versa). The significance of this concept extends well beyond the appropriateness of garments and clothing. The Torah is teaching us that a woman cannot utilize her unique potential and enjoy the true satisfaction which that brings, by trying to be like a man.

A woman has the privileged task of imbuing her home with a truly Jewish atmosphere, and she alone has unique talents for rearing a family, thereby perpetuating the existence of the Jewish people.

After a woman has finished this task, there is no harm in her pursuing a career (amid the air of modesty, which is the hallmark of a Jewish woman). But her true pride and joy is surely not to be found in the family, thereby perpetuating the existence of the Jewish people.
• Rather, you should bury him on that very day, for a hanging (corpse) is offensive to God (who created man in His image). Then you will not defile your land, which God, your God, is giving you as an inheritance.

**Care for Another’s Property**

22

1. You should not watch your brother’s ox or sheep straying, and turn a blind eye. You should return them to your brother.

2. But if your brother is not near to you, or if you do not know him, you should bring it into your house and it should remain with you until your brother seeks it out. (If he proves to be the genuine owner) you should return it to him.

3. You should do the same with his donkey, you should do the same with his clothes, and you should do the same with any lost property of your brother which he has lost and you have found. You should not turn a blind eye to it.

4. You should not watch your brother’s donkey or his ox fallen (under its load) on the road and turn a blind eye to him.

(Rather,) you should pick up (the load) with him.

**Cross-Dressing**

• An article of men’s clothing may not be worn by a woman,

• A man may not wear an article of women’s clothing.

For whoever does these (things) is an abomination to God, your God.

**Sending Away the Mother Bird**

22:6 If you encounter a bird’s nest in the street—on any tree, or on the ground—containing chicks or eggs, and the mother is sitting upon the chicks or upon the eggs:

• You should not take the mother from upon the young.

• You should always send away the mother, and then you may take the young for yourself.

(This will be) for your own benefit, and you will live a long time.

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**Classic Questions**

• When may the mother bird not be taken? (v. 6)

Rashi: While she is on her young.

• What happens if the mother comes back? (v. 6)

Talmud: Even if the mother bird comes back four or five times before the young have been taken, one must send her away (Chullin 141a).

• Why does the Torah promise that “you will live a long time” specifically in connection with this mitzvah? (v. 7)

Rashi: If in the case of such an easy commandment, which involves no financial loss, the Torah states, “(This will be) for your own benefit and you will live a long time”—then how much more will one be rewarded for mitzvos that are more difficult [to observe].

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**A Very Easy Mitzvah (v. 6-7)**

Rashi writes (in his commentary to verse 7) that sending away the mother bird is a very easy mitzvah to perform, and it incurs no financial loss. However, this appears to be problematic, because:

a.) Rashi suggests that in sending away the mother bird no financial loss is incurred at all. But surely the value of the mother bird itself is lost? (In fact, the Mishnah states explicitly (Chullin 142a) that a small financial loss is incurred).
Why does the mitzvah of guardrails follow after the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird? (v. 8)

Rashi: If you have fulfilled the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird, you will eventually build a new house and fulfill the mitzvah of constructing a guardrail, because one mitzvah leads to another. You will then come to possess a vineyard (v. 9), a field (v. 10), and fine clothes (v. 11). Therefore, these passages are juxtaposed.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

b.) How can Rashi maintain that sending away the mother bird is an example of one of the easiest of the mitzvos of the Torah, when ultimately some form of physical effort is required? Surely a mitzvah such as the recital of the Shema, which involves merely the uttering of words, is easier than the act of sending away the mother bird?

A further issue here concerns Rashi’s explanation (v. 8) as to why the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird is followed in the Torah by the mitzvos of i.) constructing guardrails (v. 8), ii.) not mixing seeds in one’s vineyard (v. 9), iii.) not plowing a field with two different types of animals (v. 10), and iv.) not wearing garments made of wool and linen (v. 11)—because “one mitzvah leads to another” (see Classic Questions to v. 8). For, while Rashi does indeed stress that the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird will lead to the mitzvah of constructing a guardrail, he then continues: “You will then come to possess a vineyard, a field, and fine clothes.” Why did Rashi not connect these acquisitions with the mitzvos they entail: the mitzvah of not planting mixed seeds, the mitzvah of avoiding mixed plowing and the mitzvah of avoiding shatnez?

TOSFORD

a.) The Talmud maintained that it is a mitzvah to send the mother bird away repeatedly, if necessary, in order that she not see her young being taken away (see Classic Questions to v. 6, above). Rashi, however, who limited himself to a literal interpretation of scripture, rejected this idea. For the Torah states explicitly: “You should not take the mother from upon the young,” indicating that this prohibition only applies as long as the mother is upon her young.

Thus, according to Rashi, when the mother bird returns—as is extremely likely—it would be permissible to take the mother bird too, for at that point she would not be on her young.

(If even one wishes to argue that according to Rashi this mitzvah is intended to prevent a person from being cruel [and that therefore the bird would have to be sent away repeatedly], Rashi would maintain that the main cruelty is taking the young from a mother while she is roosting on them—and this is what the Torah wishes to avoid here.)

And this explains quite simply why Rashi wrote that this mitzvah involves no financial loss at all, because after sending away the mother bird and taking the chicks, the person would still be able to take the mother bird as well, when she returns a short while later.

b.) At the literal level, this mitzvah is easier than reciting the Shema. Reciting the Shema can sometimes be difficult to carry out, e.g. when one is busy with another matter and the time for Shema is passing. In contrast, sending away the mother bird is always related to what one is doing at that moment, namely, collecting birds and eggs. Therefore, this mitzvah is even easier than reciting the Shema, as it is not only simple and effortless to perform and incurs no financial loss, but furthermore, it always comes at a convenient time.

c.) In addition to the physical rewards that, generally speaking, every mitzvah brings, there is also the spiritual “reward” that “one mitzvah leads to another.” However, at the literal level, it is only logical that one mitzvah would lead to another if both the mitzvos are similar in nature.

The mitzvah of sending away the mother bird is clearly similar to the mitzvah of erecting guardrails, since: i.) They are both mitzvos associated with the acquisition of property (new birds and new houses). ii.) Both mitzvos are aimed at saving another creature from pain.

Thus, Rashi writes (in his commentary to verse 8) that the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird not only brings the physical reward that “you will eventually build a new house,” but in addition, it brings the spiritual reward of the mitzvah of constructing a guardrail.

However, the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird is not similar to the laws of planting mixed seeds, plowing with different types of animals or wearing shatnez. Therefore, Rashi could not suggest that a person...
CONSTRUCTING GUARDRAILS

- When you build a new house, you must make a guardrail for your roof.
- Do not allow blood (to be spilled) in your house, when one (who is destined) to fall, falls from (your unprotected roof).

FORBIDDEN MIXTURES

- You may not sow your vineyard with a mixture of seeds, for then the (seeds’) growth and even the seed that you planted together with the (fruit) yield of the vineyard will become forbidden.
- You may not plow with an ox and a donkey together.
- You may not wear shatnez, (which is) wool and linen together.
- You should make yourself twisted threads (tzitzis), on the four corners of your garment with which you cover yourself, (even from a mixture of wool and linen).

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why may one not plow with an ox and a donkey? (v. 10)

Ramban: Because it would lead to the further prohibition of crossbreeding species (Vayikra 19:19). For the farmer will house the ox and the donkey together, and they will breed with each other.

To what extent may wool and linen not be mixed? (v. 11)

Rashi: If wool and linen are combed together, and spun into thread and woven together into cloth, then it is Bibically forbidden [to wear a garment that is made from this cloth] (as quoted in Tur, Yoreh De’ah ch. 300).

Rabeinu Tam: Woolen thread and linen thread that were prepared separately will become Bibically prohibited if they are woven together as one cloth (Tosfos ibid.).

Rambam: When wool and linen are bound together in any way whatsoever, the product is prohibited by the Torah (Laws of Forbidden Mixtures 10:2).

TORAS MENACHEM

Third reading

Sparks of Chasidus

"Make a Guardrail For Your Roof" (v. 8)

A roof, being the highest part of any structure, alludes to the ego, which gives a person an elevated impression of himself. Thus, in order to prevent a person from “falling off his roof,” by allowing his feelings of swollen self-esteem to degenerate into selfishness, we are warned to “make a guardrail for your roof”—to carefully control and temper the ego with “guardrails”!

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 140)
Rashi, however, agreed that the inclusion of the two prohibitions (shatnez and plowing with an ox and donkey) in one paragraph suggests that they are of a similar nature. However, where he differed with Rabeinu Tam was in his understanding of why plowing with two different animals was prohibited. Rashi followed the reasoning of Ramban, that the Torah prohibited plowing with an ox and donkey together because it would lead to the further prohibition of crossbreeding species (Vayikra 19:19). Therefore, when Rashi saw that the Torah placed the two prohibitions of

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<th>WOOL AND LINEN THREAD WOVEN TOGETHER</th>
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22:13 If a man takes a wife, is intimate with her and hates her, and he makes scandalous accusations against her and defames her name, saying, “I took this woman, and when I came to her, I did not find proof of her virginity.” Then the girl’s father and her mother should take proof of the girl’s virginity, and bring it out to the elders of the city, at the gate(s of justice):

- The girl’s father should say to the elders, “I gave my daughter to this man as a wife, and he hated her. He has now made scandalous accusations, saying, ‘I did not find proof of your daughter’s virginity.’ But here is the evidence of my daughter’s virginity!”

- (If the facts are as clear) before the elders of the city, (like a) garment (which is) spread out:
  - The elders of the city should take the man and reprimand him (with lashes).
  - They should fine him one hundred silver (shekels), because he defamed the name of a Jewish virgin, and give it to the girl’s father.
  - She must remain as his wife. He may not send her away all the days of his life.

- But if these words (of the husband) were true, and it was proven that the girl was not a virgin (and she had committed adultery after she was betrothed):
  - They should take the girl out to the entrance of her father’s house, and the people of her city should pelt her to death with stones—because she did a disgraceful act in Israel, committing adultery (in) her father’s house—and you will eliminate the evil from among you.

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

**Sparks of Chasidus**

**“I GAVE MY DAUGHTER TO THIS MAN…” (v. 16)**

Our Sages learned from the verse, “I gave my daughter to this man” (v. 16), that a father may betroth his daughter to a man while she is still a child (Kidushin 3b).

According to Chasidic teachings, the concept of marriage between a man and woman on earth is a physical manifestation of the union between God and the Jewish people.

The fact that a father may betroth his daughter while she is a child teaches us the power of God’s love for the Jewish people, that He wishes to “betroth” us with an eternal spiritual bond, even though we are but a “child” compared to Him.

Why was this concept recorded here, amid the laws of defamation? Defamation is an allusion to exile, as we find that the spies brought about the first “exile” through defaming the Land of Israel. So the Torah recorded the law of child betrothal here, to teach us that even amid the darkest moments of exile, God remains loyally betrothed to the Jewish people—and from this love the Redemption will blossom.

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* Rambam shared the outlook of Rashi and Rabeinu Tam, that the prohibition of shatnez is learned from the “adjacent” prohibition of plowing with mixed species together. But, due to the fact that Rambam understood the latter prohibition differently, he therefore made a dissenting ruling with regard to shatnez. In his Laws of Forbidden Mixtures (9:2), Rambam writes, “It is permitted to place two different species in one enclosed area, and if one sees them mating, one is not required to separate them,” i.e. he saw no problem with the outcome of breeding two species together. Thus, it is not the creation of a new entity which Rambam perceived as problematic, but rather the act (alone) of causing two different species to mate. From this, he came to a similar conclusion about shatnez: that the Torah prohibits wearing a garment that has undergone any act of mixing wool and linen together (be it during the combing, spinning or weaving), even if they have not been completely combined into a new entity.
**Violations of Intimacy**

- **22** If a man is found lying with a married woman, both of them must die—the man lying with the woman and the woman. Thus you will eliminate the evil from Israel.
- **23** If there is a virgin girl betrothed to a man, and (another) man finds her (lurking) in the city, and lies with her, you should take them both out to the gate of that city, and you should pelt them both to death with stones—the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he violated his fellow’s wife. Thus you will eliminate the evil from Israel.
- **25** But if a man finds the betrothed girl in a field, and the man overpowers her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her should die.
- **26** To the girl, you should do nothing. The girl did not commit a sin deserving of death, for in this case (the girl was forcibly coerced) like a man who assaults his fellow and murders him, and since he found her in a field, there was nobody to save the betrothed girl when she cried out.
- **28** If a man finds a virgin girl who was not betrothed, takes hold of her and lies with her, and they are found:
  - **29** The man who lay with her must give fifty (shekels of) silver to the girl’s father, because he violated her.
  - She must become his wife.
  - He may not send her away all the days of his life.

**Prohibited Marriages**

- **1** A man may not marry his father’s wife.
- **2** One may not uncover the clothing of (a woman destined for) his father (in Levirate marriage).
- **2** (A man) with damaged testicles or whose phallus is severed, may not (marry a Jewish woman and) enter the congregation of God.
- **3** A mamzer* may not (marry a Jewish woman and) enter the congregation of God. Even his tenth generation may not enter the congregation of God.
- **4** An Amonite or Mo‘abite may not (convert and marry a Jewish woman and) enter the congregation of God. Even their tenth generation may not enter the congregation of God, because of the (persuasive) talk (of the Mo‘abite women that led you to sin**, and because)

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**The Last Word**

Surgical intervention for the treatment of an enlarged prostate gland, the lowering of an undescended testicle into the scrotum or scrotal hernia often involves explicit scriptural prohibitions against severing and disconnecting seminal organs (v. 2), even though alternative techniques may be permissible, without reservation. In any of these areas it is thus crucial that a Rabbi who is qualified to rule in these matters be consulted.

If there were surgeons who would be willing to testify publicly that they had successfully carried out prostate surgery without disconnecting the spermatid ducts, this would almost certainly influence other surgeons to do likewise. Publicity of this kind is worthwhile even if the possible results are limited.

(Based on Sefer Haminhagim p. 84)

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* A person born of an adulterous or incestuous union (but not one born simply out of wedlock).  
** See Bamidbar 25:1-2.
The Last Word

“When You Go Out As A Camp…” (v. 10)

What makes servicemen particularly receptive to the basic approach of Torah-true Judaism is, first of all, the very basic principle on which the military depends, namely obedience and discipline in the execution of an order by his commanding officer. Even though in civilian life a private may be superior to his C.O., the principle on which the military depends, namely obedience and discipline in the execution of an order by his commanding officer, is a further basic point in military life.

Applying the analogy to Jewish life, it becomes quite evident how vitally important is every Jew’s commitment to Torah and mitzvos in his personal life and in spreading Yiddishkeit to the fullest extent of his influence. It may be added that the Jewish people live in a state of emergency, what with the general atmosphere of trends and ideas which are inimical to the Torah way, and a Jew having to fight to overcome all and sundry alien forces which tend to undermine his spiritual, hence also physical, existence.

In other words, every Jew must consider himself a “soldier” in God’s Army (Tzivos Hashem) and be on a constant alert to spread the light of the Torah and mitzvos, until the time when “God’s Glory will be revealed, and all flesh shall see” (Isaiah 40:5), and “all the earth will be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea” (ibid. 11:9)—which will come to pass with the appearance of Mashiach Tzidkeinu, may he come speedily in our time.

(Excerpt from a letter of the Rebbe dated 24 Adar, 5737)
they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were (exhausted after) leaving Egypt, and because (the people of Mo’av) hired Bilam—the son of Be’or, from Pesor in Aram Naharayim—against you, to curse you. But God, your God, did not want to listen to Bilam, and God, your God, transformed the curse into a blessing for you, because God, your God, loves you.

7 You must never seek peace or anything good with them all your days.

8 You should not (completely) despise an Edomite, for he is your brother, and you should not (completely) despise an Egyptian, for you were residents in his land. Children who are born to them in the third generation may (convert and marry a Jewish woman and) enter the congregation of God.

Sanctity of the Camp

10 When you go out as a camp against your enemies, you should be careful to avoid anything evil (because, at a time of danger, prosecutions of the Heavenly Court are more severe).

11 If there is a man among you who is ritually impure, (e.g.) due to a nocturnal emission:

- He should go outside the camp.
- He should not come within the (Levite) camp.
- Then, towards evening he should immerse in (mikvah) water, and when the sun sets, he may come into the camp.

13 You should have a designated place outside (the cloud surrounding) the camp, so that you can go out there (to use it as a toilet).

Classic Questions

1. Does the prohibition of marrying an Amonite, Moabite, Edomite or Egyptian convert apply nowadays? (v. 4-9)

Rambam: When King Sancheriv, King of Assyria, rose to power, he confused the identity of all the nations and mixed them together, exiling them from their homelands. Those “Egyptians” who now inhabit Egypt are different people, and likewise the “Edomites” in the area of Edom.

Now that these four forbidden nations have become mixed with all the other nations of the world from whom it is permissible to marry their converts, every convert has become permitted. This is because when one of them separates himself out from the others by converting, we presume that he belongs to the majority* [of permitted nations].

Thus, nowadays, wherever a convert converts, regardless of whether he is an Edomite, Egyptian, Amonite, Moabite, Kushite, or of another nationality, whether male or female—that person is permitted to “enter the congregation” immediately (Laws of Forbidden Relations 12:25).

Levush: Certainly a minority of the original Egyptian nation remained in Egypt. Thus while they are clearly stationed in their original place we cannot apply the principle that the identity of the minority is nullified.* However, when an individual converts and separates himself out from them* we can presume that he is from the majority of permitted nations, and thus is fit to marry a Jew upon conversion (Even Ha’ezer ch. 4).

Toras Menachem

2. The Egyptian Convert (v. 9)

Rambam rules that, nowadays, it is permissible to marry an Egyptian convert and that one does not have to wait for “children who are born to them in the third generation” (v. 9), because “when one of them singles himself out from the others by converting, we presume that he belongs to the majority [of permitted nations].”

Here Rambam has applied the Talmudic principle that kol d’parish m’ruba parish—“anything that becomes separated from a mixture is considered to have come from the majority of the mixture” (see note). Thus, even though a remnant of the original Egyptian nation still remains in Egypt (as Levush writes), nevertheless, when one person is separated from this population, we can presume that he belongs to the majority (of non-Egyptians).

*This discussion involves a number of Talmudic principles that are employed to resolve cases of uncertainty that arise when non-distinguishable items are mixed together. The most straightforward rule is that of following the majority (rov), based on which the Talmud concludes in many instances that kol d’parish m’ruba parish—“anything that becomes separated from a mixture is considered to have come from the majority of the mixture.” However, there are many exceptions to this rule, where we do not follow the majority, such as when the item is clearly identifiable, or when the item has the status of “an item of importance” (see Tosfos to Chulin 95a, s.v. sfayko; ibid. Zevachim 73b, s.v. aileh). The exception under discussion here is, kal kavaa k’mechtsah al mechtsah dami, which means: “items that were clearly stationed within their original mixture are of an indeterminate status.”
At first glance however, there appears to be a problem with this argument:

The principle that an item is “considered to have come from the majority of the mixture” can only be employed when that item becomes separated from the mixture. However, before it is separated, we apply the rule that kol kavua k’mechtsah al mechtsah dami (“items which are clearly stationed within their original mixture are of an indeterminate status.”)

Thus, Rambam’s dispensation to marry a first-generation Egyptian convert would only appear to be valid outside Egypt, after the individual became separated from the mixed population of “real” Egyptians and others. For as long as the convert remains in the Land of Egypt he is “clearly stationed within the original mixture” and is thus “of an indeterminate status.” Why then did Rambam not state explicitly that his dispensation applies only outside Egypt?***

We might argue that Rambam maintained that the tiny number of Egyptians remaining somewhere in Egypt are outweighed by the majority. But this is not the case, since Rambam rules that the prohibition against a Jew living in Egypt is still in force in the present age (see Laws of Kings 5:7).

And since Rambam understood that living in Egypt is prohibited due to the negative influence of the Egyptian people (“so we do not learn from their deeds,” Sefer HaMitzvos, prohibition 46), it follows that he considered even the minority of original Egyptian people that exist today in Egypt as being sufficient to keep this prohibition in force.

From this we see that Rambam did accept the argument that when the minority of original Egyptians are stationed within their “original mixture” [i.e. in Egypt], their effect is not outweighed by the majority of non-Egyptians.***

This appears to further strengthen our previous question: Why did Rambam not rule that a convert from Egypt may not marry a Jew while the former is still found in Egypt (“clearly stationed” in his “original mixture”)?

**The Explanation**

Rambam stresses that it is permissible to marry an Egyptian convert in the present age because when “one of them separates himself out from the others by converting, we presume that he belongs to the majority [of permitted nations].”

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(Zevachim ibid.). The term, “kavua,” is literally translated as “firmly established” and usually refers to an item after it was taken from its original location. If the item was “kavua,” we do not follow the general principle of majority rule. For further discussion of this subject see Sha’arei Yosher, Sha’ar Dalet; Ait Sofer (by Rabbi Eliezer Zusman Sofer, 1888-92), Sugyos Hashas, Klal Kavua. See also Sichas Shabbos Parshas Bo 5751, note 42. (Editor’s note) **cf. Yevamos 16b, Rashi s.v. beduchta dekevivi. ***Furthermore, logically speaking, the minority of original Egyptians would not be insignificant, since: a.) The prohibition is motivated by the debased quality of the Egyptians’ deeds, and not their quantity. b.) The debased activities of the original Egyptians are not out of character from the rest of the population—they are merely debased to a greater degree. Thus it is likely that even a small number of Egyptians would succeed in pushing an already debased population to further extremes.
• 14 In addition to your weapons, you should keep a shovel. Then, when you sit down outside (to relieve yourself), you should (first) dig a hole with it, and then you may sit down, (and afterwards) cover your excrement.

15 Since God, your God, is accompanying your camp, to save you and to place your enemies before you, your camp should be holy. Then He will not see any immorality in you and turn away from you.

♫ PROVIDING REFUGE FOR FLEEING SLAVES ♫

• 16 You should not hand over a slave to his master if he seeks refuge with you (in the Land of Israel) from his master. 17 He should (be allowed to) reside among you wherever he chooses, in one of your cities where it is good for him.

• You should not oppress him.

♫ MODESTY ♫

• 18 No Jewish girl may be promiscuous.
• No Jewish man may be promiscuous.
• 19 You should not bring an (animal that was used to) pay a harlot, (even if) it was exchanged for a dog, to the House of God, your God, to fulfill any (sacrificial) vow, because both (the animal and anything it is exchanged for) are an abomination to God, your God.

TORAS MENACHEM

At first glance, this emphasis that the separation is “by converting” is difficult to understand. For even if a resident of Egypt singled himself out merely by leaving the geographical boundaries of Egypt he would cease to have any association with the original Egyptian nation, since kol d’parish m’ruba parish—“anything that becomes separated from a mixture is considered to have come from the majority of the mixture.” Why, then, did Rambam stress that “one of them separates himself out from the others by converting”?

However, it could be argued that with this phrase, Rambam is addressing our above-mentioned question. Rambam is teaching us that the “separation” occurs, not via a geographic relocation, but rather, via a change in halachic status—by conversion itself. The resident of Egypt who converts to Judaism ceases to be part of the mixed population of Egypt, since the conversion “separates” him from the mixture. Therefore, we can safely apply the principle that kol d’parish m’ruba parish—“anything that becomes separated from a mixture is considered to have come from the majority of the mixture.” And since the majority of the inhabitants of modern-day Egypt are not members of the original Egyptian nation, therefore, “that person is permitted to convert and ‘enter the congregation’ immediately.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 171ff.)

♫ The Last Word ♫

“YOUR CAMP SHOULD BE HOLY...” (v. 15)

Holiness, purity and modesty are the foundations of the indwelling of the Divine Presence among Jews in general, and within every Jew, man and woman, in particular.

The sanctity of the “camp,” the Jewish home, and of Jewish conduct, is clearly emphasized in the Torah: “Your camp—at home and outside the home—should be holy. Then He will not see any immorality in you, and turn away from you” (v. 15).

Our Sages explain that modesty and holiness must be observed in every aspect of Jewish life, including speech and thought, and certainly in dress and general conduct.

In this area, especially, as in certain other areas of Jewish life, the Jewish woman and daughter set the tone and standard, as experience has shown. Our Sages often stressed that the future and happiness of children is largely tied in with the modest conduct of the mother [See Yoma 47a; Zohar 126a].

(Free translation of Letter to Women’s Convention, Lag b’Omer 5730)
Should one charge interest to a gentile? (v. 21)

Rambam: It is a positive command to charge a gentile interest, as the verse states, “You should charge a gentile interest” (v. 21). We have received by oral tradition that this is a positive command (Laws of Lending and Borrowing 5:1).

To whom are verses 25-26 addressed?

Rashi: To an employee.

Jerusalem Talmud: The verse states, “When you come in your fellow’s vineyard,” which you might think refers to any person. Therefore the Torah clarifies, “You may not put any into your container,” indicating that you are putting some into your fellow’s container. So who does this refer to? An employee (Ma’aseros 2:4).

Charging Interest (v. 20-21)

What is the logic behind Rambam’s ruling that it is a mitzvah to charge interest to a non-Jew? We can appreciate that it might be permissible to do so, since it is commonplace among non-Jews to charge interest. But why should it be a positive command?

In principle, however, the Torah would require us to charge interest to any borrower, Jew or gentile. Being that it is an ethical, universally accepted practice to charge interest, failing to do so would be considered an unnecessary wastage of funds, which is prohibited by the Torah (see Rambam, Laws of Kings 6:8f).

It is only that in the case of a Jewish person, the Torah makes an exception to this rule and instructs: “You may not cause your brother to pay interest” (v. 20).

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeshev 5747)

The Employee’s Rights to Food (v. 25-26)

The Rogatchover Ga’on taught that many laws of the Torah can be identified as a function of either the agent, the action or the result of what is being carried out, and that this distinction can often take expression in various practical ramifications. In this light, there are three ways of approaching the principle recorded in verses 25 and 26, that an employee is entitled to eat some of the crops which he is harvesting, while at work:

a.) The result of the work is that, having harvested the crops, the employer rewards the employee. Thus, the fact that the employee is permitted to eat from the crops while at work could be perceived as a type of bonus payment given to the employee as a result of his work (in addition to his main payment for services rendered).

b.) Alternatively, permission to eat from the crops could be perceived as a function of the action of work itself, regardless of what that work actually
**Interest**

- **20** You may not cause your brother to pay interest—interest on money, interest on food or interest on any other item for which interest may be taken.
- **21** You should charge a gentile interest, but to your brother you may not pay interest, in order that God, your God, will bless all the work of your hands upon the land which you are coming to take possession.

**Fulfilling Pledges**

- **22** When you make a vow to God, your God, you should not delay in paying it (beyond three festivals), since God, your God, will be sure to exact it from you, and you will have sinned.
- **23** It is not considered sinful for you to refrain from making vows.
- **24** Be careful to carry out what is uttered by your lips—whatever you have pledged to God, your God, as a donation, which you have spoken with your mouth.

**An Employee’s Rights**

- **25** When you come (to work during the harvest season) in your fellow’s vineyard, you may eat as many grapes as you desire until you are satisfied, but you may not put any into your container.
- **26** When you come (to work) in your fellow’s (field of) standing grain, you may pluck ears with your hand (to eat them), but you may not lift a sickle on your fellow’s standing grain.

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

Grapes are an expensive commodity, whereas grain is relatively cheap. Thus, after reading that a person may eat his employer’s grapes (in v. 25) it is obvious that he would be allowed to eat his employer’s less valuable grain (v. 26). Surely then, the Torah should have stated the more obvious case first?

The distinction between grapes and grain is that the former is a sweet and tasty food eaten for pleasure, whereas the grain is eaten as a necessary, staple food.

A person who serves God in the manner of “grain” is one who sees the mitzvos as a necessary chore, and fulfills the minimum requirement out of a sense of obligation. On the other hand, one who serves God in the manner of “grapes” sees the observance of mitzvos as a delight and a pleasure.

Thus, when our Supernal “Employer,” provides us with comfortable “working conditions” in this world so we can perform the task of observing His mitzvos, it is more obvious that He will provide for those who work in His “vineyard,” serving Him with the joy and delight characterized by grapes. Thus, being that this is the more obvious case, the Torah recorded it first.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, pp. 133-4)
What constitutes grounds for divorce? (v. 1)

**Talmud:** The School of Shamai says: “A man may not divorce his wife unless he discovers something immoral about her, as the verse states, ‘because he has found something immoral about her.’

The School of Hillel says: “[He may divorce her] even if she spoils his food, as the verse [could be rendered]: “because he has found something immoral [or another] thing about her.”

Rabbi Akiva says: “[He may divorce her] even if he finds another one who is more attractive, as the verse states, ‘and it happens that she does not find favor in his eyes’” (Gittin 90a. See Sparks of Chasidus).

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

Rambam derived the law from the words, “When you come into your fellow’s vineyard,” which describe the employee himself merely “coming into” the vineyard, and not actually working. (Though, in practice, he is obviously not permitted to start eating until work has begun).

A Contractual or Religious Duty?

A further distinction that arises out of the above discussion is whether the employer’s requirement to permit his employee to eat from his crops is a contractual duty or a purely religious one:

According to the approach (of the Jerusalem Talmud,) that the law is a function of the result of the work and is thus a type of additional payment to the employee, it follows that this “payment” is part of the contractual obligation of the employer.

According to the approach (of Rambam) that we are speaking of an inherent right of the employee (the agent) which is non-work related, it follows that the employer is not paying a personal debt to the employee, but rather, granting him a God-given right to eat while at work. Thus, we follow that the employer is not paying a personal debt to the employee, but rather, granting him a God-given right to eat while at work. Hence, we derive the law from the verse: “When you come into your fellow’s vineyard,” which describe the employee himself merely “coming into” the vineyard, and not actually working. (Though, in practice, he is obviously not permitted to start eating until work has begun).
**Divorce**

If a man takes a wife and is intimate with her, and it happens that she does not find favor in his eyes because he has found something immoral about her:
- He must write a bill of divorce for her, place it into her hand, and send her away from his house.
- If she leaves his house and goes and marries another man, and the latter husband hates her and writes her a bill of divorce, places it into her hand and sends her away from his house; or if the latter husband who took her as a wife dies—her first husband, who had sent her away, may not take her again as his wife, since she was defiled (to him), for that is an abomination before God, and you should not bring sin to the land God, your God, is giving you as an inheritance.

**Newlyweds**

- When a man takes a wife who is new (to him), he must not go out (to war) in the army, and no (military) duty may be imposed upon him.
- He must remain free for his (own) house for one year and make his wife whom he has taken happy.

**Debt Collection**

- One may not take (things used to prepare food, such as) a lower or upper millstone, as security (for a loan), because that is taking a life-(sustaining entity) as security.

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

**Becoming “Divorced” From One’s Mission in Life...And “Marrying” a New One (v. 1)**

The place and circumstances in which a person finds himself are guided by Divine Providence, and in the vast majority of cases a person finds himself in an environment which is perfectly suited to his mission in life (shlichus). So, even when things become difficult, he should be loath to “divorce” himself from his current mission and become “married” to a new path in life.

Even in a case where a person does wish to do so, he must have sufficient grounds for “divorce”—and in this matter, there is a dispute among the Sages (see Classic Questions):

The School of Shammai maintained that, even if a person is facing seemingly insurmountable difficulties in his mission, he is forbidden to divorce himself from it unless “he discovers something immoral about her.” I.e. there is a halachically valid reason why he cannot continue. For only at this point can it be proven unequivocally that the soul’s current mission has to be changed for another.

However, the School of Hillel maintained that a person may become divorced, “even if she spoils his food.” I.e. if a person finds that his mission is not being successfully carried out that and even his prior spiritual achievements are being spoiled, then he may seek a “divorce” and seek out a new mission.

Rabbi Akiva maintained that a man may seek divorce “even if he finds another one who is more attractive,” i.e. even if there are no real shortcoming to his current situation, but “she does not find favor in his eyes”—he has lost enthusiasm in his current shlichus and has spotted another path which he prefers—then he may change.

The final ruling in Jewish law favors the opinion of the School of Hillel (Shulchan Aruch, Even Ha’ezer 119:3). However, this only means that according to the letter of the law a person could be justified in some cases to seek a new path in life. Nevertheless, our Sages taught, “Whenever a person divorces his first wife, even the altar sheds tears” (Gittin 90b), and even in a case where a person is halachically obliged to divorce his wife (even according to the School of Shammai), he should not hurry to do so (Cheikas Mechokai 119:2).

If a person truly desires, even in the face of tremendous difficulties, he can uphold the view of the School of Shammai. Even if he has lost enthusiasm in his shlichus and he is not successful, and furthermore, if his Torah study and care in the observance of mitzvah enhancements has decreased—he should know that this is nothing but a test from above, and that God is with him to help him succeed.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 3, p. 1121ff; Sicha of 20th Av 5719)
The Torah warns, “You may not take a widow’s garment as security,” for there is a remote possibility that, for a widow, this may be a distressing experience.

From this we can learn that even in a situation where: a.) It appears unlikely that somebody will be hurt by one’s actions; b.) There is no intention to hurt another’s feelings; and c.) One suffers a personal loss—nevertheless, there remains an obligation to “love your fellow like (you love) yourself.”

(Based on Sicha of 5th night of Chanukah 5747)
Kidnapping a Jewish Person

- 7 If a man is witnessed kidnapping any person from among his brothers, the children of Israel, and then he treats him as a slave and sells him—that kidnapper must die, and you will eliminate the evil from among you.

Caution With Tzara’as Lesions*

- 8 Be careful (not to interfere with) tzara’as lesions, and be very cautious about carrying out all the instructions of the priests, (who are from the tribe of) the Levites. Be careful to observe what I have commanded them.
- 9 Remember what God, your God, did to Miriam on your journey out of Egypt.

Security for Loans

- 10 When you hold any sort of debt against your fellow, you may not enter his home to take any of his property as security. 11 You must stand outside, and the man to whom you are lending should bring the security to you, outside.
- 12 If he is a poor man, you may not go to sleep while holding his security. 13 You must return the security to him by sunset, so that he can go to sleep in his garment, and he will bless you. (Even if he does not bless you), it will be considered as a righteous act for you, before God, your God.

Paying Wages on Time**

- 14 You must not withhold the wages of a poor or destitute hired worker, (regardless of whether he is) one of your brothers, one of your converts in your land, (or a resident alien) within your cities. 15 You must give him his wage on the day it is due, and not let the sun set upon him, for he is poor, and he endangers his life (to work for you). Do not cause him to cry out to God against you, for then (the punishment for) this sin will be upon you (more quickly).

Testimony of Relatives

- 16 Fathers may not be put to death by (the testimony) of sons, nor may sons be put to death by (the testimony) of fathers. A man should be put to death (only) for his own sin.

The Convert, Widow and Orphan

- 17 You must not pervert the judgment of a convert or an orphan,
- 18 You may not (come and) take a widow’s garment as security (for a pre-existing loan). Remember that you were once a slave in Egypt, and that God, your God, redeemed you from there (to observe his laws, even if they cause you to lose money). Therefore, I am commanding you to do this thing.

* See Vayikra ch 12ff. ** See Vayikra 19:13 and Sparks of Chasidus, ibid.
Does God give blessings for unintentional mitzvos? (v. 19)

RASHI: If someone dropped a coin, and a poor man found it and was sustained by it, then he [who lost the coin] will be blessed on its account.

TORAS MENACHEM

"When You Forget A Bundle..." (v. 19)

Why should a person be blessed for performing a mitzvah if he unwittingly—and even unwillingly—drops money on the floor, which is later found by a poor person? (see Rashi to v. 19)

Chasidic thought explains that every Jew, regardless of his status and station, is essentially willing to do all that he is commanded to do by our Torah. The fact that he might sometimes be influenced to do otherwise is because his conscious state can be affected by external pressures that induce states of mind and even behavior which is contrary to his essential nature (cf. Rambam, Laws of Divorce 2:20).

Therefore, if he performs a mitzvah which was not consciously intended, it is nevertheless an act that is consistent with his inner, subconscious desire. In fact, what has actually occurred here is that his subconscious mind has been able to influence his actions directly, without passing through the conscious state.

So, if a person drops money which is later found by a poor person, he has done an action which is commensurate with his true, inner desire to serve God, and therefore he is blessed because of it.

(Based on Sefer Hama’amarim Melukat vol. 5, p. 50)
19 When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a (single) bundle (behind you) in the field, you may not go back to take it.

20 It must be left for the convert, the orphan, and the widow, so that God, your God, will bless you in everything you do.

21 When you beat your olive tree (to shake off the olives), do not remove (all of) its best produce. This should remain for the convert, the orphan and the widow.

22 When you pick the grapes of your vineyard, do not harvest the young grapes. They should remain for the convert, the orphan and the widow.

22 Remember that you were once a slave in the land of Egypt. Therefore, I am commanding you to do this thing.

### Administering Lashes

25 If there is a quarrel between (two) men, who come to court to be judged, the innocent one will be acquitted and the guilty one will be condemned.

- If the guilty person (from a court case) is liable for lashes, the judge should make him bend over, and flog him with (one third of) the (total) number (of thirty-nine lashes) he deserves on his front (and two thirds on his back).

- He should flog him with (almost) forty (lashes), but he must not give more, for if he gives him a lot more lashes than this, your brother will be degraded before your eyes.

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### Classic Questions

- Why does the Torah need to explain the reason why two people might go to court? (25:1)

**Rashi:** “If there is a quarrel,” they will eventually go to court. We learn from this that a quarrel will not end in peace.

**Gur Aryeh:** Rashi was troubled that the words, “If there is a quarrel,” are superfluous. The Torah could have simply stated, “If two men come to court to be judged...” Rashi answers that the words “If there is a quarrel” teach us that when a quarrel arises, “they will eventually go to court.”

At first glance, this is difficult to understand, as Gur Aryeh and Maskil LeDavid ask, for going to court is surely the most effective way of ending any quarrel in peace? Surely this is more preferable than continuing to quarrel? It seems that Rashi means to say that they will eventually quarrel so much that the only solution will be to go to court.

**Maskil LeDavid:** Surely going to court is a method of “ending in peace” and not the opposite?

Rather, Rashi’s intention here is that when the case comes to court, it will escalate from a verbal dispute to the extent that one of the parties receives lashes, as the section continues (v. 2), “If the guilty person is liable for lashes.”

- Is it not obvious that “the innocent one will be acquitted and the guilty one will be condemned”? (25:1)

**Sifri:** Rabbi Shimon says: “The innocent one will be acquitted and the guilty one will be condemned.” This teaches us that one should attempt to acquit a person.

**Sifri DeRav:** Rabbi Shimon reached his conclusion from the fact that the verse stresses first, “The innocent one will be acquitted,” and only afterwards, “the guilty one will be condemned.”

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### The Quarrel (v. 1)

On the words, “If there is a quarrel between (two) men” (v. 1), Rashi comments, “they will eventually go to court. We learn from this that a quarrel will not end in peace.”

At first glance this appears to be difficult to understand, as Gur Aryeh and Maskil LeDavid ask, for going to court is surely the most effective way of ending any quarrel in peace?

Gur Aryeh answers that Rashi’s statement, “they will eventually go to court,” means that they will eventually quarrel so much that the only solution will be to go to court. However, Rashi’s statement, “They will eventually go to court,” seems to imply that going to court itself is the undesirable outcome here, and that this is worse than the quarrel itself.

Maskil LeDavid explains that Rashi means to say that going to court will lead to an escalation in the intensity of the quarrel, to the point of necessitating lashes. However, it is very difficult to accept that this was Rashi’s intention here, as he makes no reference at all to such a possible outcome. All Rashi says is, “They will eventually go to court.”

So we are left with the question: What is undesirable about going to court?
A further problem with this verse concerns the statement, “The innocent one will be acquitted and the guilty one will be condemned.” Surely these words are superfluous, and if so, why does Rashi not explain their significance, as he does in the case of all apparently superfluous phrases of scripture?

Rabbi Shimon in the Sifri (as clarified by Sifri deby Rav) explains that these words teach us that the court must always attempt to acquit a person before they incriminate them. However, at the literal level, this answer is difficult to accept, because the verse appears to be referring to two separate people: “the innocent one will be acquitted and the guilty one will be condemned.”

Presumably Rashi felt that the reader could work this matter out for himself with simple logic and a knowledge of Rashi’s prior comments. What, then, is the explanation of this matter, at the literal level?

The Explanation

In addition to the fact that the words, “If there is a quarrel between two men,” appear to be superfluous (as Gur Aryeh writes), Rashi was troubled in particular why the Torah chose to use the word “quarrel” (ברור). For normally, when two disputants go to court, the matter is referred to as a (קרע) (“claim” or “case” cf. Shemos 18:16, 19, 22, 26). The use of the term “quarrel” generally refers to a personal dispute which does not reach court, as in: “A quarrel erupted between the herdsmen of Avram’s cattle (who rebuked) the herdsmen of Lot’s cattle” (Bereishis 13:7), “The shepherds of Gerar argued (ברו בם) with Yitzchak’s shepherds” (ibid. 20:6), and, “If two men quarrel, and one strikes the other” (Shemos 21:18).

So, Rashi was troubled: Since our verse speaks of a dispute which came to court, the verse should have said, “If two men bring their case to court.”

Rashi answered that if their intention is to quarrel, then “they will eventually go to court,” but that all that will happen is “the innocent one will be acquitted and the guilty one will be condemned.” However, this will not help bring peace, since the disputants are not interested in resolving their dispute, but rather, in fighting with each other. Thus, “We learn from this that a quarrel will not end in peace,” because the initial intention of the disputants was not to seek peace, but to quarrel with each other. Thus, even when the court passes its judgment, the situation will not be alleviated, and the two disputants will continue to quarrel.

It follows from this that, according to Rashi, our verse is teaching an important law. If two disputants come to court and it appears obvious to the judges that either one or both of the men are not really interested in resolving their dispute, the court may be tempted not to judge the case. They might think it preferable to penalize one or both of the contentious parties, and perhaps in this manner the quarrel will finally end.

To contradict this notion, the Torah teaches us: “If there is a quarrel between (two) men who come to court to be judged, the innocent one will be acquitted and the guilty one will be condemned.” Even if the court sees that a legal ruling will not bring two disputants to peace, it is nevertheless the duty of the court to decide the law and make the path of justice known for all those who wish to avail themselves of it.

( Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 152ff.)

* However, the Torah does use the term ביר in reference to court cases too. See: Shemos 23:2, 3, 6, Devarim 17:8; 19:17; 21:5.
• 4 Do not muzzle an ox (or another animal) while it is threshing (or doing other agricultural work).

**Levirate Marriage**

25:5  
If brothers (from the same father) live together (in the world at the same time) and one of them dies having no child (or grandchild):

- The wife of the deceased may not marry outside (the family) to a strange man. Her husband’s brother must come to her, taking her as a wife for himself in Levirate marriage.
- 6 What should happen is that the eldest brother (will perform the Levirate marriage with her), provided she can bear (children), standing in the place of his deceased brother, so that his name should not be lost from Israel.

7 But if the man does not wish to take his brother’s wife:

- The brother’s wife should go up to the gates (of justice), to the elders, and say: “My brother-in-law has refused to perpetuate his brother’s name in Israel. He does not wish to perform a Levirate marriage with me.”
- 8 The elders of his city should call him and speak to him. He should stand up and say (in Hebrew), “I do not wish to take her.”
- 9 His brother’s wife should approach him, in the presence of the elders, and remove his shoe from

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**Classic Questions**

- What if a muzzled animal threshes unintentionally? (v. 4)

  **Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch:** A person does not transgress the prohibition of “Do not muzzle,” if he muzzles his cows when taking a shortcut over grain, even though the grain is inevitably threshed, because this is not his intention. The same applies in other such cases. (יודע שלמה תשעים ו’e) (see Classic Questions, i.e. in the case of other prohibitions).

  However, regarding positive mitzvos, the consensus of most authorities is that a lack of intention does not render the mitzvah invalid. At first glance, we would think that the opposite would be the case. A positive mitzvah causes a total change of status, sanctifying a physical object that was previously devoid of holiness; but a transgression merely distances an already mundane object further from being holy. Why is intention necessary for the apparently easier task?

  In truth, however, it could be argued that intention is crucial for all commands. In the case of a positive mitzvah though, the fact that a person praised God upon awakening, at the beginning of the day*, serves as a general “intention” for all the mitzvos throughout the day. (Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 4, p. 1127f.)

- Is it preferable for a person to perform Levirate marriage (v. 5-6) or to exempt himself by chalitzah? (v. 7-10)

  **Rambam:** The mitzvah of Levirate marriage takes precedence over the mitzvah of chalitzah (Laws of Levirate Marriage and Chalitzah 1:2).

  **Rema:** We do not permit a Levirate marriage unless it is clear that both parties are doing so for the sake of the mitzvah (Even Ha’ezer 165:1).

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**Toras Menachem**

“Do Not Muzzle an Ox...” (v. 4)

The Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch rules that a person does not transgress the prohibition of muzzling an ox while threshing unless he does so intentionally—and that, “the same applies in other such cases” (see Classic Questions), i.e. in the case of other prohibitions. However, regarding positive mitzvos, the consensus of most authorities is that a lack of intention does not render the mitzvah invalid.

At first glance, we would think that the opposite would be the case. A positive mitzvah causes a total change of status, sanctifying a physical object that was previously devoid of holiness; but a transgression merely distances an already mundane object further from being holy. Why is intention necessary for the apparently easier task?

Indeed, however, it could be argued that intention is crucial for all commands. In the case of a positive mitzvah though, the fact that a person praised God upon awakening, at the beginning of the day*, serves as a general “intention” for all the mitzvos throughout the day. (Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 4, p. 1127f.)

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Levirate Marriage vs. Chalitzah (v. 5-10)

Generally speaking, the view of Sefardic Rabbinical authorities (such as Rambam—see Classic Questions) is to favor the process of Levirate marriage (v. 5-6), rather than the exemption process of chalitzah (v. 7-10). On the other hand, we find that the vast majority of Ashkenazic authorities (such as Rema) strongly advocate chalitzah.

This difference of opinion is a reflection of the different degrees of exile in which the Sefardic and Ashkenazic Jews have found themselves during history. Sefardic Jews have generally lived in countries which allowed Jews to practice the mitzvos amid a state of relative prosperity. Ashkenazic Jews however, have faced a much more bitter exile where poverty and persecution have been a fact of day-to-day life. Thus, due to the financial burdens of supporting a family, Ashkenazic Rabbis did not deem it wise for a person to carry out Levirate marriage unless he was absolutely committed to doing so. In Sefardic communities, this limitation was unnecessary.

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* By saying the prayer Modeh Ani. However, even one who does not do so still has a subconscious positive intent which suffices to validate the positive mitzvos that he or she performs. See Sparks of Chasidus to v. 19 above.
The Last Word

"REMEMBER WHAT AMALEK DID TO YOU..." (v. 17)

A malek’s unprovoked and stealthy attack was calculated to shake their [the Jewish people’s] belief in God and dampen their enthusiasm for His Torah and mitzvos.

Haman, a direct descendant of Amalek, was driven by hatred of the Jews, because “their laws were different from those of any other people,” as the Megilah states (Esther 3:8). Likewise did all subsequent Amalekites and Hamans of all ages hate the Jews.

But “Amalek”—in a wider sense—represents all obstacles and hindrances which a Jew encounters on his, or her, way to receive and observe the Torah and mitzvos with enthusiasm and joy in the everyday life....

Why should a Jew be confronted with such trials and difficulties? The answer is, that every Jew has been given the necessary powers to overcome all such “Amalekites,” and he is expected to use them, in order to demonstrate to himself and others that nothing will deter him, nor dampen his fervor, in the observance of the Torah and mitzvos in accordance with God’s Will.

And once he recognizes that whatever difficulty he encounters is really a test of his faith in God, and resolves firmly to meet the challenge, he will soon see that no “Amalek” of any kind is a match for the Divine powers of the Jewish soul.

Indeed, far from being insurmountable obstructions, they turn out to be helpers and catalysts for ever greater achievements, having been instrumental in mobilizing those inner powers which would otherwise remained dormant.

(Excerpt from a letter written by the Rebbe on Rosh Chodesh Adar II, 5738)
his foot. She should spit before him (on the ground). She should respond to him, and say (in Hebrew), “That is what should be done to the man who will not build his brother’s household!”

- **His name in Israel will be called, “The household of the one whose shoe was removed.”**

## Penalty for Embarrassment

- **If (two) men, a man and his brother, are fighting together, and the wife of one of them comes close to rescue her husband from his assailant, and she stretches forth her hand and grabs hold of (the assailant’s) private parts, 12 you should decide* (an appropriate penalty for her, for the embarrassment that she caused with) her hand. You should not look (upon her with) pity.

## Correct Weights and Measures**

- **You must not keep in your pocket (two apparently identical) weights (and yet) one is a bigger weight and one is smaller.**
- **You must not keep in your house (two apparently identical) dry-measures, (and yet) one is a bigger dry-measure and one is smaller.**
- **You must have (only) perfect and correct weights, perfect and correct dry-measures, in order that your days will be prolonged on the land which God, your God, is giving you.**
- **For anybody who does these things—anybody who acts dishonestly (with weights and measures)—is an abomination to God, your God.**

## Remembering Amalek

**Maftir**

- **Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey out of Egypt, 18 how they surprised you on the road and cut off all the weak people at your rear, when you were parched and weary (from the journey), and they did not fear (retribution from) God (for hurting you).**

## Classic Questions

- **How often does one have to remember “what Amalek did to you”? (v. 17)**

 **Rambam**: It is a positive command to constantly remember their evil deeds and ambush, to arouse hatred for them, as the verse states, “Remember what Amalek did to you” (v.17). According to Oral Tradition we are taught: “‘Remember’—with your mouths; ‘Do not forget’ (v. 19)—in your hearts,” for it is forbidden to forget the hatred we have for them (Laws of Kings 5:5).

 **Sefer Hachinuch**: It is sufficient for us to remember the matter once a year, or once in two or three years....If a person never mentioned it with his mouth once in his entire life, then he has transgressed (Mitzvah 603).

 **Minchas Chinuch**: Thus, according to the Sefer Hachinuch, it appears that mentioning what Amalek did once in a lifetime suffices.

 **Shaloh**: It is a great mitzvah to say this passage (v. 17-19) every day to fulfill the mitzvah to “remember” (Torah Shebiksav, Parshas Ki Seitzei).

### The Obligation to Remember Amalek (v. 17)

We find a range of opinions concerning how often the mitzvah of remembering Amalek needs to be carried out. **Sefer Hachinuch** argues that once a year, or even once in a lifetime would suffice. **Shaloh** recommends the verbal remembering of Amalek daily, and **Rambam** states that the mitzvah is incumbent “constantly.”

In order to minimize the dispute, the following could be argued:

a.) Even according to **Sefer Hachinuch**, if one chose to remember Amalek verbally on a daily basis, one would perform a mitzvah daily.

b.) Furthermore, it could be argued that, according to all opinions, whenever one remembers Amalek, it has the status of a halachically “ongoing activity”*** until the next occasion that one performs this mitzvah.

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* [Literally “cut (מְצַל) her hand.” However, Rashi explains this to mean a process of evaluation. מְצַל is thus related to the term מְצָל בּוּשֶׁכֶם, meaning the “evaluation of funds.” Thus we have translated the term here as “you should decide,” since the verb “to decide” in English also means “to cut off,” from the Latin decidere. A “decision” is thus the “cutting off” point of an evaluation process, which appears to be Rashi’s intention here.] ** See Classic Questions and Toras Menachem to Vayikra 19:35-36. ** See Me’am L’Eish Tzafunos (Kasher, 1976), chapter 5.
How does one “erase any reminder of Amalek” (v. 19)?

RASHI: Eliminate both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, so that the name of Amalek should never again be mentioned, even regarding an animal, e.g. “This animal was from Amalek.”

RAMBAM: This mitzvah is incumbent on the community as a whole, not on every person individually (Sefer Hamitzvos, end of positive commands).

What is the connection between the command to “remember what Amalek did” (v. 17) and “erase any reminder of Amalek” (v. 19)?

RAMBAM: It is a positive command to remember what Amalek did to us... at all times, and to verbally arouse people to fight them (Sefer Hamitzvos, positive command 189).

However, this seems to present us with a problem when we compare the mitzvah of remembering Amalek (v. 17) with the mitzvah of erasing any reminder of Amalek (v. 19; see Classic Questions). In the present age, it is not possible to perform the mitzvah of erasing any reminder of Amalek because:

a.) This mitzvah is only incumbent when all the Jewish people are living in the Land of Israel, in a state of peace. As the verse states explicitly: “When God, your God, gives you relief from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which God, your God, is giving to you... you must erase any reminder of Amalek” (v. 19).

b.) Even if this were to be the case, the precise identity of the various nations (including Amalek) has become confused due to intermixing (see Classic Questions to 23:4-9, above). So it is impossible to eradicate Amalek nowadays, since it cannot be determined which people are actually descendants of the original nation of Amalek.

This begs the question: RAMBAM writes that the reason we are required to “remember what Amalek did,” is “to verbally arouse people to fight them,” i.e. in order to perform the mitzvah of eradicating Amalek. So, if we are no longer able to carry out the mitzvah of “eradicating,” why is the mitzvah of “remembering” still required, (especially in light of the above explanation that remembering is required constantly)?

Of course, we could argue that since we impatiently await the arrival of Mashiach every day, there is a need to prepare for the elimination of Amalek, which may become relevant at any moment. But surely though, there must be some significance to this mitzvah today, even before the coming of Mashiach?

The Explanation

The mitzvah of remembering Amalek clearly has a broader scope than just a direct preparation for the war to eradicate Amalek, since:

a.) If “remembering” was merely required to “verbally arouse people to fight them,” the two processes of “remembering” and “eradicating” would constitute one single mitzvah. As we find in the case of the other nations which the Jewish people are obligated to eradicate (the seven nations of Canaan—see 20:16 above), that one single mitzvah includes both the "arousal" to fight, and the fighting itself.

b.) While the requirement of eradicating Amalek is a mitzvah incumbent on the community as a whole, the mitzvah of remembering the deeds of
Consequently, when God, your God, gives you relief from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which God, your God is giving to you as an inheritance to keep as a possession—you must (destroy every man, woman, child and animal belonging to Amalek, so that you) erase any reminder of Amalek from beneath the skies.

Do not forget (what they did to you)!

THE HAFTARAH FOR KI SEITZEI IS ON PAGE 284.
Parshas Ki Seitzei contains 27 positive mitzvos and 47 prohibitions

1. The law of a beautiful woman taken captive at war [21:11].
2. Not to sell a beautiful woman taken captive at war [21:14].
3. Not to make a beautiful woman taken captive at war as a slave after one has been conjugally intimate with her [21:14].
4. To hang a person after his execution when it is required [21:22].
5. Not to leave a person who was hung overnight on the gallows, and not to leave a dead man overnight in his house, unless it is for his honor [21:23].
6. To bury a person put to death by court sentence, or any other deceased person, the same day that he dies [21:23].
7. To return lost property to its owner [22:1].
9. Not to work with two kinds of animals together [22:10].
10. To help lift up a heavy load for a Jew [22:4].
11. A woman should not wear men's clothing [22:5].
12. A man should not wear women's clothing [22:5].
13. Not to take the mother-bird while its eggs or young are in the nest [22:6].
14. To send away the mother-bird from its nest, when taking its eggs or young [22:7].
15. To build a parapet around a dangerous roof or pit [22:8].
16. Not to leave a dangerous roof or pit without a parapet [22:8].
17. Not to sow a mixture of seeds in a vineyard in the Land of Israel [22:9].
18. Not to eat the produce of mixed seeds grown in a vineyard in the Land of Israel [22:9].
19. Not to work with two kinds of animals together [22:10].
20. To prepare a shovel for each person in the army, so he can cover his excrement [23:14].
21. Not to oppress a slave who flees from his master in the Diaspora to the Land of Israel [23:16].
22. Not to oppress a slave who flees from his master in the Diaspora to the Land of Israel [23:18].
23. Not to be conjugally intimate with a woman out of wedlock [23:11].
24. Not to bring the wage of a harlot or the exchange-price of a dog as an offering in the Temple [23:19].
25. To build a parapet around a dangerous roof or pit [22:8].
26. To send away the mother-bird from its nest, when taking its eggs or young [22:7].
27. To build a parapet around a dangerous roof or pit [22:8].
29. Not to work with two kinds of animals together [22:10].
30. To help lift up a heavy load for a Jew [22:4].
31. A woman should not wear men's clothing [22:5].
32. A man should not wear women's clothing [22:5].
33. Not to take the mother-bird while its eggs or young are in the nest [22:6].
34. To send away the mother-bird from its nest, when taking its eggs or young [22:7].
35. To build a parapet around a dangerous roof or pit [22:8].
36. Not to return a slave who fled from his master in the Diaspora to the Land of Israel [23:18].
37. Not to return a slave who fled from his master in the Diaspora to the Land of Israel [23:16].
38. Not to make a beautiful woman taken captive at war as a slave after one has been conjugally intimate with her [21:14].
39. To hang a person after his execution when it is required [21:22].
40. Not to leave a person who was hung overnight on the gallows, and not to leave a dead man overnight in his house, unless it is for his honor [21:23].
41. To permit a hired worker to eat certain types of produce while he is under hire [23:25].
42. A hired worker should not take more produce from his employer than he is allowed [23:25].
43. A hired worker should not eat from his employer's crops during his actual work [23:26].
44. One who wishes to divorce his wife must do so with a get (bill of divorce) [24:1].
45. A divorced man may not take back his ex-wife after she has married and divorced again, or widowed [24:4].
46. A divorced man may not take back his ex-wife after she has married and divorced again, or widowed [24:4].
47. A bridegroom must remain with his wife during the first year of marriage [24:5].
48. A childless widow should marry her late husband's brother (Levirate marriage) [25:5].
49. Not to leave forgotten sheaves for the poor [24:19].
50. Not to pluck out signs of tzara'as [24:8].
51. Not to pawn any objects with which sustaining food is prepared [24:6].
52. Not to keep inaccurate scales or weights, even if they are not used [25:13].
53. Not to turn a blind eye to a lost object [22:3].
54. To return lost property to its owner [22:1].
55. Not to make peace with the nations of Amon or Mo'av before a war [23:7].
56. A descendant of Eisav may not marry a Jewish person even after he has converted to Judaism, nor may his child [23:9].
57. A woman should not wear men's clothing [22:5].
58. A man should not wear women's clothing [22:5].
59. Not to work with two kinds of animals together [22:10].
60. To help lift up a heavy load for a Jew [22:4].
61. Not to return a slave who fled from his master in the Diaspora to the Land of Israel [23:18].
62. Not to return a slave who fled from his master in the Diaspora to the Land of Israel [23:16].
63. Not to forget what Amalek did to the Jewish people when they came out of Egypt [25:19].
64. Not to borrow at interest from a Jew [23:20].
65. Not to delay a vow to make an offering, or to delay the offering of a consecrated animal for three festivals [23:22].
66. Not to delay a vow to make an offering, or to delay the offering of a consecrated animal for three festivals [23:22].
67. A childless widow should marry her late husband's brother (Levirate marriage) [25:5].
68. To permit a hired worker to eat certain types of produce while he is under hire [23:25].
69. A married and divorced again, or widowed [24:4].
70. Not to have mercy on a pursuing killer [25:12].
71. Not to turn a blind eye to a lost object [22:3].
72. To remember what Amalek did to the Jewish people when they came out of Egypt [25:19].
73. Not to keep inaccurate scales or weights, even if they are not used [25:13].
74. Not to permit a hired worker to eat certain types of produce while he is under hire [23:25].
75. To permit a hired worker to eat certain types of produce while he is under hire [23:25].
76. To permit a hired worker to eat certain types of produce while he is under hire [23:25].
77. To permit a hired worker to eat certain types of produce while he is under hire [23:25].
Ki Savo means “when you enter,” as in the verse, “When you enter the land which God...is giving you.”

At which point, according to Torah, does “entering” occur? Do we say that as soon as a person puts his hand in a room he has “entered” it? Or does he have to put most of his body inside? Or can he only be said to have “entered” when his whole body is in the room?

Similarly, at which point has a nation considered to have entered a land? When the first few people arrive? Or do they all have to arrive and settle before we can say they have truly entered?

The Talmud answers: “Partial entry is not considered entry” (Chullin 33b). Likewise, Rashi explains at the beginning of our Parsha that, “when you enter the land” refers to the time when “they conquered the land and divided it.”

This teaches us a powerful lesson in daily life: that we should “enter” ourselves totally and wholeheartedly into everything that we do for God.

When a person becomes fully immersed in what he is doing, there is not merely a quantitative improvement in his actions (how much he is involved), but a qualitative change, which radically affects the manner in which he is involved.

In order to reach a state of total immersion (“entering”), a person must temporarily relinquish any other cares or concerns, and dedicate himself unrestrainedly to the matter at hand with utter devotion and concentration. He must surrender himself and not allow any personal bias to interfere with the purity of this act.

In other words, even though a person has many “layers” through which he interfaces with the world and copes with day-to-day life, it is possible for him to “peel away” these layers and forge a direct soul-connection with what he is doing. If he succeeds in doing so, then he and the activity will become one indistinguishable entity.

By way of illustration: when the soul enters the body to bring it to life, there is a total “entering,” such that soul and body become one. Now, the body is alive too. It is not merely enlivened by the soul; it has actually become alive itself, because the soul has entered the body totally, such that the soul and body are truly one.

And that is the lesson from Parshas Ki Savo: We should “enter” into every mitzvah that we perform, and every act with which we serve God. Then our observance of Judaism will become alive—literally.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, pp. 245-7; Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ki Savo 5733)
When were firstfruits first brought? (v. 1-2)

**Rashi:** The words, “What will happen is, when you enter...you should take possession of it and settle in it,” teach us that they were not obligated to bring firstfruits until they conquered the land and divided it.

**Sifri:** [The obligation to bring firstfruits] began immediately on entering the land.

**Malbim:** How can Sifri argue that the obligation to bring firstfruits began immediately upon entering the Land of Israel, when the verse states explicitly that “you should take possession of it and settle in it,” before bringing firstfruits? Rather, Sifri’s intention here is that the mitzvah of firstfruits became obligatory immediately after conquering the land and dividing it. This is in contrast to the mitzvah of eliminating Amalek, recorded at the end of the previous Parsha, which did not become obligatory immediately after conquering the land and dividing it, but only later, “when God your God gives you relief from all your surrounding enemies” (25:19).

What is the reason why firstfruits are brought? (v. 3)

**Rashi:** [To show] that you are not ungrateful [to God].

When did the Mitzvah of Firstfruits Begin? (v. 1)

Rashi explains that the mitzvah of offering firstfruits did not become obligatory until the Jewish people had fully conquered and settled in the Land of Israel, a process which actually took fourteen years.

Sifri, however, is of the opinion that the obligation to bring firstfruits became obligatory immediately upon entering the Land of Israel.

One problem with the view of Sifri is that it appears to contradict that which is stated explicitly in verse 1, that the mitzvah of firstfruits only applies after the Jewish people “take possession” of the land “and settle in it”—as Malbim points out.

Malbim explains that Sifri’s intention was not that the mitzvah became obligatory immediately upon entering the land, but rather, immediately upon settling in it. This is not indicated, however, in the wording of the Sifri.

The Explanation

The Torah stipulates that firstfruits are only to be brought after “you enter the land...take possession of it and settle in it” (v. 1). Rashi understood that, like the vast majority of mitzvos connected with entering the Land of Israel, this mitzvah would only become obligatory after the entire land was conquered and settled by the Jewish people as a whole.

Sifri, however, understood that the above verse is speaking to the individual, i.e. when you personally enter the land, you have an obligation to bring firstfruits immediately upon settling on your own private property. Thus, you do not have to wait until the entire land has been conquered and settled.

At first glance, however, this does not fully solve our problem. For even according to Sifri, a person only brings firstfruits upon acquiring his own piece of land (when he can speak of the land “which you, God, have given to me,” v. 10), and the allocation of land only began after the conquest was complete, seven years after the Jewish people entered the Land of Israel. Thus, even according to Sifri it appears that the obligation to bring firstfruits did not begin immediately, but rather after seven years.

It could be argued though, that according to Sifri, it did in fact become obligatory for a person to bring firstfruits immediately upon entering the land, but until the person actually owned land, he was legally exempt...
Conquest and Settlement of the Land

1. What will happen is, when you enter the land which God, your God, is giving you as an inheritance, you should take possession of it and settle in it.*

Firstfruits

2. Then (when the land is fully settled) you should take some of the first (to ripen) from every fruit of the ground, which you gather in from your land, that God, your God, is giving you.

You should put it into a basket and go to the place which God, your God, will choose to make His Name rest there.

1. You should come to the priest who is present in (your times, whatever caliber he may be), and say to him:

“I am declaring today to God, your God, that I have come to the land which God swore to our fathers to give us.”

4. The priest will take the basket from your hand (and wave it together with you). He will then place it before the Altar of God, your God.

The Rationale of Rashi and Sifri

At first glance, Rashi’s opinion also appears to be difficult to appreciate. Rashi himself writes that firstfruits are brought so as not to appear “ungrateful” to God (v. 3), so surely when a person has fruits growing from his own land, he should make an offering to God immediately, as Sifri argues? According to Rashi, a person who was one of the first to settle in the land would be enjoying fruits from his field for seven years before thanking God!

In truth, however, there are different approaches to expressing our gratitude to God, each having their own unique advantage. For example, according to Jewish custom, as soon as a person wakes in the morning he recites the prayer Modeh Ani as an expression of gratitude to God, while he is still in bed, even before his hands have been washed. Later in the day, when he rises to the priest who is present in his town, he performs the act of bringing firstfruits to the Alter of God. This is the lesson from the requirement of firstfruits being placed in a basket. Although the fruits are the finest and first of the crop, they cannot achieve perfection without a basket. Likewise, the Jewish soul, which is God’s highest priority, cannot achieve perfection without coming down into a physical body, in a world of concealment and temptation, because it is precisely through this descent that an even greater ascent is achieved.

The Last Word

“YOU SHOULD PUT THEM INTO A BASKET” (v. 2)

Firstfruits represent the Jewish souls, as the Midrash teaches that the Divine Thought to create Jewish souls “preceded everything” (Bereishis Rabah 1:4). In this respect, Jewish souls are “first” and cherished in a way similar to firstfruits.

When the soul is in Heaven, before it enters a body, it enjoys an intense, ecstatic relationship with God. Nevertheless, the soul is sent down to earth in a body which conceals its relationship with God. This is not without profit since, through this descent, the soul is able to carry out a mission in the physical world, which can eventually result in an even more intense relationship with God. For God’s innermost “desire” is for His mitzvos to be carried out specifically in the physical world.

This is the lesson from the requirement of firstfruits being placed in a basket. Although the fruits are the finest and first of the crop, they cannot achieve perfection without a basket. Likewise, the Jewish soul, which is God’s highest priority, cannot achieve perfection without coming down into a physical body, in a world of concealment and temptation, because it is precisely through this descent that an even greater ascent is achieved.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 29, p. 150ff.)
day, he will pray more at length to God, at which time he will obviously be in a more fit state of mind to praise his Creator.

Nevertheless, each of these types of praise possesses a unique advantage: His recital of the Modeh Ani prayer in the morning is immediate and spontaneous, demonstrating a deep-rooted commitment to serving God, to the extent that the very first thing a person does upon awakening is to recite a prayer. On the other hand, his praises to God later in the day are more meaningful, because they arise from a fuller and more conscious appreciation of God’s kindness.

Sifri perceived the firstfruits to be a form of thanksgiving to God of the former type (comparable to Modeh Ani), where a person offers fruits to God immediately on acquiring his field.

Rashi, however, understood that the firstfruits are a form of praise which comes after a person fully appreciates the fact that God gave the Land of Israel to the Jewish people (comparable to one’s prayers later in the day that arise from a fuller appreciation of God’s kindness). So until the point is reached when every Jewish person has received his portion in the land, one’s praise to God cannot be complete—for how can one Jew rejoice in receiving his portion when another Jew is still lacking? Thus, Rashi maintained that firstfruits are only brought after “they conquered the land and divided it.”

**When Rashi & Sifri Would Agree**

It could be argued that the positions of Rashi and Sifri are not mutually exclusive. For while the conquest and division of the Land of Israel did actually take fourteen years, if the sin of the spies had not occurred, it would have happened instantaneously (for the spies themselves would have conquered the land—see Rashi to Bamidbar 21:32). Thus, in such an instance, firstfruits would have been brought immediately upon entering the land, even according to Rashi.

And this will indeed occur with the true and complete Redemption, when not only will the conquest of all the ten promised lands be instantaneous, but the fruits will grow instantly too, as the verse states, “the plowman will meet the reaper, and the treader of grapes the one who carries the seed” (Amos 9:13). Thus, at that time, both Rashi and Sifri will concur that firstfruits are to be brought immediately.

(Based on Likutim Sichos vol. 34, pp. 145ff.; vol. 9, pp. 155-6; Sichos Shabbos Parshas Ki Sasso 5744; Sichos Shabbos Parshas Va’eschanan 5751)
You should (hold the basket and) say out loud before God, your God:

“(Lavan the) Aramean (wanted to) destroy my father (Ya’akov. And his sorrows did not stop there, because) he went down to Egypt and lived there in a small (family) group (of seventy souls). But he became a great, powerful, and populous nation there. 6 The Egyptians treated us cruelly and afflicted us, and they imposed hard labor on us.

7 “We cried out to God, God of our fathers, and God heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. 8 God brought us out from Egypt with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm, with great awe, and with signs and wonders.

9 “He brought us to this site (of the Holy Temple), and He gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

10 “I have now brought here the first fruit of the ground which you, God, have given to me.”

You should (wave the basket once again, and) place it before God, your God.

Then prostrate yourself before God, your God.

Then you will rejoice with all the good that God, your God, has granted you and your household—(both) you, the Levite, and the convert who is among you.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

What is the connection between Ya’akov’s difficulties with Lavan and the bringing of firstfruits? (v. 5)

Rashi: One mentions the kindness of the Omnipresent [by stating]: “(Lavan the) Aramean (wanted to) destroy my father.”

Torah Temimah: One brings firstfruits to thank God for His kindness in giving the Land of Israel to the Jewish people. Normally, a nation can only acquire a land when they themselves are settled, and in a position of strength. The Jewish people, however, were lacking any strength at all, spending all their time wandering from place to place, and yet thanks to God’s kindness, they managed to take possession of the Land of Israel miraculously. For this reason, when a person brings firstfruits to the Temple, he describes how from the moment Ya’akov left his father’s house, Ya’akov was unsettled and in a position of strategic weakness which continued throughout the Egyptian exile. And nevertheless, God’s kindness ensured that the Jewish people came to possess the land, despite all odds.

The Declaration Upon Bringing Firstfruits (v. 5-10)

In addition to the mitzvah of bringing firstfruits to the Temple, there is a further mitzvah to make a verbal declaration (v. 5-10) in which “one mentions the kindness of the Omnipresent,” as Rashi writes.

However, one detail which Rashi does not explain is why this declaration only mentions two events in the history of the Jewish people: Lavan’s attempt to “destroy” Ya’akov, and the Egyptian exile.

Why, for example, does the declaration omit major occurrences such as the salvation of Ya’akov from Eisav, the splitting of the Reed Sea, the miracles of the war with Amalek, the manna, and the supply of water in the desert, etc.?

Torah Temimah explains that the two events mentioned in the declaration, bring to light how the Jewish people managed to acquire a homeland despite the fact that they were strategically weak, being a people wandering from place to place.

However, this only magnifies the question why the declaration fails to mention Ya’akov’s fleeing from Eisav, which was the initial cause of Ya’akov’s wandering. Also, it would have been appropriate to mention how the Jewish people were wandering in the desert for forty years.

Since this is a matter which is difficult to understand at the literal level, Rashi should surely have addressed this matter. We can only presume that Rashi felt that the reader could discern the matter for himself with simple logic, from one of Rashi’s earlier comments.

The Explanation

The declaration made on bringing firstfruits to the Holy Temple, thanking God for His kindness, must clearly be connected with the firstfruits themselves. I.e. we mention only acts of kindness of God which resemble the kindness that led to the bringing of firstfruits.

The Jewish people were only obligated to bring firstfruits after the Land of Israel had been divided among the Tribes (see Rashi to v. 1, above). Consequently, this mitzvah is not merely a thanksgiving for acquiring the actual land, but for its complete settlement, since only at that point could one truly “rejoice with all the good” (v. 11).

Consequently, the salvation of Ya’akov from Eisav and the splitting of the Reed Sea are not directly relevant here, since these events occurred while on a journey, and not at a time of settlement. Similarly, the miracles that occurred to our ancestors in the desert, such as the war with Amalek and the manna, were not associated with a fixed place.

Thus, the only events mentioned in the declaration are times when God helped the Jewish people while they were settled: a.) the salvation of Ya’akov from Lavan, since Ya’akov lived with Lavan for twenty years, and, b.) the period in Egypt, which lasted 210 years, since these were both times when our ancestors benefitted from acts of God’s kindness during long-term settlements. And this resembles God’s kindness in helping a person to be settled in his homeland, and bring firstfruits.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 14, p. 93ff.)
“Look Down From Your Holy Abode in Heaven, and Bless Your People Israel” (v. 15)

Why does the verse use the repetitive phrase, “bless Your people Israel”? Surely “Your people” and “Israel” are one and the same! And why are “Your people” mentioned before “Israel”?

“Israel” refers to Torah scholars, and “Your people” refers to ordinary Jews, who observe the mitzvos loyally. In the Talmud, a debate is recorded whether Torah study or mitzvah observance is greater, and the conclusion is: “Torah study is greater, since it leads to practical observance” (Kidushin 40b). I.e. even according to the opinion that Torah study is superior, this is only because it leads to practical observance. Consequently, our verse places “Your people,” the observant Jew, before “Israel,” the scholar, to emphasize that, overall, observance is more important.

However, while the Talmud appears to stress that practical observance is more important, it nevertheless employs the expression, “Torah is greater.” So why are “Your people” placed before “Israel,” suggesting that observance is unequivocally superior?

The answer lies in a comment of the Jerusalem Talmud on our verse: “Come and behold the greatness of those who observe the mitzvos! For every time the term ‘look down’ is mentioned in the Torah, it appears to stress that practical observance is brought to light by the fact that it transforms curses into blessings. And since this is the message conveyed by our verse, “Your people” are placed first.

(Based on Sefer Hama’amim Melukat vol. 4, pp. 371-2)
The Tithe Declaration

When you have reached (Erev Pesach of the fourth year of the tithing cycle, which is) the end (of the period when you may) separate all the tithes of your produce for the third year—the year when (only) the (first) tithe (is separated which) you give to the Levite. (And instead of separating the second tithe, which is eaten in Jerusalem, you shall separate the tithe for the poor, which you shall give) to the convert, the orphan, and the widow, so that they can eat to their satisfaction in your cities—

- Then you say before God, your God, (the following declaration):
  
  “I have removed the holy (second tithe and fourth-year fruits*) from the house.
  “I have also (separated terumah and firstfruits).
  “(I have) given (the first tithe) to the Levite.
  “(I have given the tithe for the poor to) the convert, the orphan, and the widow.
  “(I did all this) in accordance with Your command which You have commanded me (about the precise order of separation).
  “I have not transgressed Your commands (about cross-separation).
  “I have not forgotten (to bless You).
  “I did not eat any (second tithe) while I was in a state of mourning.
  “I did not consume any of it while in a state of ritual impurity.
  “I did not give any of it (for making a coffin or shrouds) for the dead.
  “I listened to the voice of God, my God, (and brought these offerings to the Temple).
  “I did everything that You commanded me. (I rejoiced and brought joy to others).
  
  “(We have done what is incumbent upon us. Now do what you promised and) look down from Your holy abode in heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given to us—as (You fulfilled the oath that) You swore to our fathers (and gave us) a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Classic Questions

- When is the tithe declaration to be made? (v. 12)
  
  **Rashi:** When you finish separating the tithes of the third year [i.e. in the fourth year of the seven-year cycle].
  
  **Rambam:** At the time of minchah (afternoon service) on the Yom Tov of the last day of Pesach of the fourth year....The declaration may only be made during the day (Laws of the Second Tithe 11:3-4).

- Are women obligated to make the tithe declaration?
  
  **Sefer Hachinuch:** Only males are obligated (mitzvah 607).

**Minchas Chinuch:** Sefer Hachinuch ruled that women are exempt from making a tithe declaration, because: a.) They were not given a portion in the Land of Israel, so they cannot say the words “the Land which you have given to us” (v. 15). And, b.) Women are exempt from mitzvos that are bound to a specific time.

**R’ Eliyahu of London:** Women are obligated in this mitzvah. Even though they were not given a portion of the land, they can inherit land like the daughters of Tzalchad. Therefore they can say the words, “the Land which you have given to us” (Piskei R’ Eliyahu Milondrish leMa’aser Sheni).

Toras Menachem

- The Tithe Declaration—a Woman’s Obligation
  
  **Sefer Hachinuch** and **R’ Eliyahu of London** dispute whether women are obligated to make the tithe declaration (v. 12-15).
  
  **Rambam** does not mention this issue, from which it appears that Rambam maintained that women are obligated to make the declaration, for otherwise he would have mentioned their exemption explicitly (as he did in the case of the firstfruits declaration—Laws of Firstfruits 4:2).

  However, this leaves us with the problem posed by Minchas Chinuch. Since Rambam states explicitly that the tithe declaration is a mitzvah bound to a specific time (“minchah on the Yom Tov of the last day of Pesach”), surely women should be exempt?

* See Vayikra 19:24; 27:30.
The Explanation

If a mitzvah is not observed at a particular time, it could be for one of two reasons:

a.) There is no obligation in Jewish law to observe the mitzvah at this precise time.

b.) In principle, one would observe the mitzvah at this time, but it is impossible to perform it for some other reason.

The former category, a., represents a true “time-bound” mitzvah, from which women are exempt. The latter case b., however, is not a mitzvah that is bound to a particular time, but rather, a mitzvah which applies at all times, and is not observed at certain times due to practical considerations. Thus, women would be obligated in this type of mitzvah.

In our case, it could perhaps be argued that the mitzvah of making a declaration at the end of the tithing season falls into the latter category. For the Torah simply instructs us to make a declaration when tithing is complete. The fact that this occurs at a particular time of the year is due to the fact that, until then, there are simply no crops to tithe (because of the natural phenomenon of seasons which regulate the agricultural cycle), and not because the Torah made this mitzvah obligatory at this time in particular. Therefore, Rambam was of the opinion that women are obligated to make a tithe declaration, just like men.

At first glance, however, there seems to be a further difficulty here. For in addition to the fact that the tithe declaration is made, “At the time of minchah (afternoon service) on the Yom Tov of the last day of Pesach,” (which is a circumstantial limitation and not a true limitation of time, as explained above), Rambam also writes, “The declaration may only be made during the day.” Apparently, the requirement to perform this mitzvah during the day is a pure limitation of time that did not arise due to any circumstantial factor. So why does this not render a woman exempt from this mitzvah?

In truth, however, the limitation that this mitzvah may only be performed during the day is not considered to be a “limitation of time” which is sufficient to render a woman exempt. We see this explicitly from the case of sacrifices which “may only be offered during the day” (Rambam, Laws of Sacrificial Procedure 4:1), and yet we do not find that women are exempt from personal sacrifices due to this time limitation. (Only in the case of festival sacrifices, which are limited to a specific time of the year, are women exempt.)

The above brings to light even further the importance of women in so many areas of Judaism, which is all the more stressed in our generation immediately prior to the redemption, which will come “in the merit of the righteous women of the generation” (Yalkut Shimoni, Rus, remez 606).

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Kesoshim 5749, note 87, and hashamos ibid.)
CONCLUSION OF MOSHE’S ADDRESS

16 (It should always appear in your eyes that) today God, your God, is commanding you to fulfill these suprarational commands and rational commands (for the first time). Be careful to observe them, with all your heart and all your soul.

17 (It should always appear in your eyes that) today you have selected God (from all the foreign gods), to be your God (for the first time)—to go in His ways, and to observe His suprarational commands, His (other) commandments and His rational commands, and to listen to His voice.

18 And (it should always appear in your eyes that) today God has selected you (from all the nations of the earth) to be His treasured people (for the first time)—as He told you—and to observe all His commandments, and to make you elite above all the nations that He made, in acclaim, renown and splendor, being that you are a holy people to God, your God, as He said.

INSTRUCTIONS UPON CROSSING THE JORDAN

Moshe and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, “You are to be keeping all of the commandment(s) that I am commanding you today!”

2 “What will happen is, on the day that you cross the Jordan to the land God, your God, is giving you, you should set up (at the Jordan) huge stones for yourself, and plaster them with lime. And when you cross over, you should write on them all the words of this Torah, so that you may come into the land which God, your God, is giving you a land flowing with milk and honey, as God, the God of your forefathers, has told you.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

How is God commanding you “today”? (v. 16)

Rashi: [This means:] Every day they shall be new in your eyes, as though you have been commanded them today.

What do the words מִיַּחַיָּה and מְנִיטְרָה mean? (v. 17-18)

Rashi: There is no conclusive proof in scripture as to what מִיַּחַיָּה and מְנִיטְרָה mean, and it appears to me that they mean “separation” and “distinction.” [The meaning here is:] You have separated God for yourself from all the foreign gods to be your God, and He distinguished you for Himself from all the nations on earth to be His treasured people.

[Alternatively] these words could be understood as being similar to the term for “glory” (נִחְיָה), as in the verse “all workers of violence glorify themselves (יְנִיחַיָּה)” (Psalms 94:4).

Ibn Ezra: מְנִיטְרָה means “exalted.” Rabbi Yehudah Halevi Hasefardi understood it as meaning “speech”: “Today, you have caused God to say that He is your God...And today God has caused you to say that you are His treasured people.”

RASHI & IBN EZRA (v. 17-18)

Why did Rashi reject the simple interpretation cited by Ibn Ezra that מִיַּחַיָּה and מְנִיטְרָה are from the Hebrew word מִיַּחַיָּה meaning “speech,” and opt instead for an interpretation that “has no conclusive proof in scripture”?

The Explanation

In his commentary to verse 16, Rashi explains that the word “today” comes to stress, “Every day they shall be new in your eyes, as though you have been commanded them today.” Thus, when verses 17 and 18 continue to stress something which is happening “today,” Rashi understood that the subject here must be something that happens every day. Since there may be times, God forbid, that the Jewish people do not follow God’s Will, Rashi could not accept the (second) interpretation of Ibn Ezra that our actions cause God to happily affirm that He is the God of the Jewish people every single day. Similarly, it is difficult to accept that God would glorify (Rashi’s second explanation) or exalt (Ibn Ezra’s first explanation) the Jewish people on a daily basis, for the same reason.

Therefore, Rashi accepted that the primary interpretation here is that God separates the Jewish people on a daily basis, even though this interpretation “has no conclusive proof in scripture,” because the context of this verse dictates such an interpretation. For even when the Jewish people do not follow His Will, God forbid, they still remain distinct as His people every day (even if God is not openly proud at that particular time).

Nevertheless, since this is an unprecedented interpretation, Rashi deemed it necessary to offer a secondary interpretation which has some scriptural basis: that God is glorifying the Jewish people daily. Of course, this will leave us with the above question—how are we causing God to glorify His people when we are not acting in accordance with His Will? So since this is a less acceptable explanation at the literal level, Rashi left it as his secondary interpretation.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 9. p. 162ff.)
Why are eleven curses mentioned here? (v. 15-25)

RASHI: I saw in the treatise of Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan that there are eleven curses here, corresponding to eleven of the [twelve] tribes. But in connection with Shimon, [Moshe] did not write “Cursed be the man...,” because he did not have it in his heart to bless him before his passing, when he blessed the other tribes. Therefore, he did not wish to curse him (Rashi to v. 24).

RASHBAM: The sins listed here are things done in private. Two sins—idol worship (v. 15) and hurting one’s fellow (v. 24)—are sometimes done in public too, so in these cases the Torah adds: “...in secret.”
“Then, when you cross the Jordan, you should set up (a further set of) these stones, which I am commanding you about today, on Mount Aival, and you should plaster them with lime. You should build there an Altar to God your God, (by making these stones into) an Altar of stones. You should not use any iron (tool) on them. You should build the Altar of God, your God, out of whole stones, and you should offer up burnt-offerings on it to God, your God. You should slaughter peace-offerings, and eat there, rejoicing before God, your God. You should write upon the stones all the words of this Torah, very clearly (rendered into seventy languages).”

Moshe and the priests (from the tribe of) Levi spoke to all of Israel, saying, “Pay attention and listen. O Israel! (It should always be in your eyes as if) today, you have become a people to God, your God (for the first time). Listen to the voice of God, your God. Perform His commandments and His supra-rational commands, which I am commanding you today.”

**Blessings & Curses At Mount Gerizim & Mount Aival**

Moshe commanded the people on that day, saying, “When you cross the Jordan, the following should stand on Mount Gerizim (where the priests and Levites will face) to bless the people: Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, Yissachar, Yosef, and Binyamin. The following should stand on Mount Aival (where the priests and Levites will face) for the curse: Re’uwain, Gad, Asher, Zevulun, Dan, and Naftali.

The Levites should speak up, saying to every Jewish person, in a loud voice:

“Cursed be the man who makes a graven or molten image—an abomination to God—the handiwork of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret!” Then all the people should respond, and say, “Amen!”

“Cursed be the one who disgraces his father and mother!” Then all the people should respond, and say, “Amen!”

“Cursed be the one who moves his neighbor’s landmark!” Then all the people should say, “Amen!”

“Cursed be the one who misdirects the path of a person who is blind (to a certain matter)! Then all the people should say, “Amen!”

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**The Eleven Curses (v. 15-25)**

What is the reason why these eleven specific sins in verses 15-25 were singled out to be the subject of the curses? The vast majority of the topics chosen here are not of a general nature, which begs the question why they were singled out in particular?

Since Rashi does not appear to address this question, which requires explanation at the literal level, we can presume that Rashi felt that the reader could work the matter out for himself with simple logic and knowledge of Rashi’s previous comments.

**The Explanation**

Rashi explains that the eleven curses listed here correspond to eleven of the twelve tribes (with the exclusion of Shimon). At first glance, Rashi appears to be indicating only why the number eleven was chosen, and not offering any explanation about the content of the curses.

In fact, however, Rashi is also indicating the solution to our above problem: The reason why these eleven sins were picked is because each sin has a connection with one of the tribes. Rashi did not explain the matter any further, since he has already provided sufficient information in his prior comments:

- “Cursed be the man who makes a graven or molten image...” (v. 15). Which tribe is associated in particular with idol worship? In Parshas Lech Lecha, on the verse, “Avraham...pursued them as far as Dan” (Bereishis 14:14), Rashi writes: “There he became weak, seeing prophetically that his children were destined to erect a [golden] calf there.” Thus the tribe of Dan is associated with “a graven or molten image.”

- “Cursed be the one who disgraces his father and mother!” (v. 16). In Parshas Ki Seitzei the reader learned of the rebellious son who disgraces his parents by being “a binger and a boozer” (Devarim 21:20), indicating that the child’s rebellion arose from physical luxuries. Which tribe was blessed with the greatest abundance of luxuries? “From Asher’s land will come rich food, and he will provide royal delicacies.” (Bereishis 49:20). Therefore the tribe of Asher needed to be warned especially about honoring parents.

- “Cursed be the one who moves his neighbor’s landmark!” (v. 17). Who would be suspected of moving landmarks? One who is frequently found at the borders. Thus, this is a warning addressed to the tribe of Yissachar, who were “(Like a donkey that journeys day and night, resting temporarily) between the city borders,” (ibid. 49:14).

- “Cursed be the one who misdirects the path of a person who is blind (to a certain matter)! (v. 18). In Parshas Pinchas, Rashi relates that there was a plot by a group of seven families to return to Egypt. Of these seven, five families belonged to the tribe of Binyamin (Rashi...
"Cursed be the one who perverts the judgment of the convert, the orphan, or the widow!" (v. 19). This is addressed to the tribe of Yehudah, who provided the vast majority of judges for the Jewish people.

"Cursed be the one who lies with his father’s wife, uncovering the robe of his father!" (v. 20). This is addressed to the tribe of Re’uvain, who sinned by moving his father’s bed: “You interfered with your father’s bed” (Bereishis 49:4).

"Cursed be the one who lies with any animal!" (v. 21). This is addressed to the tribe who possessed a large number of animals. This could be either Re’uvain or Gad (see Bamidbar 32:1), and since the previous curse was addressed to the tribe of Re’uvain, it follows that this one corresponds to the tribe of Gad.

"Cursed be the one who lies with his sister...." (v. 22). This is addressed to the tribe of Yosef, since the wife of Potifar (who later became Yosef’s mother-in-law) attempted to lie with him (Bereishis 39:7ff., ibid 41:45 and Rashi).

"Cursed be the one who lies with his mother-in-law!" (v. 23). This is addressed to the tribe of Re’uvain, who sinned by moving his father’s bed: “You interfered with your father’s bed” (Bereishis 49:4).

"You interfered with your father’s bed." (v. 24). This refers to the sin of Shimon and Levi, who misused their powers of speech (see Bereishis 49:5). And since Rashi writes that there is no curse corresponding to Shimon, it follows that this must be addressed to the tribe of Levi.
“Cursed be the one who perverts the judgment of the convert, the orphan, or the widow!” Then all the people should say, “Amen!”

“Cursed be the one who lies with his father’s wife, uncovering the robe of his father!” Then all the people should say, “Amen!”

“Cursed be the one who lies with any animal!” Then all the people should say, “Amen!”

“Cursed be the one who lies with his sister, his father’s daughter or his mother’s daughter!” Then all the people should say, “Amen!”

“Cursed be the one who lies with his mother-in-law!” Then all the people should say, “Amen!”

“Cursed be the one who hurts his fellow (by maligning him) in secret!” Then all the people should say, “Amen!”

“Cursed be the one who takes a bribe to put an innocent person to death!” Then all the people should say, “Amen!”

“Cursed be the one who does not uphold the words of this Torah and observe them!” Then all the people should say, “Amen!”

**Blessings for Observing the Mitzvos**

What will happen is, if you always listen to the voice of God, your God, and are careful to observe all His commandments which I am commanding you today, then God, your God, will make you an elite nation, above all the nations of the earth. All the following blessings will come upon you and overtake you, if you listen to the voice of God, your God:

1. You will be blessed in the city, and blessed in the field.
2. The fruit of your womb, the fruit of your soil, the fruit of your livestock, the offspring of your cattle, and the flocks of your sheep will be blessed.
3. Your fruits and your dough will be blessed.
4. (Just as) you were blessed (and without sin) when you arrived (in this world, so too), you will be blessed (and without sin) when you depart.

Here we see, once again, how Rashi’s commentary is a comprehensive study of scripture at the literal level, which is neither lacking in necessary information, nor superfluous in any detail.

*(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ki Savo 5733)*

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“Cursed be the one who takes a bribe to put an innocent person to death!” (v. 25). Such an act is most likely to be done by a businessman. Thus this is addressed to the tribe of Zevulun, who were businessmen (See Rashi to Bereishis 49:13).

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**The Last Word**

In order to receive God’s blessings it is necessary to prepare ‘receptacles.’ It would have been impossible for us to know the receptacles, but for God’s mercy and infinite kindness, having given us the Torah and having revealed to us that Torah and mitzvos are the proper receptacles for us to receive His blessings....

The daily life and conduct in accordance with the will of God, namely in accordance with the Jewish way of Torah and mitzvos, in addition to being a must for its own sake, is also the channel to receive God’s blessings in all needs. Therefore, every additional effort in this direction is bound to bring additional Divine blessings, and there is always room for advancement in all matters of goodness and holiness, Torah and mitzvos, which are infinite, being derived from, and connected with, the Infinite.”

Every Jew, man or woman, young or old, must always have complete faith in God, Whose benevolent Providence extends to everyone individually, and our Sages have taught us, ‘Everything that the Merciful One does is for the good’ (Brachos 60a). Of course, a human being cannot always understand the ways of God, but nevertheless he should be unshaken in his trust in God, and this very faith is in itself a channel and vessel to receive God’s blessings, as all matters connected with the Torah and mitzvos experienced in the daily life.”

*(Excerpts from letters written by the Rebbe on 4th of Shevat, 5713, 16th of Adar I, 5738, and 5th of Iyar, 5721)*
הכפים עליה נפשים לעיני bard וארז ירה צאוה אלול ו וישנה

dבל משלא יד והבוך כל ביו אסירת ירה צאוה נוהי
dקפל יוהו ל亚马 קדושי יאשרא עליוה יאשרא ונוהי
dאתMountain יוה אالته והלחם ברכחי. יאשראכילפי

בכל בניהם נפגש יאני הב metic יאני ראש יאני רכתי אמט.

answered ושע היד הכה יאני ויאשרא עליוה יאני רכתי אמט.

ככל בניהם נפגש יאני הב metic יאני ראש יאני רכתי אמט.

וידא כי נפש בנה יאני ויאשרא עליוה יאני רכתי אמט.

סיפורה אחר אפשר חומר א珊 מתן, לא Became שמאי להקות רוח ובית הتراث.
God will cause your enemies who rise up against you to be beaten before you. They will come out against you in one direction, and flee from you (in a panic) in seven directions.

God will direct (His) blessing to be with you in your granaries, and with everything to which you put your hand. He will bless you in the land which God, your God, is giving you.

God will establish you as His holy people, as He swore to you, if you observe the commandments of God, your God, and walk in His ways. Then all the nations of the earth will see that the Name of God is upon you, and they will fear you.

God will grant you a good surplus in the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your livestock, and the fruit of your soil, on the land which God swore to your forefathers to give you. God will open up for you His good treasury, the skies, to give your land its rain in the (right) time, and to bless everything you put your hand to. You will lend to many nations, but you will not (need to) borrow.

God will put you at the head, and not at the tail. You will be only at the top, and not at the bottom. (All this is) if you listen to the commandments of God, your God, which I am commanding you today, being careful to observe (them). You must not deviate, right or left, from all of the words I am commanding you today, to follow other gods and worship them.

Consequences of Failing to Observe the Mitzvos

What will happen is, if you do not listen to God, your God, to be careful to observe all His commandments and suprarational commands which I am commanding you this day, then the following curses will come upon you and overtake you:

16 You will be cursed in the city, and cursed in the field. 17 Your fruits and your dough will be cursed.

18 The fruit of your womb, the fruit of your soil, and the fruit of your livestock—those born from your cattle and the flock of your sheep—will be cursed. You will be cursed when you arrive, and cursed when you depart.

20 God will send you shortages, confusion, and turmoil in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and quickly vanish, because of your evil deeds in forsaking Me. 21 God will make a plague cleave to you until it has consumed you from upon the land of which you are coming to take possession.

22 God will strike you with inflammation, illnesses, burning fevers, unquenchable thirst, with the sword (of invading armies), with blasting and withering (of the crops), and this will pursue you until you perish.

Classic Questions

How does one “walk in His ways”? (v. 9)

Rambam: We are commanded to emulate the Almighty as much as possible, as the verse states “walk in his ways”. Just as God is referred to in scripture as being gracious, likewise you are to be gracious. Just as He is referred to as being compassionate, likewise you are to be compassionate. Just as He is referred to as being benevolent, likewise you are to be benevolent (Sefer Hamitzvos, positive command 8).

Toras Menachem

The Last Word

What does the mitzvah of “walking in His ways” (v. 9) teach us that we do not already know from the requirement to “love your fellow as (you love) yourself” (Vayikra 19:18)?

Rambam explains that the key focus here is that “we are commanded to emulate the Almighty as much as possible.” I.e. when we act in a manner of graciousness, compassion or benevolence, it should not be merely out of an ethical imperative, or for the general benefit of society, but rather, in an attempt to resemble God—“just as God is referred to as being...likewise you are to be...”

Practically speaking, this will ensure that a person will not allow himself to become emotionally “carried away” to an extreme. For in attempting to emulate God, one will always be conscious of the need to balance one’s attributes—like God, whose qualities of kindness and severity are in perfect harmony.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 153ff.)
23 Your skies above you will (not rain, but merely exude moisture like) copper, and the earth below you (will be dry like) iron. 24 God will make the rain of your land (insufficient, causing the wind that follows to blow) dust and dirt (onto your sprouting crops). It will come down upon you from the skies until you are destroyed. 25 God will cause you to be struck down before your enemy. You will come out against them in one direction, but you will flee from them (in panic) in seven directions. You will become a (cause of) dread to all the kingdoms on earth (when they hear what has happened to you). 26 Your corpses will be food for every bird of the skies and for the beasts of the earth, and no one will frighten them (away).

27 God will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with hemorrhoids, with oozing sores, and with dry lesions, from which you will not be able to be cured. 28 God will strike you with insanity, with blindness, and with bewilderment. 29 You will grope around at midday, as the blind man gropes in the dark, and you will be unsuccessful in your ways. You will be nothing but oppressed and robbed all the time, and no one will save you. 30 You will betroth a woman, but another man will lie with her. You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not render it fit (for use).

31 Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will not eat from it. Your donkey will be robbed right in front of you, and it will never come back to you. Your flocks will be given over to your enemies, and you will have no savior. 32 Your sons and daughters will be given over to another people, and your eyes will see (what happened), and yearn for them all day long, but you will be powerless. 33 The fruit of your soil and all your hard work will be eaten up by a people unknown to you. You will be nothing but wronged and downtrodden all the time. 34 You will go insane from the things that your eyes will see.

35 God will strike you on the knees and on the legs with severe boils from which you will not be able to be cured, (spreading out) from the sole of your foot to the top of your head. 36 God will lead you, and your king whom you will have appointed over you, to a nation unknown to you or your fathers, and there you will serve other gods of wood and stone. 37 Among all the nations to whom God will lead you, you will become a (source of) astonishment, an example (of persecution), and a topic of discussion.

38 You will take a lot of seed out to the field, but you will gather in little, for the locusts will consume it. 39 You will plant vineyards and work them, but you will neither drink their wine, nor gather their grapes.
because the worms will devour them.  

40 You will have olive trees throughout all your borders, but you will not anoint with their oil, because your olive trees will shed (their fruit).  

41 You will bear sons and daughters, but they will not be yours, because they will go into captivity.  

42 The locusts will deplete all your trees and all the fruit of your soil.  

43 The foreigner who is among you will arise above you, higher and higher, while you will descend lower and lower.  

44 He will lend to you, but you will not lend to him. He will be at the head, while you will be at the tail.  

45 All these curses will befall you, pursuing you, overtaking you until they destroy you because you did not listen to God, your God, and observe His commandments and suprarational commands which He commanded you.  

46 They will be as a sign and a wonder, upon you and your children forever, because you did not serve God, your God, with joy and with gladness of heart, when (you had an) abundance of everything.  

47 Therefore, you will serve your enemies, whom God will send against you, amid hunger, thirst, nakedness and total destitution. He will place an iron yoke on your neck, until He has destroyed you.  

48 God will bring upon you a nation from afar, from the end of the earth, (suddenly) as the eagle swoops down—a nation whose language you will not recognize, an arrogant nation, which will not respect the elderly, or be kind to the young.  

50 They will devour the fruit of your livestock and the fruit of your soil, destroying you. They will not leave over anything for you from the grain, the wine, the oil, the offspring of your cattle or the flocks of your sheep, until they destroy you.  

52 They will besiege you in all your cities, until your tall and fortified walls in which you trust are conquered, throughout your entire land. They will besiege you in all your cities throughout your entire land, which God, your God, has given you.  

53 During the siege and the distress which your enemies will bring upon you, (you will be so hungry that) you will eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom God, your God, has given you.  

54 The most sensitive and squeamish man among you (will be so hungry for his own children’s flesh that he) will be selfish to his own brother, his darling wife and the rest of his children whom he has allowed to remain (refusing) to give any one of them of his children’s flesh that he is eating. For not a thing will remain for him in the siege and distress which your enemies will bring upon you, in all your cities.

TORAS MENACHEM

The Last Word

“BECAUSE YOU DID NOT SERVE GOD, YOUR GOD, WITH JOY AND WITH GLADNESS OF HEART” (v. 47)

Simchah (joy) breaks through all barriers. This is also the unique quality of Mashiach, who is a descendant of Peretz, and is referred to as “the one who breaks through (haporetz).”

I therefore offer the following suggestion and request: that we increase in joy with the intent of actually bringing Mashiach and the true and complete Redemption.

Throughout the years of exile, the Jewish people have longed for the Redemption and prayed for it sincerely every day. In earlier generations, the main emphasis of the Chasidic movement was on spreading the wellsprings of Chasidus outward and not (so strongly) on the goal of this process, that of bringing Mashiach. It was known that the object of these endeavors was to bring Mashiach, and from time to time this goal was spoken about, but this point was not the focus of attention.

After the Previous Rebbe issued the call, “Immediately to teshuvah, immediately to Redemption,” the emphasis has been placed on actually bringing Mashiach, to the extent that every phase of our efforts in our Divine service (including the efforts to spread the wellsprings of Chasidus) need to be permeated consciously with the goal to bring Mashiach. For this is the mission of our generation: to actually bring the Redemption.

Many decades have passed since the time of the Previous Rebbe’s announcement, and the tumultuous activities which arose from it to bring Mashiach. Nevertheless, Mashiach has not yet come.

There is no way to explain this. Our Sages stated, “All the appointed times for Mashiach’s coming have already passed.” And surely, there is not a single Jew who has not had several thoughts of teshuvah.

What is there left to do?

In reply, I am suggesting, as above, that the approach that is required is the expression of joy for the sake of bringing Mashiach. Joy breaks through barriers, including the barriers of exile, and joy has a unique potential to bring about the Redemption.

This joy will surely lead to the ultimate joy, the rejoicing of the Redemption, when “our mouths will be filled with joy” (Psalms 126:2).

(Excerpted from Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ki Seitzei 5748—Free Translation)
56 (Even) the most sensitive and squeamish woman among you, who had never dared to place her foot upon the ground because of (her) sensitivity and squeamishness, will begrudge (giving flesh to) her darling husband, her (adult) sons and daughters, the infants who came from between her legs, and her own children whom she will bear—for she will (slaughter them and) eat them in secret, amid the siege and distress which your enemies will inflict upon you in your cities.

58 If you are not careful to observe all the words of this Torah, which are written in this scroll, to fear this glorious and awesome name of God, your God, then God will distinguish your plagues and your children’s plagues, (to be) powerful and effective plagues, with sicknesses that are nasty and effective.

60 He will bring back upon you all the diseases of Egypt which you were terrified of (when you saw the Egyptians suffer from them), and they will cling to you. God will also bring upon you every disease and plague that is not written in this Torah scroll, to destroy you.

62 You will remain few in number, instead of being as numerous as the stars of the heavens as you once were, because you did not listen to God, your God. Then, just as God rejoiced over you to do good for you and to increase you, God will likewise make (your enemies) rejoice over you, annihilating you and destroying you. You will be uprooted from the land of which you are now entering to take possession. God will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you(r taxes) will (be used to) serve other gods unknown to you or your fathers, (gods of) wood and stone. You will not be at ease among those nations, nor will your foot find rest. There, God will give you a trembling heart, dashed hopes, and a suffering soul. Your life will hang in suspense before you. You will be frightened night and day, and you will not be certain of your life. (Things will constantly get worse, so) in the morning, you will say, “If only it were (yesterday) evening!” and in the evening, you will say, “If only it were (this) morning!”—because of the fear in your heart which you will experience and because of the things that you will see. God will return you to Egypt (in captivity) in ships, through the route about which I had said to you, “You will never see it again.” There, you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as slaves and handmaids, but there will be no buyer.

68 God will return you to Egypt (in captivity) in ships, through the route about which I had said to you, “You will never see it again.” There, you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as slaves and handmaids, but there will be no buyer.

Toras Menachem

The ultimate purpose of the admonition is to lead the Jewish people to teshuvah (repentance; return). This is alluded to in the concluding curse, “God will return you to Egypt” (v. 68). To explain the unique quality of teshuvah, the verse continues:

There, you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies—Through observing the mitzvos, we can only sanctify and spiritually elevate those parts of the physical world which the Torah permits us to interact with. In contrast, the ba’al teshuvah (penitent) elevates all his prior forbidden interactions with the physical world, and his “intentional sins are transformed to merits” (Yoma 86b). This is alluded to by the verse: “there (i.e. in the realms of the forbidden) you will offer yourselves for sale to (i.e. spiritually elevate) your enemies (i.e. the forbidden entities that the ba’al teshuvah had interactions with).

As slaves and handmaids—In addition to elevating the parts of the physical world which he came into contact with, the ba’al teshuvah also enjoys a substantial spiritual elevation himself, as a result of conquering his strong desires. Being a master of self-control, the ba’al teshuvah is compared to a “slave,” who does not initially find his allotted tasks easy, but does them nonetheless with utmost dedication.

But there will be no buyer—Rashi explains: “Because they will decree death and expiration upon you,” i.e. the ba’al teshuvah manages to “kill” his obsession with the pleasures of the world, and instead he yearns to “expire”—to become free from the shackles of physical existence and become one with God.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 239ff.)
Omnipresent was not strict with you until this day, but from now on, He will be strict with you. Therefore, “guard the words of this covenant....” (v. 8; Rashi to v. 6).

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

**Rashi:** No person can appreciate the depths of his teacher’s mind or the profundity of his teachings before forty years. Thus, the Omnipresent was not strict with you until this day, but from now on, He will be strict with you. Therefore, “guard the words of this covenant....” (v. 8; Rashi to v. 6).

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- **What extra understanding was added on “this day”? (v. 3)**

Rashi: No person can appreciate the depths of his teacher’s mind or the profundity of his teachings before forty years. Thus, the Omnipresent was not strict with you until this day, but from now on, He will be strict with you. Therefore, “guard the words of this covenant....” (v. 8; Rashi to v. 6).
These are the words of the covenant, which God commanded Moshe to make with the children of Israel in the land of Mo'av, besides the covenant of (curses*) which He made with them in Choraiv.

Moshe’s Final Address

Moshe called all of Israel and said to them, “You have seen all that God did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, to all his servants, and to all his land, 2 the great tests (of faith) which your eyes saw and those great signs (of God’s direct involvement) and wondrous (plagues).

3 Until this day, God has not yet given you a heart to recognize (His true kindness), eyes to see (it) or ears to hear (it). 4 I led you through the desert for forty years, but your garments did not wear out from your (using them), nor did your shoes wear out from (being used by) your feet. 5 You did not eat bread, nor drink new wine or old wine, in order that you would know that I am God, your God.

6 When you arrived at this place, Sichon, the King of Cheshbon, and Og, the King of Bashan, came out towards us in battle, and we annihilated them. 7 We took their land, and we gave it as an inheritance to the tribes of Re’uvain and Gad, and to half the tribe of Menasheh.

8 (Since you have witnessed God’s greatness), guard the words of this covenant and observe them, in order that you succeed in everything that you do.

THE HAFTARAH FOR KI SAVO IS ON PAGE 286.

Understanding One’s Teacher (v. 3)

Rashi writes that in the current passage, Moshe was telling the Jewish people that now they should be especially careful to “guard the words of this covenant and observe them” (v. 8), because, “No person can fathom the depths of his teacher’s mind or the profundity of his teachings before forty years. Thus, the Omnipresent was not strict with you until this day, but from now on, He will be strict with you.”

However, this begs the question:

The “words of this covenant” refers to the entire body of Torah and mitzvos, which includes mitzvos that were only communicated by Moshe at the end of his forty-year leadership. So surely God should only have been “strict” with the Jewish people in those areas in which they had been given a full forty years to internalize, and not with all “the words of this covenant”?

Another fundamental difficulty here is how a fixed time could be given to the process of fathoming one’s teacher’s mind and the profundity of his teachings. Surely a bright student will take less time to understand his teacher’s wisdom, and a weak student will take more time?

The Explanation

When a student learns Torah from his teacher, he is being educated at two levels: a.) He learns specific teachings, i.e. laws, subjects and passages. b.) He learns how to think, i.e. how to conceptualize and analyze the subject matter.

The rate at which one fully understands the specific teachings (‘a’) will vary significantly from person to person, depending on the aptitude of each individual student. But with regard to learning how to think like one’s teacher does, if the teacher is truly of a superior intellectual caliber to his students, then his intellectual approach will not be quickly internalized, even by his most adept students.

Nevertheless, God fashioned the human mind** in such a manner that after prolonged exposure even this is absorbed by the students. For since all a teacher’s ideas are, ultimately, a direct expression of his genius, it follows that through absorbing his teacher’s ideas a student is gradually and indirectly absorbing his teacher’s way of thinking too. But since this occurs via a process of passive “absorption” (rather than through critical analysis) it is simply a matter of time (rather than aptitude) until this point is reached. Therefore, “No person can appreciate either the depths of his teacher’s mind or the profundity of his teachings before forty years,” if his teacher is truly of a different intellectual caliber to his students.

Nevertheless, once a person has internalized his teacher’s way of thinking (after forty years), he is able to see all his teacher’s teachings in the same light—even those teachings which have been studied over the latter part of the past forty years.*** Therefore, Moshe told the Jewish people that, since they had now reached the fortieth year of having “witnessed God’s greatness,” their minds understood things from God’s perspective, so to speak. This enabled them to understand even those things they had witnessed in the recent past.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, pp. 163-5)

* I.e. the curses in Parshas Bechukosai—Vayikra 26:14ff.

**Thus the verse stresses: “Until this day, God has not yet given you...” (v. 3).

***From this it would appear that those who were children at the beginning of Moshe’s leadership, or those that were born afterwards, did not appreciate the depths of Moshe’s mind even at this point, since they had not been his students for forty years. However, it could be argued that as long as one person had come to truly appreciate Moshe’s genius (and of course, there were many more than that), he would be able to impart that appreciation to others (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Bo 5749, note 23).
Parshas Ki Savo contains 3 positive mitzvos and 3 prohibitions

1. To recite a declaration when bringing firstfruits to the Temple [26:5].
2. To recite a declaration when bringing tithes to the Temple [26:13].
3. Not to eat the Second Tithe while in a state of mourning [26:14].
4. Not to eat the Second Tithe while in a state of ritual impurity [26:14].
5. Not to spend the money for which the Second Tithe was exchanged on anything other than food or drink [26:14].
6. To emulate the good attributes of God [28:9].
The Parsha begins with the declaration: “You are standing firmly (nitzavim) today, all of you together, before God, your God—the heads of your tribes...to your water-drawers—in order to bring you into the covenant of God, your God....”

At first glance, this declaration appears to contain a contradiction: It begins by saying, “You are standing firmly...all of you together” (without distinction); yet, it proceeds immediately to divide them into various and separate categories. Besides, what is the purpose of enumerating the various classes of Jews, from the highest to the lowest, after they had already been all included in the general term “all of you” (כלكم).

But—herein precisely is to be found a basic “rule,” namely, that both go together: (a) “all of you”, meaning all as one, and (b) at the same time, however, each individual, man or woman, has his or her specific task and mission, each one according to his or her status and station in life.

Yet, the question begs to be asked: Since such a division is necessary, indeed such an extreme diversity—from “your heads” down to your “water-drawer”—how can they be so completely unified and merged to become “all as one”?

The answer is: “You are standing firmly this day, all of you—before God, your God.” The Hebrew verb עֲבֵדְתֶךָ, שָׁמַיִם, and means a firm stand, being deeply conscious of standing in the presence of God, Who is “your God”—your strength and your whole essence. In this—all Jews are equal, and this is what makes them all—one....

And the Torah goes on to explain: “All of you together” are divided into “the heads of your tribes”...down to your “water-drawer,” and each of them, with his distinct capacity (and his special endeavors) is brought into the covenant with God. Each individual endeavor, whether by one who belongs in the category of your heads and acts like a head, or in the category of water-drawer and acts as such, is an expression of the total covenant of all of you with God, your God. Each one has his special Divine assignment according to his status and station in life, and in this way—when each and every one carries out his assignment—the complete unity of the Jewish people—all as one—is achieved.

(Excerpt from public letter written “In the Days of Selichos” 5731)
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why were the people “standing firmly today”? (v. 9)

Rashi: This teaches us that on the day he died, Moshe assembled the Jewish people before God, to bring them into a covenant.

The Midrashic explanation is as follows. Why is Parshas Nitzavim juxtaposed with the admonition [the curses in Parshas Ki Savo]? Because when the Jewish people heard these ninety eight curses, besides the forty nine curses in the Book of Leviticus (26:14-39), their faces turned pale, and they said, “Who could withstand all these?” So Moshe began to appease them, saying: “You are standing firmly today”—You have angered God many times, but He has not destroyed you. And you see that you continue to exist before Him, “today”—just as this day exists....

Another explanation of “You are standing firmly”: Since the Jewish people were now passing from leader to leader, from Moshe to Yehoshua, Moshe brought them to a standing assembly, in order to encourage them.... (Rashi to v. 9 & v. 12).

TORMENACHEN

“Standing Firmly Today” (v. 9)

To explain the words “You are standing firmly today” (v. 9), Rashi cites three different interpretations. This begs the following questions:

a.) Rashi’s commentary was written exclusively to explain difficulties with scripture at the literal level, as Rashi himself writes: “I come only to explain the literal meaning of scripture” [Rashi to Bereishis 3:8]. What problem was troubling Rashi here, at the literal level?

b.) When Rashi gives more than one interpretation, it is because he does not find any of the interpretations totally satisfactory as they remain alone, and by offering several solutions, the shortcomings of one interpretation are compensated for by another.

In our case, we need to explain the difficulties posed by each one of Rashi’s three interpretations, and how they are solved by the other two interpretations?

c.) The sequence of Rashi’s interpretations is also arranged with precision. The first interpretation is the most appropriate overall at the literal level, followed by the second and then the third interpretation. How is this to be explained in our case?

RASHI’S PROBLEMS

The opening of our Parsha prompts the following questions:

a.) Why do words of introduction appear in the middle of a speech? Parshas Nitzavim opens in the middle of a speech which Moshe began at
THE ETERNAL COVENANT WITH GOD

29:9 You are standing firmly today, all of you together, before God, your God—the heads of your tribes, your elders, your police officers (standing in front of) every Jewish person:

- your young children, your women, and the converts within your camp (who were assigned positions ranging) from your woodcutters to your water-drawers— in order to bring you into the covenant of God, your God, and His oath which God, your God, is making with you today.

Second Reading

(This is) in order to establish you today as His people, that He will be your God, as He told you, and as He swore to your forefathers, to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov (that He would never swap you for another nation).

I am not only making this covenant and this oath with you, but with (both) those standing here with us today before God our God, and with those (in future generations) who are not here with us today.

TORAS MENACHEM

Rashi’s First Solution
Rashi’s first solution solves the first four of these problems:

- Rashi stresses: “Moshe assembled the Jewish people before God, to bring them into a covenant,” i.e. the reason why Moshe assembled the Jewish people at the end of Parshas Ki Savo was not merely to convey the eight verses at the end of that Parsha, but it was primarily to “enter them into a covenant,” with the words of our Parsha. The eight verses at the end of Parshas Ki Savo are thus a form of introduction, before reaching the main topic of Moshe’s speech which is found here. So in v. 9, Moshe stressed, “You are standing firmly today, all of you together before God your God, etc.” because he was coming to the primary content of his speech, for which he gathered the people in the first place.

- Moshe waited until the day of his passing to make this covenantal declaration, so that it would be as close as possible to the time when the Jewish people would enter the Land of Israel, when the covenant would actually begin (as Rashi writes below, v. 28).

- Nevertheless, since these words would not be immediately relevant in any case for a number of days, until the Jewish people actually entered the land, there was no need for these to be Moshe’s very last words.

- Since Moshe was entering the Jewish people into a covenant for all future generations, the children were included too.

However, Rashi’s first solution leaves problem ‘e’ (why the word nitzavim is used) unanswered. In fact “standing firmly” appears to be an inappropriate word, since the Jewish people would surely have been in a state of submission at the thought of entering the covenant, and not standing firmly?

Rashi’s Second and Third Solutions
Therefore Rashi cited a second solution, which addresses problem ‘e’ directly: “When the Jewish people heard these ninety eight curses... their (Excerpt from public letter written on Erev Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim 5721)
For you know how we lived in the land of Egypt, and how we went among the nations, (and) as you went on your way, you saw their disgusting and repugnant (idols of) wood and stone (in their streets, and their idols of) silver and gold which were (hidden in their houses) with them. So perhaps there is among you a man, a woman, a family, or a tribe, whose heart is straying today from God our God, (and does not want to enter into the covenant with Him, but would rather) go and worship the gods of those nations. Perhaps there is among you (a person growing in wickedness like) a root that is sprouting (bitter herbs, like) hemlock and wormwood, such that when he hears the words of this oath, (he will think that they do not apply to him) and he will convince himself in his heart, saying, “I will be okay, even if I follow my heart’s desires.” (To such a person) I will add (to the punishment for his sins which were done inadvertently, as if) in a drunken stupor, (a further punishment for his sins done intentionally, out of a conscious) thirsting. God will not be willing to forgive him! Rather, God’s fury and His zeal will then fume against that man, and the entire curse written in this book will come down upon him, and God will obliterate his name from beneath the skies. God will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for severe treatment, according to all the curses of the covenant, written in this Book of the Torah.

The later generation— your descendants, who will come after you, along with the foreigner who comes from a distant land—will say upon seeing the plagues of that land and the diseases with which God afflicted it: Sulfur and salt have burned up their entire land! It cannot be sown. It is infertile, and not even grass will sprout upon it. It is like the overturning of Sodom, Amorah, Admah and Tzevoyim, (the cities) which God overturned in His fury and rage. All the nations will say, “Why did God do such a thing to this land? What caused this great rage of fury? Then they will say, “It is because they

faces turned pale...so Moshe began to appease them, saying, “You are standing firmly today.”

According to this interpretation, the Torah’s use of the term “standing firmly” is understood, since Moshe’s intention was to re-establish the strength of the Jewish people after they were emotionally debilitated from hearing the curses: “You have angered God many times, but He has not destroyed you. And you see that you continue to exist before Him.”

Problems ‘b’ & ‘c’ are also answered according to this explanation. Because here the word “today” refers, not to the day of Moshe’s passing, but rather, it is interpreted non-literally: “you see that you continue to exist before Him “today”—just as this day exists.”

However, the drawback of this interpretation is that it does not solve problems ‘a’ or ‘d.’

a.) Why was Moshe’s attempt to console the Jewish people after the curses made in the middle of his speech? Surely this should have been done immediately after the curses were said?

d.) The curses describe the result of failing to observe the mitzvos. This is clearly not directly relevant to children, who are not obligated to observe the mitzvos. Thus, according to Rashi’s second solution we are left with the question why Moshe gathered the children too.

Due to these problems, Rashi cited a third solution: “the Jewish people were now passing from leader to leader, from Moshe to Yehoshua, therefore Moshe brought them to a standing assembly, in order to encourage them.”

This explains:

a. & b.) Why Moshe said these words on the day he passed away, and why he did not say them at the very beginning of his last day (in Parshas Ki Savo), so the words would be nearer to his actual passing.

d.) Why Moshe addressed the children, for they too were “passing from leader to leader.”

e.) Why the Torah uses the word יִשָּׂרֵאֵל (“standing firmly”) because: “Moshe brought them to a standing assembly (יִשָּׂרֵאֵל),” and the purpose of this was “in order to encourage them” to accept Yehoshua’s leadership wholeheartedly.

However, we are left with one problem:

c.) Since these words were meant as a transition into the leadership of Yehoshua, surely they should have been Moshe’s very last words?

The Sequence of Rashi’s Solutions

Why does Rashi write this explanation last, when it seems to have fewer problems than the previous one? Because, in the final analysis, Rashi’s second solution preserves a thematic continuity between Parshas Ki Savo and Parshas Nitzavim (which the third solution does not) and in this respect it resembles Rashi’s first, primary interpretation. Therefore, of the second and third solutions, Rashi deemed the second interpretation to be more acceptable, at the literal level.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 258ff.)

* According to the second interpretation, Rashi was forced to explain the word “today” non-literally (i.e. that it does not refer to the day of Moshe’s passing) for the following reason: Even if Moshe’s words of consolation here were not said immediately after the curses, they clearly must have been said soon after the curses. Thus, if the current passage was said on the day of Moshe’s passing, it would follow that the curses too were said on, or shortly before, that day. This is difficult to accept at the literal level, since: The curses were intended to inspire the Jewish people to strengthen their observance of the mitzvos, so why should this be left until the last day of Moshe’s life? Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that Moshe would have rebuked the Jewish people on his last day. (In fact, we find that he blessed them on his last day).
Why would God's blessings lead a person to return to Him? Surely this is caused by the curses? (30:1)

Ohr HaChayim: So long as the Jewish people had not sinned, they did not attribute the blessings in their lives to their observance of the mitzvos, and they only began to recognize the source of their blessings after they sinned and were punished. Thus, in order to return to God, a person had to contemplate both “the blessing and the curse which I have set before you.”

Blessings that Lead to Teshuvah (v. 1)

Ohr HaChayim addresses the question why a person needs to take to heart both “the blessing and the curse which I have set before you,” in order to return to God. Surely it is the curses alone that inspire a person to teshuvah? How can the blessings lead him to teshuvah?

Since this appears to be a question at the literal level, why does Rashi not address it?

The Explanation

The current passage describes the feelings of distress that lead to profound remorse and teshuvah, “with all your heart and with all your soul.” (v. 2). Logically speaking, a more profound teshuvah will arise if the cause—the feeling of distress—is more intense, and this will result in the teshuvah reaching deeper into the depths of the heart and the soul.

When is a person most distressed? “When all these things come upon you...the blessing and the curse” (v. 1), i.e. when a person first has blessings, and then he loses them, the feeling of pain is more profound than if he would never have had the blessings in the first place. Thus, in order to return to God, “with all your heart and with all your soul,” it is necessary that “all these things come upon you...the blessing and the curse.”

Rashi did not feel it necessary to clarify this point, because:
abandoned the covenant of God, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He took them out of the land of Egypt, 25 For they went and served other gods, prostrating themselves to them—gods which they knew were devoid (of Divine power), and which He had not apportioned to them. 26 God’s fury raged against that land, bringing upon it the entire curse written in this book. 27 God uprooted them from upon their land, with fury, anger and great wrath, and He cast them to another land, (where they are) to this day.”

28 (If you will say, “Since this punishment will come on us even if an individual is harboring thoughts of idolatry, what hope is there for us?” My response is:) the hidden things (in a person’s mind) are for God, our God, (to deal with privately), but the revealed things (where people’s sins are known) are for us and for our children forever (to deal with, and enact justice), to fulfill all the words of this Torah.

**INGATHERING OF THE EXILES**

What will happen, when all these things come upon you (while you are) among all the nations where God, your God, has banished you—the blessing and the curse which I have set before you—you will take it to your heart, 2 and you will return to God, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul. You will listen to His voice, to everything that I am commanding you today, you and your children. 3 Then, God, your God, will return your captives (from exile), and He will have mercy upon you. He will gather you again from all the nations, where God, your God, had dispersed you.

**TORAS MENACHEM**

a.) It is an observable fact of human nature which should not have to be explained.

b.) The reader is already familiar with this concept from Rashi in Parshas Re’eh. Concerning the amount of charity that a person is required to give, Rashi writes, “You are not required to make him wealthy” (Rashi to 15:8). Nevertheless, one is required to give a person “what he is lacking—even a horse to ride on and a servant to run before him” (ibid.), if the person had become accustomed to such a lifestyle. Clearly then, the reader will already have understood that, at the literal level, losing one’s previous blessings is a very painful matter to such an extent that restoring a man to his previously luxurious lifestyle is considered charity.

(Excerpt from a letter written by the Rebbe on 21st Menachem Av, 5728)

**The Last Word**

“HE WILL GATHER YOU AGAIN FROM ALL THE NATIONS” (v. 3)

The true test of events, to see if they herald the Geulah [redemption] or not, is to see whether there has been an essential change in the causes which have brought about the Galus [exile] in the first place, namely, a new tendency in the direction of stronger adherence to the Torah and Mitzvos...It has been amply explained in the Written and Oral Torah that the Geulah will come through the Melech Hamoshiach (Messianic King), and as the Rambam also declares....

“And when a king of the House of David will arrive, dedicated to the study of the Torah and observance of the Mitzvos like his father David, according to the Torah Shebiksav [written law] and Shebeal-Peh [oral law], and he will compel all the Jewish people to walk in it and strengthen its fences, and he will fight the wars of God, he is assumed to be the Moshiach. (Note that this is not yet a certain sign of the Geulah, for all this can still take place in a state of Galus. However) If he did so and has succeeded (in the above matters, namely having won all battles and impelled all the Jewish people to study the Torah and to mend its fences, we are still not sure and require a further sign, namely), and built the Beis Hamikdash [Holy Temple] in its place (clearly in the holy city of Jerusalem, indicating that there would be a large Jewish population in that city, yet we are still not certain of the end of the Galus, so a further factor must be fulfilled, namely), and he gathers in the dispersed ones of Israel—then he is certainly the Moshiach.... (Laws of Kings, 11:4).

It is clear from the above Psak Din [ruling] of the Rambam that before there can be a Kibbutz Galuyos [ingathering of the exiles] and the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash in its place, there has to be a full and complete return to the Torah and Mitzvos while Jews are still in the Galus, and it is this that is the prelude and preparation for the Geulah....

May God grant that each and all of us in the midst of all Israel, should be inspired with true Heavenly inspiration to walk in the way of the Torah and to mend its fences, for it is this that will prepare the way for Moshiach to implement all the conditions necessary to bring about the truly full and complete Geulah.

(Excerpt from a letter written by the Rebbe on 21st Menachem Av, 5728)
What does it mean that “God will circumcise your heart”? (v. 6)

**Onkelos:** He will remove the foolishness from your heart.

**Kli Yakar:** God will enable the Jewish people to serve Him, not only out of fear, but out of love, as the verse stresses, “God, your God, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children, (enabling you) to love God, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul.” Since one can only serve God out of love and joy when not threatened by one’s enemies, the Torah continues: “God, your God, will place all these curses upon your enemies and upon those that hate you, who have pursued you” (v. 7).

**Ramban:** In the future era, to which this verse refers, God will totally eliminate the existence of impurity and evil, and consequently, the evil inclination will cease to exist. This is the meaning of the statement, “God will circumcise your heart.”

Why does verse 8 state, “You will return to...God,” when verse 2 already stated, “You will return to God”?

**Tzror Hamor:** The first teshuvah, in verse 2, is not a complete teshuvah, because it is inspired by the difficult circumstances of pain and suffering. Thus, in verse 8 the Jewish people do teshuvah again, for God’s sake, and not merely to relieve their suffering.

**Kli Yakar:** The expression “You will return to God,” in verse 8, does not refer to actual teshuvah, since the previous verses already described how the Jewish people will return to God. Rather, verse 8 indicates the Jewish people will reach a state of teshuvah which they are doing completely on their own, without having to rely on any of the merits of their forefathers.

**Ohr HaChayim:** What is the need for the Jewish people’s hearts to be “circumcised” in verse 6, after they have already done teshuvah, in verse 2? And why does verse 8 repeat that the Jewish people will do teshuvah again?

There are three phases to the Jewish people’s teshuvah described here:

a.) “You will return to God your God, with all your heart and with all your soul. You will listen to His voice” (v. 2). This refers to Torah study (“His voice”), which is the beginning of teshuvah.

b.) “God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children, (enabling you) to love God,” (v. 6), i.e. they will stop transgressing the prohibitions of the Torah.

c.) You will return and listen to the voice of God, and fulfill all His commandments,” (v. 8), i.e. they will observe all the positive commands too (“all His commandments”).

### "Circumcising" the Heart (v. 6)

What does it mean to “circumcise” a heart? If the verse spoke of “circumcising” the foreskin of the heart (as written above 10:16), we would understand that this refers to the removal of undesirable qualities that had crept into a person’s emotional makeup, which “block” a person’s heart from loving and fearing God (see Rashi ibid.). But our verse does not mention circumcision of the “foreskin” of the heart, but rather, the heart itself. What does this mean, and why does Rashi not clarify this matter?

The question why Rashi is silent here is strengthened by the fact that Onkelos, whose translation of the Torah into Aramaic also aims to explain scripture at the literal level, does deal with the matter. Onkelos explains that the “circumcision” referred to here is “to remove the foolishness from your heart.”

Since Rashi explains every difficulty that arises at the literal level, we can presume that Rashi did not address this matter since he felt that the reader would be able to clarify the matter for himself with simple logic and a knowledge of Rashi’s prior comments.

### The Explanation

When addressing any problem, the answers that are offered might be of varying quality; a poor answer, an acceptable answer or even an excellent answer...
4 Even if your exiles will be (on mountains reaching*) the extremities of the skies, God, your God, will gather you from there, and He will take you from there.

5 God, your God, will bring you to the land which your forefathers possessed, and you will take possession of it. He will be good to you, and He will make you more numerous than your forefathers.

6 God, your God, will “circumcise” your heart and the heart of your children, (enabling you) to love God your God with all your heart and with all your soul, for the sake of your life.

7 God, your God, will place all these curses upon your enemies and upon those who hate you, who have pursued you. 8 You will return and listen to the voice of God, and fulfill all His commandments, which I am commanding you today. 9 God, your God, will give you prosperity in all the work of your hands, the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your livestock, and the fruit of your soil—for God will, once

answer. However, the best answer of all is to prove that the question itself was unfounded.

In our case: Not only is it of no concern as to why our verse omits “circumcising the foreskin of the heart”; on the contrary, if the verse had mentioned “circumcising the foreskin of the heart,” then we would have a legitimate question. For our verse is referring to the Jewish people after “you will return to God, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul” (v. 2), i.e. after the Jewish people have repented and subsequently eradicated their rebellious traits (“foreskin”) from their hearts (cf. question of Ohr HaChayim).

Thus, if our verse had stated that “God will circumcise the foreskin of your heart,” then we would have a legitimate question: Why is it necessary to remove a person’s emotional barriers to Divine service, after they have already been removed (in v. 2), through teshuvah?

Clearly, our verse refers to a further, much higher level of emotional attachment to God that occurs after a person has already done teshuvah; an attachment that leads a person “to love God, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul.”

TORAS MENACHEM

However, this leaves us with the following questions:

a.) If we are only speaking here of a higher level of love of God, why does the verse use a negative expression, “circumcise,” which suggests the removal of something undesirable?

b.) Why does the verse state that this refinement will be brought about by God (“God will circumcise your heart”—see Ramban), and not through further efforts by man?

THE BROADER CONTEXT OF VERSE 6

In order to answer these questions, we need to examine the broader context of verse 6, which is the climax of a long sequence of events that began earlier in chapter 29, verse 15. There, Moshe began to warn the Jewish people of the dire consequence of their actions if they choose to sin, a description that continues to the end of the chapter. Chapter 30 then opens with the promise that the Jewish people will eventually return to God, Who will gather in the exiles.

On closer examination, Moshe’s warning (in chapter 29) is divided into two distinct sections: a.) The causes which lead a person to sin (verses 15-18); and b.) The consequences when a person sins (verses 18-27).

From this it follows that even after the Jewish people eventually do teshuvah, uprooting their sins and the consequences that these sins bring, there needs to be a further stage of refinement, to uproot the causes which led the person on a path towards sin in the first place.

What, precisely, are these causes? The Torah explains, “You saw their disgusting and repugnant (idols of) wood and stone...So perhaps there is among you a man...whose heart is straying today from God our God” (29:16-17), i.e. we are dealing here with a case of “the eye sees and the heart desires.” (Rashi to BamiidBar 15:39), and this causes the heart to “stray.”

Therefore, even after the Jewish people have done teshuvah and uprooted all their sins (described here in chapter 30:1-2), they are then required to eliminate the cause of sin—the problem that if “the eye sees, the heart desires.”

But surely, this is a fact of human nature? It does not appear to be within the ability of the average person to refine himself to the extent that he will not desire what he sees.

Therefore, the Torah continues, in verse 6, “God will circumcise your heart,” i.e. after the person has done teshuvah with all his heart and all his soul and returned to God, (thus removing the “foreskin” of his heart), God will reciprocate and circumcise the person’s heart itself—changing man’s innate nature to desire what he sees (by severing this automatic connection between the eyes and the heart), thus enabling the person to serve God with a total purity of spirit.**

(Based on Likutel Sichos vol. 29, p. 167ff.; Sichas Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim 5743)

* See Sichas Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim 5745.  **Verse 6 is thus the climax of the entire sequence of events that began in chapter 29, verse 15. Therefore, at the literal level, we can presume that in verses 7-9, the Torah is merely recapping to explain in further detail the general statement in verse 5 that “God will be good to you.”
What does it mean that the Torah is not in the skies? (v. 12)

**Rashi:** It is not in the skies*, for if it were in the skies, you would have to climb up after it [in order] to learn it.

**Rambam:** It is clearly explained in the Torah that its commandments are eternal and cannot be changed....The verse, “It is not in Heaven,” teaches us that it is no longer the prerogative of any prophet to introduce a new part of the Torah (Laws of Foundations of the Torah 9:1).

Will new parts of Torah ever be revealed by God?

**Rashi:** We have a promise from Him that He will once again appear to us and reveal the secrets of its reasons and concealed facts (commentary to Song of Songs 1:2).

**Midrash:** How will the [Leviathan fish and the giant fish (Shor Habor)] be slaughtered? The beast will gore the fish with its horns, and tear it up, and the Leviathan will slaughter the beast with its fin.

The Sages say: How could that be a kosher form of slaughter? Are we not taught in the Mishnah, “Any person may slaughter, and any [hard, smooth] substance may be used for slaughter; and slaughter may be done at any time; except a sickle, saw, teeth, or nails are prohibited since they are not smooth and cause tearing” (Chullin 15b)?

R’ Avin bar Kahana says: “A new Torah will emerge from Me. New laws will emerge from Me!” says God (Vayikra Rabah 13:3).

**Yalkut Shimoni:** In the future, God will sit...and expound a new Torah which will be given through Mashiach (Isaiah remez 429).

**Rambam:** The king who will arise from the seed of David (Mashiach), will be a greater genius than Shlomo, and a great prophet approaching the greatness of Moshe. Therefore, he will teach all humanity, and show them the way of God (Laws of Teshuvah 9:2).

**Classic Questions**

The Immutability of the Torah (v. 12)

The Midrash and Yalkut Shimoni describe the “new Torah” that is destined to be given by Mashiach in the future. Rambam appears to hint to this point, by stating that Mashiach “will be a greater genius than Shlomo, and a great prophet...therefore he will teach all humanity,” i.e. since he will be a “great prophet,” therefore the “new” Torah will be revealed through him, and he will teach all humanity.

How is this to be reconciled with the fundamental principle, which Rambam himself writes, that the Torah “is not in Heaven,” and, “it is no longer the prerogative of a prophet to introduce a new part of Torah”?

* See Likutei Sichos vol. 34 pp. 170-1, that according to Rashi is to be translated “skies.”

The Sages taught: “Every insight that an advanced student was destined to innovate, was already given to Moshe at Sinai” (Megillah 19b). At first glance, this appears to be a contradiction: On the one hand, the insight is termed a genuine “innovation,” implying that it has never existed before, and yet, “it was already given to Moshe at Sinai”?

However, the explanation is that at the “Giving of the Torah,” Moshe was given the principles through which we may innovate new laws through “suggesting the logic behind laws, analyzing them with questions and refutations, delving deeply into the rationale behind and the reasons
**Closeness of the Torah**

**30:11**

For this (body of) commandment(s) which I am commanding you this day, is not concealed from you, nor is it far away.  

12 It is not in the skies, that you should say, “Who will go up to the skies for us and take it for us, to tell it to us, so that we can keep it?”  

13 Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, “Who will cross the other side of the sea for us and fetch it for us, to tell it to us, so that we can keep it?”  

14 Rather, this thing is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it.

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**Toras Menachem**

Given for the laws, understanding one thing from another” (Laws of Torah Study of the Alter Rebbe 2:2, see Shemos Rabah 41:6). Therefore, when an “advanced student” toils to find an undiscovered insight which is consistent with the principles of analysis, it can be rightly termed (according to the rules of Torah) as his innovation. Nevertheless, since this “insight” was derived through the application of the pre-existing principles given to Moshe at Sinai, he has merely identified a concept that was present, but remained as yet undiscovered.

A similar process could be argued for the introduction of the “new Torah,” in the Messianic Era. At Sinai, the entire Torah was given (which was a “one-time” event, never to occur again), including all the secrets of the “new Torah” which will be revealed by Mashiach. All of this was included, hidden within the Torah of Moshe.

But there is a fundamental difference between the innovative insights of “advanced students,” throughout history, and the impending “new Torah”:

Since the innovations of today are discovered via human intellect, (which is limited), it follows, that even before they are found, these insights were hidden within the Torah in a way that is possible for man to discover (by novel application of the pre-existing principles).

However, the ingenuity necessary to discover the “new Torah” is so profound that it is beyond mortal imagination. Therefore, God Himself will have to demonstrate its presence, (hence, “a new Torah will emerge from Me”), since these insights are so well hidden that it is impossible for any human mind to find them. With the advent of the Messianic Era, they will be “revealed” by God in the form of “innovative Torah thoughts,” ideas that are incomparably more profound than our present Torah—as the Sages said, “The Torah that a person learns in this world is empty compared to the Torah of Mashiach” (Koheles Rabah 11:7).

According to this approach, it is clear that the “new Torah” revealed by Mashiach is, in fact, part of the pre-existing Torah given to Moshe at Sinai, which has “no possibility of change and “is not in Heaven.” Even though the ideas which will be revealed by God (“from Me”) are so deep that no man could possibly discover them, nevertheless, they will be brought down into a comprehensible form. Consequently, it is stressed that, “A new Torah will emerge from Me,” i.e. it will depart the Heavenly realm and come into earthly terms.

The route by which the new Torah will escape its heavenly garb and come into human comprehension is via Mashiach himself. Rambam stresses that the Mashiach is both a “great prophet” and “a greater genius than Shlomo...therefore he will teach all humanity.” This indicates that “New Torah” will first be revealed to him in the form of prophecy and then, through his great genius, Mashiach will be capable of articulating these complex ideas in a way that makes them accessible to the normal human intellect, so that “he will teach all humanity.”

The reason why Godly revelation of new legislature will not be a breach of the tenet that the Torah “is not in heaven,” is because Mashiach (being a greater genius than Shlomo) will explain the new innovations to the newly reconvened High Court in Jerusalem in a rational way that meets their approval (according to the existing principles and logic of Torah).

This will then become fixed as Jewish Law, since the High Court Judges are “the bastion of Oral Law and the pillar of guidance. From them, comes the Law for the entire Jewish People” (Rambam, Laws of Rebellious Individuals 1:1).

In this manner, the “new Torah” will become like “laws learned through tradition...laws learned through the intellectual application of one of the principles of Torah exposition, and it will appear in their eyes that this is indeed the case” (ibid. 2).

(Based on Sicha of second day of Shavuos 5751)

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

“**This Thing is Very Near to You...**” (v. 14)

At first glance, the statement that “this thing is very near to you...in your heart,” appears to be contrary to our experience (and yet the Torah is eternally relevant), that it is simply not a “very near thing” to transform one’s heart’s desires from wanting worldly pleasures to a sincere love of God.

However, the words “to observe it” [at the end of the verse qualify what is written at the beginning of the verse]: that we are speaking here merely of a love which is sufficient to bring about the practical observance of the commandments...even if it is not palpable in his heart, like a burning fire.

And this is indeed “very near” and easy for any person who has a brain inside his skull, since a person’s mind is under his control, and he is free to think about whatever he pleases, on any subject. So when he will use it to think about the greatness of God, he will inevitably generate—in his mind, at least—a love of God, [sufficient to make a person] to cleave to Him through the performance of His commandments and the study of His Torah.

(Except from Tanya, chapter 17—Free Translation)
See! I have given you today (a choice of) life and good, or death and evil. For I am commanding you today to love God, your God, to walk in His ways, and to observe His commandments, His suprarational commands, and His rational commands, so that you will live and prosper. God, your God, will then bless you in the land of which you are coming to take possession.

But if your heart strays and you do not listen, and you turn away and prostrate yourself to other gods and serve them, I am declaring to you today, that you will definitely perish! You will not live a long time on the land, of which you are crossing via the Jordan to come and take possession.

I am calling upon the heaven and the earth (which are eternal) as witnesses against you! I have set before you (a choice of) life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life! Then you and your children will live, to love God, your God, to listen to His voice, and to cleave to Him—for He is your life and the length of your days—to live on the land which God swore to your fathers to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov, to give to them.

THE HAFTARAH FOR NITZAVIM IS ON PAGE 288.
R’ Sa’adia Ga’on writes that Nitzavim and Vayeilech actually constitute one single Parsha, and it is only that in some years the Parsha is split into two (as opposed to other instances, where two separate Parshiyos will be combined together). Thus, even when Vayeilech is read separately, we can derive a lesson from the reading of Nitzavim and Vayeilech together.

At first glance, the two terms Nitzavim and Vayeilech appear to be diametrically opposed. Nitzavim means “standing firmly” in the same position, whereas Vayeilech, which means “he went,” indicates movement. So what is the lesson to be learned from combining together “standing firmly” and “moving,” a feat which does not appear to be at all possible?

Standing firmly represents stability, reliability and strength. A king, for example, remains stationary on his throne, and those who wish to see him must come from afar. Moving, on the other hand, is a sign of growth and expansion.

Thus, the combination of simultaneously “standing firmly” and “moving” (Nitzavim-Vayeilech) represents: the ability to grow without compromising one’s prior position of strength.

Some practical examples: When a person grows in his knowledge of Torah, there is a danger that his newly found sophistication may negatively affect his prior quality of simple faith and dedication. The lesson of our Parsha is the need to retain one’s strong foundation of simple faith—which is “reliable” under all circumstances, even when the intellect fails—and not allow it to become tarnished by one’s understanding.

Another example concerns the wealthy businessman who enjoys substantial growth in his financial affairs. Such a person may be tempted to feel that this growth came as a result of his good judgment and business acumen; so when somebody asks him for a donation to charity, he may think to himself, “I earned this money through my business skills and hard work, so why should I give it away?” Of course, the less successful businessman does not have this “problem,” and he regularly prays that if only God would bless him with riches, he would gladly give much of it to charity....

The lesson here is obvious: Our challenge is to harmonize Nitzavim with Vayeilech—the stability of simple faith, together with constant growth and expansion.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech 5742; Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 298)
OBJECT: Moshe went... (v. 1). Where did he go?

**Ibn Ezra:** He went to the camp of each tribe individually.

**Targum Yonason:** He went to the House of Study.

**Ramban:** When Moshe finished relating Parshas Nitzavim, the people would have gone home, because this gathering was made in order to bring the Jewish people into a covenant with God ("You are standing firmly today, all of you together...in order to bring you into the covenant of God, your God," 29:9-11), so when the covenant had been established, the gathering would have fulfilled its purpose and consequently dispersed. Our verse continues to explain that, afterwards, Moshe left the Levite camp and went over to the Israelite camp, like a person who wishes to depart from his friend, and comes to ask permission from him.

**Kli Yakar:** Moshe went quickly throughout the entire Jewish camp to prove that his leadership was not ending because he was physically weak, but rather, because he had not been permitted by God to continue.

**Ohr HaChayim:** Before a person passes away, his spirit leaves him. The verse is thus teaching us that "the spirit of Moshe went."

**Ba'el Haturim:** "Moshe went" to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, who are mentioned in the previous verse, to inform them that God was fulfilling His promise to bring the Jewish people to the Land.

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**Where Did Moshe Go? (v. 1)**

At the literal level, it appears to be unclear where "Moshe went" in verse 1.

**Ibn Ezra** suggests that Moshe went to the camp of each tribe individually. However, this does not appear to be a literal interpretation, since:

a.) Each tribe was of a very different character. For example, the tribe of Yissachar were Torah scholars, the tribe of Zevulun were business people, and the tribe of Levi were priests and ministers. So if Moshe had gone separately to each camp and spoken to them individually, he would have addressed them each in a different manner that befit their character of that particular tribe (even if the general content of his words was the same). The fact that the verse stresses that Moshe spoke "the following words to all Israel" suggests that he spoke to them as a group, and not as individual tribes.

b.) The entire camp measured 3 parsas by 3 parsas (See Rashi to Bamidbar 21:35, 10:25, 33:39), which would mean that in order to visit each tribe individually Moshe would need to have walked 12 parsas. This is difficult

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* Equivalent to 46,000 meters or 28.6 miles.
Moshe went, and he spoke the following words to all Israel. He said to them, “Today I am one hundred and twenty years old. I am no longer (permitted by God) to lead (you) out (to war) and bring (you) back (safely again, even though I am physically capable of doing so, because) God said to me, “You may not cross this (River) Jordan.”

It is God, your God, Who will take you across the Jordan. He will destroy these nations before you so that you will take possession of their (lands). And it is Yehoshua who will lead you across, as God has said. God will do to them what He did to the Amorite kings, Sichon and Og, and to their land when He destroyed them. God will deliver them to you, and you should do to them in accordance with all the commandment(s) that I have instructed you.

Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or dismayed because of them! For God, your God, is the One Who is going with you. He will not loosen (his hold on) you and forsake you!”

Moshe called Yehoshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous! For you will come with this people to the land which God swore to their fathers to give them, and you

Thus, we can assume that, at the literal level, when “Moshe went, and he spoke the following words to all Israel,” he did not need to make a special gathering since he would have found “all Israel” already gathered together when one of the communal sacrifices was offered.

At first glance, the transfer of leadership from Moshe to Yehoshua represented a weakening of the strength of the Jewish people, as our Sages taught: “Moshe’s face was like that of the sun. Yehoshua’s face was like that of the moon” (Bava Basra 75a). If the Jewish people had merited to enter the Land of Israel under Moshe’s leadership, the conquest would have been instant and miraculous. Under Yehoshua, however, the Jewish people were required to conquer the land within the confines of nature, with the tremendous courage and self-sacrifice which that involves.

Nevertheless, Chasidic thought explains that this was not in fact a disadvantage, but to the contrary, it was for the overall good. The purpose of creation is to make, “a home for God in the lowest realms,” i.e. by human effort within an everyday setting. Miracles are generally counterproductive to this goal, as they serve to impose spirituality on the world, rather than letting the “lowest realms” develop a spiritual sensitivity for themselves.

So, ultimately, the non-miraculous entry into the land via Yehoshua fulfilled the purpose of Creation to a greater extent.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 9, p.56ff.)
Why are men, women and children required to be present at the Hakhel gathering (v. 12)?

**Talmud (Tractate Chagigah):** Men come “to learn” and women come “to hear.” Why do children come? In order to reward those who bring them along (Chagigah 3a).

**Maharsha:** Verse 13 states explicitly the reason why children are brought to the Hakhel gathering: “Their children, who do not understand, will hear and learn to fear God, your God.” Why then does the Talmud offer a different reason, “In order to reward those who bring them along”?

The answer is that verses 12 and 13 are speaking of different types of children. Verse 13 refers to a child who has reached the age when his education has begun, and thus his father has an obligation to bring him to the gathering, to educate him. Verse 12, however, refers to very small children (“minors”).

**Talmud (Tractate Kidushin):** Children are obligated [in the mitzvah of Hakhel] (Kidushin 34b).

But this begs the question: Why did Moshe instruct, later in the Parsha, to “gather to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers” (v. 28), when he could have addressed them during one of the communal sacrifices, without having to make a special gathering?

There is, however, a clear distinction between these two cases. Moshe gathered the elders and leaders in order to fulfill God’s instruction to teach them the Song of Ha’azinu (v. 19). And, for this, it was only appropriate to have a gathering specifically for that purpose, so as not to fulfill the Divine command ad hoc, while the Jewish people had gathered for another reason.

In the opening of our Parsha, however, where Moshe chose to offer words of encouragement to the Jewish people of his own volition, and not as a direct command from God, Moshe did not want to bother the Jewish people to make a special gathering. Rather, he addressed them when they had gathered in any case, to offer a communal sacrifice.

(Based on Sichas Motzoil Shabbos Parshas Vayeilech 5739)

**Assembling All The People (v. 12-13)**

The explanations of Hakhel in the Talmud (see Classic Questions) present us with a number of difficulties:
will apportion it to them as an inheritance. 8 It is God Who will lead you forward. He will be with you. He will not loosen (His hold on) you and forsake you. Do not be afraid or dismayed.”

9 Then Moshe wrote down this (entire) Torah, and gave it to the priests, (on behalf of) the descendants of Levi, who carry the Ark of God’s covenant, and to all the elders of the Jewish people (on behalf of the Jewish people).

**The Mitzvah of Hakhel**

Moshe commanded them, saying: “At the end of seven years (in the year following) the sabbatical year, during the festival on the holiday of Succos, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before God, your God, in the place that He will choose:

- (The king) should read this Torah before all of Israel, in their ears.
- 12 Assemble the people—the men, the women, and the minors, and the convert in your cities—in order that they will hear, and in order that they will learn and fear God, your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this Torah. 13 Their children, who do not understand, will hear and learn to fear God, your God, all the days that you live on the land, of which you are crossing the Jordan to take possession.

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**The Last Word**

“(The King) Should Read This Torah...” (v. 11)

The Torah was given to us in order that it permeate and vitalize each and every Jew without exception—man, woman, child and stranger—so thoroughly, and to such an extent and degree, that one’s entire being, in all its aspects, senses and feelings, will become a “Torah and mitzvos being.”

And in order to attain this end, most deeply and fully, the Torah was read on that occasion by the king, whose awe-inspiring quality filled the audience with an overwhelming sense of awe and subservience, to the extent of complete bitul—self-effacement....

It is the duty of everyone who is a “king,” a leader, in his circle—the spiritual leader in his congregation, the teacher in his classroom, the father in his family—to raise the voice of the Torah and mitzvos, forcefully and earnestly, so that it produces a profound impression and an abiding influence in the audience.... an influence that should be translated into daily life, into conduct governed by the Torah and mitzvos, with fear of Heaven, and, at the same time, with gladness of heart.

(Excerpt from a public letter written in the Days of Selichos, 5726)

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

Hakhel is a rare case where the Torah specifies that even small children are obligated to observe a Biblical command. For Hakhel is a mitzvah which arouses and strengthens the inner faith of a Jew—and in this area, men, women and children are equal.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 369)

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*Even Maharsha’s distinction is in itself difficult to accept. One is only required to educate a child in those mitzvos in which he will later become obligated as an adult. Thus, according to Maharsha, verse 13, which speaks of an older child, would not obligate a father to bring a child who was, for example, blind or mentally handicapped, since there is no requirement to educate a child in a mitzvah which he would not be required to observe as an adult. However, verse 12 require all minors (below the age of education) to be brought to the Hakhel gathering, since at this age the child is not being brought for the purposes of education but “in order to reward those who bring them along.” Thus, according to Maharsha’s interpretation, we would come to the bizarre conclusion that a blind or mentally handicapped child would be brought to a Hakhel gathering before reaching the age of education, but not afterwards!*
The Explanation

There are two legal dimensions to the mitzvah of Hakhel: a.) the obligation resting on the king; and b.) the obligation resting on the people:

a.) The basic requirement of Hakhel, as it is recorded in the Torah, is an obligation upon the king to “assemble the people.” The people themselves, on the other hand, have no direct command to attend the gathering, and they do so merely in order to enable the king to fulfill his own, personal obligation. In other words, since the observance of any mitzvah involves taking an “entity” and doing a certain act with it, the king needs an “entity” that he can inspire to “learn and fear,” in order to fulfill his mitzvah—and the people are that entity.

b.) As a result of their central role in the assembly, the people themselves are indirectly obligated too. This could be compared to the mitzvah of having children, which, according to Jewish Law, rests upon the man and not the woman. But since it is clearly impossible for a man to father children on his own, it follows that his wife also shares the obligation of having children indirectly (Ran to Kidushin beg. chap. 2). Likewise in our case, it is impossible for a king to discharge his obligation of gathering and inspiring the people without their co-operation, so it follows that they share the obligation too, indirectly.

Based on this distinction we can now explain the apparent contradiction between Tractates Kidushin and Chagigah:

The king’s direct obligation (‘a’) requires him to gather the entire nation, including the children. This is the meaning of the statement in Tractate Kidushin that “children are obligated,” because in terms of constituting an “entity” with which the king can perform his mitzvah (and thus sharing the obligation indirectly), children are equal to adults.

But when we speak of the obligation resting on the people (‘b’), which is a personal obligation, the question arises, “Why do minors come?” They cannot be personally obligated in mitzvos, and they are too young to be inspired to “learn and fear God.”

In response to this question, Tractate Chagigah explains that yes, it is true that when we speak of the personal obligation resting on the people themselves, children cannot be obligated; but even then, they are not just part of an “entity” with which the king fulfills his mitzvah, but furthermore, they are brought “in order to reward those who bring them along.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 363ff.)

*With the mitzvah of Hakhel there is more sharing of obligation than with the mitzvah of having children. For in the case of Hakhel it is intrinsic to the mitzvah itself that the people become inspired, as the Torah stresses, “Assemble the people...in order that they will learn and fear God, your God etc.” So the people do not merely share the obligation with the king by virtue of a practical technicality—that he could not do the mitzvah without them—but rather, because the very purpose of this mitzvah is to inspire the people.
Moshe is Informed of the Events After His Passing

God said to Moshe, “The time is now approaching for you to die. Call Yehoshua and stand in the Tent of Meeting, and I will encourage him.”

Moshe and Yehoshua went, and stood in the Tent of Meeting. God appeared in the Tent, in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the entrance to the Tent.

God said to Moshe, “You are soon to lie with your fathers. This nation will rise up and desire to follow the gods of the people of the land into which they are coming. They will forsake Me and violate My covenant which I made with them. On that day, I will become very angry with them. I will forsake them and hide My face from them, (appearing as if I do not see their distress). They will be consumed, and many misfortunes and traumas will happen to them. On that day, they will say, ‘Is it surely because our God is no longer among us, that these evils have befallen us.’ I will surely hide My face on that day, because of all the evil they have committed, when they turned to other gods.”

God’s Testimony for the Future

- 15 “Now, write for yourselves this song (in Parshas Ha’azinu), and teach it to the Children of Israel.”

Place it into their mouths, so that this song will be for Me as a witness to the children of Israel.”

20 “When I bring them to the land which I have sworn to their forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey, they will eat, be satisfied, and become fat. Then they will turn to other gods and serve them, angering Me and violating My covenant.

Classic Questions

What law is derived from verse 19?

Rambam: It is a positive command for every Jewish man to write a Torah scroll for himself, as the verse states, “Now, write for yourselves this song,” meaning to say, “write for yourselves a Torah which contains this song,” for a Torah is invalid if it consists of separate scrolls... If a person writes one with his own hand, it is as if he received it from Mount Sinai (Laws of a Torah Scroll 7:1).

Toras Menachem

Sparks of Chasidus

The Final Two Mitzvos of the Torah

Parshas Vayeilech contains two mitzvos: 1.) Hakhel—Gathering the entire people in Jerusalem after the Sabbatical year to hear the King read from the Torah (v. 10-13). And, 2.) The mitzvah of writing a Torah scroll (v. 19—see Classic Questions).

What is the significance of the fact that these are the last two mitzvos recorded in the Torah, both transmitted by Moshe on the day of his passing?

As long as the Jewish people were in the desert, memories of the experience at Sinai remained fresh. Even those members of the next generation who had not seen the giving of the Torah with their eyes, had nevertheless grown up in a spiritual oasis where the effects of Sinai were still palpable.

But at this junction in time, the Jewish people were leaving that oasis and embarking on the formidable challenge of living a life dominated by earning one’s physical needs—and this was to be without the leadership of Moshe. To help overcome these hurdles, the Jewish people were given two mitzvos whose purpose was to enable them to recreate the experience of Sinai in their new setting.

Thus Rambam writes that, at a Hakhel gathering: “They must prepare their hearts and alert their ears to listen with dread and awe and with trembling joy, like the day it was given on Sinai...as though the Torah was being commanded to him now, and he was hearing it from the mouth of the Almighty, for the king is an agent to make the words of God heard” (Laws of Festival Offerings 3:6).

However, this only recreates the experience of being commanded by God as a nation to observe the mitzvos. In order to re-enact the experience of being given the Torah personally by God to study, a further mitzvah was given—to write a Torah scroll. For when: “a person writes one with his own hand, it is as if he received it from Mount Sinai” (see Classic Questions).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 189ff.)
Where was the Torah scroll placed? (v. 26)

Rashi: In [Tractate] Bava Basra, the Sages of Israel were divided over this matter. Some maintained that there was a shelf protruding from the Ark, where it was put. Others maintained that it was put next to the tablets, inside the Ark.

Moshe’s Torah Scroll (v. 26)

Rashi cites two views of “the Sages of Israel” concerning where the Torah scroll that Moshe wrote was placed: i.) On a shelf protruding from the Ark; or ii.) Inside the Ark.

This prompts the following questions:

a.) Since Rashi’s commentary is devoted exclusively to explaining scripture at the literal level, how could he accept the notion that the Torah was placed inside the Ark, when the Torah states unambiguously that it was placed “beside the Ark”?

b.) Rashi’s first interpretation is also difficult to accept at the literal level, since the detailed description of the Ark’s design in Parshas Terumah makes no mention of “a shelf protruding from the Ark,” on which a Torah scroll could be placed. Why did Rashi not conclude more simply that the Torah was kept next to the Ark, without the Ark having a special feature to accommodate it?

The Explanation

While verse 26 states clearly that Moshe’s Torah scroll was to be placed beside the Ark, the verse does not state explicitly whether the Torah was required to remain in this place at all times, even when the Ark was in transit.

However, from the context of the verse, it is quite clear that the Torah was required to remain next to the Ark during transit, because:

a.) Verse 26 was an instruction given to “the Levites, who carried the Ark of God’s Covenant” (v. 25).

b.) In a much broader context, the verse is part of Moshe’s instructions to Yehoshua in preparation for their imminent entrance into the Land of Israel. They were going to begin traveling very soon, and during this time, the Tabernacle would have to be dismantled. So if we were to accept that the command in our verse (to place Moshe’s Torah next to the Ark) only applied when the Tabernacle was erected, then it would turn out that
21 “What will happen is, when numerous misfortunes and traumas will happen to them, this song (which warns them of the consequences of their actions) will speak out to them as a witness, for it will not be forgotten from the mouths of their children; for I know their inclination that they (are planning) to do today, (even) before I bring them into the land which I swore (to give them).”

22 On that day, Moshe wrote down this song, and taught it to the children of Israel.

23 (God) commanded Yehoshua, the son of Nun, and said:

“Be strong and courageous! For you will bring the children of Israel to the land that I have sworn to them, and I will be with you.”

∽ Moshe’s Torah Scroll is Placed With the Ark ◇

Then, when Moshe finished writing the words of this Torah, until its very end, in a scroll, Moshe commanded the Levites, who carried the Ark of God’s Covenant, saying:

25 “Take this Torah scroll and place it beside the Ark of the Covenant of God, your God, and it will be there as a witness. 26 For I know your rebellious spirit and your stubbornness. Look!—even while I am alive with you today you have been rebels against God, surely (you will be) after my death (too)!”

TORAS MENACHEM

Sparks of Chasidus

Is a teacher forced to dilute his understanding of a subject in order to transmit it to his students? Or, is it possible for the teacher to take an idea as he understands it and “reconstruct” that very concept in class, so that it retains the same level of brilliance and profundity that it possessed within his own mind?

Or, to phrase it differently: The teacher sees the general perspective of an idea, but he can only communicate it through a series of details. Is it possible for a teacher to infuse those details with the same energy and vision which the general idea possesses? Or will the student inevitably be left with a series of disjointed details which he cannot “re-assemble” to capture the general perspective that existed in the teacher’s mind?

This question was disputed between “the Sages of Israel” (see Rashi): The Tablets inside the Ark contained the Ten Commandments which represent the laws of the Torah in general. Moshe’s Torah scroll (v. 24), contained the laws of the Torah specified in detail.

Moshe’s Torah scroll had to be placed “beside the Ark” (v. 26), indicating that the details should always be “close to” and representative of the general perspective. But how close?

One view maintained that the Torah was kept on a shelf outside the Ark, but connected to it, i.e. that the details will never truly represent the general perspective (they are “outside”), but that they will be loyal and “connected to” it.

A second view, however, maintained that the Torah scroll was placed inside the Ark—i.e. that a very talented teacher is capable of communicating ideas in a way that they retain the same brilliance and profundity that existed in the teacher’s own mind.

(Moshe’s instructions here did not apply to the immediate future, and were therefore out of context with the rest of his words to Yehoshua, which did concern the immediate future.

c.) In any case, the verse stresses that the Torah was placed “as a witness,” which would presumably apply at all times.

This requirement for the Torah scroll to be with the Ark at all times, presented Rashi with a problem: The Ark was protected with no less than three coverings while in transit (Bamidbar 4:5-6), so how could Moshe’s Torah scroll remain “beside the Ark” when the coverings intervened?

To solve this problem, Rashi offered two solutions (from “the Sages of Israel”):

That the Ark had a shelf protruding from it, on which the Torah scroll was placed; and clearly, the coverings must have been placed over the Ark and its shelf (and scroll).

As for the fact that this shelf was not mentioned in Parshas Terumah, we could argue that since the command to “take this Torah scroll and place it beside the Ark of the Covenant” was surely an instruction which Moshe had heard from God, it follows that the requirement to make the shelf is derived from this verse itself—as a logical extension of the requirement to keep the Torah scroll next to the Ark at all times.

However, in the final analysis it is difficult to accept that at this time, some forty years after the Ark was made, a shelf was suddenly added. Therefore Rashi cited a second interpretation, that the Torah scroll was placed inside the Ark.

However, this too is difficult to accept, because the verse states that the Torah scroll was placed “beside the Ark” and not in the Ark.

Thus Rashi was forced to bring two interpretations, since each is problematic at the literal level.

Ultimately, Rashi was equally dissatisfied with both interpretations, so he prefaced his explanation with the phrase: “the Sages of Israel were divided over this matter,” as if to say: “neither of these interpretations are preferable at the literal level, and they differ only according to the personal approaches of the Sages.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 9, pp. 202-3)
Why were the elders and police officers picked for this gathering? (v. 28)

**Abarbanel:** Because they were the leaders of the people, who listened to Moshe’s words on behalf of the people.

**Toras Menachem**

At first glance, these efforts to avert spiritual decline would appear to have been totally futile, according to Moshe’s own admission, as he exclaimed in verse 27: “even while I am alive with you today you have been rebels against God, surely (you will be) after my death (too)!” How could Moshe possibly expect the Jewish people to listen to the elders, if they had not listened properly to Moshe himself?

To address this problem, Moshe added police officers to the gathering, thereby setting a precedent: that whenever the elders would gather in the future to transmit the Torah’s commands to the people, they would do so in the presence of the police officers. In this way, the elders’ declarations would be taken more seriously by the people, since the threat of law-enforcement would be real and obvious.

Of course, this had not been done in the past, but on the day of his passing, Moshe understood that it would be required in the future, at least as a deterrent.

*(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeilech 5746)*
GATHERING OF THE ELDERS TO HEAR THE SONG OF HA’AZINU

31:28

M A F T I R

“Gather to me all the elders of your tribes and your police officers, and I will speak these words (of the song of Ha’azinu) into their ears. I will call upon the heavens and the earth as witnesses against them, for I know that long after my (disciple Yehoshua’s) death you will surely become corrupted (with idol worship), and depart from the way which I commanded you. Misfortune will inevitably come upon you in the end, because you did evil in the eyes of God, to provoke His anger through your actions.”

30 Then Moshe spoke the words of the following song, into the ears of the entire assembly of Israel, until their completion.


PARSHAS VAYEILECH is read on the Shabbos preceding Yom Kippur (in years when it is read separately), whereas Parshas Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah.

The High Holidays are a time of Jewish unity, when we stand before God as one. Nevertheless, there is a subtle, but significant difference between the unity of Rosh Hashanah and the unity of Yom Kippur, which takes expression in the two Parshiyos which are connected with these dates: Nitzavim and Vayeilech.

Rosh Hashanah is a time of unity of all Jewish souls, as they exist in their spiritual source. Yom Kippur, on the other hand, represents the unity of the Jewish souls even as they exist down below, in physical bodies.

Thus, on Rosh Hashanah we do not make confessions to God or openly mention our sins, for this holy day stresses the soul as it is in its source, where it transcends the concept of sin. On the other hand, on Rosh Hashanah we do eat food—an experience which each person enjoys in a different way, indicating that the unity and equality among the souls that occurs on Rosh Hashanah is not experienced by the body.

True unity comes about when there is a potential for differences and divisiveness (due to the body), and yet we nevertheless come together—and this occurs on Yom Kippur. Thus, the theme of Yom Kippur is atonement for sins, for this stresses how our physical existence lends the possibility for sin (and hence divisiveness), but how we are nevertheless cleansed from sin, and come together as one. Likewise, even in our physical lives we stand united and equal on Yom Kippur, for each person equally denies himself or herself any food or drink at all.

Thus, Parshas Nitzavim, which is always read before Rosh Hashanah, stresses the unity of the Jewish souls: “You are standing firmly today, all of you together, before God, your God”—i.e. the reason why “you are all together” is because we are speaking here of the Jewish souls as they exist “before God, your God,” in their source.

Parshas Vayeilech, however, which is connected with Yom Kippur, stresses the unity of the Jewish people as they exist down here in this world, on their own level. Thus the Parsha begins, “Moshe went, and he spoke the following words to all Israel,” i.e. Moshe “went” from his exalted spiritual standing and lowered himself to the level at which “all Israel” found themselves.

And similarly here, at the end of the Parsha, the Torah stresses the same theme again: “Then Moshe spoke the words of the following song, into the ears of the entire assembly of Israel, until their completion” (v. 30). Literally, the words, “until their completion” refer to the end of “the words of the song.” However, Chasidic thought explains that “their completion” also refers to the “completion” and spiritual perfection of the Jewish people. Thus, the verse is informing us that Moshe did not only address the souls of the Jewish people, but he uplifted “the entire assembly of Israel” until their bodies and souls together reached “completion” and perfection, here in this world.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 298ff.)
Parshas Vayeilech contains 2 positive mitzvos

1. To assemble the entire people to hear the Torah being read, after the Sabbatical year [31:12].

2. Every Jew should write a Torah scroll for himself [31:19].
Parshas Ha'azinu

There is a very big difference between acquiring a new talent and uncovering an existing one. Acquiring a talent involves learning totally new skills, that are alien to one’s existing personality traits. And even after the person has fully mastered the skill, it will always remain as an acquired trait.

On the other hand, if a person has an intrinsic talent in a certain area from the time he was born, when he uncovers that talent it will be: a.) much easier to learn than acquiring a new one, and, b.) after he has perfected this “new” skill, it will be a statement of who he really is, rather than something he has tried to become.

The Jewish soul is “literally a part of God Above” (Tanya ch. 2). So, for a Jew, the feeling of being “close to the heavens” is not something that needs to be acquired, but merely uncovered. Thus, in some way, it is relatively easy and natural for us to feel “close to the heavens and distant from the earth,” because our souls, which sustain our very lives, are truly “distant from the earth.”

But nevertheless, after being born into a body, we are firmly rooted in this world too, enabling us to bring our natural affinity with “the heavens” down to the earth—thus making “a home for God below.”

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ha’azinu 5750)
How does one “ascribe greatness to our God”? (v. 3)

Rashi: “When I call out the Name of God”—When I call out and mention God’s Name, you should “ascribe greatness to our God”—and bless His Name. From here, they derived that after a blessing recited in the Temple, one responds: “Blessed be the Name of His glorious Kingdom!” [and not “Amen”].

Sifri: From where do we derive that one must answer “Amen” after a blessing is made? From the words, “ascribe greatness to our God.”

Gur Aryeh: The verse cannot refer to answering “Amen,” since Amen is not a phrase with which one praises the greatness of God, and the verse stresses: “ascribe greatness to our God.”

Ascribing Greatness To God (v. 3)

What forced Rashi to conclude that, at the literal level, the words “ascribe greatness to our God,” refer to responding, “Blessed be the Name of His glorious Kingdom!” after a blessing recited in the Holy Temple? Why did Rashi reject the apparently more straightforward and simple explanation of Sifri that the verse is referring to the answering of “Amen” when any blessing is recited?

Gur Aryeh argues that the words “ascribe greatness to our God” could not be referring to the response of “Amen,” which is not a description of greatness.

However, this still does not explain why, at the literal level, Moshe would be telling the Jewish people now such a basic principle: “When I call out and mention God’s Name, you should ascribe greatness to our God and bless His Name”? Moshe had mentioned God’s Name on numerous occasions before this point, so why would he be teaching them how to respond now?

Due to this question, Rashi understood that our verse cannot be referring to an ordinary response made when hearing God’s Name (such as reciting “Amen,” as Sifri suggests), but rather, that it must be referring to a more special and unusual response.

From an earlier comment of Rashi, the reader will already be familiar with the concept that God’s Name was pronounced in a special manner in the Holy Temple: “permission was only granted to mention the Explicit Name in the place where the Divine Presence comes, which is in the Temple in Jerusalem” (Rashi to Shemos 20:21).

So, since we have a precedent here (at the literal level) for an unusual manner in which God’s Name may be mentioned, Rashi concluded that our verse must be referring to the principle that: “After a blessing recited in the Temple, one responds, ‘Blessed be the Name of His glorious Kingdom!’”

And this also explains why Moshe made this statement at the end of his life, for it was only at this point that the Jewish people were poised to enter the Land of Israel and build the “Temple in Jerusalem,” where this law would become relevant, for the first time.

(Classic Questions)

The Explanation

In Parshas Ha’azinu, Moshe was addressing the Jewish people on the very last day of his life, after leading them for some forty years in the desert.

So, on reaching our verse, Rashi was troubled: Why is Moshe teaching the Jewish people now such a basic principle: “When I call out and mention God’s Name, you should ascribe greatness to our God and bless His Name”? Moshe had mentioned God’s Name on numerous occasions before this point, so why would he be teaching them how to respond now?
32:1-4

**The Song of Ha’azinu**

1 Listen, O heavens (and be my witness), for I will speak!
   Let the earth hear (and witness) the (following) words of my mouth!

2 Let my (Torah) teaching drip like rain (and give life to the world).
   Let my words flow like dew;
   Like storm winds (that bring rain) on vegetation (to make them grow),
   And like raindrops on grass.

3 When I call out (and mention) the Name of God,
   (Respond and) ascribe greatness to our God.

4 (Though He is powerful, like a) rock,
   His acts (of retribution) are perfectly balanced,
   For all His ways are just;

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**The Last Word**

The Maharal of Prague and the Mezritcher Maggid stressed the importance of reciting the Song of Ha’azinu and knowing it by heart (with its cantillation notes), for it purifies the mind and heart, and leads to longevity and success in business affairs. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch added: “If businessmen realized what benefit this would actually bring, they would be more careful about doing it!” (Memoirs ch. 29; Sefer Hasichos 5701, p. 56; ibid. 5696, p. 149).

This general relevance of the Song of Ha’azinu is stressed further by the fact that:

- The Song of Ha’azinu was chanted by the Levites throughout the year in the Holy Temple, when the additional offering of Shabbos was brought (Rosh Hashanah 31a).
- The mitzvah of writing a complete Torah scroll is derived from the verse, “write for yourselves this song” (Devarim 31:19; See Rambam cited in Classic Questions ibid.), alluding to the fact that the Song of Ha’azinu is connected with the entire Torah.
- Ha’azinu is the last Parsha of the Torah that is read on Shabbos (since Parshas Vezos Habrachah is read on Simchas Torah, which never occurs on Shabbos). Thus Ha’azinu is, effectively, the “conclusion” of the Shabbos Torah-reading cycle, which stresses its connection to the entire Torah.
- At the literal level, the Song was said with the intention that “you will command your children to be careful to observe all the words of this Torah” (v. 46).
- Parshas Ha’azinu spans the whole of chapter 32 (ב), of the Book of Devarim. This alludes to the fact that Ha’azinu is connected to the whole Torah, for the Torah begins with the letter ב, and ends with the letter כ. (Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ha’azinu 5735, 5741 & 5747)

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

“LET MY TEACHING DRIP LIKE RAIN...” (v. 2)

In the song of Ha’azinu, Torah is described as both “rain” and “dew” (v. 2). Physically speaking, rain and dew are both sources of nourishment, but the causes which bring them about differ significantly. Rain is formed from water which is lost to the atmosphere as vapor from the earth, then condenses and precipitates back—as the verse states: “a mist ascended from the earth, and then soaked the entire surface of the ground” (Bereishis 2:6). The precipitation of rain is thus dependent on prior evaporation from the earth.

Dew, by contrast, “never ceases” (Ta’anis 3b), and appears spontaneously, regardless of the amount of water which is being evaporated from the earth.

Rain thus represents the influx of Godliness which is bestowed from above, in direct response to the efforts of Man (on earth). Dew, on the other hand, alludes to that which God bestows unconditionally, disproportionately to man’s efforts.

So, since “rain” and “dew” in this verse both refer to Torah, it follows that “rain” represents the parts of Torah which are dependent on the degree of effort on the part of man to master them—namely, the extensive legal discussions of the Torah. The comparatively effortless “dew” alludes to the mystical parts of the Torah, which transcend the limitation of the human mind, since they “flow” directly from their Divine source (as the verse states, “Let my words flow like dew”).

Consequently, we find it is the “dew” of Torah with which God will ultimately revive the dead (and not the “rain”), since “all Jews” will enjoy resurrection and “have a portion in the world to come” (Sanhedrin 90a). And clearly, something that is bestowed upon all Jews, regardless of their spiritual standing, must be given from Above, like dew, regardless of the efforts made to elicit it. (Based on Sefer Hama’amirim Melukat vol. 1, p. 458ff.)
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

- How does one “Remember the days gone by, [and] reflect upon the years of one generation and another”? (v. 7)

RASHI: “Remember the days gone by”—what God did to past generations who provoked Him to anger. “Reflect upon the years of one generation and another”—the generation of Enosh, upon whom He inundated the waters of the Okeanos [Ocean], and the generation of the Flood, whom He washed away.

TORAS MENACHEM

“Days Gone By...” (v. 7)

Rashi’s comments to verse 7 prompt the following questions:

a.) What forced Rashi to conclude that, at the literal level, “one generation and another,” refers specifically to the generation of Enosh and the generation of the Flood, rather than to previous wicked generations in general?

b.) Why did Rashi bring a second interpretation, that “one generation and another,” refers to “the days of the Mashiach and the World to Come”?

c.) Why did Rashi reject the simple meaning of “fathers” and “elders,” and write instead that they refer to “prophets” and “sages”??
God is faithful (to reward his righteous ones),
(He even rewards the wicked) without injustice;
(All acknowledge that) He is righteous and upright (in judgment).

5 Corruption (is theirs), not His!
It is His children’s defect,
A crooked and twisted generation!

6 Is this how you repay God,
You disgraceful, unwise people?
Is He not your Father, your Master?
He has made you (a special nation),
And established you (to be self-sufficient).

7 Remember the days gone by (when God punished the wicked).
Reflect upon the years of one generation and another.
Ask your father, and he will tell you (about days gone by),
(Ask) your elders, and they will inform you (what the early generations did).

8 When the Supernal One gave nations their lot (with the Flood),
When He separated the sons of man (after the Tower of Bavel),
He (allowed them to exist by) establishing (seventy) distinct nations,
the Reed Sea upon them when they pursued you...What He did to Dasan and Aviram, sons of Eliau, Re’uwn’s son, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up.” (Ibid. 11:4-6).

So Rashi was troubled: After a lengthy introduction about the unprecedented qualities of the song of Ha’azinu, the command to “remember days gone by,” appears to be nothing new at all.

Rashi concluded that the innovative quality of our verse is that it represents a warning to the Jewish people of unprecedented severity. In the past, when contemplating the consequences of disobeying God, the Jewish people had been reminded by Moshe about the punishments received by those who worshiped Ba’al Pe’or, by the Egyptian people and by Dasan and Aviram, etc. But here, they were informed of incomparably more severe punishments:

“The generation of Enosh, whom He inundated with the waters of the Okyanus”—lived in close proximity to the garden of Eden, since the nations were only scattered after the Tower of Bavel was built (see Bereishis 11:9). Yet we find that God chose to punish them with a flood from the waters of the Okyanus, “the largest of all oceans” (Rashi to Bereishis 1:9), which was clearly a tremendous distance from the garden of Eden. This indicates what a major cataclysmic event this punishment must have been.

So by referring to the generation of Enosh, and certainly “the generation of the Flood,” Moshe was giving a warning that was incomparably more ominous than anything he had said in the past.

RASHI’S SECOND INTERPRETATION

Rashi was not entirely satisfied with the above solution (that Moshe was speaking of global punishments to entire generations), because the Torah stresses that the Song of Ha’azinu was addressed to each person individually—“into the ears of the entire assembly” (Devarim 31:30). So Rashi looked for another explanation which explained how Moshe was talking to each member of the Jewish community, on a personal level: “If you have not set your attention to the past, then, ‘reflect upon the years of one generation and another’—to recognize the future, that He has the

TORAS MENACHEM

The Torah teaches a person to “ask your father” about “one generation and another” (v. 7), i.e. about “the days of the Mashiach and the World to Come” (Rashi ibid., see Classic Questions), and, “he will tell you.” Here we see that a father should educate his child about the concept of Mashiach, and not leave the child to “pick up” knowledge of the matter by himself.

Even though the concept of Mashiach is a lofty one, with immense mystical significance which can only be fully appreciated by an adult, nevertheless, it remains one of the principles of our faith which needs to be taught to children even at a young age.

Obviously, the educational approach will be different in the case of children than with adults. For example, with a child we might stress the fact that with the coming of Mashiach “delicacies will be as plentiful as dust” (Rambam, end of Laws of Kings), as this is something which the child can relate to easily (and it is, of course, totally true). Naturally, when the child matures, so will his perception of Mashiach, but we cannot wait for children to grow up before teaching them about a major principle of our faith.

Rather, when still very young, a child should be taught to cry out earnestly and enthusiastically: “We want Mashiach now!”

(Based on Sichos Motzoi Shabbos Parshas Ha’azinu 5739; Terumah 5741)
לא מסוף בה יישאר: "וכי תלך ידוהי אם עקבי חכמל שלוחה:

ומעוזה אבריאי Marxism בעיתונות: 1. שמר הdebit והשיירה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 4. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

נָאַיָּיָהוּ פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 5. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

网讯 נָאַיָּהוּ פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 6. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 7. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 8. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 9. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 10. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 11. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 12. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 13. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 14. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 15. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 16. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה"

Containing פִּקְדָה אֵלֶּהוּ אֵלֶּהוּ 17. שמע ידוהי עקבי חכמל שלוחה: "הלכות ידוהיعم עקבי חכמל שלוחה".
(For the sake of) the children of Israel (who would later arise),
(And) number (seventy souls).

9 (He saved all the nations) because of God’s portion, His people, (hidden among them),
Ya’akov (and his sons were) His inheritance,
(For Ya’akov’s merit was threefold, like the strands of) a rope

10 He found them (faithful to Him, accepting the Torah) in a desert land,
(Following Moshe) into a desolate, howling wasteland.
He encompassed them (with clouds),
And bestowed understanding upon them (through the Torah);
He protected them (from snakes and scorpions) like the pupil of His eye.

11 (He guided them with compassion) like an eagle (that) wakens its nest (gently),
Hovering over its young (without touching them);
It spreads its wings, taking them,
Carrying them (safely) on its upper side.

12 God alone guided them,
And there was no strange god (able to attack) them.

13 He settled them on (the Land of Israel), the peak of the earth,
So they could eat (its fast-growing) produce of the field.
He let them suck honey from (its figs, which grow) from a rock(y, hard crust),
And oil from the (olives that grow at the) hard, rock(y ground of Gush Chalav).

14 The cream of cattle and the milk of sheep,
With the fat of lambs,
Fattened rams from Bashan and he-goats,
With fat kernels of wheat.
You will drink the blood of grapes, delicious (wine).

15 But Yeshurun became fat and rebelled;
You grew fat, rotund and obese;
(Israel) forsook the God Who made them,
And disgraced the Rock of their salvation.
Seder Hadoros relates that Ramban once confronted his former student, named Avner, and asked him why he had strayed from the path of observant Judaism. Avner replied that Ramban had once taught that “everything is to be found in the Song of Ha'azinu,” and Avner found the idea so utterly preposterous that it led him to lose faith. When Ramban stated that he still held by his assertion, Avner challenged him, “If so, where is my name to be found in the song?” Ramban turned to the wall, praying to God, and it soon occurred to him that the third letter of each word in verse 26 spelled Avner’s name: רָבָּנָּן רְאוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל רְאוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל נַעֲשֶׂה רַבָּנָּן (Rav Avner is shown to be the head of Israel, and Ramban is the head of Rav Avner). On hearing this, Avner repented and mended his ways.

Even though Avner had strayed far from the path of observance, his name was nevertheless recorded in the Torah with his title, רְבָּנָּן (Rav). Avner, referring to his status as a fully observant Jew, after he had returned—for this was indeed his true essence.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ha'azinu 5742)

**Sparks of Chasidus**

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(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ha'azinu 5742)
They made him furious with alien (worship);
They made Him angry with abominable acts.

They sacrificed to demons, which have no power,
Deities with which they were not acquainted,
New (idols) that just arrived (and were not even known by idolaters themselves),
Which your fathers did not fear.

You forgot the Rock Who gave birth to you;
You forgot the God Who delivered you (from the womb).

God saw this and became angry,
Provoked by His sons and daughters.

He said: I will hide My face from them;
I will see what their end will be.
For they are a generation that changes (My goodwill into anger);
Children that have no (signs of My good) upbringing.

They have made Me furious with something that is not a god,
Provoked My anger with their nonsense.
So I will make them furious by a nation devoid (of a name),
I will provoke their anger with a vile (heretical) nation.

For a fire burned in My nostrils,
And it will blaze (in you) to the lowest depths (of your foundations).
It will consume (your) land and its produce,
Setting aflame (Jerusalem which is), founded upon mountains.

I will heap misfortunes upon them.
I will use up My arrows on them.

They will sprout hair from famine, be attacked by flying (demons),
And be cut down by (the Demon) Meriri.
I will send animal’s teeth upon them,
With the venom of those (snakes) that slither in the dust.

From outside (the city), the sword (of invading armies) will bereave (them),
And terror (will destroy) the chambers (of the heart),
(Of even) young men and maidens,
Suckling babes with old men.

I said (in My heart) that I would scatter them,
Causing their memory to cease from mankind.
In truth, however, one cannot compare these two cases. For the verse in Parshas Bechukosai is referring to the annihilation of the enemy, “Five of you will be able to chase away a hundred....They will fall by the sword before you” (ibid.), whereas the verse here is speaking only of chasing away the enemy. Thus, it would be unreasonable to compare the two cases (Sotah 11a).

MASSIL LEVAD: Alternatively, one could argue that the verse in Parshas Bechukosai is referring to five of the weakest members of the Jewish army, chasing away a hundred members of the enemy, as Rashi writes there explicitly. Whereas here, the verse is speaking of one of the strongest members of the enemy army.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

• Is the ratio of one member of the enemy chasing one thousand of Israel a fair punishment? (v. 30)

TOSFOS: When speaking of God’s “measure of retribution” (the enemy chasing away the Jewish people), there is a ratio of 1:1000, “How can one (of us) pursue a thousand (of Israel).” Yet, when speaking of God’s corresponding “measure of benevolence,” the Torah states (in Parshas Bechukosai), “Five of you will be able to chase away a hundred” (Vayikra 26:8), a ratio of just 1:20. How is this to be reconciled with the principle that “God’s measure of benevolence always exceeds His measure of retribution”?

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27 If it were not for the enemy’s anger heaped up (against them),
   Lest their adversaries misconstrue (their power) to a foreign (power);
   Lest they claim, ‘Our hand was triumphant!’
   And, ‘It was not God who did all of this!’

28 For (the enemy of Israel) is a nation devoid of good advice,
   And they have no understanding (to see that their victory would come from God).

29 If they were wise, they would understand this;
   they would reflect upon (Israel’s) demise.

30 (They would have thought): How can one (of us) pursue a thousand (of Israel),
   And two put ten thousand to flight,
   Unless their Rock has sold them out,
   And God has delivered them (into our hands)?

31 For their rock is not (a true power) like our Rock.
   (If) our enemies judge (and defeat us it is because our Rock has decreed so).

32 (God says: I wish to scatter Israel) because their vine is of the vine of Sodom,
   and of the (grain) fields of Amorah;
   Their grapes are grapes of bitterness,
   They (deserve) clusters (with) bitter juice.

33 Their (cup of punishing) wine (will be like) the bitter venom of serpents,
   and the cruel poison of cobras.

34 Is not (the evidence of all their wicked actions) stored away with Me,
   Sealed up in My treasuries?

35 Within Me vengeance is (prepared), and it will repay,
   At the moment their foothold (of merit of their fathers) falters.
   (As soon as I decide to punish them) the day of their reckoning (will be) close,
   And what is destined for them will happen quickly.”

36 When God will judge His people (and bring these sufferings upon them),
   He will (then) change His mind about His servants,
Why does “I injure and I heal” come after “I cause death and I bring to life”?

Talmud: Rava noted an inconsistency between two statements. The verse states, “I cause death and I bring to life,” and then it states, “I injure and I heal.” If He can bring to life, does it not go without saying that He can heal?

Rather, God is saying: To the same person that I bring death, I will bring life, just as I heal the same person that I injure. [Likewise] our Sages taught: When the verse states, “I cause death and I bring to life,” you might think that it is speaking of the natural phenomenon where one person dies and another comes to life. Therefore, the verse states, “I strike and I injure,” to teach you that just as one person is injured and then healed, so too, this same person who dies, is brought to life. From here we have a proof from the Torah that the dead will be revived.

Another interpretation: First, I will bring to life those that I caused to die [and the injuries that they had when they died, will temporarily persist]. Then I will heal the injuries that I caused (Pesachim 68a).

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Toras Menachem

(“Into our hands?”) I.e. we are not speaking here about a simple war between Israel and its enemies, but rather, a case where the enemy was attacking Israel through God’s direct intervention.

At the literal level, the principle that, “God’s measure of benevolence always exceeds His measure of retribution,” only applies in a case where Israel is fighting its enemies without the direct intervention of God. Then we would argue that the Jewish people do not deserve to be punished at war for their sins (1:1000) to a greater degree than they are rewarded at war for their merits (1:20).

However, in an exceptional case where “their Rock has sold them out, and God has delivered them,” the above logic clearly does not apply.

In fact, when God intervenes, not even one soldier is required to secure a defeat of even a thousand soldiers, as we find in the case of the Egyptian army, which numbered many thousands and yet drowned at sea, without the need to be fought at all.

Thus, the fact that even one soldier is required here is an expression of God’s kindness, because in truth, not even that one is required.

However, in Parshas Bechukosai, the Torah is speaking of the usual scenario, where God does not make any direct intervention. And in such a case we are promised, “If you pursue (the study of) My laws (in order to) guard My commands and observe them....Five of you will be able to chase away a hundred....They will fall by the sword before you.”

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Ha’azinu 5733)
When He sees that the power (of the enemy) is increasing,
And no one (among Israel) has a source of salvation or help.

Then He will say: Where is their deity (that they worshiped),
The rock in which they trusted?

Which ate the fat of their sacrifices,
And drank the wine of their libations?
Let them stand up and help you!
Let them be your shelter!

See now that it is Me! I am the One!
There is no god (to stand against) Me.
I cause death and I bring to life.
I injure and I heal.
And no one can rescue from My Hand (those who sin against Me)!

For (when the Jewish people repent, I will turn My anger upon the nations!*)
I (will) raise up My Hand to (Myself in) heaven,
And say: Just as I live forever,
(I swear that) when I sharpen the blade of My sword,
And My hand grasps judgment (to punish the enemies of Israel),

THE EXPLANATION

Rashi did not find it necessary to address the Talmud’s question here, as
with a knowledge of Rashi’s prior comments, the matter can be worked out
with simple logic.

In Parshas Mishpatim, the Torah states, “If two men quarrel, and one
strikes the other...he must (pay all) his medical (fees).” (Shemos 21:18-19,
according to Rashi). From here the reader will have gathered that, at the
literal level of scriptural interpretation, God does not heal the sick directly,
but rather, through the agency of a doctor.

Thus our verse, “I injure and I heal,” is not superfluous, for it teaches us
a new piece of information: that, in some cases, God heals an injury
directly, without the intervention of a doctor.

And the distinction between these two cases is made clear by scripture.
When the injury is caused by man (“two men quarrel, and one strikes
the other”), then the cure comes (from God, but) via the agency of man,
i.e. a doctor.

But when the injury is caused by God (“I injure”), as a punishment for
sin, then the cure also comes directly from God (“I heal”).

PROOF FOR THE REVIVAL OF THE DEAD

In clarifying Rashi’s approach here, we appear to have created another
problem. For in rejecting the Talmud’s interpretation, we also appear to
have rejected the Talmud’s conclusion, “From here we have a proof from
the Torah that the dead will be revived.”

Is it now the case that, at the literal level of scriptural interpretation
(adhered to by Rashi,) our verse does not provide proof that the dead will
ultimately be revived?

In truth, however, at the literal level, our verse must be speaking of the
death and subsequent life of the same person, for otherwise the verse
would not be teaching the reader anything new. The reader already
knows that God created the heavens and the earth (Bereishis 1:1), and that
“there is none other besides Him,” (Devarim 4:35), so if the verse “I bring to
life,” simply means that God causes new people to be born in this world,
then the verse is not teaching the reader something that he did not know
already. Clearly then, the verse, “I cause death and I bring to life,” must
be referring to the same person, who first dies and then comes back to life.

So, in the final analysis we do indeed “have a proof from the Torah,” at
the literal level, “that the dead will be revived.”

But we are now left with a further problem. For having proved that it is
self-evident, at the literal level, that our verse refers to the revival of
the dead, why did the Talmud need to devise an elaborate proof for
this point?

The answer lies in the fact that the Talmud was written for a readership
which was familiar with Talmudic teachings, whereas Rashi’s commentary
was written for those who were beginning their studies. Thus, the Talmud
found it necessary to prove that our verse indicates that the dead will be
revived, despite the fact that the matter appears to be obvious at the literal

* At first glance, verse 40 represents a sudden change of topic which appears to be out of context with the verses that precede it. For the previous verses describe the sins of the Jewish people, whereas from verse 40, the topic switches to describe God’s punishment of the nations who harmed Israel. Furthermore, the two passages are connected by the word “*” (meaning “for,” or “because”) at the beginning of verse 40, suggesting that the reason why God will punish the nations is because the Jewish people will sin! Rashi addresses this matter by explaining that the use of the word “*” here suggests: “For in My anger, I will raise up My hand to Myself, making an oath.” Where do we see God’s anger being mentioned? In Parshas Nitzavim it is written that when the Jewish people will repent, “God will place all these curses upon your enemies” (Devarim 30:7), which includes the curse that “I will become very angry with them” (ibid. 31:17). Thus, according to Rashi the verse is suggesting that after the Jewish people repent, God will redirect His anger towards the nations. (Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ha’azinu 5736).
Therefore, the Talmud was forced to contradict this notion and show (through an elaborate proof) that, to the contrary, our verse does provide support for the revival of the dead.

However, Rashi presumed that his readership would not yet be familiar with the Talmudic teaching, “There are three keys in God’s hand etc.,” so Rashi did not need to prove that our verse could have any other meaning than its literal interpretation—that the same person to whom “I cause death, I will bring to life,” directly. Consequently, if our verse has already been used to provide proof that God does this directly without an agent, then it can no longer be used to prove another point, that the revival of the dead has a basis in the Torah.

(Toras Menachem)}
41 (At that time) the nations will sing praises for His people!
When (they see how) He will avenge the blood of His servants (that they spilled),
Inflict revenge upon His enemies (for the robberies and losses they caused),
And appease His land (and) His people (for their distress).

42 I will make My arrows drunk with (enemy) blood,
And My sword will consume (their) flesh;
On account of the blood of the slain (of Israel) and the captives (seized),
From (even) the first attacks of the enemy.

43 I will bring vengeance upon (them, for they are) My enemies (too).
I will repay those who hate Me.

Moshe came and spoke all the words of this song into the ears of the people, he and Hoshe’a the son of Nun.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why will the nations praise Israel? (v. 43)

Rashi: At that time, the nations will praise Israel, saying: “See how praiseworthy this nation is, that they remained attached to God throughout all the hardships that they suffered and they did not forsake Him!

Why are both Moshe and Yehoshua mentioned? (v. 44)

Rashi: It was a rulership of two pairs, [two leaders each with their own spokesman through whom they lectured. For complete]

The Explanation

On reading that the nations will “sing praises” for the Jewish people, Rashi was troubled by an apparent inconsistency between this verse and an earlier statement made in the song of Ha’azinu. In verse 6, Moshe said, “Is this how you repay God, you disgraceful, unwise people? Is He not your Father, your Master? He has made you (a special nation), and established you (to be self-sufficient).” Consequently, upon reading in our verse that the nations will praise Israel because “they remained attached to God throughout all the hardships that they suffered, etc.”?

Moshe & Yehoshua (v. 44)

Rashi’s self-declared task is to explain the literal meaning of scripture, and not to cite Talmudic and Midrashic teachings which are not connect-
ed with a verse at the literal level. But in his commentary to verse 44, he cites no less than three apparently non-literal teachings of the Sages: a.) About the “rulership of two pairs,” from the Talmud (Sotah 13b); b.) The appointment of Yehoshua’s “spokesman” (Sifri, near beginning of Vayeilech); and, c.) The reason why our verse uses the name Hoshe’a, and not Yehoshua (Sifri to this verse). Why are these three teachings necessary to understand our verse at the literal level?

A further problem here, is that our verse is not the first occasion that the Torah refers to the joint role of Moshe and Yehoshua on the last day of Moshe’s life. In Parshas Vayeilech, the Torah also states: “Moshe and Yehoshua went, and stood in the Tent of Meeting” (31:14). Furthermore, at the very beginning of Parshas Vayeilech, Moshe also touched on this matter, when he said “I am no longer (permitted by God) to lead (you)” (ibid. v. 2). So why did Rashi not address this issue of the joint leadership when the matter first arose, rather than here?

The Explanation

Even though Moshe declared at the beginning of Parshas Vayeilech that his leadership was ending, he immediately clarified that this was because “God said to me, ‘You may not cross this (River) Jordan,’” (ibid.), suggesting that his leadership was actually going to continue until the Jewish people had crossed the Jordan. So from Parshas Vayeilech, there is no proof, at the literal level, that Yehoshua had yet been given any leadership position at all.
Likewise, the fact that “Moshe and Yehoshua went, and stood in the Tent of Meeting” (31:14), does not prove that Yehoshua had begun a new leadership position, for at the literal level, they were merely following orders from God: “Call Yehoshua and stand in the Tent of Meeting” (ibid.).

It is only upon reading in our verse, “Moshe came and spoke all the words of this song into the ears of the people, he and Hoshe’a the son of Nun,” that we have clear proof of Yehoshua actually beginning a leadership role alongside Moshe.

Therefore Rashi explained, “It was a rulership of two pairs...Moshe appointed a spokesman for Yehoshua,” for addressing the people by means of a spokesman was the privilege of the leader of the Jewish people, a role which Moshe and Yehoshua now shared.

However, this begs the question: Usually, a new leader begins office only after the passing of the previous leader. Why should Yehoshua’s leadership have started before Moshe passed away?

To explain this, Rashi continues: “So that the Jewish people would not become arrogant, for although he was given high status, he humbled himself as he was at the beginning”—a powerful lesson for all those who are appointed to positions of authority.
Moshe’s Concluding Words

32:45 When Moshe finished speaking all these words to all of Israel, he said to them, “Turn your hearts to all of the words which I am bearing witness for you today, so that you will command your children to be careful to observe all the words of this Torah. For it is not an empty thing for you (for which you will not be rewarded). Rather, it is your life! Through this thing, you will lengthen your days upon the land of which you are crossing over the Jordan, to take possession.”

Moshe is Told To Ascend Mount Nevo

32:48 God spoke to Moshe on that very day, saying, “Climb up the Avarite mountains here, (at) Mount Nevo—which is in the land of Mo’av that is facing Jericho—and see the Land of Cana’an, which I am giving to the children of Israel as a possession. Then die on the mountain upon which you are climbing and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aharon

Classic Questions

- Aren’t the words “on that very day” superfluous? (v. 48)
  - **Rashi:** Scripture uses the phrase “on that very day,” in three places [that have the same implication]:
    1. Concerning Noach it is written, “On that very day...Noach came into [the Ark]...” (Bereishis 7:13), indicating that daylight was shining [when he came in]. For the people of his generation were saying, “We swear that we will not allow him to enter the Ark if we notice him! Furthermore, we will take axes [to hold back Noach] and sledgehammers to smash the ark!”
    2. Concerning Egypt it is written, “[It happened] on that very day that God took [the children of Israel] out [of the land of Egypt]” (Shemos 12:51). For the Egyptians were saying, “We swear that we will not allow them to leave if we notice them! Furthermore, we will take swords and weapons [of self-defense], and kill them [if need be]!”
    3. Likewise here, concerning Moshe’s death, it is written, “on that very day.” For the Jewish people were saying, “We swear, that if we notice Moshe [is going to die], we will not let him! He is the man who brought us out of Egypt! He split the Reed Sea for us! He brought the manna down for us! He made flocks of quails fly over to us! He brought up the well for us! And he gave us the Torah! We will not let him [die]!”
    - But God said, “I will bring them out in broad daylight! If anyone is able to resist, let him come and resist!”

Rashi concludes that the words “on that very day” allude to the Midrashic teaching that “God said, ‘I will take him in broad daylight!’” in response to the efforts of the Jewish people to avert Moshe’s death.

However, at the literal level, this account is difficult to accept. For we are speaking here of the generation that entered the Land of Israel, who—unlike their parents—did not rebel against God and remained attached to God, your God” (Devarim 4:4). So why would a righteous generation attempt to defy God’s explicit wish that Moshe die at this time?

Moshe’s Passing on the Mountain (v. 48)

Rashi’s comments to verse 48 prompt the following questions:

a.) Rashi writes, “The Jewish people were saying, ‘We swear, that if we notice Moshe [is going to die], we will not let him!’” At first glance, this appears to be utterly absurd. Life and death is something that is in the hands of God and cannot be decided by man. How could the Jewish people possibly “not let” Moshe die?

b.) Is it really necessary to know that, “Scripture uses the phrase, ‘on that very day,’ in three places, etc.”? Why was it not sufficient for Rashi to explain our verse alone?

c.) Rashi does not explain why Noach’s contemporaries wished to stop him from entering the Ark, nor does he explain why the Egyptians did not want the Jewish people to leave Egypt, because the reason is obvious. So why did Rashi explain that the Jewish people did not want Moshe to die because “he is the man who brought us out of Egypt! etc.”? Surely this is obvious too?

The Explanation

In our verse, the phrase “on that very day” appears to be superfluous. Since no word in the Torah can be devoid of meaning, Rashi searched for a teaching that would explain why the Torah used this extra phrase.

When the Jewish people sought to annul the decree against Moshe’s passing, God did not reply, “If anyone is able to resist, let him come and resist!” (see Classic Questions). The inner reason for this is because if the Jewish people had actually resisted, they would have indeed reversed the Divine decree against Moshe’s passing. For when the Jewish community is united, they have the power to nullify a Divine decree, even after the decree is sealed (See Rosh Hashanah 18a).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 346)
In order to answer this question, Rashi cited the fact that, “Scripture uses the phrase, “on that very day,” in three places....” For by demonstrating that this phrase consistently has the connotation of a rebellion against God, Rashi strengthens his assertion that this too is the meaning of the phrase here.

How, indeed, did the Jewish people intend to rebel against God and avert Moshe’s death? Rashi stresses that this case is, “likewise here...” i.e., similar in nature to the previous two cases that he cited, about Noach and the Egyptian people. Both these two cases involved a rebellious group which plotted to prevent the relocation of another party: Noach’s contemporaries wished to stop him from relocating into the Ark, and the Egyptian people planned to stop the Jewish people from leaving Egypt.

So, “likewise here,” it follows that the Jewish people wished to avert Moshe’s death by preventing him from relocating to another place, namely, to Mount Nevo. For God had said, “Climb up the Avarite mountains here, (at) Mount Nevo....Then die on the mountain” (v. 49-50), indicating that Moshe’s death was to be the result of a Divine decree (not from natural causes), which would occur after ascending the mountain. So the people figured: If Moshe does not “climb up Mount Nevo,” then the decree will not take effect, and he will not die.
died on the double mountain and was gathered to his people. 

51 For, in the presence of the children of Israel, you (caused people to) betray Me at the waters of Merivas-Kadaish, in the desert of Tzin, for you did not (allow) My (Name) to be sanctified in the presence of the children of Israel.  

52 While you will see the land from afar, you will not come there, to the land I am giving to the children of Israel.

—Toras Menachem

However, the question still remains: How could a righteous generation of Jewish people attempt to defy God’s Will and prevent Moshe from dying by Divine decree?

The Jewish People’s Argument

If a person helps you, there is a Torah obligation not to be ungrateful to that person. We see this, at the literal level, from the example of first-fruits which must be taken to the Temple from one’s portion of the Land of Israel, “[To show] that you are not ungrateful [to God]” (Rashi to Devarim 26:3).

Moshe had helped the Jewish people in so many ways: “He is the man who brought us out of Egypt! He split the Reed Sea for us! He brought the manna down for us! He made flocks of quails fly over to us! He brought up the well for us! And he gave us the Torah!” So the Jewish people had a Torah obligation to show gratitude to Moshe, and help him, in any way possible. Thus, when Moshe faced a decree of death, the Jewish people were obliged to help Moshe, by restraining him from going on the mountain where the decree was to be enacted.

So there were two conflicting obligations here: On the one hand, Moshe was required by the Torah to ascend the mountain. But, on the other hand, the Jewish people were required by the Torah to ensure that Moshe did not ascend the mountain!

In the final analysis the Jewish people decided that their obligation superseded that of Moshe’s, for the following reason:

The Torah states, “God spoke to Moshe on that very day, saying... ‘Climb up...Mount Nevo...Then die on the mountain,’” indicating that the requirement to ascend the mountain was incumbent on Moshe alone. As far as the Jewish people were concerned, they had one single obligation resting upon them which they were required to carry out: to save Moshe. Even though this would, in turn, prevent Moshe from carrying out his obligation, this would nevertheless not be considered a transgression on Moshe’s part, but rather, Moshe would be exempt due to circumstances beyond his control (cf. Devarim 22:26 and Rashi ibid.). And this, reasoned the Jewish people, would be less of a problem than failing to discharge their own Torah obligation to save Moshe, which constituted circumstances within their control.

Furthermore, the very fact that God had put it within the control of the Jewish people to nullify the decree was taken as a hint by them from God that they should do everything in their power to keep Moshe alive.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 339ff.)
Parshas Vezos Habrachah ("And this is the blessing") is
the concluding Parsha of the entire Torah. It is not
read on Shabbos, but on the festival of Simchas Torah.
This has the following significance:

- The Torah begins with Parshas Bereishis ("In the
beginning"), which teaches us the general principle
that "God created the world for the sake of the Torah
which is called, 'the beginning of His way,'" (Rashi to
Bereishis 1:1). The subsequent parshiyos continue to
discuss various details concerning how the Torah’s
plan is to be enacted, but on reaching the end of the
Torah we return again to the general theme and
purpose of the Torah: “This is the blessing,” i.e. that
God’s blessings are brought into the world via the
observance of Torah.

- The blessings mentioned here by Moshe in this Parsha
are considerably greater than any of the blessings given
earlier in the Torah, such as those given by Yitzchak
and Yaa’cov. And yet, in contrast to all the other
Parshiyos of the Torah, this Parsha is not read amid the
spiritually uplifting atmosphere of Shabbos, but on a
weekday. (And while it is a festival day, it is
nevertheless of a lower sanctity than Shabbos, as
evidenced by the fact that many acts that are forbidden
on Shabbos are permitted on a festival). So with
Parshas Vezos Habrachah we witness two extremes:
It is the Parsha which contains the most blessings, and
yet it is read on a day which is of lesser holiness.
This indicates that the blessings read here are very
powerful, for the ability to penetrate through to a lower
sphere (a weekday, as opposed to Shabbos) indicates
that the blessings come from a higher source.

- Furthermore, the Parsha is called, “And this is (vezos)
the blessing,” indicating that we are speaking here
about blessings whose benefits are visible and
apparent, to the extent that one can actually “point to
it with one’s finger” (cf. Rashi to Shemos 15:2), and say,
“This is the blessing!”

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Balak 5740, Sicha of 6th of
Tishrei 5734 and Sicha of 6th night of Succos 5742)
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Moshe’s Final Blessings

And this is the blessing which Moshe, a man of God, gave to the children of Israel, (shortly) before his death.

2 He (first) said (words of praise about God): “God came (out) from Sinai (to meet the Jewish people), and He shined His glory to them (after coming) from Se’ir, (where the children of Eisav had declined to accept the Torah). He appeared (to them after coming) from Mount Paran (where the children of Yishma’el had declined to accept the Torah). He came (to the Jewish people along) with some of the holy myriads. (Then He gave) them a fiery Law, (written with) His right Hand.

3 He also showed affection for the (tribes, who are all) nations (unto themselves). All the holy (souls of the righteous) are in Your hand (a privilege which they deserve), for they let themselves be placed at Your feet (at Mount Sinai), bearing (the yoke of) Your utterances (and decrees with joy).

4 The Torah (which) Moshe commanded us is an inheritance for the congregation of Ya’akov, (which will never be abandoned).

5 Whenever the people gathered as a numerous group, with the tribes of Israel together, (they always accepted God’s rulership), so He was King in Yeshurun (and He wished to bless them).

Moshe Blesses the Tribes

33:6

“May Re’uvin live (in this world), and (when he reaches the World to Come, may he) not “die” (because of the incident with Bilhah*). May his people be counted in the (official) number (of the tribes, and not be punished for his sin by being excluded).”

7 The following was (said) about Yehudah. He said, “Listen, God, to Yehudah’s voice (when he prays to You), and bring him (in peace) to his people (back from war). May his hands do battle for him (successfully), and may You be a help against his enemies.”

8 About Levi he said: “(God!) Your Tumim and Urim belong to Your pious man, (Levi), who (remained faithful when) you tested him at Massah, (and when) you tried him at the waters of Merivah.

9 He said about his (non-Levite grand-)father (from) his mother’s side, who was guilty of perpetrating the sin of the Golden Calf, ‘I do not see him (as my grandfather any more),’ neither did he recognize

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SECOND READING

“Whenever the People Gathered...The Tribes of Israel Together” (v. 5)

Verse 5 speaks of Jewish unity (achdus), “the tribes of Israel together,” a level which is in fact higher than Jewish brotherly love (ahavas visra’el). For even when you fulfill the command to “love your fellow like (you love) yourself” (Vayikra 19:18), there nevertheless remains two separate entities: “your fellow” and “yourself.” But when achdus is achieved, all Jewish people come together as one single entity (“the tribes of Israel together”).

Nevertheless, the Torah did not mandate an explicit command that the Jewish people reach the state of achdus, because achdus is a direct consequence and an inevitable progression from loving one’s fellow as one loves oneself. In fact, these two stages are indicated by the Alter Rebbe in Tanya (ch. 32). First he writes that one should love every Jew individually by virtue of the souls they all possess, since, “Who knows their greatness and exaltedness in their root and source in the living God?” And then, one progresses to appreciate how all Jews are united as one single entity, since “they all have one Father.”

This theme of Jewish unity is especially stressed on Simchas Torah, when this Parsha is read, a time when all Jews express their connection to Torah, not through study (in which everyone is on a different level), but rather, by dancing with their feet, in which all Jews are equal.

(Based on Sicha of the night of Simchas Torah 5743)

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* See Bereishis 35:22 and Rashi ibid.
his (guilty, non-Levite half-)brothers, nor did he know his (guilty non-Levite grand-)children, (and he
loyally followed God’s orders to kill them. But none of the Levites were guilty), because they kept Your
word (never worshiping idols) and kept Your covenant (of circumcision, when others lapsed). They will
teach Your laws to Ya’akov, and Your Torah to Israel (because they are fit to do so). They will place
incense before You, and burnt-offerings upon Your Altar. May God bless him with his possessions, and
may You favor the work of his hands. May You smash the loins of his foes and his enemies, so that they
will never recover.”

10 They will teach Y our laws to Y a’akov, and Y our T orah to Israel (because they are fit to do so). They will place
incense before Y ou, and burnt-offerings upon Y our Altar.

11 May God bless him with his possessions, and
may Y ou favor the work of his hands. May Y ou smash the loins of his foes and his enemies, so that they
will never recover.”

12 About Binyamin he said, “May God’s beloved dwell securely with Him, (when the Holy Temple will
be built in Binyamin’s portion. May the Divine presence) cover him (and protect him) forever, and dwell
among (the high places of Binyamin’s territory, which are likened to) his shoulders.”

13 About Y osef he said: “May his land be blessed by God, with delicacies (nourished by rains) from
the skies, from dew, and (from underground waters that rise) from the depths that lie below. (May it be blessed with) the delicacies of produce (sweetened by) the sun, and with delicacies from crops
(ripened) by moon(light. (May it be blessed) with crops (that ripen) early (on its) mountains, and with
delicacies from its hills, all year round. (May it be blessed) with the abundant delicacies of the
(low)lands, through the goodwill (of God, who was first revealed to Me) dwelling in the thornbush.
May (all this) come upon Y osef’s head, upon the crown of the one (who was) separated from his brothers
(when they sold him. 17 Yehoshua, a descendant of Yosef, is like) his firstborn ox (for he is to be a
powerful king, and) glory will be (given to) him. His horns are (beautiful like the) horns of an oryx.
With them, he will gore (thirty-one) nations together, (as far as) the ends of the Land (of Israel).
These (nations will number) tens of thousands (all killed by Yehoshua, a descendant) of Efrayim,
(besides) the thousands (to be killed in Midian by Gideon, a descendent) of Menasheh.”

14 (May it be blessed with) the delicacies of produce (sweetened by) the sun, and with delicacies from crops
(ripened) by moon(light. 15 May it be blessed) with crops (that ripen) early (on its) mountains, and with
delicacies from its hills, all year round. (May it be blessed) with the abundant delicacies of the
(low)lands, through the goodwill (of God, who was first revealed to Me) dwelling in the thornbush.
May (all this) come upon Y osef’s head, upon the crown of the one (who was) separated from his brothers
(when they sold him. 17 Yehoshua, a descendant of Yosef, is like) his firstborn ox (for he is to be a
powerful king, and) glory will be (given to) him. His horns are (beautiful like the) horns of an oryx.
With them, he will gore (thirty-one) nations together, (as far as) the ends of the Land (of Israel).
These (nations will number) tens of thousands (all killed by Yehoshua, a descendant) of Efrayim,
(besides) the thousands (to be killed in Midian by Gideon, a descendent) of Menasheh.”

18 About Zevulun he said: “Succeed, Zevulun, when you go out (to work), and Yissachar, in your tents
(of Torah, where you will establish the calendar. Then, when the festivals arrive), they will call (all the

● Why is Zevulun mentioned before Yissachar ? (v. 18)
RASHI: Zevulun and Yissachar entered into a partnership: “Zevulun will live by the sea coast” (Bereishis 49:13), and go out in ships to trade. He would make a profit and feed Yissachar’s mouth, while they would sit and occupy themselves with Torah. Therefore, Moshe mentioned Zevulun before Yissachar [even though the latter was older], because Yissachar’s Torah was supported by Zevulun.

TORAS MENACHEM

At first glance, however, this appears to be difficult to accept. For the approach of Zevulun is a temporary one which will cease after the coming of Mashiach, when all Jews will become Torah scholars. How then could it be suggested that the purpose of Creation is furthered to a greater extent by Zevulun?

The answer is that a true “home for God below” can only be made amid the Torah and the Jewish people, which are eternal. The businessman makes a “home for God below” to a greater extent, not due to his involvement with the physical world per se, but due to the effect that this involvement has on his soul. For when the businessman learns Torah, devotes himself to mitzvos and lengthy prayer, and retains his Jewish values in the alien environment of the workplace, he reveals the powers of his soul to a greater extent. And this makes his bond with God, down here in this world, eternal and lasting under all circumstances.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 134ff.)
Jewish) people to mount (Moriah, and) there, they will slaughter offerings of righteousness. For (Zevulun— and Yissachar, whom they support)—will be nourished by the abundance of the seas, and by the valuable things hidden in the sand.”

20 About Gad he said: “Blessed is He Who grants an expanding (territory) to Gad, who lives (in a territorial stronghold) like a lion. He will tear off an arm (of his enemy in one blow, along) with the head.

21 He saw (fit to take) the first portion (of the land that was conquered) for himself (in the territory of Sichon and Og), because there the (burial plot of (Moshe) the lawgiver is hidden. (Gad) came (out to war) at the head of the people (even after he had acquired his own portion), doing what was right for God, and what is lawful with Israel.”

22 About Dan he said: “Dan is a young lion (for he, too, has a territorial stronghold. His land drinks from a) stream that runs from Bashan.”

23 About Naftali he said: “Naftali’s land brings) satisfaction (to its inhabitants) and is filled with God’s blessing. Take possession of (part of) the south of the (Kineret) Sea (to spread your fishing nets).”

24 About Asher he said: “May Asher be blessed with sons. He will be pleasing to his brothers (through producing special oils), and he will (have so much) oil (that he will be able to) immerse his foot.”

Moshe Blesses All Israel

33:25

May your locks (on your border towns) be (strong like) iron and copper. May the days of your old age be like the days of your youth.

26 “Yeshurun, there is none like God! (God), Who rides the heavens is at your assistance! (He rides) the heavens in His majesty!”

27 “(The heavens) are the abode for God, Who precedes all. The mighty ones of the world are found (only) below. He expelled the enemy from before you, and said, ‘Destroy!’ 28 Israel will live safely and (it

Classic Questions

What did Moshe promise in verse 28? Was it fulfilled?

Talmud: Moshe, our teacher, decreed four decrees on the Jewish people, and then four prophets came and annulled them.

[One of the decrees was that] Moshe said: “Israel will live safely and alone, like Ya’akov” (v. 28)—as if to say: “When will the Jewish people live safely? When they will be righteous like Ya’akov.”

Amos came and annulled this decree, as the verse states: “Please refrain! How will Ya’akov survive [for he is small]?!” (Amos 7:5)—as if to say: “Who could be as righteous as Ya’akov? Such people are very small in number!”

And the verse continues (ibid. 6): “God changed His mind about this...” [and canceled the decree]. (Makos 24a, according to Rivan).

Moshe’s Decree (v. 28)

The Talmud’s statement, that verse 28 was a decree of Moshe which was later annulled by Amos, prompts the following questions:

a.) How could Amos annul Moshe’s decree, when according to Jewish law, a decree can only be annulled by a Beis Din (court of law) and not by a prophet? (see Rambam, Laws of Rebellious Individuals 2:2)

b.) Furthermore, a decree may only be annulled by a Beis Din which is “greater than the first in size and wisdom” (ibid). So how could Moshe’s decree be annulled at all, since Moshe was the greatest sage of all?

The Explanation

In order to answer these problems, let us first pose another question. The Talmud states, “Moshe was a lover of the Jewish people,” (Menachos 65a).
concerning a small child whose ability to regenerate certain tissues ends at the end of the third year of the child’s life. What will happen, then, if the
A possible scenario that can arise as a result of this is that a person might celebrate his birthday, and only afterwards the
reasoned that when a decree of Torah is made, the world is
comply with the decree because the Torah is the blueprint of the world
A person’s body.*

* One of the roles of the Jewish Supreme Court (Sanhedrin) is to establish if a given year will be a leap year, which has an additional month (to correlate it with the solar year). A possible scenario that can arise as a result of this is that a person might celebrate his birthday, and only afterwards the Sanhedrin declares that an additional month is to be added, causing his birthday to be moved back a month. He will thus now regress to his earlier age, celebrating his birthday again the following month!! This has an astonishing ramification concerning a small child whose ability to regenerate certain tissues ends at the end of the third year of the child’s life. What will happen, then, if the Sanhedrin declares a leap year after the child’s birthday, rendering the child to be less than three full years? Answers the Jerusalem Talmud: the ability to regenerate the tissues will return! Here we have a graphic example that a Torah decree brings about a physical change in the world.
will be safe for each person to live) alone—as Ya’akov (blessed them)—in a land of grain and wine, with skies that drip dew, (as Yitzchak blessed them).

Fortunate are you, O Israel! Who is like you, O people saved by God, the Shield Who helps you, your majestic Sword! Your enemies will lie to you, but you will trample upon their exalted ones.”

Moshe’s Passing

Moshe went up from the plains of Mo’au to Mount Nevo, (to the) top of the summit facing Jericho. God showed him the Land (and visions of what was to happen there in the future): (The events at) the Gilead as far as Dan, 2 all (the land of) Naftali, the land of Efrayim and Menasheh, all the land of Yehudah until the western sea, 3 the Negev, and the plain, (including) the valley of Jericho, and the city of palm trees as far as Tzoar. 4 God said to him, “This is the Land I swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya’akov, saying, ‘I will give it to your offspring.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you should not cross over there.”

Toras Menachem

principle that a decree may only be annulled by a Beis Din which is “greater than the first in size and wisdom,” only applies to a decree which, “became universally accepted by the Jewish people” (Ramban ibid.). However if, “they made a decree, and they believed that it had become universally accepted by the Jewish people, and this state of affairs continued for many years, but after a long period, another Beis Din was established which conducted a survey among the entire Jewish people and discovered that the decree had never been universally accepted—then they may annul the decree, even if they are less in number and wisdom than the first Beis Din” (ibid. 2:7).

Likewise in our case, Moshe annulled Moshe’s decree because he “discovered that the decree had not been universally accepted.” He indicated this by arguing, “Who could be as righteous as Ya’akov? Such people are very small in number!”

(In a typical case, the non-acceptance of a decree would be verified by a survey of the court; whereas in Amos’ case, he verified the matter using his powers of prophecy.)

The reason why it was Amos in particular who annulled the decree, can be understood from another of Amos’ prophecies: “For three sins (I could forgive) Israel, but for four sins I will not forgive” (Amos 2:6). The Talmud explains: “If a person sins once, he is forgiven; twice, he is forgiven; three times, he is forgiven—but the fourth time, he is not forgiven” (Yoma 86b).

Now, clearly, Amos’ statement here refers to the Heavenly court, for an earthly court would not pardon a person even for one violation of the law, never mind three. His prophecy therefore confirmed that sins were indeed being committed, and he realized that Moshe’s “decree,” that everyone should be as righteous as Ya’akov, “had not been universally accepted.”

Moshe’s original intention in making the decree was to lift the Jewish people to the level where they would always be connected to God by not sinning in the first place, and would thus not need to be forgiven for their sins. But when Amos saw that Moshe’s “decree” had simply not been accepted, he annulled it.

In the final analysis, Moshe’s enactment of the decree and Amos’s annulment of it were actually in the best interests of the Jewish people, because:

a.) Amos did not annul the positive effects of Moshe’s decree, but only the limitations that it imposed. The fact that Moshe said in the Torah that the Jewish people “will be righteous like Ya’akov” gives us the strength, even today, to refrain from sin, because all Moshe’s words and actions are eternal. Amos only waived the limitation of Moshe’s decree, that the Jewish people cannot continue to exist if they sin even once.

b.) Moshe’s decree only allowed the Jewish people to exist as tzadikim (pious individuals). Amos, however, made it possible for the Jewish people to exist as ba’alei teshuva (penitents). And since ba’alei teshuva are spiritually superior to tzadikim—to the extent that, “even complete tzadikim cannot stand in the place of ba’alei teshuva” (Brachos 34b)—it turns out the Amos acted in the best interests of the Jewish people.

(Based on Sichas Yud-Tes Keslev 5728)

Sparks of Chasidus

“Moshe Went Up...To Mount Nevo” (v. 1)

Our Sages taught: “The world was created with fifty gates of understanding, and they were all given to Moshe except for the fiftieth, as the verse states (Psalms 8:6), ‘You have made him slightly less than the angels,’” (Rosh Hashanah 21b).

The Mezritcher Maggid added that, on the very last day of his life, Moshe was granted access to the elusive “fiftieth gate.” This is hinted to by the verse, “Moshe went up...to Mount Nevo,” since the word נב (Nevo) can be read ב נ meaning, “the fiftieth is in him” (see Likutei Torah, Bamidbar 12a).

According to Chasidic teachings, every Jew possesses a spark of Moshe within his or her soul. So the fact that Moshe reached the fiftieth gate of understanding is of practical relevance to us, since our own spark of “Moshe” gives us the power to experience the fiftieth gate too.

And while Moshe had to wait until the last day of his life to reach this level, we do not. For Moshe paved the way which now remains open to all Jews who choose to avail themselves of it immediately, in their lifetimes.

(Based on Sicha of 3rd night of Succos 5744; Sefer Hasichos 5749, vol. 2, p. 756)
Who wrote the words “Moshe...died there”? (v. 5)

**RASHI:** Is it possible that Moshe died, and then wrote, “Moshe...died there”? Rather, Moshe wrote up to this point, and Yehoshua wrote from here on.

Rabbi Meir says: “Is it possible that the Torah Scroll [which Moshe gave to the Levites] would be lacking something? The verse states that he did not explain the words with tears of poetry, poetically depicting his own death amid a spirit of resignation and determination. Moshe was not crying because of the thought that he was about to die, but rather, because he was being denied the opportunity to observe the mitzvos which can only be carried out in the Land of Israel (Kesubos 103b).”

**IYUN YA’AKOV:** Moshe was not crying because of the thought that he would be lacking something? The verse states that the Jewish people would transform the decree of his actual death, to a determination to avert the impending decrees.

The Jewish people did not merit for this to occur at that time. But when Moshe does return, with the revival of the dead, the words, “Moshe died there,” will then adopt their spiritual meaning alone.

**Sparks of Chasidus**

Rashi explains (in his second interpretation) how it is possible that Moshe could have written the words, “Moshe...died there,” but he does not explain the purpose of this disharmonious event. Why did God command Moshe to write about his own passing?

It could be argued, however, that Moshe actually wrote these words with tears of determination and optimism. Moshe was not poetically depicting his own death amid a spirit of resignation and surrender, as it may at first seem. Rather, he was using these last moments in a further, practical attempt to avert the looming decree of his death, by motivating the Jewish people to beseech God on his behalf. For Moshe knew that when the Jewish people would read of his death written down in black and white, it would provoke an uproar. The people would surely respond: “We will not allow this to happen! We will pray, beg and demand from God that Moshe lead us into the Land!” and the decree would thus be annulled.

But this begs the question: Surely, when something is written in the Torah it must happen? So by writing “Moshe...died there,” Moshe appears to have been guaranteeing his own death.

In truth, however, Moshe’s “death” could have occurred in many different ways, and not necessarily in the literal sense. For example, the Zohar teaches, “One who falls to a lower spiritual level is called ‘dead’” (Zohar III 135b). We even find that a spiritual migration to a higher plane is also sometimes referred to as “death” or “departure” (Mikdash Melech to Zohar III 158a). So Moshe hoped that the prayers of the Jewish people would transform the decree of his actual death, to a spiritual equivalent.

The Jewish people did not merit for this to occur at that time. But when Moshe does return, with the revival of the dead, the words, “Moshe died there,” will then adopt their spiritual meaning alone.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeilech 5749)
5 Moshe, the servant of God, died there, in the land of Mo'au, by (a kiss from) the mouth of God.
6 (God) buried him in the valley, in the land of Mo'au, opposite Bais-Pe'or. No person knows the place of his burial, to this day.
7 Moshe was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eye never dimmed, nor did moisture leave his (body, even after he died).
8 The men of Israel wept for Moshe in the plains of Mo'au for thirty days, and then the days of weeping over the mourning for Moshe came to an end.
9 Yehoshua, the son of Nun was filled with a spirit of wisdom, because Moshe had laid his hands upon him. The children of Israel obeyed him, and they did as God had commanded Moshe.
10 No other prophet ever arose in Israel like Moshe, whom God knew face to face, as manifested by all the signs and wonders, which God had sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and all

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why did only the “men of Israel,” and not the entire house of Israel, mourn Moshe’s passing? (v. 8)

PANE'ACH RAZA: When Aharon died, Moshe’s intense mourning inspired the whole of the Jewish people to mourn too. However, when Moshe passed away, there was no person as great as Moshe as Rashi explained that Aharon’s greatness, which Moshe only attained at this point in his life.

RASHI: [Here Moshe was only mourned by some of the males. But concerning Aharon, the Torah states, “The entire house of Israel” wept for him (Bamidbar 20:29), meaning both males and females, because he used to pursue peace and bring peace between a man and his fellow, and between a woman and her husband.

AVOS D’RABI NASAN: When Aharon was walking in the street and met a wicked person, Aharon would greet him. The next day, when the man wanted to commit a sin, he would say, “Dear me! How will I lift up my eyes afterwards and look at my friend [Aharon]? I am ashamed, because he greeted me.” In this way, the man would refrain from sinning.

Likewise, when two people quarreled Aharon went and sat down with one of them and said to him, “My son! Do you know what your friend is saying? His heart is in a turmoil and he is tearing his clothes saying, ‘Dear me! How can I lift up my eyes and look at my friend? I am ashamed because I have wronged him.’” [Aharon] would then sit with him until he had dispelled the grudge from his heart.

Then Aharon would go and sit with the other one, and say to him, “Do you know what your friend is saying? His heart is in a turmoil and he is tearing his clothes saying, ‘Dear me! How can I lift up my eyes and look at my friend? I am ashamed because I have wronged him.’” [Aharon] would then sit with him until he had dispelled the grudge from his heart. When the two of them would then meet, they hugged and kissed each other (Avos d’Rabbi Nisan 12:3).

THE PUBLIC MOURNING OF MOSHE’S PASSING (v. 8)

In his commentary to verse 8, Rashi explains a subtle distinction between the Torah’s description of Aharon’s passing, and that of Moshe’s passing. In the former case, the Torah states that Aharon was mourned by “the entire house of Israel,” a phrase which clearly refers to men women (and even the children—see Zohar III 183a). In Moshe’s case however, an open display of mourning only occurred with “the men of Israel,” indicating that: i.) The women were not involved at all; and ii.) Only some of the men participated (since the verse does not stress that “all the men of Israel” mourned).

Rashi explains that Aharon’s passing grieved the Jewish people to a greater extent, “because he used to pursue peace and bring peace between a man and his fellow, and between a woman and her husband.”

This prompts the following questions:

a.) Since the current passage relates the passing of Moshe, we would expect the Torah to stress Moshe’s greatness. Why then did Rashi choose an interpretation which indicates Aharon’s superiority over Moshe, rather than one which indicates the greatness of Moshe, such as the explanation of Pane’ach Raza?

b.) How could we possibly accept the notion that Moshe did not “pursue peace and bring peace between a man and his fellow, and between a woman and her husband”? Does the Talmud not testify that “Moshe was a lover of the Jewish people” (Menachos 65a)?

THE EXPLANATION

Our Sages taught that Moshe personified the quality of truth (Shemos Rabah 5:10; Sanhedrin 111a). Therefore, while Moshe would certainly have made great efforts to “pursue peace and bring peace,” during his lifetime, he found himself unable to go to the same lengths as Aharon in the pursuit of peace. For Aharon followed the principle, “It is permissible to modify the facts for the sake of peace” (Yevamos 65b), and thus he would bring quarreling parties together by saying that the opposing party really wished to make peace (as described in Avos d’Rabbi Nisan).

Moshe, however, was unable to do so—not because he disagreed with the principle that “it is permissible to modify,” since, after all, this was part of the Torah which Moshe himself had taught the Jewish people. Rather, Moshe could simply not utilize this “permission” to modify the facts even for the sake of peace,” since he embodied the attribute of truth.

Nevertheless, on the last day of his life, Moshe was able to reflect on his life’s work (something he would have been far too busy to do before), and at this point, he came to attain the additional advantage of Aharon’s approach which succeeded in reaching more people than Moshe.

Therefore, in an act of true ahasas yisro’el (love of one’s fellow), Moshe recorded the events of his own passing in a way that brought to light Aharon’s greatness, which Moshe only attained at this point in his life.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 253ff.)
שלחו יזה לרשת ב значит מצרימים לפני בתוך הלב-עביזים
ולכל-אוצר: בית ילב ליוד התרזה לפני למائر וברזל אישה.

genosh משה לעני עלי ישראלי.

בורה י никו י브יהו

מא פסוקות, גואני'ל סים, על סימן.
his servants, and to all his land, and all the strength (he needed to receive the Torah with his) hand, and all the (miracles that occurred in the) great, awe(some, wilderness), which Moshe performed before the eyes of all Israel.

The congregation*, followed by the reader, proclaim:

**Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!**

THE HAFTARAH FOR VEZOS HABRACHAH (SIMCHAS TORAH) IS ON PAGE 295.

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- What did Moshe perform “before the eyes of all Israel”? (v. 12)
  
  **RASHI:** His heart inspired him to smash the Tablets before their eyes, as the verse states, “I shattered them before your eyes” (Devarim 9:17). God gave His approval...[saying] “Well done that you broke them!”

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

- How can Rashi conclude his commentary to the entire Torah with a reference to Moshe’s breaking of the Tablets, in contradiction, it would seem, to the principle of always ending on a positive note? (see Brachos 31a; Rashi to end of Lamentations)

  Furthermore, if the Jewish people were not fit to receive the Tablets, having sinned with the Golden Calf, why did Moshe need to destroy them? Surely, it would have been preferable to put the Tablets aside, protecting these precious items that were fashioned by the Almighty, until the time came when the Jewish people were fit to receive them?

  In truth, however, the breaking of the Tablets brings to light Moshe’s greatness as a true leader of Israel.

  Rashi explains (in his commentary to Shemos 34:1**), that Moshe’s breaking of the Tablets was like tearing up a contract, to ensure that the Jewish people would not be in “breach of contract” for worshiping the calf.

  So the breaking of the Tablets brings to light Moshe’s true dedication as a protector and defender of the Jewish people, that when faced with a dilemma between saving the holy Tablets of Torah fashioned by God, and saving the Jewish people from being liable for breach of contract, he chose the latter.

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  So the breaking of the Tablets brings to light Moshe’s true dedication as a protector and defender of the Jewish people, that when faced with a dilemma between saving the holy Tablets of Torah fashioned by God, and saving the Jewish people from being liable for breach of contract, he chose the latter.

**Sparks of Chasidus**

THE CONCLUSION OF THE TORAH

However, this has not fully solved our problem. For while we have explained that the Torah does indeed end on a positive note for the Jewish people and their faithful shepherd Moshe, it reflects negatively on the Torah itself. For when faced with a choice between protecting the Torah and protecting the Jewish people, Moshe chose not to protect the Torah!

The answer to this problem is clarified by the following Midrash:

“There are two things in the world and I love them totally with all my heart: the Torah and the Jewish people. But I do not know which comes first?”

“People say that the Torah comes first...but since the Torah states, “Command the children of Israel. Speak to the children of Israel,” I say that the Jewish people come first” (Tanna debey Eliyahu Rabah ch. 14).

So when Moshe broke the Tablets he was making a very similar statement, that, “the Jewish people come first.” And this is indeed a fitting conclusion for the Torah, for having completed the Torah we should come to the realization that the purpose of the Torah is to bring the greatness of the Jewish people to light.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 217)

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*According to Chabad custom, the person called to the Torah also recites chazak chazak venischazeik, in contrast to those authorities who deem this to be an interruption before the blessing which is said after reading the Torah (Sefer Haminhagim, p. 31; See Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 411; ibid. vol. 25, p. 474ff. See also Chikrai Minhagim by Rabbi Eliyahu Yochanan Gurary (Oholei Shem, Lubavitch 5759), p. 126ff.). **Cited above in Classic Questions to Devarim 9:17, from Rashi’s source text, the Midrash.
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS WITH NOTES USED BY THE READER
FOR PUBLIC TORAH READING

אנכי יוהו אלהיך א願意 להגאתך מארץ מ злоמה מבית
נברים לא יוהו אלהיך א愿意 להגאתך עילופי אלהיך
פאל לכל cittתך אשי ש痱ים אפילוף א פאל לכל cittתך
ואשר בימה מתחיה לארצ לארש מהתתיה כי אלהיך
 따른 יוהו אלהיך ולא כי פקד און אוהי עילופי
על תשלימה על רבעים שניהם חסד חסד לאפלים לוהבי
לשמ PriorityQueue (ך הרותליא) : מ לא תשה אהיריהו
אלהיך לשהא כי לא נפשו אלהיך אם ארש יש אהיריהו
לשהא: מ שמש אריים השבחת לכלשו כסח גמל | יוהו
אלוהיך עשה יום חמוד ועשינו כלمالאותך ו злоמה תשביעה
שיעט | יוהו אלהיך לא תשה כלمالאותך עדח אבהו
בשעדי להשיגו יצורו פחד ואמר הכבד מספר פי ינהל בחינה
האלים מזרחיים יוכלו יוהו אלהיך לעשה אתיוום השבח: מ
כדר אדאם כי 용 אדם כל טוב כת צון יוהו אלהיך כלמי
יאלulumi יוהו השם וישב כל ה殃폭 לאשר יוהו אלהיך
נשי כי: מ לא תחרה: מ ולא תהנה: מ ולא תסד: מ
אלא תמה עבשру עד שמה: מ ולא תגרר: שיבת мира שיבת
לא תמה עבשрут עד שמה: מ ולא תגרר: שיבת мира שיבת
הנה לעבשрут: מ
Haftaros
坚果·拉·约

הַפְתָּרוֹס
Blessings on Reading the Haftarah

The person who was called up for Maftir says the following before reading the Haftarah:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוהינו מלך העולמים
בכבודו יש.align

האמתו ברוך אתה יהוה המобще מגודריה
וכם יבשוחו יהולמ ת proximité

וכל העולים יעשו כיובטחני יהוה צורק.

After the Haftarah the following blessings are recited:

ברוך אתה יהוה מלך העולמים
ברך בך חורחה, חאל הנשים
האמתו ברך אתה יהוה מגוביה עקריה, ונבר
אבר מברך אתה לא ישוב רקמה, כי ולא
מלך עמל ורותם אתה. ברוך אתה יהוה, חאל הנשים
וכם יבשוחו יהולמ ת proximité

רמות על ציווי כי חזה ביה נוון, הגלות נפש
הושיע ויהulfill נפשו במלחה צמיה, ברוך אתה יהוה

משמו זיוון בבנייה.

שלמהו, כי אלהינו, אלהינו הגבירים עבורה, והמלובה
בית רוד מישרות, במלובה יבא ושיל להנה
על באה לא ישב ר, ולא יגדלו עוד אברים אח
כבוד, כי בשמ קדוש נשבה לו, שלמה יבשוח רוח
לעולם ווד. ברוך אתה יהוה, מנהג רוד.
On fast days end here. On Shabbos (including Shabbos Chol HaMo’ed) continue:

On a Festival, and Shabbos that coincides with a Festival continue here:

Shemini Atzeres / Simchas Torah
Succos
Shavuos
Pesach

On a Festival, and Shabbos that coincides with a Festival continue here:

On Rosh Hashanah continue here:

On Yom Kippur continue here:
Devarim / דבכים

(Isaiah 1:1-27)

1:1

This is the prophetic vision of Yeshayahu son of Amoz.

(The following) was prophesied about Yehudah and Jerusalem in the days of Uziyahu, Yosam, Achaz, and Chizkiyahu, Kings of Yehudah.

1. Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth, for (it is) God (and not I who) has spoken (these words):

“I have reared and raised (my) children, (the Jewish people, above all the nations), and they have rebelled against Me! (Even) an ox recognizes its owner and a donkey its master’s trough, (but) Israel does not (want to) know (me)! My people (whom I have helped) do not try to understand (what is good for them)!”

4. Oh you sinful nation! A people (who were once holy and are now) heavy with sin! (Holy) offspring (who became) wicked! Corrupt children! They have abandoned God, disgraced the Holy One of Israel, and separated themselves (from Him)! Why do you (allow yourselves to commit the same sins repeatedly, continuing to) turn astray and be stricken again and again?

(From being stricken so many times) every head is heavy and every heart is pained. From the sole of the feet to the head nothing is sound—(only) wounds, bruises, and open sores, untreated, unbandaged, not softened with oil, (yet you continue to sin, and incur yet more lashes).

7. (Therefore) your land is waste, your cities burned down. Strangers eat your farmland before your eyes.

It is desolate, as if destroyed by foreign (enemies, from afar). “(The city of) Tziyon is left (uninhabited) like an obsolete hut in a vineyard, like an abandoned night-hut in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.” If the God of Hosts had not left us a small remnant (in His kindness), we would be (destroyed) like Sodom and like Amorah!

10. Hear God’s Word, you (who resemble the) nobles of Sodom! Listen to the teachings of our God, you (who resemble the) people of Amorah!

Haftarah of Parshas Devarim

This is the third of three “Haftaros of punishment” which are read between the 17th of Tamuz and the 9th of Av, when we mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple. The Haftarah is taken from the opening of the Book of Yeshayahu (Isaiah), though it is unclear whether this was in fact his first prophecy.

At first glance, the harsh tone of Yeshayahu’s words—the most condemning of all three “Haftaros of Punishment”—is difficult to understand in the light of the Talmud’s statement that “Yeshayahu speaks entirely of consolation.” (Bava Basra 14b). Maharsha answers, “This is not meant literally, that the entire book of Yeshayahu is consolation, as we find many prophecies of destruction there. Rather, the overwhelming majority of the book is consolatory.”

However, according to Kabalistic teachings, the Talmud’s statement could, in fact, be taken literally. Kehilas Ya’akov writes that Yeshayahu did not speak words of pure gevurah (harshness; judgments), but rather, chesed shb’gevurah (sweetened judgments), and this spiritually empowered the Jewish people to bring the redemption, which will come through sweetening the judgments of exile. Therefore, it could truly be said that “Yeshayahu speaks entirely of consolation,” for even his words of criticism are charged and sweetened with redemptive undercurrents (Likutei Sichos vol. 18, p. 344, note 22).

After the Haftarah’s opening words which introduce Yeshayahu as a prophet (1:1), he laments the sinfulness and rebelliousness of the Jewish people and their consequent punishments (2-9). He rebukes them for insincere confession when bringing sacrifices (10-15), because God desires ethical behavior and repentance (16-20). In his final lament, the
11 “Why do I need all your numerous sacrifices (when your accompanying confessions are insincere)?” says God. “I had enough of your burnt-offering rams and fattened cattle, and I do not desire the blood of cattle, sheep, and goats (since they do not bring you to repent).”

12 When you appear before Me (at a festival, I will say), “Who asked you to do this, trampling My (Temple) courtyards?” Do not bring anymore meal offerings (for they will be) in vain, (for the three-finger fistful that) is burned (on the Altar) is offensive to Me! (When) groups of you (bring the sacrifices of Rosh) Chodesh, Shabbos, and festivals I cannot bear the falsehood (in your hearts)! I hate your (Rosh) Chodesh offerings and festival (offerings). They are (like) a burden to Me, and I cannot bear them! When you spread your hands (in prayer), I will turn My eyes away from you. As much as you pray, I will not listen, (because) your hands are full of blood!”

16 “Cleanse and purify yourselves (by repenting). Remove your evil deeds from My sight, and refrain from doing evil. Learn (to do) good, seek justice, and support the oppressed. Demand justice for the orphan and plead the cause of the widow!”

18 “Come, now, and let us clarify (who has offended whom),” says God. “If your sins are like scarlet thread (and you return to Me), they will become white like snow. If they are as red as crimson, they will become like wool.”

19 If you desire to listen, you will eat the best of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you will be eaten by the sword,” for God has spoken.

21 How the (faithful) city (of Jerusalem) has become (unfaithful like) a harlot! (Once) it was full of justice, and righteousness was always there, but now (it has become a city of) murderers! (In your business dealings) your silver has become dross and your strong drinks diluted with water. Your rulers are corrupt and are friendly with thieves. They all love bribes and run after favors. They do not judge the orphan, and the widow’s case does not reach them.

24 Therefore, the Master of Israel, the God of Hosts says: “Oh! I will appease Myself (of anger against) My rivals and take

1._Decadence of Jerusalem
2. Haftarah

prophet grieves over the corrupt state of Jerusalem (21-25), and envisions a future time of restoration (26-27).

1. The prophetic vision of Yeshayahu. The Shabbos when this Haftarah is read is commonly known as Shabbos Chazon ("Shabbos of the prophetic vision"), after the opening words of the Haftarah. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev taught a further significance to this term, that on this day, “Everybody is shown a distant vision of the future Temple.” And, even though most people do not claim to actually see this vision, it nevertheless is felt by the more sublime, subconscious levels of each person’s soul which subsequently influence the conscious mind.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak explained the purpose of this vision with a parable: A father had a valuable garment made for his son, but the son was irresponsible, and soon the garment was ripped into pieces. So the father had a second garment made for his son, but the son also allowed it to be ripped. When the father prepared a third garment he did not give it to his son to wear, but instead he showed it to him from time to time, telling him that if he would behave himself the garment would be his to wear.

Likewise, the vision which we experience on Shabbos Chazon is intended to arouse a desire for the Third Temple to be built, a feeling which will inevitably lead a person to be more careful in the observance of mitzvos (Sichos Shabbos Parshas Devarim 5749, note 3).

2. Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth.

Moshe used the opposite expression to Yeshayahu. Instead of saying, “Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth,” he declared, “Listen, O heavens...Let the earth hear” (Devarim 32:1). The Midrash explains that Moshe was “close to the heavens,” so he told them to “listen”—a term which suggests a closeness between speaker and listener. But since
he was “distant from the earth,” he told it to “hear,” from afar. Yeshayah, however, told the earth to “listen,” since he was “closer to the earth, and more distant from the heavens” (Sifri, beginning of Parshas Ha’azinu).

Being closer to the heavens, Moshe was able to take the Torah from its supernal source and act as a channel for it to be brought below. Yeshayah, on the other hand, worked in the opposite direction. Being closer to earth, he was able to address the real issues in people’s lives, lifting them out of their difficulties so as to progress to a higher spiritual level. So both prophets aimed to spiritualize, but Moshe “delivered” spirituality in the form of mystical revelation, whereas Yeshayah cajoled and challenged the people to become more spiritual themselves (Likutei Sichos vol 2, p. 415ff).

27. (The city of) Tziyon will be redeemed through (the observance of) law, and those who return there (will come) due to (their acts of) righteousness. The last verses of the Haftarah describe two phases of restoration: 1.) First, in verses 25-26, we read of the correction and transformation of evil: “I will pass My hand over you (to strike you with one blow after another). I will smelt your impurities as (if cleaning them) with soap, and I will remove all your (impurities) of tin.”

26. “I will restore your judges (to be righteous) as they were at first, and your advisers as they were in the beginning. Afterwards you will be called ‘city of righteousness—faithful city.’”

27. (The city of) Tziyon will be redeemed through (the observance of) law, and those who return there (will come) due to (their acts of) righteousness.
blows over it. Indeed, the people (of Gog will be like) grass! *(They are like) grass (that) withers and flowers (that fade), but the word of our God will endure forever*!”

"(You prophets) who bring news (of redemption) to Tzion, go up on a high mountain (so your voices can be heard from afar! You prophets) who bring news (of redemption) to Jerusalem, raise your voice powerfully! Raise it, do not be afraid (that somebody will deny it)! Declare to the cities of Yehudah, “God is coming (to redeem you)!”  10 Look! God Almighty is coming with power, and His arm will rule for Him (without any help). His reward (for every person) is (ready) with Him! His payment (for good deeds) is (ready) before Him!  11 (God will lead you out of exile) like a shepherd pasturing his flock, who gathers the lambs with His arm (and not his stick) and carries them in his bosom, leading the nurslings carefully.

12 Who (is like God, Who knows the depth of) the waters (as if) He measured (them) with His fist, and (He knows the length of) the skies (as if) He measured them with a ruler? (He knows) the amount of earth on the ground (as if) He measured it. (He knows) the weight of the mountains and the hills (as if He had used) a scale and a balance.  13 Who (could) influence God’s will (to accord with his own will)? What man is His advisor that informs Him?  14 Whom did He consult and who taught Him? Who instructed Him in the way of justice, taught Him knowledge, or guided Him in the path of wisdom?

15 The (strength of the) nations is like a drop (which runs down the back of) a bucket (and becomes) bitter (from the mold on the bucket. They are) like (moldy) dust on a (copper) balance (which can easily be blown away). He casts away the islands (that fade), but the word of our God will endure forever!  16 *You prophets (of) the nations* —Comfort, oh comfort My people! Noting the obvious repetition in this verse, the Midrash explains that the prophet was offering a double measure of comfort here, “for the First Temple and for the Second Temple” (Eichah Rabah end of ch. 1; Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayah, remez 445).

Here we see a connection to the Parsha. (Strictly speaking, the “Seven Haftaros of Comfort” are not directly connected to the Parshiyos when they are read (see Orach Chaim 428), but Shaloh writes that, by Divine Providence, a connection will always be evident). Parshas Va’eschanan takes its name from Moshe’s petition to God to enter the Land of Israel.
their land! It was the wicked ones (who came from you, and not I) who destroyed you and laid waste to you, (O Tziyon).

read between the ninth of

and, as Megaleh Amukos writes (par. 185), if this request had been granted, the Jews would never have gone into exile because Moshe’s conquest would have been eternal. This parallels the theme of “double comfort” in the Haftarah, since the only consolation for the destruction of the first two Temples will be the rebuilding of the Third Temple, which will be eternal (Sichas Shabbos Parshas V’asheschan 5748).

Haftarah of Parshas Eikev

This is the second of a series of “Seven Haftaros of Comfort” which are read between the ninth of Av and Rosh Hashanah. The Haftarah was addressed by the prophet Yeshayah (Isaiah) to the Jewish people in Babylon after the exile at the end of the 6th century B.C.E.

The Haftarah opens with God’s consolation to Tziyon (Zion) that she will not be abandoned, and promises of restoration (49:14-21). In a second declaration, God reaffirms the ingathering of the exiles and punishment of the nations with more vivid imagery (22-26). In the following chapter, the mood shifts from consolation to criticism. Exile (“divorce”) has come, not due to a weakness on God’s part, but because of Israel’s sins (50:1-3). On a personal note, the prophet declares his own loyalty to God, and his determination to deliver God’s word regardless of

its own). 20 A poor person sets aside (large amounts of money for his idol, as if he were rich). He (pays a) professional to choose a wood which will not rot, and he seeks an expert to prepare an idol which will not fall apart (and shame him for worshipping it).

21 Don’t you know (who the Master of the world is by working it out by yourself)? Haven’t you heard (from somebody else that worked it out)? Haven’t you been told (about God) from ancient tradition? Haven’t you understood that the earth (is not resting on any) foundations (for it is a globe surrounded by sky, so God must be decreeing it to stand)?

22 (God) sits above the skies that encompass the earth, and those who live on it seem like grasshoppers. He stretches out the skies like a sheet and spreads them like a tent for dwelling. 23 He makes princes into nothing and turns rulers of the land to worthlessness. 24 (They are as if) they were never planted or never sown, (as if) they never even took root in the earth. (Even) by blowing at them (with an ordinary breath) they dry up, and the storm carries them away like straw (blowing in the wind).

God is unique

25 “So to whom can you liken Me? To whom can you compare Me?” asks the Holy One. 26 Lift up your eyes to the heavens and see who created these (stars)! He brings out their hosts by number, calling each (star) by name. Because of His great might and tremendous strength, not one (star) is lost (because He made them exist permanently).

Eikev / עקיב

(Isaiah 49:14 – 51:3)
“Lift up your eyes and see (how your children) have all gathered and come to you. “As I live,” says God, “you will (be proud of) them all like (one who) wears jewels, and you will tie them to yourself like silk adornments of a bride.”

For your (worries about your) ruins, desolate places, and destroyed land (will end, as your land) will now be swarming with inhabitants, and your destroyers will be distant from you. Your ears (will hear) that your children (from whom you thought you were) bereaved are saying (to each other): “This place is too crowded for me. Make room for me to settle (too)!”

Then you will say in your heart, “Who gave birth to (all) these (people) for me? I was bereft and alone (for so long, with my children) exiled and wandering (from me). Who raised them? For I was by myself—where have these (people come from)?”

This is what God Almighty says: “Look! I will lift up My hand to the nations and hoist My banner to the peoples (to arouse their hearts). They will bring your sons in their corners (of their garments) and carry your daughters on their shoulders.”

“Kings will be your child-minders and their princesses your wetnurses. They will bow down to you and lick the dust of your feet, and you will know that I am God (Who is all-powerful, so) that those who trust in Me will not be ashamed.”

Can spoil be taken away from the mighty (Eisav)? Or captives saved from (Ya’akov) the righteous? But God says: “Captives can be freed from the mighty and spoil taken back from tyrants, for I will fight your enemies and save your children. I will feed the flesh of those who verbally abused you (to wild animals), and (birds) will become drunk on their blood as if it were wine. Then All flesh will know that I am God, your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Ya’akov!”

God says, “What is (the reason for) the bill of divorce with which I sent away your mother, (the congregation of Israel)? To which of My creditors did I sell you (to pay back My loan)? You were sold because of your sins, and your mother was sent away because of your transgressions, (so all this will end when you repent).”

any opposition (4-9). The only solution, therefore, is to listen to the prophet and trust in God (10-11). The conclusion of the Haftarah, from yet another chapter, sees the tone return to conciliation. The Jewish people are advised to find hope in the story of Avraham and Sarah, that God will soon comfort all the ruins of Tziron (51:1-3).

49:14. “Tatyon will (want to) say,” “God has abandoned me! Chasidic thought describes a two-phase interaction that forms the basis of man’s relationship with God. Initially, there must be an “arousal from Above.” God must spark an interest in the relationship and send messages that He desires the person to respond. But while these revelations are both inspiring and effective, they do not form a true relationship with God, which must come from within the person himself. The “response from below” ensures that God’s initial “arousal” does not evaporate, but instead becomes a source of real, lasting inspiration.

These two phases are represented by Parshiyos Va’eschanan and Eikev, which are read in the wake of Tisha b’Av (the destruction of the Temple), when our relationship with God needs to be rebuilt once again. Va’eschanan means an “uneared gift” (Rashi), signifying God’s initial “arousal from Above” which comes “free of charge,” without any effort from man. But this only penetrates a person superficially, and it must be followed by Eikev (“heel”), i.e. a self-motivated effort to building the relationship that permeates the person’s entire being, down to his heels.
"Why was no one there when I came (to you), no one to answer when I called? Is My hand too short to redeem? Do I lack strength to save? Indeed, I can dry up a sea (of idol worshippers) with My roar and make the rivers (of them) into a desert, so their fish stink from lack of water and die of thirst. ¹ I (can) clothe the heavens in darkness and cover them with sackcloth."

¹ (The prophet says): God Almighty has given me a tongue for teaching, so I should know how to (teach those who) thirst for (God’s word, (the right thing) at the right time. He wakes (me) every morning and rouses my ears (to hear prophecy), so I will be able to listen like a disciple.

¹ God Almighty opened my ears, and I did not hold myself back or retreat. ⁶ (Even if there was a fear that I would be hurt, I went nonetheless and) I gave over my body to floggers and my cheeks to those who tore out my hair. I did not hide my face from (the fear of) insult and spitting. ⁷ (Despite all odds), God Almighty helped me and so I was not ashamed. (I saw God was helping me) so I have made my face like hard rock (that would deflect any insult), and I know that I will not be ashamed.

¹ (God, Who is) my defender is near (to me)! So who wants to fight me? (God and I) will stand together! Whoever (wishes to be) my adversary, let him approach me! ¹² Indeed, God Almighty will help me, so who could declare me guilty? (My opponents) will all be worn out like old clothing and consumed by moths.

¹⁰ Who among you fears God and listens to the voice of His servant (the prophet)? Even he who walked in darkness (of suffering), without (any) light (of hope for salvation), should trust in God’s Name (that salvation will indeed come) and rely on his God. ¹¹ But in truth (nearly) all of you cause the fire (of God’s anger) to blaze and fan the flames. (Consequently), you will walk in the light of your fire and the flame you lit (being punished accordingly)! This (is no accident! It) has come to you from My hand, so that (when) you lie down (to die you will have had only) sadness.

Listen to Me, you who pursue justice and seek God! Look to (Avraham), the rock from which you were hewn and to (Sarah), the quarry from which you were dug. ¹ Look to your father Avraham, and to Sarah, who gave birth to you. For he was alone (without any family) when I called him, but I blessed him and caused him to multiply, (and likewise, I will make the Jewish people, who are now a minority, multiply greatly).

¹ For God will comfort Tziyon, (He will) comfort all her ruins. He will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like God’s garden. Joy and gladness will be found there, thanksgiving and the sound of music.

The two phases are also reflected in the Haftaros. Initially, in the Haftarah of Parshas Va'eschanan, it is God Who arouses the Jewish people: “God will say (to the prophets), ‘Comfort, oh comfort My people!’” But then, in the Haftarah of Parshas Eikeu, it is the people that cry out to God (“God has abandoned me! My God has forgotten me”), because they are struggling with the second, more difficult phase of internalizing their relationship with God so that it integrates smoothly with their real personalities and their real lives (Likutei Sichos vol. 9, p. 76ff).
Jerusalem filled with gems

54:11 (O Jerusalem! You afflicted, storm-tossed one, who has not been comforted! I will lay your (floor) stones upon antimony (instead of sand), and lay your foundations with sapphires. 

11 “All your children will be (extremely wise, as if they were) disciples of God, and your children will have much peace.

14 “Through (your) righteousness you will be fit (for all this). You will distance yourself from crooks who have no fear of me (at all), and from terror, for it will not come near you. 

15 Indeed, people will fear no one but Me. Whoever attacks you will fall into your power. 

16 Behold, it was I Who created the smith to fan coal fires and make the tools of his trade, and it was I Who created the destroying (enemy) to destroy (it itself). 

Every weapon engineered against you will not succeed, and every tongue raised against you in judgment you will have condemned. This is the inheritance of God’s servants and their just reward from Me,” says God.

55:1 “Come! Everyone who is thirsty (for God’s word), go to (the prophet and drink his) ‘water’! (Even) those who have no money, go and eat! Come and take wine and milk without paying, without charge (for the prophet’s wisdom is free)! 

Why do you ‘pay money’ (and invest your energies in non-Jewish wisdom) without (getting any real substance or) ‘bread’? Why do you labor (in something that) cannot give satisfaction? 

Listen to me! (Learn Torah) and you will ‘eat’ well and satisfy your souls with rich foods!

3 “Incline your ears and come to Me (to hear My words)! Listen, and you will (merit to) live (again, with the revival of the dead)! I will make an eternal covenant with you, as enduring as (My) loyalty to David. 

4 Indeed, I have made his (enduring dynasty) as a proof to the nations (that My word always endures, and Mashiach, his descendant, will be) a ruler and leader of the nations. 

( Likewise My promises to you will be fulfilled). Indeed, nations that you do not know will call upon you (to serve you), and nations which never knew you will run to you (to follow your orders. But they will not do this due to your own power, but) for the sake of the God your God, the Holy One of Israel (Who dwells among you and) Who has glorified you.

**Haftarah of Parshas Re’eh**

This is the third of a series of “Seven Haftaros of Comfort” which are read between the ninth of Av and Rosh Hashanah. The Haftarah was addressed by the prophet Yeshayah (Isaiah) to the Jewish people in Babylon after the exile at the end of the 6th century B.C.E.

The Haftarah describes the magnificent rebuilding of Jerusalem (54:11-12), and the peace which will then prevail (13-17). In the following chapter, the people are urged to study Torah, and not secular wisdom (55:1-3), and are promised an everlasting covenant (3-5).
If Sunday is Rosh Chodesh, Chabad communities add (I Samuel 20:18,42):

20. Yonasan said to him (David), “Tomorrow is the (first of the new) month. You shall be missed, because your seat will be empty.

42. Yonasan said to David, “Go in peace, as both of us have sworn in the name of God, saying, ‘God be (a witness) between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.’”

| Shoftim / שופטים |

( Isaiah 51:12 –52:12)

It is I, yes I, Who comforts you. Why do you, (who have so many merits), fear mortal man, human beings who are put (into the world) like grass? 11 You have forgotten (the influence of) God, Who made you, Who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. You are constantly afraid, all day, from the anger of the enemy that is preparing to destroy you. But where is the enemy’s anger?

The wanderer (in exile) will be freed quickly. (Even while in exile) He did not die and he was not destroyed, and his bread did not fail.

For I am God your God, Who calms the sea (if He wants, or makes) its waves roar. His name is the God of Hosts.

I have put My Words (of Torah) into your mouth and (in the Torah’s merit, I) sheltered you with the shadow of My hand (from the enemy), planting (you in your land like the stars) of the skies, and establishing you (to be as widespread as) the earth. (All the nations) will say to Tziyon: “(God is saying to you), You are My people!”

Wake up! Wake up! Rise, O Jerusalem, you who have been drinking (until now) the cup of wrath from God’s hand (to cleanse your sins)! You drank and sucked, the cup of poison, to the dregs (so there are no punishments left for you). Of all the children to whom she gave birth, there is no one to guide her, no one to hold her hand from all the children she raised. Double (suffering) has happened to you, but who will (even) nod (his head to comfort) you (when everybody is your enemy? (From the double suffering of) robbery and starvation, famine and the sword, who will be able to comfort you? 26 Your children have

Haftarah of Parshas Shoftim

This is the fourth of a series of “Seven Haftaros of Comfort” which are read between the ninth of Av and Rosh Hashanah. The Haftarah was addressed by the prophet Yeshayah (Isaiah) to the Jewish people in Babylon, after the exile, at the end of the 6th century B.C.E.

As the Haftarah opens, God announces Himself as the comforter of the Jewish people and urges them not to fear the enemies who are just mortal men (51:12-16). God urges Jerusalem to “rise” from her pitiful state, because all the suffering has now come to an end (17-22). In a second awakening call, Jerusalem is told to prepare for imminent redemption, because God hates the exile when His Name “is disgraced.
The day of redemption is then depicted, with universal recognition of God amid song and rejoicing (6-10). The conclusion of the Haftarah backtracks to the time preceding redemption, as the Jewish people are urged to leave the exile without delay (11-12).

The opening of the Haftarah is connected with both the beginning and end of the Parsha. The Parsha begins with the instruction to appoint judges that issue rulings of law, and the Haftarah likewise alludes to the significance of law by employing the unusual term Anochi (“I”) which is associated with the beginning of the Ten Commandments, the basis of all Jewish law. The repetition of the term here, “Anochi Anochi,” alludes to the Written and Oral law with which the judges guide the people.

A further connotation of this repetition is the theme of teshuvah (repentance; return). At the giving of the Torah, the word Anochi was said only once, so its repetition here hints to the superior level of ba’alei teshuvah (see commentary to Haftarah of Parshas Ki Sisa at end, page 1420). Here we see a connection with the conclusion of the Parsha which stresses the idea of atonement and teshuvah: “Atone for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, O God!” (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shoftim 5750 and 5748).
Ki Seitzei / כ ב ה ת א צ

(Isaiah 54:1-10)

Says God: “(O Jerusalem! During exile times,) you (were like a) barren woman who never gave birth, (since you were a city devoid of people. But now, in the times of the Redemption, you can) sing! (O Jerusalem!) Open your mouth and sing loudly, for you (were a woman who) never had labor pains. (Now), the inhabitants of (Jerusalem—which previously) lay desolate—are more numerous than the inhabitants of the built up cities (of Edom).”

“(O Jerusalem!) Extend the area of your tent (to include all your children). Stretch the curtains (that mark the edge) of your dwellings so that they spread out far—do not hold (them) back. Lengthen your ropes (of your tents, expanding your borders) and strengthen your fastening-peg (so that your borders remain enlarged forever). For you will break through, (spilling into the territory) to the right and (to the) left. Your descendants will inherit nations and (they will multiply so much that they will) inhabit desolate cities.”

“Do not fear (another exile after the redemption). Do not be ashamed or embarrassed (to proudly display your greatness, for fear that you may be exiled again), for you will not be disgraced (with another exile). You will forget the shame (of the exile) of your youth, and you will no longer remember the disgrace of your widowhood (when you were a people without a king). For the Name of your Husband, who made you (great), is the God of hosts—(so who could possibly oppose you? Isn’t)

52:12. But you will not leave too quickly. The comfortable pace of the future redemption described in this verse is in contrast to the panic of the Egyptian redemption, when “the people fled” (Shemos 14:5).

According to Chasidic thought, the collective mitzvah-acts and good deeds of history have gradually refined the physical fabric of the world such that when the Divine revelation of the redemption emerges, the world itself will be compatible and comfortable with that revelation. Therefore, the redemption will not be a cause of panic. But when the Exodus from Egypt took place, “the evil in the [animal] souls of Israel was still strong” (Tanya, ch. 31), and therefore they had to flee from the evil and impurity of Egypt.

In other words, the Exodus from Egypt occurred despite the world, but the revelations of the future redemption will be effective with the world (Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 125).

This Haftarah mentions God’s promise to Noach not to bring another flood that will destroy the world (v. 9). In general, the Haftarah describes the rebuilding of Jerusalem with the Final Redemption, and the universal knowledge of Torah that will be attained by the Jewish people.

The Haftarah opens with a description of how Jerusalem will be repopulated with the Redemption (54:1-3), followed with a promise that the present exile is only temporary (4-10). The prophet then describes how God will rebuild Jerusalem with gems (11-12) and how the Jewish people will master the study of Torah and be righteous, thus averting any threat from potential enemies (13-17). The prophet then lauds the virtues of Torah study (55:1-3) and describes the respect that the nations will have for Israel in the times of Mashiach (4-5).

5. כ ב ה ת א צ —Your Husband, who made you. Our Sages taught: “A woman [before marriage] is unfinished, and she enters into the

End of exile

Jerusalem in the times of Redemption

Promise to never bring another exile
your Redeemer (none other than) the Holy One of Israel, Who will (then) be called ‘God of the entire earth’ (by all, so why be afraid)?"

9. "For God has called you (to return to Him) like a (husband who calls to his) forsaken and dejected wife; like a man who was (briefly) disgusted by the wife of his youth (but soon forgives her)," says your God. 7 "(When) I abandoned you (it was only) for a short moment (compared to the time when) I will gather you, (which will last forever, due to My) great mercy. 8 (Compared to the) everlasting kindness (with which) I will make your window panes from emeralds, your gates from carbuncle stones, the floor-stones of all your borders (will become) desirable gems.

If Shabbos Parshas Ki Seitzei occurs on the 14th of Elul, Chabad communities add the following section.

10. "For the mountains (may) move away and the hills might collapse (in an earthquake), but My kindness will not leave you, nor will My covenant of peace collapse," says God, Who is merciful to you.

covenant only with a man who will transforms her [into] a [finished] vessel, as the verse states, ‘The Name of your Husband, who made you, is the God of hosts’” (Sanhedrin 22b). In the prophet’s analogy of the marriage between the Jewish people and God, the difference between being an “unfinished” or “finished vessel” is whether or not a person is a suitable receptacle to spiritual matters. If he performs mitzvos by rote, without enthusiasm, then he is an “unfinished vessel”; if he finds the mitzvos exciting and inspiring, then he is a truly receptive “vessel” to Godliness. Of course, for most people this does not come naturally, which is why the Chasidic movement stresses the importance of prolonged meditative prayer, which is aimed at transforming oneself into a “finished vessel” (Sefer haMa’amrim 5718, pp. 311-2).

9. The waters of Noach. At first glance, the term “waters of Noach” appears to be self-contradictory, as Noach was the savior of his generation, whereas the waters constituted the punishment. A simple solution is that the waters eliminated the generation because of Noach, since he failed to pray sufficiently for the people to be saved (Zohar 167b). However, Chasidic thought explains that the waters were named after Noach because they had a positive effect of cleansing the earth spiritually, like a mikvah, making it more sensitive to spiritual matters (Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 40; Torah Ohr, Noach 8c).

12. I will make your window panes from emeralds etc. This is not a mere metaphor. This prophecy will materialize physically in the future era (Sefer haMa’amrim 5734, p. 198, 202).
Ki Savo /כי חנוכה

(Isaiah 60:1-22)

Arise, shine (and rejoice, O Jerusalem)! For your light has arrived, and God’s Glory has shone upon you. Darkness (and suffering) will cover the earth and thick clouds (will cover) the nations, but God will shine (the light of salvation) on you, and His Glory will be seen on you. Nations will follow your (guiding) light, and kings your shining brilliance.

(Likewise My promises to you will be fulfilled). Indeed, nations that you do not know will call upon you (to serve you), and nations which never knew you will run to you (to follow your orders. But they will not do this due to your own power, but) for the sake of the God your God, the Holy One of Israel (Who dwells among you and), Who has glorified you.”

Haftarah of Parshas Savo

This is the sixth of a series of “Seven Haftaros of Comfort” which are read between the Ninth of Av and Rosh Hashanah. The Haftarah was addressed by the prophet Yeshayah (Isaiah) to the Jewish people in Babylon, after the exile, at the end of the 6th century B.C.E.

The Haftarah opens in a wondrous, redemptive mood. A new light is shining on Jerusalem and the exiles are returning (60:1-9). The city is fully restored with the finest wood and precious metals, its gates are opened and a new era of prosperity begins (10-18). Divine light is the only source of illumination (19-20), and the expanding nation is completely righteous (21-22).
how everybody has gathered together and are coming to you! Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be reared (by kings). 5 When you see this, you will glow (with joy). Your heart will throb and swell, for the many (possessions) of the (people who live in) the west will be turned over to you, and the wealth of nations will come to you. 6 You will be covered by hordes of camels, young camels from Midian and Aifah (brought as gifts). They will all come from Sheba, carrying (gifts to God of) gold and incense and they will declare God’s praises.

“All the sheep of Kedar will be gathered up (and brought) to you, and the rams of Neivayos will serve all your needs. They will be accepted favorably on My altar, and I will glorify the House of My splendor (by causing the nations to come with gifts of gold and silver).

(People will ask:) Who are these (exiled people that are returning so quickly) like soaring clouds, and like doves to their coop-windows? 7 For (the people of) the islands are gathering with the ships (which cross the Sea of) Tarshish in the lead, to bring your sons from afar, along with their silver and gold (as a gift for God). All this will happen) for the sake of the Name of God your God, the Holy One of Israel, Who glorifies you.

Foreigners will rebuild (the) walls (of your cities), and their kings will serve you. For I struck you in My anger, but in My grace I had mercy on you. 11 Your gates will always be open; they will not close day or night, so the wealth of nations may be brought in to you, with their kings in procession. 12 For whatever nation or kingdom does not serve you will perish, and those people will be utterly destroyed.

The glorious (trees) of Lebanon will be brought to you together—cypresses, fir, and box trees—to glorify the site of My sanctuary. I will (use them to) honor the site of My “footrest,” (the Holy Temple).

“..."with our youth and with our elders...with our sons and with our daughters" (Shemos 10:9), will be redeemed, including their allotted portion of the world, “along with their silver and gold,” and all their activities and possessions from exile. The redemption will free each and every person (including non-Jews) and all their worldly affairs, and each individual will be preserved with all his effects.

All (positive) things in exile will remain and continue; only the state of exile will cease to exist. The concealment which masks the true and inner identity of the world will be eliminated, including the subjugation to nature and physicality, which is a result of the concealment.

As Rambam rules, “Do not think that in the Messianic Era any aspect
In the place of the bronze (which the nations took from you), I will bring gold, and in the place of the iron I will bring silver. In the place of the wood (I will bring) bronze, and in the place of the stone (I will bring) iron. (In the place of) your (aggressive, tax-collecting) government, I will make (a) peaceful (friendly one), and (in the place of) your debt-collectors, I will place people (that) will come to perform (justice). 18 Corruption will no longer be heard of in your land, nor robbery and ruin in your borders. You will call your walls “Salvation (of God),” and your gates “Glory (of God).”

19 You will no longer need the sun for daylight nor the moon to shine at night. God will always be your light, and your God will be your glory. 20 Your sun will never set and your moon will not be eclipsed (by another nation), for God will always be your light (and source of power). Your days of mourning will come to an end.

21 Your people will all be righteous (since the wicked have perished). They will inherit the land forever, (never to be exiled again). They are the shoot I planted, My handiwork in which I take pride. 22 The smallest (tribe) will become a thousand (times the size), and the youngest (tribe), a mighty nation. (Since) I am (the all-powerful) God, I will hasten (the smallest tribe to expand) in the time (of the redemption)!
Almighty cause the righteousness and praise (of Israel) to sprout before all the nations.

6:1 For Tziyon’s sake I will not be silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be still, until her righteousness emerges like shining light, and her salvation like a burning torch. Nations will see (the) righteousness (which I will do for you), and all the kings, your glory. You will be called a new name, pronounced by the Mouth of God.

3 You will be (protected like) a crown of beauty in God’s hand, a royal coronet in the palm of your God. You will no longer be called “Abandoned (by God),” and your land will no longer be called “Desolation.” Rather, you will be called “I desire her” and your land “inhabited,” for God will desire you, and your land will be inhabited. As a young man (marries a) maiden and settles (with her), so will your children settle you, and your God will rejoice over you as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. Over your walls, Jerusalem, I have appointed (the stones as) watchmen. They will never be silent (from crying and mourning), day or night. (Do not be silent,) you (stones) who speak of God! Do not let Him be idle (and free from complaint) until He restores Jerusalem and establishes it in glory amid the earth!

4 God has sworn by His right hand and His mighty arm: “I will never again give your grain as food to your enemies or let foreigners drink the wine for which you labored.” Rather, those who harvest (the grain) will eat it and praise God (in thanks), and those who gathered (the grapes) will drink (wine) in (their homes, in) My holy courts (of Jerusalem).”

5 Go through the gates (you nations), go through (the gates of your cities, in order to) raise (and smooth) the road for the people. Clear away stones (that obstruct the way). Raise a banner for the nations (telling them to bring the Jewish people home).

6 Look! God has proclaimed to the ends of the earth:

Say to the daughter of Tziyon: Your salvation is coming! Look! His reward (which is due to the Jewish people) is with Him, and His wages (which he owes to the Jewish people are ready) before Him!” They will be called a holy people, God’s redeemed. You, (Tziyon), will be called “sought after, a city not forsaken.”

6:1 (When God wreaks vengeance on Edom, people will say), “Who is this coming from Edom, from Batzrah, with (blood)-

whereas being glad is only felt inwardly because one’s joy is tempered by other concerns or fears, as the verse states, “Be glad in times of trepidation” (Psalms 2:11).

“I will rejoice greatly” thus alludes to the joy of the festival of Succos, which is expressed outwardly, whereas, “My soul will be glad with my God” refers to the more restrained joy of the High Holidays which are festivals in their own right, but are tempered by the trepidation of judgment (Likutei Torah, Nitzavim 47a).

This, however, begs the question: Why does the verse mention rejoicing (Succos) before gladness (Rosh Hashanah), when these festivals occur in the reverse order? And why is this Haftarah, which opens with the theme of outward joy, read on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah and not the Shabbos before Succos?

The answer is that Rosh Hashanah itself is associated with both an element of outward rejoicing and a sensation of restrained joy, one preceding the other. First, on the eve of Rosh Hashanah there is a feeling of joy, in anticipation of celebrating the holy day, and this can be expressed outwardly because the time of judgment has not yet begun (see Tur, Orach Chaim 581). This is then followed by the more restrained feeling of “gladness” on Rosh Hashanah itself. Thus the verse reads, “I
The prophet says, “Israel) will relate God’s kind deeds and His praise for everything He has done for us—all the good He has granted to the House of Israel in His mercy and great kindness.”" (When God took them out of Egypt), He said, “Indeed, they (alone) are My people, children who were not unfaithful (and did not forsake Me),” and He became their Savior.

All their sufferings caused Him pain and the angel (who stands) before Him saved them. (Likewise), out of His love and mercy He redeemed them. He will bear them and carry them forever.

**Shabbos Shuvah / שבת שובת**

(Hosea 14:2-10; Joel 2:11-27; Micah 7:18-20)

14:2 **I**srael, return to God your God, for you have stumbled on account of your sins. 1 (You do not need to take sacrifices. Just) take words (of confession) with you and return to God. Say to Him: “Lift away all sin and accept (our promises for) good behavior in the

will rejoice greatly in God—on Erev Rosh Hashanah—My soul will be glad with my God—on Rosh Hashanah itself. (Sicha Shabbos Parshas Nitzanim-Vayeilech 5735, par. 2).

**Haftarah of Shabbos Shuvah**

The Shabbos preceding Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) is known as Shabbos Shuvah (Shabbos of Return), after its special Haftarah that stresses the need for repentance by man, and God’s forgiveness.

According to Chasidic thought, this Shabbos spiritually elevates and “mends” every Shabbos of the past year (Sefer Hamadamim Melukat vol. 1, p. 345). Of all times in the year, the “Ten Days” between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the most opportune for teshuvah (Rambam, Laws of Teshuvah 2:6), and among these days themselves, Shabbos Shuvah is the pinnacle (Sicha of Shabbos Shuvah 5749).

It is customary that men, women and children come to the synagogue on this day, because the theme of teshuvah is of universal relevance.
future). Let (the confession) of our lips be in place of (the sacrificing of) bullocks."

4 "We will no longer (ask) to be saved by Assyria, and we will not (put our trust in) riding (powerful) horses (into battle). We will never again call the (idol) made by our hands, 'our god,' because (we know that) the orphans finds compassion through You (alone)."

5 Then (after they confess) I will forgive them for their rebelliousness. I will love them deeply, because My anger will have turned away from them. (My love) for Israel will be (perpetual) like dew. He will blossom like a rose, and his roots will spread like (the roots of a cedar from) Lebanon. His young leaves will spread out, he will be beautiful like an olive tree, and he will have the aroma of Lebanon. Those who sat in His shade will be peaceful. They will be peacefully self-sufficient like grain (which sustains life), and they will blossom like the vine. Their fame will be like that of the wine of Lebanon.

6 (When) Efrayim asks, “What do I need idolaters for anymore?” I will answer (all his requests) and look over (and supervise his needs). I (will attend to him) like a fresh cypress tree (which bends its head over its roots). The fruit of your sacrifice of bullocks."

Chabad and Sefardic communities omit the following (Yoel 2:11-27) and continue below:

2:11 God makes His voice heard (through the prophets) before His army (of locusts arrive). His camp is extremely large, and those who carry out His Word (on a mission of destruction) are awesome. The day of (destruction from) God is great and very formidable. Who could endure it?

12 Yet even now—says God—return to Me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping and lamenting. 13 Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to God your God. For He is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger, very kind and renounces bad (decrees). 14 Let anyone who knows (what sin he has done) repent and regret. Then, (when the locusts come) they will (not destroy, but rather) leave behind a blessing (from which to bring) a meal-offering and a wine libation to God your God.

15 Sound the shofar in Tziyon (to awaken the people to repent), announce a fast, call an assembly. 16 Gather the people, instruct the congregation (to fast), bring together the elders, gather the children and the nursing babies. The groom

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In the opening passage of the Haftarah, the prophet Hoshea (7th century B.C.E.) urges the people to sincere verbal confession (14:2-3) and to trust in God (4). God will then forgive Israel and love them forever (5-9). The passage concludes with a plea to take the prophet’s words to heart (10). In the following section, from Yoel (read only by Ashkenazim),
should leave his room and the bride her chuppah (to participate; they should not rejoice).

17 Let the priests, the ministers of God, cry out between the Hall and the Altar. Let them say, “God! Have pity on Your people! Do not allow Your inheritance, (Your people,) to be shamed by letting nations rule over them (when they come to beg for food after the locusts destroy everything they have). Why should the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’”

18 Then, (when you repent) God will become jealous for His Land and have pity on His people. 19 God will respond and say to His people, “(From now on), I will send you grain, wine and oil, and it will satisfy you. I will no longer let you be shamed among the nations. 20 I will distance you from you the (locusts that come form the) north and drive them to (their death in) a barren and desolate land. (I will send) the first (locusts that come) to the (Salt) Sea in the east, and the last (locusts) to the Western Sea. The stench (of the dead locusts) will go up and its odor will rise, for there were many locusts (ready) to do (harm).

21 Do not be afraid, Land (of Israel, that the locusts may return. Rather), be glad and rejoice, because God (has decided from now on to do) many great things. 22 Do not be afraid of the animals of the field (that pasture may be lacking), because the pastures in the wilderness have sprouted. (Even) trees (which need much more rain than pasture) have borne their fruit, and the fig tree and vine have produced their yield.

23 Rejoice and be happy with God your God, children of Tziyon, because He has given you the early rain as charity (and not according to what you deserve). He caused the early and late rain to fall in the first (part of the season). 24 The granaries will be filled with grain and the vats will ring (with the noise of flowing) wine and oil. 25 I will repay you for (your losses in) the years that were consumed by the (different species of locust) arbeh, yelek, chasli and gazam, My mighty army which I sent against you. 26 Then, you will eat and be satisfied, and praise the Name of God your God, Who performed such wondrous acts. My people will never be shamed again (by being forced to live in other lands due to lack of food). 27 Then you will know that I am in Israel’s midst, that I am God your God, and there is no other. My people will never be shamed again.

All communities conclude here (Micah 7:18-20):

Who is like You, O God, forgiving iniquity and overlooking transgression for those who remain of His heritage (after the birth pangs of Mashiach? Even when the prophet inspires the people towards repentance in order to avert an imminent day of locust destruction (2:11-14). A public fast is declared, and the priests are advised to cry out to God (15-17). In response, God will bring ample sustenance and safety from the enemy,
God helps during difficult times

He does become angry) He does not maintain His anger forever, because He is a lover of kindness. 19 He will (once again) have mercy on us. He will grasp our iniquities (preventing them from being held against us), and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. 20 Give (to us the fulfillment of the) true (words that You spoke) to Yaakov, (and the words of) lovingkindness (you spoke) to Avraham, which you promised our fathers long ago (at the Akeida).

The Song was recited by David in his old age in gratitude to God, Who “saved him from all of his enemies and from Sha’ul” (22:1). David answered: “On the seventh day of Pesach, the Haftarah is the Song of David because on the seventh and final days of Pesach there is a revelation of Mashiach, who is a descendant of David. Thus, it is to honor Mashiach that we recite the Song of David” (Sefer Hasichos 5698, p. 283). The Song of David thus alludes to the “Tenth Song” that will be chanted with the coming of Mashiach (Likutei Sichos vol. 37, p. 111).

The Song was recited by David in his old age in gratitude to God, Who “saved him from all of his enemies and from Sha’ul” (22:1). David praises God as a “rock” and personal savior Who responded in times of emergency (2-7), and God’s methods of deliverance are depicted with rich imagery (8-20). David then attests to his own loyalty to God (21-24) and hopes for just reward (25-28). The theme of personal gratitude is then redeveloped, as David depicts God’s involvement in his victories at length (29-46). In his closing words, David reiterates and intensifies His praise and calls out God’s praises (29-46).
Rashi describes that the descendant forever (51)
and prays that God should continue to bestow kindness on his high places.

He makes my legs straight like a doe’s, He stands me on the male’s. According to Chasidic thought, the legs represent “that which supports the entire body, with the head which stands over them, and they bring a person to his desired destination. Just as this is the case physically, so too it is true spiritually...Faith is referred to as ‘legs’ since it upholds and sustains the head, namely the intellect, which meditates upon the
have broadened my step, so my feet have not slipped. 81 I pursue my enemies and destroy them, not turning back until I annihilate them. 82 I annihilate them and strike them so they rise no more, and they fall beneath my feet. 83 You gird me with strength for battle, and cause my attackers to fall before me. 84 You made my enemies and foes turn around before me, but I (still chased them and) destroyed them. 85 They turned (for help), but there was no one to save them. (They turned) to God, but He did not answer.

86 "I ground them like dust of the earth, I pulverized and crushed them like the mud of the streets. 87 You saved me from the enemy (from among) my own people, You protected me (from them all until I became) the head of nations, (and now even) a people unfamiliar to me serves me. 88 Foreigners (desperately) lie to me (out of fear, but) because of what they heard about me, they listened to me. 89 Foreigners wither, and become lame from their confinement (that I decree on them).

90 "God lives! May my Rock be blessed! My exalted God is the Rock of my salvation. 91 The God, Who avenge on my behalf, Who subdues nations before me, 92 Who saves me from my enemies, Who lifts me above my attackers, Who rescues me from corrupt men! Therefore, (for these acts of kindness) I will thank God (and publicize His acts) among the nations and sing to Your Name. 93 He granted His king great victories, and He has acted kindly to His anointed one. (As he did) to David, (so may He do) to his descendants forever!

Vezos Habrachah / (Shemah Torah)  
(joshua 1:1-18)

It was after the death of Moshe, God’s servant, that God said to Moshe’s attendant, Yehoshua son of Nun:

1 “My servant Moshe is dead. Now, set off and cross this (river) Jordan now—both you and this entire people—to the land which I am giving the children of Israel. 2 I will give you every place on which the soles of

greatness of God” (Tanya, Igeres Hakodesh ch. 1). By suggesting that the female deer has “straighter” legs, the verse points to the fact that women are generally endowed with a greater measure of faith in God than men. (For example, we find that the women did not wish to contribute their jewelry for the construction of the Golden Calf.) Thus, with these words, David praised God for giving him the superior quality of faith usually possessed only by women (Ohr Hatorah, Nach vol. 2, p. 927).

Haftarah of Simchas Torah

This Haftarah mentions the passing of Moshe, which is related in the Torah portion for Simchas Torah. It is also a direct continuation of the Five Books of Moshe which are completed on this day (for a further explanation see Sichah of the night of Simchas Torah 5747, par. 39). The Haftarah opens with God’s communication to Yehoshua after Moshe’s
*Yehoshua then commanded the officers of the people:*

11 “Go through the camp and instruct the people, saying, ‘Prepare provisions for yourselves, for in another three days you will cross this Jordan (river) to enter and take possession of the land which God your God is giving you as an inheritance.’”

12 Yehoshua then told the tribes of Re’uvin, Gad and half the tribe of Menasheh, saying: 13 “Remember the words which Moshe, God’s servant, commanded you, saying: ‘God your God is granting you a place to settle, and He has given you land on this (side of the Jordan).’

passing, instructing him to lead the conquest of the Land (1:1-4). God promises to assist Yehoshua, encourages him to be “strong and firm,” and warns him that he must observe the Torah (5-9). Yehoshua immediately instructs the people to prepare for war (10-11). He reminds the tribes of Re’uvin and Gad and the half-tribe of Menasheh of their promise to lead the battle before returning to settle in the Transjordan (12-15), and they wholeheartedly consent (16-18).

8. **You must pore over it day and night.**

"Technically speaking, a person can fulfill his obligation to study Torah by allocating specific times, thus satisfying the requirement to "pore over it day and night," by allocating specific times in the day and the night when he will learn and memorize well at least those ideas that have practical relevance, which is a universal obligation. This includes the parts of the Code of Jewish Law which every person needs to know himself—which do not require further Rabbinical clarification—and the study of non-legal Midrashim or texts of ethical refinement that are based on the wisdom of our Sages" (Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Laws of Torah Study 3:4).

Every mitzvah has a preferable standard to which it should be observed (lechatchal), and a minimal standard which is acceptable only under extenuating circumstances (b’dives).

The preferable way of observing the mitzvah to study Torah is to follow the verse literally and “pore over it day and night,” i.e. all day and all night. The notion of merely allocating a time during the day and a time at night, mentioned here in the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, is a dispensation for those who are only capable of fulfilling a minimal
Your wives, children, and flocks can settle in this land which Moshe has assigned you across the Jordan (from the Land of Israel), but all of you—all your mighty warriors—must pass armed ahead of your brothers and help them, until God grants your brothers a place to settle as you (have), and they take possession of the land which God your God has given them. Then you will return to the land of your inheritance which Moshe, God’s servant, gave you on the east side of the Jordan, where the sun (rises), and take possession of it.

They answered Yehoshua: “Everything you have commanded us, we will do, and wherever you send us, we will go! Just as we listen to everything Moshe (said), so will we listen to you, so long as God your God is with you, as He was with Moshe. Any man who rebels against you and does not listen to your words concerning anything you command us will be put to death. Just be strong and firm (to punish them, and do not forgo your honor)!”

The Plan

Yonasan said to (David), “Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month. You shall be missed, because your seat will be empty. For three (days) you should go down (and hide yourself) well. Come to the place where you hid on the day of the incident (when the King swore to me not to kill you), and sit by the traveler’s (marker) stone.

“I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target. Then, I will send a lad (saying to him), ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I say to the lad, ‘look!’—the arrows

Erev Rosh Chodesh / ערב ראש ח룸 שחל הבשת

(I Samuel 20:18-42)

Obligation, for Torah study is, in essence, a continual obligation (Likutei Sichos vol. 14, p. 21, note 6).

Haftarah of Erev Rosh Chodesh

This Haftarah mentions the eve of Rosh Chodesh: “Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month” (20:18). At first glance, this connection appears to be somewhat tenuous, as the remaining narrative of the Haftarah is not connected with the theme of Erev Rosh Chodesh. Why should this be more pertinent than reading the Haftarah connected with the weekly Parsha? Chasidic thought explains that the renewal of the moon signifies redemption, and therefore, by logical extension, the eve of the new moon (Erev Rosh Chodesh) represents the work carried out during exile in order to bring the redemption. Being that this is the underlying significance of all our activities, it was considered a sufficiently important replacement for the Haftarah of the week (His estadus 5711, vol. 2, p. 50, 56).

The Haftarah describes a climactic moment in the rift between David and Sha’ul, which arose from David’s successful military career. Sha’ul, who was king at the time, perceived David as a rebel that needed to be eliminated. Fearing for his life, David seeks the assistance of Yonasan, the king’s son, who was David’s passionate admirer, but Yonasan finds the conspiracy theory difficult to believe. In order to verify his suspicions, David suggests a plan: he will disappear for three days to test the king’s reaction, which would then be reported to David by Yonasan with a secret sign.

The Haftarah opens as Yonasan reviews David’s plan and confirms a secret sign to be enacted by shooting arrows and instructing certain
The arrows are on this side of you," then you should take them and return, for it is safe for you, and there is no (dangerous) thing (looming. I swear this) as God lives.

22. “But if I say this to the young man, ‘Behold, the arrows are beyond you,’ then go, because God has sent you.

23. “This matter of which you and I have spoken, beholď—God is (a witness) between me and you forever.”

24. David hid himself in the field. When the (first of the new) month came, the King sat down to eat the meal.

25. The King sat at his seat, as usual, on a seat by the wall. Yonasan stood up so that Aner could sit at Sha’ul’s side. David’s place was empty. Nevertheless Sha’ul said nothing on that day, for he thought, “(He had) a (nocturnal) accident. He is not ritually pure. (He didn’t come because) he has not been ritually purified.”

26. It came to pass on the next day, which was the second day of the month, that David’s place was empty. Sha’ul said to Yonasan his son, “Why didn’t the son of Yishai come to the meal, neither yesterday, nor today?”

27. Yonasan answered Sha’ul, “David asked me permission to go to Beis Lechem. ‘He said, ’Please let me go, because our family (is offering) sacrifice(s today) in the city and my (oldest) brother (Eliau] has instructed me (to be there). Now, if I have found favor in your eyes, please excuse me (from the King’s duties) to see my brothers.’ Therefore he has not come to the King’s table.”

28. Sha’ul became furious with Yonasan, and he said to him, “You are the son of a sinful and rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Yishai (for the monarchy) to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother’s nakedness (for the fact that you prefer that my enemy will lead people to suspect that you are not my son)?”

29. For as long as the son of Yishai lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your Kingdom. Now (since you sent him away) send (for him) and fetch him to me, for he deserves death.”

30. Yonasan answered Sha’ul, his father, and said to him, “Why should he be killed? What has he done?”

31. Sha’ul raised a spear to strike him. Yonasan realized that his father was determined to slay David.

32. Yonasan rose from the table in fierce anger. He ate
no food on the second day of the new moon, for he was upset for David, and his father had put him to shame (by insulting and threatening him).

35 In the morning, that Yonasan went out to the field to the appointed place (he had arranged) with David, and a young lad was with him. 36 He said to his lad, “Run! Find now the arrows which I shoot.” As the lad ran (for the first arrow), he shot an arrow beyond him.

37 When the lad came to the place of the (first) arrow which Yonasan had shot, Yonasan called out after the lad and said, “Isn’t the (last) arrow beyond you?”

38 Yonasan called out after the lad, “Go quickly! Hurry (after the second arrow). Don’t stay (by the first)!”

Yonasan’s lad gathered up (both) the arrows, and came to his master. 39 The lad knew nothing (about the sign). Only Yonasan and David knew the matter.

40 Yonasan gave his bow and arrows to his lad, and said to him, “Go and carry them to the city.” 41 As soon as the lad had gone (towards the city), David (understood that it was safe and) stood up from near the south (side of the stone). He fell on his face to the ground, and prostrated himself three times. They kissed one another, and wept with one another, until David (wept) greatly (more than Yonasan).

42 Yonasan said to David, “Go in peace, as both of us have sworn in the name of God, saying, ‘God be (a witness) between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.’”

God is everywhere

Exile: But do not be afraid to continue this work, “because God has sent you” (Hisvaduyos ibid.).

Shabbos Rosh Chodesh

The Maftir reading for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh is on page 302. (Bamidbar 28:9-15)

This Haftarah mentions the sacrificial worship that will occur every new month (Rosh Chodesh) after the ingathering of the exiles. The Haftarah was addressed by the prophet Yeshayah (Isaiah) to the Jewish people in Babylon after the exile, at the end of the 6th century B.C.E.

The Haftarah opens with God’s proclamation of omnipresence and the insufficiency of one House to contain Him (66:1). God will turn His attention to those that fear Him (2), and all types of insincere worship are abhorred by Him (3-4). Those who fear God will ultimately be joyous, but those who hate and ostracize God’s servants will be chastised by a “voice from the Temple” (5-6). Tziyon’s (Zion’s) deliverance is compared to that of a mother who gives birth without pain (7-9), and the rejoicing at Jerusalem’s rebuilding is depicted (10-14). All enemies and idol-worshippers will be punished (15-18) and the nations that remain will come to Tziyon, bringing the Jewish people along with them (19-20). New priests will be appointed, and all mankind will worship God (21-23). The rebels’ corpses will remain in the valley of Yehoshafat as an ominous reminder to all mankind (24; verse 23 is then repeated so as to finish on a positive note).

1. The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. According to Chasidic thought, the various...
is worthy for) My (Presence to) rest? 7 My hand has made all these things (Heaven and earth), and (therefore) all these things came into being," says God. "But (even though I am so exalted), to this I will pay attention: to he who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word. 8 "However, he who kills an ox (offering his sacrifice without trembling at My word) it is as if he slew a man. He who sacrifices a lamb (without trembling), is as if he cut off a dog's neck. He who offers a meal-offering (without trembling), is as if he offered swine's blood. He who burns incense (without trembling), is as if he blessed an idol. He who offers up frankincense (without trembling) is as if he offered an inappropriate gift. They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations. 9 So too I will choose to mock them, and will bring their fears upon them, because when I called (to them through the prophets), none answered. When I spoke, they did not listen. They did evil before My eyes, and chose what I did not desire."

10 "Hear the word of God, you who tremble at His word! Your (wicked) brothers who hate you and who ostracize you say, 'I am so great that God is glorified because of my name!' (But in truth) we shall see your joy and they shall be shamed. 11 Then there will be) a voice of rumbling from the city (of Tziyon), a voice from the Temple, the voice of God rendering recompense to his enemies (Gog and Magog)."

12 "Before she (Tziyon) feels labor pains she will give birth. Before her labor pain will come, she will be delivered a son. 13 Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such a thing? Has a land gone through its labor in one day? Has a nation been born all at once, for Tziyon labored and gave birth to her children? 14 Shall I bring to the bithstool, and not cause her to give birth?" says God. "Shall I, who cause birth, hold back?" says your God.

15 "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her (to see her rebuilt). Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her (in her destruction), so that you may (be rewarded to) nurse, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations. That you may drink deeply, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

(13) so that you may (be rewarded to) nurse, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations. That you may drink deeply, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. 12 For this is what God says: 'Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations (will rush to her) like a flowing stream. (You who mourned for her) shall (be rewarded) to draw (effortlessly from) the wealth of the nations. You shall be (honored by the nations, like a baby who is) carried on (its mother's) sides, and dandled on her knees. 13 Like one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in

On occasion, however, one can draw from these energies of the soul in order to break free from existing limitations in one's life. 14 There is the very essence of the soul which is not limited to being inside or outside the body. The route to access the soul's essence is through humility, simplicity and sincere dedication.

gradations of the human soul can be divided into three broad categories: a.) Internal. Those powers which rest within the body and interact with it. These parts of the soul give life to the body and control its intellectual and emotional activity. b.) External. The aura (makif) of the soul which surrounds the body and ordinarily has no direct contact with it.
Jerusalem (for your suffering). 14 When you see (Jerusalem rebuilt), your heart will rejoice, and (the health of) your bones will (be strengthened) like flourishing grass. The (mighty) Hand of God will be known to His servants, and His anger toward His enemies.

15 For, behold, God will come with fire (to destroy the armies of Gog and Magog), and with His chariots like a storm to repay (His enemies) with fury. His rebuke (will be) with flames of fire. 16 For by fire God will execute judgment, and by His sword upon all flesh. The slain by God will be many.”

17 “Those who prepare and purify themselves (to go) to the gardens (of idolatry, one group) after another (to worship the idol) in the center (of the garden); those who eat swine’s flesh, abominable creatures, and mice—they will all perish together,” says God. 18 “I (know) their works and their thoughts. (The time) has come, that I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see My glory. 19 I will scatter them, but from them I will let survivors escape to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, the archers, to Tuval, and Yavan, to far off islands, that have not heard My fame, nor have they seen My glory. They shall declare My glory among the nations.

20 They will (then) bring all your brothers from all nations as an offering to God, on horses, in chariots, in covered wagons, on mules and with songs and dances to My holy mountain in Jerusalem,” says God, “just as (respectfully as) the people of Israel bring an offering in a pure utensil to the House of God.

21 From them too I will take to be priests and Levites (even though they will have forgotten their lineage),” says God. 22 “For just as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make (in those days), shall remain before Me, says God, so shall your descendants and your name remain (forever).”

23 “It will then be, that every (first of the) new month, and every Shabbos, all mankind shall come to worship before Me (in the holy Temple),” says God. 24 The (non-Jews) shall go out (of Jerusalem, to the valley of Yehoshafat), and look upon the corpses of the men (of Gog and Magog) who have rebelled against Me, for the worms (that eat them) will not

These three levels of the soul are alluded to in the opening of the Haftarah. “The heavens” and “earth” allude to Torah and mitzvos respectively (because Torah was given from Heaven, and the mitzvos are performed with physical objects here on earth), i.e. things which are observed in everyday life with the normal faculties of the soul found in the body. The “house” mentioned by the verse alludes to the soul powers which encompass the body, just as a house encompasses a person. While these powers are indeed impressive, scripture nevertheless bemoans their insufficiency (“What house could you build (worthy) for Me?”), because the most profound form of Divine service comes from the essence of the soul. And this essence is reached through humility: “To this I will pay attention: to he who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word” (v. 2). This explanation adds further significance to the reading of this passage on Rosh Chodesh (new moon). For just as the disappearance of the moon and its re-emergence as a miniscule point is the key to its later growth, likewise it is the path of humility and self-renunciation which reaches the essence of the soul, bringing the person to a genuine spiritual rebirth (Sefer Hama’amrim Melukat vol. 3, p. 133).
die, and the fire (that burns them) shall not be extinguished. They shall be a (symbol of) disgrace to all mankind.”

21 “It will then be, that every (first of the) new month, and every Shabbos, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says God.

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If Sunday is also Rosh Chodesh, Chabad communities add (I Samuel 20:18,42):

20:18 Yonasan said to (David), “Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month. You shall be missed, because your seat will be empty.

42 Yonasan said to David, “Go in peace, as both of us have sworn in the name of God, saying, ‘God be (a witness) between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.’”

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Maftir for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh

(Bamidbar 28:9-15)

Maftir is on page 299.
Appendix
APPENDIX: THE LOCATION OF KADAISH-BARNE'À

In conclusion we see that, according to Rashi:

i.) The Kadaish-Barne'À referred to at the beginning of the Book of Devarim is not the town on the southern border of the Land of Cana'an. (Incidentally, this appears to be the view of Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim III:50). This is because the Jewish people could not have reached the southern border of Cana'an without passing through enemy territory of Edom which bordered the southern border of Cana'an. Rashi did not need to clarify this point at the beginning of the Book of Devarim as it is self-evident from his description of the borders in Bamidbar 34:3.

ii.) The town to the south of Edom from which the Jewish people sent the spies was the same town to which they returned after wandering in the desert.

iii.) This town is referred to in the Torah both by the names of “Kadaish-Barne'À” and “Kadaish.”

Another point that remains to be clarified is: What forced Rashi to conclude, at the literal level, that the Land of Edom spanned the entire southern border of Cana'an, from Egypt to Mo'Av? Surely it would be simpler to conclude, at the literal level, that there was some direct access point to the southern border of Cana'an, without having to pass through another land, and thus it is feasible that the Jewish people did indeed reach Kadaish-Barne'À on the southern border of Cana'an. With this approach, Rashi would have avoided the slightly difficult conclusion (argued above), that the Torah sometimes refers to the same place by different names (“Kadaish-Barne'À” and “Kadaish”).

Perhaps it could be argued that Rashi rejected the notion that there was an access point to the south of the Land of Cana'an without passing through Edom, for then we would be left with the question: Why did Moshe ask Edom for the right of passage through his land (Bamidbar 20:14ff), if there was a direct access point to Cana'an without passing through Edom? Clearly, at the literal level, there was no route into the south of Cana'an other than passing through Edom.

Therefore, Rashi concluded that the “Kadaish-Barne'À” referred to at the beginning of Devarim must be synonymous with the town of “Kadaish” on the southern border of Edom.

As for the fact that we are left with the difficulty that the Torah refers to the same place with two slightly different names, it could be argued that:

i.) They are not different names, but rather, one is an abbreviated form of the other.*

ii.) This is a problem that applies equally to the interpretation that Kadaish-Barne'À (at the beginning of Devarim) is the town at the southern border of Cana'an, since the Torah states, in reference to this location, “You stayed in Kadaish for a long time” (Devarim 1:46). Here we see that the names Kadaish and Kadaish-Barne'À are used interchangeably according to all interpretations. (Editor’s note)

* cf. Masah u’Merivah (Shemos 17:7) which is also referred to as just “Masah” (Devarim 6:16).
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**Metzudos** — Commentary to the Prophets and Writings, consisting of two parts, *Metzudas Tziyon*, which explains the meaning of individual words, and *Metzudos David*, a running commentary to the text. Initial manuscripts of the commentary were authored by Rabbi David Altschuler, and published shortly before his passing in 1753. The commentary was edited and completed by his son, Rabbi Yechezkel Hillel, and published in 1780. The commentary has attained great popularity for being concise and comprehensive.

**Midrash** — Aggadic and Halachic teachings of the Talmudic period arranged according to the verses of the Torah.

**Midrash Hagadol** — Midrashic anthology arranged by R’ David al-Adeni of South Arabia (13th century). Many Midrashic teachings which were lost throughout the course of time have been preserved in this work. First printed in 1967 in Jerusalem.

**Midrash Lekach Tov** — (also known as *Pesikta Zutrasa*). Midrashic anthology arranged by R’ Toviah Hagadol (1036-1108) of Greece and Bulgaria.

**Midrash Rabah** — A major collection of homilies and commentaries on the Torah, ascribed to R’ Oshiah Rabah (c. 3rd century), perhaps assembled during the early Geonic period. First printed in Constantinople 1512.

**Mikdash Melech** — Commentary to the Zohar culled from the works of R. Chaim Vital, R. Avraham Azulai, and their students R. Yaakov Pinto, R. Yeshaya Cohen and R. Moshe Zacuto.

**Minchah Belulah** — Commentary to the Torah by R’ Avraham Menachem Rapaport (c. 1540-1604), Italian Torah scholar, doctor and grammarian.

**Minchas Chinuch** — Scholarly supercommentary to Sefer haChinuch by Rabbi Yosef Babad (1800-1875), Rabbi of Tarnopol, Poland.

**Mishnah** — Fundamental collection of the legal pronouncements and discussion of the Tanna’im, edited by Rabbi Yehuda haNassi early in the third century. The Mishnah is the basic text of the Oral Law.

**Mishneh Torah** — 14-volume halachic code by Rambam (Maimonides) encompassing all the laws found in the Talmud.

**Mitteler Rebbe** — Rabbi Dov Ber Schneuri (1773-1827), son of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi; second Lubavitcher Rebbe.

**Mizrachi** — Exhaustive supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi (1450-1525) of Constantinoole, Chief Rabbi of the Turkish Empire.

**Moreh Nevuchim** — “Guide for the Perplexed” by Maimonides.

**Moshev Zekeinim** — Anthology of comments of about 130 different sources, the majority of whom are Tosafists of France and Germany, circa. 1100-1300. First printed in 1959.

**Nachalas Ya’akov** — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Ya’akov Yekl Solnick. First published in Cracow in 1642.

**Nimukei Yosef** — Halachic commentary on Sefer Halalachos (of the Riff), by R’ Yosef Chaviva of Spain (14-15th centuries).

**Noda Biyehudah** — Halachic Responsa of Rabbi Ezekiel Landau, (1713-1793) Chief Rabbi of Prague.

**Ohr haChayim** — Commentary on the Torah by Talmudic and Kabalist scholar Rabbi Chaim ben Attar (1696-1743).

**Ohr haTorah** — Extensive exposition of Chabad chasidic thought by the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel (the Tzemach Tzedek, 1789-1866). Printed in New York between 1951 and 1983 in 48 volumes.

**Orach Chayim** — One of the four sections of the Tur and Shulchan Aruch, dealing with laws that follow a time cycle.
**Onkelos** — Proselyte (c. 90 C.E.) who reinstated a forgotten, authoritative translation of the Torah into Aramaic, which was read alongside the Torah in Talmudic times to assist the congregation in understanding the Torah reading.

**Pane'ach Raza** — Commentary to the Torah by R' Yitzchak ben Yehudah Halevi of France, 13th century. First printed in Prague in 1607.

**Parashas Derachim** — Treatises by Rabbi Yehudah Rozanes (1657-1727) of Constantinople, Turkey, author of Mishneh Lemelech, a major commentary to Rambam’s Mishneh Torah.

**Pesachim** — Tractate of Talmud in the Order of Moed (Festivals).

**Pesikta Rabasi** — Compendium of teachings by Sages of the Talmud, first published in Prague in 1653.

**Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer** — Midrashic work by the school of Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (c. 100). First published in Constantinople in 1514.

**Pnet Moshe** — Running commentary to the Jerusalem Talmud, by Rabbi Moshe Margulies of Amsterdam and Zamut. (1710-1781).

**Rabeinu Chananel** — (died c. 1056). Author of important commentary to the Talmud, and commentary to the Torah. Headed Yeshivah in Kairouan, North Africa.

**Rabeinu Tam** — Rabbi Yaakov ben Meir (1100-1171), his Talmudic discourses served as the basis for the Tosfos commentary to the Talmud. He often challenged Rashi’s interpretations, offering original and brilliant insights. Rabeinu Tam was also a successful wine merchant and financier.

**Radvaz** — (c. 1480-1573) Acronym for Rabbi David ibn Zimra, Chief Rabbi of Egypt. Author of a commentary to the Rambam’s Mishneh Torah and extensive responsa.


**Ramak** — R’ Moses Cordovero, Kabalist of 16th century Safed. Student of R’ Yosef Caro. Author of numerous works, including Pardes Rimonim, a classic work which explains fundamental concepts of Kabalah.

**Ramban** — “Nachmanides” (1194-1270), Acronym for Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman of Gerona, Spain, one of the leading Torah scholars of the Middle Ages; author of major commentary to the Torah and numerous other works.

**Ran** — Acronym for Rabbenu Nissim (1308-1376). Authored an important commentary to the Talmud, published in most major editions.

**Rashbam** — Acronym for Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir, Talmud and Torah Commentator, who supplemented Rashi’s (his grandfather’s) commentary on the Talmud (c. 1085-1174). Brother of Rabeinu Tam.

**Rashi** — Acronym for Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105), author of basic commentary on the Bible and Talmud. According to Chasidic tradition, his commentary to the Torah contains allusions to kabalistic concepts.

**Rema** — R’ Moshe Isserles (1530-1572), Rav and Rosh Yeshiva of Cracow. Author of many works. Most famous are his Ashkenazic annotations to Rabbi Yosef Caro’s Shulchan Aruch, which transformed this predominantly Sephardic work into a universal Code of Jewish Law.

**Ritvah** — Acronym for R’ Yom Tov Ibn Asevili (1248-1330), Talmudic Commentator and Halachist.


**Rosh** — Acronym for R’ Asher ben Yechiel, Talmudic commentator and author of halachic compendium arranged on the tractates of the Talmud (c. 1250-1327).

**Sa’adiah Ga’on** — (882-942) Author of works in many areas of Torah, including the philosophical work, Emunos v’Deos.

**Sanhedrin** — Tractate of Talmud in Order of Nezikin (Damages).

**S’dei Chemed** — Extensive Halachic encyclopedia by R’ Chaim Chizkiyahu Medini (1832-1904), Rav of Karasubazar in Crimea, Russia, and later Chief Rabbi of Chevron in the Land of Israel. Revised edition by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, New York, 1949-1953 (Kehos Publication Society).

**Seder Hadoros** — A chronology of events and personalities from creation until 1696, based on rabbinic sources, by Rabbi Yechiel Heilprin (1660-1746) Lithuanian Rabbi, Kabalist, and chronicler. First published in 1769.

**Sefer Chasidim** — Classical work of ethical and halachic instruction by R’ Yehudah haChasid, (c. 1150-1217).

**Sefer Ha’Agur** — Halachic compendium by R. Yaakov ben Yehuda Landa (Germany, fifteenth century), based primarily on the Tur. Widely used as a source for halachic decisions until the appearance of the Shulchan Aruch.
Sefer haChinuch — Compendium of basic explanations on the 613 mitzvos by an unknown Spanish author among the Rishonim of the 13th century.


Sefer haMitzvos — Comprehensive list of the 613 mitzvos of the Torah and their basic requirements, by Rambam.

Sefer haSichos — Public talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, from the years 1986-92.

Sefer haZikaron — Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Mordechai Hakohein, a major commentary to the Torah, incorporating numerous mystical interpretations and gematrios. First published in 1610. (Not to be confused with Rabbi Shabsai Hakohein of Cracow, author of Shaloh.

Shaloh — Acronym for Shnei Luchos Habris (“The two tablets of the Covenant”), by Rabbi Yeshayahu Hurwitz (1560-1630). There is a tradition that the Tanya is significantly based on the Shaloh.

Shemoneh Perakim — Philosophical treatise of Rambam, discussing the ills and cures of man’s soul, prophecy, reward and punishment, free will, and the rule of the “golden mean.”

Shemos Rabah — The section of Midrash Rabah on the Book of Exodus. See “Midrash Rabah.”

Shitah Mekubetzes — Compilation of numerous medieval commentaries to the Talmud by R’ Betzalel Ashkenazi (1520-1592).

Shulchan Aruch — Universally accepted halachic code encompassing all areas of practical halacha, by Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488-1575).

Sifri — Halachic Midrash on the books of Bamidbar and Devarim.

Sifri debay Rav — Comprehensive commentary to Sifri by Rabbi David Pardo (1710-1792), author of Maskil leDavid.

Sifsei Chachomim — Anthology of supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Shabsai Bass (1641-1719). First published in 1712.

Smag — Acronym for Sefer Mitzvos Gadol, an important compendium of the 613 mitzvos by the Tosafist R’ Moshe ben Ya’akov of Coucy (13th century).

Talmud — Comprehensive term for the Mishnah and Gemara as joined in the two compilations known as Babylonian Talmud (6th century) and Jerusalem Talmud (5th century).

Tanchuma — Aggadic Midrash on the Torah by Rabbi Tanchuma bar Abba (4th cen.)

Tanna debei Eliyahu — A Midrash, consisting of two parts, whose final redaction took place at the end of the tenth century of the Common Era. The first part is called “Seder Eliyahu Rabah” (31 chapters); the second, “Seder Eliyahu Zuta” (15 chapters).

Tanya — Primary chasidic text authored by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi. (See: Alter Rebbe)

Targum Yonason — Elaborate Aramaic translation of the Torah by Yonason ben Uziel, a disciple of Hillel.

Tiferes Yehonason — Commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Yehonason Eybeschutz (d. 1764) of Prague, Metz, and Altona.

Tikunei Zohar — Section of the Zohar discussing seventy permutations of the first word of the Torah – Bereishis, and commentaries on various other sections of Scripture.

Torah Shlaimah — Comprehensive encyclopedia of all Talmudic and Midrashic commentaries on the Torah, with scholarly notes and essays, by R’ Menachem Kashen (1895-1983). This work is still being compiled and currently spans 47 volumes, covering the books of Bereshis-Bamidbar, Megillos, and Hagadah Shel Pesach.

Torah Temimah — Anthology of main Talmudic references to the Torah, along with commentary, by Rabbi Baruch Epstein (1860-1942), son of Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, author of Aruch Hashulchan.

Toras Ha’olam — A work discussing the measurements of the Holy Temple and reasons for sacrifices according to philosophy by Rema. (See: Rema)

Toras Kohanim — Halachic Midrash to the Book of Leviticus. Also known as Sifra.


Tosfos — Talmudic commentary of the French, German and English rabbis of the 12th and 13th centuries.

Tsafnas Pane’ach — Precedent setting commentary to the Torah and Rambam’s Mishneh Torah which innovated a fresh, deeply analytical approach to Talmudic study, by Rabbi
Yosef Rozin, Chief Rabbi of Dvinsk, known as the Rogatchover Gaon (1858-1936). He also authored Responsa and a commentary on the Torah by the same name. Likutei Sichos makes much use of the Rogatchover’s methodology.

Tzemach Tzedek — Title of responsa authored by the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (1789-1866), after which he is usually referred to.

Tzror Hamor — Commentary to the Torah by R’ Avraham Saba (15th century) of Portugal, and later Morocco.

Tur Ha’aruch — Second half of commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Ya’akov Meir ben Asher (1268-1340), author of the Tur. (See Ba’al Haturim)

Turei Even — Prodigious commentary to tractates Rosh Hashanah, Chagigah, Taanis and Megilah by Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Metz, author of Sha’agas Aryeh.

Tzeidah Laderech — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Yissachar Ber Ailenberg. First printed in Prague in 1623.

Vayikra Rabah — The section of Midrash Rabah on the Book of Leviticus. (See “Midrash Rabah”)

Vilna Ga’on — R’ Eliyahu ben Shlomo of Vilna (1720-1797) Lithuanian Talmudist, Kabalist, grammarian, and mathematician.

Yad Malachi — Compendium of rules and principles on which various major Rabbinic texts are based (including the principles on which the Mishneh Torah is based) by R’ Malachi ben R’ Yaakov haKohain, published in 1767.

Yefay To’ar — Major commentary on Midrash Rabah, by R’ Shmuel Yaffa-Ashkenazi, Rabbi in Constantinople, 16th century.

Yalkut Re’uvaini — An anthology of Midrashic and Kabalistic commentaries on the Torah, collected by Rabbi Avraham Re’uvain Hakohein Katz of Prague (d. 1673).

Yalkut Shimoni — Comprehensive Midrashic anthology, covering the entire Bible, attributed to Rabbi Shimon HaDarshan of Frankfurt (13th century).

Yere’im — Halachic discussion of the mitzvos, by Tosafist R. Eliezer ben R. Shmuel of Metz (France, twelfth century) a student of Rabeinu Tam. First printed in condensed form in Venice, in 1565. Unabridged version published in 1892 in Vilna.

Yerios Shlomo — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah. (See: Maharsha)

Yoma — Tractate of Talmud in the Order of Mo’ed (Festivals).

Zohar — Basic text of Kabalah, compiled by Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai and his disciples in the form of a commentary on the Torah. First published in the late 13th century by Rabbi Moshe de Leon (c.1250-1305), in Spain.
לַאֲחֹת
הָרָה"ז וּרְחָרְחָר"ז וּרְחָר יִמָּאֵל שִׁילְיוֹן
וֹרְגַהְו מַרְת חָנוּר רְדָת חַדְיָה
יִלְדַיְיוֹהִים לָאָה מִנְחָה מֵעֵנֵדָל זֶה מְשַׁקֵּא וּלְיִצְחָק שִׁיחֵי
וֹרְזְיָיוֹן שִׁיחֵי

לַעֲלִילִיּוֹ נַשְׁמָה
ר"י יִצְחָק בֶּן ר"י מִנְחָה זֶבַּב
כִּיּוֹמָאָו
זָרֹןְו לָבְרָךְ
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

לַעֲלִילִיּוֹ נַשְׁמָה
הָרָה"ז וּרְחָרְחָר"ז וּרְחָר יִצְחָק בֶּן ר"י יִצְחָק
לַיְפָסְקָהּ
זָרֹןְו לָבְרָךְ
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
לעילוי נשמות
הרח"א הרח"א, ר' מרדכי זאב החן גוטניק
הרסיד ר', אברהם זונדל עוצבנ日消息
הרח"א הרח"א, ר' אחזר זונדל תביה אברהם
הרח"א הרח"א, ר', דוד אליעזר החן יאקה
פור 있을בך
תהיינה נשמותינו צרחות בצרות היום

ולכתות
הרח"א הרח"א, ר' שלום דובער שייח' החן גוטניק
ראב"ד דק"מ מעלבון עי"א
זוגות מארת דבורה תחי

מרת שרה נחמה תחי' יאקה

נדפ סעי
הרח"א הרח"א, ר', מאיר שייח' החן גוטניק
זוגות מארת שינדל טעמא תחי
בניהםговорיהם:
הרח"א שמחוּל מֶרֹּדְכִי זָאָב הַחַן גוּטְנִיק יִילְדֵיָם שְׁיִינְדֵל אֲסַתְרָה שְׁפָּרָה, דּוֹד אָרִי' וּוֹ', מְשַׁקָּא
תַּנְתָּ בֶּעָלֵה הָרָח"א תְּבִיָ' אוֹלֶּמֶל שְׁפָרָה
יִילְדֵיָם חִי', מְשַׁקָּא, מְנַחְמָה מֶעֲנָדֶל דּוֹד אָרִי' מִנְחָה רַחֲל בֶּעָלֵה הָרָח"א תִּיסָק יִצְחָק בַּאֲרֻבֵּר
יִילְדֵיָם איִיטֵא זָוִי', מְשַׁקָּא
עֲבַלוֹת בֶּעָלֵה הָרָח"א תִּיּוֹכַלְלָאֵל עֶלָּעָר
יִילְדֵיָם חִי', מְשַׁקָּא וְשֵׁבָת
מְנַחְמָה מֶעֲנָדֶל הַחַן, סִימוֹן אָסְטְרָה, שְׁפִּירִינְאָה לַאֲה, יִסָּק יִצְחָק הַחַן,
אֲבַרְכָּם שְׁלֵמָה הַחַן, חִי' בְּתַי', דּוֹד אָרִי' הַחַן
שִׁיִּי' לְאוֹרֶךְ יְמִים וְשֵׁנִים טוֹבָת
לעילוי נשמתו
ר' דוד והוגתו לאה שלגנוע
ר' דוד והוגתו רינה עטר
сорונים לבכה
תנווה נשמותיהֵי טוררות בצרור החסם

נדס על די
ר' דוד ישחי שלגנוע
והוגתו מרתה לאריא תхи

ובתנויה:
הנה ושרה מלכה

ולאזכות
ר' ראובן ישחי שלגנוע
והוגתו מרתה מרימ תהי

 mocks
לחיות התכשיות
לבדים הקדש אדוננו מורנו ורבינו
נשיא דרוני