

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

“On this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins” (Lev. 16: 30). On the holiest day of the year, the Day of Atonement, the holiest of people, the High Priest, entered the holiest of places, the Holy of Holies, and made atonement for all Israel. It was a moment on which the fate of Israel depended. For their destiny depended on G-d; and G-d in turn sought their obedience. Yet a sinless nation is inconceivable. That would be a nation of angels, not women and men. So a people needs rituals of collective repentance and remorse, times at which it asks G-d for forgiveness. That is what the Day of Atonement was when the Temple stood.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for us to understand the crisis represented by the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in the year 70CE. It was, to be sure, a military and political disaster. That, we have no difficulty in imagining. But it was also a spiritual catastrophe. Judaism and the Jewish people survived. We would not be here otherwise. But that survival was by no means assured at the time. How does a nation defined in terms of a religion centred on the Temple and its sacrifices live on after the loss of its most basic institutions? That is the question of questions.

The destruction of the First Temple was no less tragic. But in those days, Israel had prophets-men like Jeremiah and Ezekiel-who gave the people hope. There were no such prophets in the first century CE. To the contrary, from the time of the Maccabees onwards, prophecy gave way to apocalypse: visions of the end of days far removed from the normal course of history. The prophets, despite the grandeur of their visions, were for the most part political realists. The apocalyptic visionaries were not. They envisaged a metaphysical transformation. The cosmos would be convulsed by violent confrontation. There would be a massive final battle between the forces of good and evil. As one of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in Qumran put it: “the heavenly host will give forth in great voice, the foundations of the world will be shaken, and a war of the mighty ones of the heavens will spread throughout the world”.

People foresaw disaster. Josephus tells us about one of them. Four years before the war against Rome, “at a time of exceptional peace and prosperity”, a certain Jeshua son of Ananias, “a very ordinary yokel”, began to cry “Woe to Jerusalem” wherever he went. People beat him; the authorities had him sentenced to corporal punishment; yet he continued his lament undaunted: “All the time till the war broke out he never approached another citizen or was seen in conversation, but daily as if he had learned a prayer by heart he recited his lament: ‘Woe to Jerusalem’... For seven years and five months he went on ceaselessly, his voice as strong as ever and his vigour unabated”, until he was killed by a rock flung by a Roman engine during the siege.

What does a nation do in the wake of “sacrificial crisis”, the loss of its rituals of atonement? We are in a position to trace this precisely, because of the exceptionally candid confession of one who chose another way, Paul of Tarsus, the first and greatest theologian of Christianity. Paul tells us that he was obsessed by guilt. He said of himself that he was “sold as a slave to sin”. The good he sought to do, he failed to do. The sin he sought to avoid, he committed. The very fact that he was commanded to do something, provoked in him the opposite reaction, an overwhelming desire to do it. So powerful was this antinomian streak within him that it led him to conceive of a religion without commands at all-quite unlike the sermon on the mount, in which the founder of Christianity said: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets... I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.”

Paul famously attributed the sinful nature of humanity to the first sin of the first human being, Adam. This sin was lifted by the death of the Messiah. Heaven itself had sacrificed the son of G-d to atone for the sin of man. G-d became the High Priest, and His son the sacrifice.

Paul lived and taught shortly before the destruction of the Second Temple, but his teaching-like that of the members of the Qumran sect and Josephus' visionary Jeshua-fully anticipates that catastrophe and constitutes a pre-emptive response to it. What would happen when there were no more physical sacrifices to

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atone for the guilt of the nation? In their place, for Paul, would come the metaphysical sacrifice of the son-of-G-d. In Paul, sacrifice is transcendentalized, turned from an event in time and space to one beyond time and space, operative always.

Judaism could not take this route, for many reasons. First, because the message of the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22) is that G-d does not allow us (let alone Him) to sacrifice sons. Second, because not one, but all, members of the people of the covenant are sons or daughters of G-d: "My child, My firstborn, Israel" (Exodus 4: 22). Third, because despite the many messianic movements to which it has given rise, the Jewish answer to the question, "Has the Messiah come?" is always, "Not Yet". While there is still violence and injustice in the world, we cannot accept the consolation of believing that we live in a post-messianic age.

Only against this background can we appreciate the astonishing leap implicit in Rabbi Akiva's famous statement: "Rabbi Akiva said: Happy are you, Israel. Who is it before whom you are purified and who purifies you? Your Father in heaven. As it is said: And I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean. And it further says: You hope of Israel, the Lord. Just as a fountain purifies the impure, so does the Holy One, blessed be He, purify Israel."

According to Rabbi Akiva specifically, and rabbinic thought generally, in the absence of a Temple, a High Priest and sacrifices, all we need to do is repent, to do teshuvah, to acknowledge our sins, to commit ourselves not to repeat them in the future, and to ask G-d to forgive us. Nothing else is required: not a Temple, not a priest, and not a sacrifice. G-d Himself purifies us. There is no need for an intermediary. What Christianity transcendentalized, Judaism democratized. As the Yiddish dramatist S. Ansky put it: Where there is true turning to G-d, every person becomes a priest, every prayer a sacrifice, every day a Day of Atonement and every place a Holy of Holies.

This really was the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity. At stake were two quite different ways of understanding the human person, the nature of sin, the concept of guilt and its atonement, and the mediated or unmediated relationship between us and G-d. Judaism could not accept the concept of "original sin" since Jeremiah and Ezekiel had taught, six

centuries before the birth of Christianity, that sin is not transferred across the generations. Nor did it need a metaphysical substitute for sacrifice, believing as it did in the words of the Psalmist (Ps. 51: 17): "The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O G-d, you will not despise". We are all sons or daughters of G-d, who is close to all who call Him in truth. That is how one of the greatest tragedies to hit the Jewish people led to an unprecedented closeness between G-d and us, unmediated by a High Priest, unaccompanied by any sacrifice, achieved by nothing more or less than turning to G-d with all our heart, asking for forgiveness and trusting in His love.

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RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“Do not steal, and do not deny (having somebody else's item) and do not lie (about owing money)" (Vayikra 19:11). The "stealing" at the beginning of our verse refers to stealing something of monetary value, whereas the commandment "do not steal" that is the eighth of the "Ten Commandments" (Shemos 20:13) refers to stealing somebody, i.e. kidnapping (see Rashi). The Talmud (Sanhedrin 86a) proves this from the context of each of the verses. Our verse discusses other cases regarding monetary value, so the "stealing" must also refer taking something of monetary value. The "stealing" of the Ten Commandments, on the other hand, which is grouped with murder and adultery - sins of capital punishment - refers to kidnapping, which is also punishable by death.

Even though the same word is used for both types of "stealing" (gimel-nun-vaish), there is one difference. When referring to kidnapping, the Torah uses the singular "you" ("lo signov"), while when referring to stealing items, it uses the plural "you" ("lo signovu"). Although the commentators discuss the significance of using the singular vs. the plural form (see Chizkuni), the Be'er Yosef asks a more specific question. If the Torah chooses the singular form for kidnapping and the plural form for stealing, there must be something inherent in each that ties it to its respective type of theft. What is it about the singular form of stealing that makes it refer to kidnapping, and/or what is it about the plural form that causes it to refer to stealing?

Quoting a Talmudic discussion (Bava Kama 27b) about taking justice into your own hands, the Be'er Yosef suggests that the reason the plural form indicates stealing something is because one is not allowed to sneak in and "steal back" his own item from the thief (there is a dispute as to whether it can be taken back by force or not), in order that it not appear as if the victim is himself a thief. A kidnapping victim is certainly allowed to try and escape, though, so the prohibition applies only to the original thief. Since the victim is also

prohibited from "stealing" the item back, the plural form is used for stealing something (as opposed to somebody).

The Be'er Yosef wrote this in the 20th Century, but he was "mechaven" to a Rishon (early commentator), as the Bartenura (late 15th Century, in his commentary on Shemos 20:30) gives a very similar explanation, although he references the Sifra (on our verse in Vayikra) rather than the Talmud. Nevertheless, there may be another way to approach the reason each form was used the way it was.

Despite the contexts of the two verses, the commentators point out that the word "genaivah" refers to all kinds of theft; kidnapping, stealing something of monetary value, and misleading someone ("genaivas da'as"). The context tells us which specific form of theft is the primary focus of the verse, but the prohibition applies to all of them. Rabbeinu Bachya says that the Torah used two different forms of the word in order to clue us in that two different types of theft are being highlighted. From this perspective, there need not be any implication in either of the forms of the word towards any specific type of theft. The important thing is that they are different, telling us that they are not referring to the same type of theft; the context will point us to which type the Torah is referring to. Still, it would be reasonable to say that if the Torah is going to use different forms of the same word, it will choose the form that more closely aligns with the context of that verse. The prohibition against stealing your property back from the thief would therefore be enough for the Torah to use the plural form when discussing stealing something. However, rather than being a biblical prohibition, discreet vigilante justice could be rabbinic in origin despite being the reason for the Torah selecting the plural form.

The Kli Yakar provides another possible connection between plural thievery and stealing things of monetary value. It is common, he writes, for thieves to divide up their ill-gotten gains, and the Torah is prohibiting those who would share in the stolen money or items from doing so. Although he acknowledges that a kidnapping victim is often sold for ransom or as a slave (see Shemos 21:16), he says that it is much harder to find buyers; splitting the money is therefore more likely to occur when the money itself is stolen. It would seem that this difference is not implied in the plural form vs. the singular form, but is understandable if we are only trying to explain why, if differentiating is necessary (as Rabbeinu Bachya maintains), it was monetary theft where the plural form was used. It is also possible to differentiate between kidnapping and stealing based on the fact that multiple thieves can each receive stolen goods and are therefore considered a thief in their own right, whereas if more than one person was involved in a kidnapping, it would not be attributed to any of them (much like two people doing a melachah on Shabbos together, which is forbidden but not an act

that brings either a chiyuv chatas or sekilah). And by the time the victim is sold (when the money can be divided), the act of kidnapping has already been done. Because there can be multiple thieves that are all considered "thieves" the admonition against stealing was given in the plural.

One other possibility that came to mind was the frequency of people stealing vs. how often people kidnap others. It is much more likely for someone who cheats on his taxes, or takes supplies from a company that does not allow it, to rationalize his behavior because he thinks that "everyone" does it. (Even though it's not true that "everyone" does it, it is unfortunately common enough to give the yetzer hara the opening to rationalize it.) By saying, "do not steal" in the plural form, the Torah is telling us that even if others also do it, it is still wrong, as "none of you should be stealing."

Since all of these things are more relevant to stealing something, when the Torah wanted to differentiate between the types of theft, it used the plural form for stealing and the singular form for kidnapping.

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RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Why were Nadav and Avihu, two of Ahron's (Aaron) sons killed? The Torah states their death came when they brought an eish zarah, a foreign fire, into the Temple. (Leviticus 10:1) But what was the nature of this fire?

Some maintain that because the prohibition against drinking is found in the sentences that follow their death, (Leviticus 10:9) the fire alludes to the possibility that Ahron's sons served in the sanctuary while intoxicated. This may be the reason for the punishment of death.

Others insist that the fire relates to their being "hot" in deciding halakhic matters themselves without consulting Moshe (Moses). Note that the preceding sentence (Leviticus 9:23) stresses the leadership role of Moshe and Ahron.

I am convinced that when many answers are offered, it indicates that none are truly compelling. It can be suggested that we cannot comprehend the reason why Nadav and Avihu's actions were deserving of death. Only G-d can grasp the unfathomable, we cannot.

This may explain why the Torah tells us at the beginning of this week's portion, that the Lord spoke to Moshe immediately after the death of Ahron's two sons. (Leviticus 16:1) The lesson: despite the suffering of sufferings, the horror of an untimely ghastly death, dialogue continues. G-d tells Moshe to speak to Ahron and Ahron does G-d's will. In fact this may be the central point of the Nadav - Avihu story. Although not understanding why his sons died, Ahron and the priesthood continue on in a relationship to G-d.

Not coincidentally, soon after the first sentence of our portion, Ahron the high priest is commanded to select two identical goats and, by lots, designate one as an offering to G-d and the other to be pushed over the cliff for Azazel. (Leviticus 16:6-11) It is extraordinary that although these goats are identical in every way, they experience different fates. This to teach Ahron and all of us that sometimes life takes tragic twists and turns that are inexplicable.

When confronted with such inexplicable suffering we ought all remember the words of Esther Wachsman, mother of Nachshon (the young Israeli soldier murdered by Arab terrorists a number of years ago). She said, "When tragedy befalls us we should not ask 'why?' but rather, 'what shall we do now?'" It is our choice whether to approach our tragedy by only crying 'woe is me' or whether to allow it to elevate us, giving our lives new meaning and direction and bringing us closer to G-d.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik makes this very point when distinguishing between "fate" and "destiny." Fate casts each of us into a dimension of life we cannot control. Destiny, on the other hand, "is an active existence in which humanity confronts the environment into which she or he was cast...Humanity's mission in this world is to turn fate into destiny, an existence that is passive and influenced to an existence that is active and influential." © 2009 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Among the many commandments and values that are represented in this week's double parsha special attention seems to be paid to the intimate and marital relationships between people. The Torah lists for us those relationships which are considered to be incestuous, immoral and forbidden. There is perhaps no area of human behavior so sensitive and yet so dissolute and dangerously self-destructive as these liaisons and relationships.

According to the popularization of Freudian psychology it is the sexual drive more than anything else that is the energy source for human behavior. The Torah looks not to deny this basic drive, it never preaches celibacy, but rather it looks to channel and control this activity, turning it from something potentially illicit and harmful to something that is holy and creative.

In order to accomplish this, the Torah imposes a set of limitations, inhibitions and rules to govern and sanctify such human behavior. In effect, the Torah teaches us that our sexual drive is a neutral commodity. It is rather the circumstances and structure that surround the use of this drive that determine its probity, correctness and holiness. That is the key idea that lies

behind all of the commandments that appear in these parshiyot - discipline, sensitivity, correctness of behavior and a sense of positive purpose.

Be holy and sanctified the Torah tells us - that is our goal. How to arrive there is what the commandments, individually and collectively, come to teach us. And the road is paved with self-discipline, self-control and a devotion to duty and responsibility.

The parshiyot also emphasize to us the Torah's view regarding the treatment of other human beings. The Torah bids us to love others, to respect others, to tolerate others, and to therefore become a holier person. Piety in matters that are so to speak between man and G-d are of prime importance in Jewish life.

But of equal importance is the correct relationship between humans and their fellow human beings. One cannot be a holy person through ritual piety and scholarship alone. Ramban advances the idea that the possibility of being obnoxious and disgusting even within the confines of the Torah, so to speak, exists. How we deal with other human beings is a crucial part of being a holy person.

It is far easier to deal with an unseen and inscrutable Divinity than to have to deal with a real human being standing face to face before us. When people differ with us, oftentimes they are not cognizant of our needs and desires, and can prove to be annoying and difficult. How are we to deal with such people? The Torah prescribes the same formula for dealing with others as it did for dealing with our innate drives as described above - patience, sensitivity, self-discipline and retention of the goal of being holy.

An awareness of circumstances and situations that govern all of the commandments of the Torah also relate to our interpersonal behavior one with another. The Torah is always to be viewed as a unity, as something whole and inseparable. That is the way to embark on the road to holiness. © 2009 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Fascinatingly enough, both halves of this week's double portion of Acharei Mot - Kedoshim include elaborate lists of sexual prohibitions, from incest and adultery to homosexuality and bestiality; clearly the Bible is emphasizing that sexuality outside of the Sanctity of marriage is problematic, to say the least.

But what is problematic is the strange order of the Biblical passages: Chapter 18 of the Book of Leviticus (Acharei Mot) commands, "You shall keep my statutes.... And live by them" (18:5), which is followed by twenty-four verses of sexual prohibitions and the warning that the penalty for promiscuous and licentious

conduct will be no less than exile - a "vomiting out" - from the Land of Israel. Next to the last "sexual prohibition" is sacrificing one's child to Molech (Lev 18:21). Then comes Chapter 19 and the second Biblical portion of Kedoshim, which gives a long list of laws of "holiness," from revering one's parents, to guarding the Sabbath, to leaving behind portions of one's field for the poor, to refraining from oppressing the stranger, to maintaining honest weights. Chapter 20 then opens with the prohibition of sacrificing one's child to Molech (Lev. 20: 1-5), only to be followed once again by a long list of sexual prohibitions, concluding this second portion with the command "And you shall be holy to me, because I the Lord am holy" (Lev. 20:26).

Hence, after the description of the Yom Kippur sacrificial service, here is the order of the laws found in the two portions we read this Sabbath: the command to live by G-d's laws, the sexual prohibitions, the transgression of sacrificing to Molech, the main commandment and continuing commandments of holiness, the transgression of Molech, the sexual prohibitions, and a final charge of holiness. Why interrupt the sexual prohibitions - which are largely repetitive - with the portion of "holiness?" Why conclude the sexual prohibitions, the first time they appear, with the prohibition of Molech and begin the second list of sexual prohibitions with the prohibition of Molech once again? And, above all, why open the sexual prohibitions the first time they appear with the command to live by G-d's laws when sexual immorality - along with murder and idolatry - is a rare prohibition for which one must give up one's life rather than transgress!

Let us deal with our last question first. I have often written that any individual who lives his life for the main purpose of continuing to live is doomed to fail; after all, no one has ever left this world alive! Hence the only meaningful life worth living is the life dedicated to an ideal more significant than any one human life - and such an ideal is the Divine concept of morality. Yes, live by my laws - but in order to live a meaningful life and eventually to become indelibly connected to eternity is to live your life within the backdrop of ideals more important than one individuals' life, i.e. the eternal ideals of the Kingship of G-d.

The Hebrew word "kadosh" is generally translated as "holy" and is the most frequently used "description" of G-d, the transcendent G-d, the "wholly other" G-d, the G-d who is above and beyond the limitations of nature and instinct. Our Bible commands us to also be holy; as much as possible we must strive to free ourselves from the seductions and blandishments of the physical, materialistic world, and even of the instinctive and natural sexual drives which can often lead to sexual immorality. Hence it is quite fitting that the list of sexual prohibitions should lead into the Biblical portion of "holiness" and be even repeated once again within the rubric of holiness. To serve and attempt to emulate G-d means to strive for holiness, for

the ability to say no to one's more materialistic instincts, and the area of sexual seduction is the most difficult to control, overcome, and eventually sublimate. Sexual morality is such a major test that the sexual prohibitions are repeated twice.

But where does sacrificing one's child to Molech come into this picture? There are many ways of destroying a child - and one of the most pernicious is when a child grows up in a home in which the faithfulness of the marital bed is compromised. There is no greater comfort for children than feeling the warmth and security of loving parents, and there is no greater psychological turmoil for children than seeing parents warring against each other, charging each other with infidelity and hypocritical conduct. One sacrifices one's child to a false G-d when one fails in one's most fundamental obligation to those whom we brought into the world, i.e. to provide for them a secure haven with parents whom they can trust. Perhaps the verses in these two portions are the most significant - as well as the most difficult to maintain - of all the verses in the Bible. © 2009 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah states: "Love your fellow man as yourself, I am the Almighty" (Leviticus 19:18). Why is the commandment to love our fellow human being followed by the words "I am the Almighty"?

The great rabbi, the Chasam Sofer, clarifies that while the commandment to love our fellow man is a concept that anyone can relate to with his own intellect, the Torah tells us to love our fellow man because it is the Almighty's will.

If your love of other people is based only on your own feelings, there could easily be a lack of consistency. One day you might feel positive towards someone and on the next day your feelings can change. However, the Torah states that the Almighty commands us to love others. We need to develop positive attitudes towards others by focusing on their virtues whether it comes easily to us or whether it is difficult.

Everyone thinks that it is a good idea to love your neighbor, but how can the Almighty command us to love our neighbor? Some of us have neighbors who are awfully hard to appreciate! However, if the Almighty commands it, it must be possible. If you ask a pregnant woman if she will love her baby, she'll look at you like you're nuts and say "Of course!" Then you can ask her, "How do you know? Maybe he'll be like your neighbor!"

A pregnant mother knows she will love her baby because she will make it her business to love that baby. And what if the baby grows up to be an irresponsible teenager flunking out of school who doesn't make his bed? She'll still love him! How? She focuses on his good points! "He has a good heart! He's got a sweet personality! He helps when I ask him to." If we make a

list of someone's positive traits and focus on them, we can generate a good feeling towards them. *based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin © 2009 Rabbi K. Packouz and aish.com*

HARAV A.Y. KOOK

The Blessed Land

“**A** land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of olive-trees and honey [i.e. syrup of dates];” (Deut. 8:8)

"Rav Hasdah and Rav Hamnunah were sitting at a meal; dates and pomegranates were brought before them. Rav Hamnunah commenced with a brakhah (benediction) upon the dates. [Rav Hasdah] said to him, is not the accepted opinion that of Rav Yosef—and some say of R. Yitzhak—that whichever takes precedence in this verse [Deut. 8:8] takes precedence in being blessed? [Rav Hamnunah] said to him, the word 'honey' [i.e. dates] is second in number after the word 'land', while the word 'pomegranates' is fifth. [Rav Hasdah] said to him, would that we had limbs of iron that we might follow you." (Brakhoth 41b)

As the brakhoth (benedictions) awaken hearts to those righteous perceptions (Rambam, Hilkhoth Brakhoth 1:3) which are parent to righteous deeds and excellent virtues, so too, are the fine points and particulars of each law built up in ways which lead on to noble and excellent virtues and the principles of Torah in beliefs and perceptions (emunoth u'deoth). And inasmuch as the love of Eretz Israel is the foundation of the Torah, bringing the community of the people of G-d [Klal Israel], and the world in its entirety, to its perfection of wholeness, therefore the precedence accorded to the object of each brakhah is linked to its proximity to "eretz" (Land) in the Torah. Thus are we taught that whoever is in closest proximity to the Land, and has the most love for the Land, and who puts forth the greatest endeavour in Settling the Land (Yishuv Eretz Israel), receives precedence in being blessed and is closer to attaining the perfection of wholeness.

And as to those who love the Land, they may be classed according to their merits and their powers of discernment. For there are those who love the Land for its noble qualities. They thirst to "take pleasure in her stones, / And love her dust." (Ps. 102:15) in order to fulfill the mitzvoth (commandments) which are dependent upon the Land. They cleave to the Land in pursuance of that lofty aim which is to be found by the community of Israel and the world in its entirety when it is sought on a spiritual level. But there are also those who love the Land and strive for its Settlement in order to achieve the aim of establishing a resting-place for the community of Israel [in their Land]. This too is a sound and glorious endeavour; nonetheless it is not on the same high level as that aspired to by those who recognize the lofty aim which is the basis of the love of the Land.

Therefore the proximity of the objects of the brakhoth to "eretz" is alluded to in this verse in two orders of classification. The first group, of five 'kinds', suggests that highest, most superior form of yearning for the Land as exemplified by the Five Books of the Torah which are the basis of the perfection of wholeness of Israel from which is drawn the perfection of wholeness of humanity. And each member of this group takes precedent in the brakhoth according to its place in the verse and its proximity to "eretz". The second group, ["olive-trees and honey"], is exemplified by those who recognize the natural wholeness of the community of Israel in its Land...

Thus we learn here how great is the merit of one who yearns to settle the Land even for materialistic purposes, for the sake of the community. For what is done for the sake of the community will always transmute the material into the spiritual, and the high and lofty aim will be attained by means of the linking of G-d's People with G-d's Land. Therefore whoever is deeply absorbed in the Land, even on a lowly level, should be strengthened and encouraged by us and placed foremost in being blessed. He must be given precedence over one who is tardy in coming and remains at a distance, even though at heart the one from afar is on a higher spiritual level. For the Settlement of the Land and the love of the Land expressed in deeds is a sublime affair. In this regard, the Sages wrote of Omri (Sanhedrin 102b) that he won a kingdom because he added one city to Eretz Israel, even though his intentions were certainly materialistic. (Yalkut Shimoni, Part II, 207)

We must learn that it is necessary for us to strengthen the physical powers of the national community, and thus will come about the strengthening of the spiritual forces. Therefore [Rav Hamnunah] said to them, this is second in number after the word 'land'. That is, even though it is second in number to 'land' in the second, lower level, spiritual grouping, nonetheless it takes precedent over that which is fifth in number to 'land' in the first, higher level, spiritual grouping, because of the impression that the love of the Land ought to make upon us. So that although the soul of one may be on a lowly level compared to that of the other, nonetheless his material enterprises impel towards a lofty aim. Thus out of physical strength will come spiritual strength. Therefore they said to [Rav Hamnunah], in word and deed, would that we had limbs of iron that we might follow you. Would that we had the physical strength and iron power—that we were strong muscled—that we might receive from you a spiritual wholeness great as your own virtues—that we might love the material strength that is in G-d's People that will surely bring about spiritual strength.

And as to national matters concerning the community of Israel, here also, would that we might have the means to strengthen the physical and material side of the community—limbs of iron—iron cars, iron

bars—with forceful vigour and a body strong as iron to gird our loins with courage and exalt our glory in the spirit of valour. That we might follow you, and we will walk your path winning to glory in the way of the Torah, with love and tranquillity, neither "scaling the wall nor crying havoc against the nations of the world" (Ketuboth 111a). Each one must multiply their inner strength, even if it is materialistic in essence, for thus will we bring about the spiritual reality, which is the ultimate goal—"Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the L-rd of hosts." (Zech. 4:6) And the Psalmist said, "Glorify the L-rd, O Jerusalem; / Praise thy G-d, O Zion. / For He hath made strong the bars of thy gates; / He hath blessed thy children within thee. / He maketh thy borders peace; / He giveth thee in plenty the fat of wheat." (Ps. 147:12-14) To which the necessary conclusion and completeness, in accordance with the keudushah (holiness) of Israel, will be that, "He declareth His word unto Jacob, / His statutes and His ordinances unto Israel." (Ps. 147:19) *HaRav A. Y. Kook, Ein Ai'yah [Brakhoth 41b] (translated by Rhea Magnes)*

COMMENTARY: The status of those Founders and Settlers in Eretz Israel who were not shomrei Torah u'mitzvoth (followers of the Laws and commandments of the Torah) is a central theme in scholarly discussions of Zionism. HaRav Kook draws upon one of the finer details of the laws concerning benedictions (Hilkhoth Brakhoth) to define this unique and complex relationship. The halakhah (Jewish Law) states that if a variety of fruits, which are each to receive the same benediction, is placed before the one who makes the benediction, and one species in the variety is of the "Seven Kinds" of produce with which Eretz Israel is blessed (Deut. 8:8), the benediction is made over that species first. It is then not necessary to repeat the same benediction over the remaining varieties of fruits. (Shulchan Arukh, Orekh Haim 211:1) The halakhah goes on to state according to Rav Yosef—that if there are two or more species of the "Seven Kinds" on the table, then the benediction is made over whichever one is named first in the passage in the Torah (Deut. 8:8).

It is to this halakhah that the story in the Gemara (Brakhoth 41b) refers. An Amora (Talmudic Sage) gave precedence to a species of fruit which is named later in the text than the other species of the "Seven Kinds" which were before him. He explained his actions by saying that the species whose name is located in the Biblical text closest to the word "eretz" (land) is to be blessed first, even though it appears later in the text. Thus are we taught that there is a special and unique virtue in being "close" to Eretz Israel. This idea is explained and developed at length by HaRav Kook.

Thus, according to the explication of HaRav Kook, even that which is done to contribute to the physical sustenance of the People of Israel in their Land, will lead in the end to their spiritual sustenance as

well. The allusion to Israel's physical sustenance is exemplified by the two species which are named in the second order of the Biblical passage: "olive-trees and honey". It may be noted that this allusion can be carried through from the fruits themselves to their products, oil which is derived from the olive and the syrup which is derived from the dates. This is applicable to the idea which is developed by HaRav Kook in which he explains that out of that material virtue of contributing to the physical sustenance of the People of Israel in the Land will be derived a spiritual end.

ARUTZ SHEVA ISRAEL NATIONAL RADIO

Independence After Remembrance

by Rabbi Shlomo Goren

If we wanted to define in a few words how Judaism and our Prophets saw the destiny of the People of Israel, we would simply quote from the words of Ezekiel (16,6) - words we recite at the Passover Seder, when we reach the pinnacle of our feeling of national freedom: "I saw you sprawling in your blood, and I said to you, 'In thy blood, live!'" In thy blood, live! Our life sprouts from our sacrifices, from the blood, from the willingness to give of ourselves. The Jewish people has always been known as Sanctifiers of G-d's Name. This commandment of "I will be sanctified by the People of Israel before the eyes of many nations," was always our supreme commandment, the pinnacle of our upliftment.

But for many generations, hundreds of years, we fulfilled this commandment with nothing sprouting forth from our blood, nothing to show for our sacrifices. We never merited to see the 'In thy blood, live!' part. We saw the blood, but not the life that was to have emanated from it. Today, however, we see both together - the "sprawling in the blood" and the "life." For this reason, Remembrance Day for the Fallen Soldiers was placed adjacent to Independence Day.

The merit of doing this fell in my lot. I would like to recount our considerations when we first determined the date, in the first year of our independence, and when we decided when and how to honor and commemorate our holy 'sacrifices.' We first thought of setting Remembrance Day on Lag BaOmer, the day that historically symbolizes the Bar Kokhba war, and that which is still celebrated by Jewish children as the day of Jewish strength. In this way, we thought that we could combine the heroism of our early ancestors with that of our own children in this generation. But doubts crept in: Would we not cause harm to the general significance, shrouded in mystery as it is, of this historic day?

One of the Fast Days, or during the Three Weeks in which we remember the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temples, was then proposed. But we could not accept the fact that the Day of

Remembrance would be solely a day of mourning. It was felt that this day must be more than that: We must remember, we must grieve, but not only that - it must be a day of mourning, of majesty, and of vision.

We realized, therefore, that we could not "assign" this day to any existing holiday. But the first Independence Day was rapidly approaching, and so we did what we did - without announcing it formally and without setting any specific format for the day. I went to Voice of Israel studios on the day before Independence Day and read aloud the Chief of Staff's Daily Military Order, which he wrote according to my request. And so I became the narrator and the one who set Remembrance Day on what became its date.

When we speak of Remembrance Day, we must speak of three time frames - just as in the Pesach Haggadah and the Seder. On Passover, we first tell the story of the past, we "recount to [the] children" the might of G-d and of Israel. We then turn to the present, as we turn the story of the past into a lesson of values for the present. We are obligated to translate the legacy left us by our forefathers into an integral part of our lives today. Finally, the "song" for the future: the fourth cup of Seder-night wine is the subject of the "blessing of song," the song that is a great vision for the future.

These three components must comprise our commemoration of Yom HaZikaron (Remembrance Day) as well. We must first tell of the heroism and strength of our sons and fathers. It is a moral imperative not to forget their acts of valor and self-sacrifice, in order that we not be ungrateful and that we recognize the tremendous contribution they made on our behalf. We, the entire nation, owes them this not as mourners, but out of thanks and recognition.

I recall an incident after the fall of Gush Etzion (in 1948) when a soldier named Charlap was wounded, was taken to the French Hospital near the Old City, died there of his wounds, and was buried by the Jordan Legion in the hospital's yard. I later received special permission to cross the lines to recover the body. The Jordanians helped me search for the exact burial site, and then helped me dig, but when we found the body, I did not let anyone touch it, but rather dealt with it myself. There was a Jordanian Major there, who said, "I see that you are a Colonel [higher than a Major]. Have you no other job but to deal with bones?!" I responded, "This is the big difference. Our national life is built upon these bones, they are that which gave us life. They are our future - the vision of the dry bones." The appreciation that we have for those who fell is that which gives us life. The Medrash teaches, "When a person walks along the way, and sees a cemetery, this is a sign that a city is near." For us, a cemetery is not a place of ruin and end, but rather a site of life, and is in fact called in Talmudic literature, "House of Life."

On Yom HaZikaron, then, we must remember first of all the holiness of the fallen - those who gave all they possibly could for the benefit of the nation. It is not

they who benefit by our remembrance and prayers, but we ourselves who can be uplifted by remembering them and by standing in communion with them.

Not only those who fell behaved heroically. Their family members, too, are more than partners in the bravery - they are those who perpetuate it. I will recount only a few of the incidents to which I was a personal witness. I saw a mother who lost her only son standing at his gravesite, crying out over and over in Yiddish, "Master of the Universe, I hold nothing against You. You are just, and Your judgments are just!" One father lost two sons in one day, and he brought them for burial on Chol HaMoed Sukkot. He had been a rabbi in Morocco, and stood at the double grave wearing white, and said, "We are forbidden to eulogize today, we are forbidden to cry, but we are not forbidden to justify G-d's judgment - and so I do that now. I don't understand the judgment, but it appears that I am wrong and G-d is right." These are stories of utmost bravery and strength, which we must gather together and write down - for them to serve as examples for the most basic values that we wish to teach our youth.

The Jewish nation never immortalized its battlefield heroes. We had many wars, and many victories, but where are the holidays to celebrate Joshua's victories? Or those of King David? Even Chanuka is remembered more as a day of Divine miracles than of physical strength. But spiritual values - these we must write down and remember, and in this way, perpetuate our heroes.

Time is ephemeral, but it can be translated into eternal values. If the nation is educated in the light of these values, there will no longer be a need for a Remembrance Day.

The juxtaposition of Remembrance Day and Independence Day is alluded to in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah (31, 12): "I will turn their mourning into joy, and I will give them comfort, and gladden them from their sorrow." The "sounds of joy" are not absolute; in the Scriptures, joy always follows sadness and mourning. Independence Day, too, must be connected with sadness, with mourning, with sacrifices, and with the blood-drenched history of the Jewish people.

All this expresses our vision of the third Redemption of the Jewish nation. We must imbue in our people the values that our Prophets attached to the national existence of the vision. We must not suffice only with its physical materialization. This our task. I hope that we have not erred in setting Remembrance Day adjacent to Independence Day. This is our symbol - from sadness to joy, and with this we will go further. *Israel's Chief Rabbi, Shlomo Goren, who died in 1994, was Chief Rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces. He took part in the liberation of the Temple Mount, the Machpelah Cave, and other holy sites in 1967. This speech was delivered before the Prime Minister and other governmental figures circa 1974, explaining why Remembrance Day was instituted on the day before Independence Day*