

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Something implicit in the Torah from the very beginning becomes explicit in the book of Devarim. God is the God of love. More than we love Him, He loves us. Here, for instance, is the beginning of this week's parsha: "If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep his covenant of love [et ha-brit ve-et ha-chessed] with you, as he swore to your ancestors. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers." (Deut 7:12-13)

Again in the parsha we read: "To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the Lord set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations- as it is today." (Deut. 10:14-15)

And here is a verse from last week's: "Because he loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength." (Deut. 4:37)

The book of Deuteronomy is saturated with the language of love. The root a-h-v appears in Shemot twice, in Vayikra twice (both in Lev. 19), in Badmibar not at all, but in Sefer Devarim 23 times. Devarim is a book about societal beatitude and the transformative power of love.

Nothing could be more misleading and invidious than the Christian contrast between Christianity as a religion of love and forgiveness and Judaism as a religion of law and retribution. As I pointed out in Covenant and Conversation to Vayigash, forgiveness is born (as David Konstan notes in Before Forgiveness) in Judaism. Interpersonal forgiveness begins when Joseph forgives his brothers for selling him into slavery. Divine forgiveness starts with the institution of Yom Kippur as the supreme day of Divine pardon following the sin of the Golden Calf.

Similarly with love: when the New Testament speaks of love it does so by direct quotation from Leviticus ("You shall love your neighbour as yourself") and Deuteronomy ("You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your might"). As philosopher Simon May puts it in his splendid book, Love: A History: "The widespread belief that the Hebrew Bible is all about vengeance and 'an eye for an eye,'

while the Gospels supposedly invent love as an unconditional and universal value, must therefore count as one of the most extraordinary misunderstandings in all of Western history. For the Hebrew Bible is the source not just of the two love commandments but of a larger moral vision inspired by wonder for love's power." (Simon May, Love: A History, pp. 19-20) His judgment is unequivocal: "If love in the Western world has a founding text, that text is Hebrew." (Ibid. pg. 14)

More than this: in Ethical Life: The Past and Present of Ethical Cultures, philosopher Harry Redner distinguishes four basic visions of the ethical life in the history of civilizations. (Harry Redner, Ethical Life: The Past and Present of Ethical Cultures, 2001) One he calls civic ethics, the ethics of ancient Greece and Rome. Second is the ethic of duty, which he identifies with Confucianism, Krishnaism and late Stoicism. Third is the ethic of honour, a distinctive combination of courtly and military decorum to be found among Persians, Arabs and Turks as well as in medieval Christianity (the 'chivalrous knight') and Islam.

The fourth, which he calls simply morality, he traces to Leviticus and Deuteronomy. He defines it simply as 'the ethic of love,' and represents what made the West morally unique: "The biblical 'love of one's neighbour' is a very special form of love, a unique development of the Judaic religion and unlike any to be encountered outside it. It is a supremely altruistic love, for to love one's neighbour as oneself means always to put oneself in his place and to act on his behalf as one would naturally and selfishly act on one's own." (Ibid. pg. 50) To be sure, Buddhism also makes space for the idea of love, though it is differently inflected, more impersonal and unrelated to a relationship with God.

What is radical about this idea is that, first, the Torah insists, against virtually the whole of the ancient world, that the elements that constitute reality are neither hostile nor indifferent to humankind. We are here because Someone wanted us to be, One who cares about us, watches over us and seeks our wellbeing.

Second, the love with which God created the universe is not just divine. It is to serve as the model for us in our humanity. We are bidden to love the neighbour and the stranger, to engage in acts of kindness and compassion, and to build a society based on love. Here is how our parsha puts it:

"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty and awesome God who

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NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL
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shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. So you must love the stranger, for you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Deut. 10:18-19)

In short: God created the world in love and forgiveness and asks us to love and forgive others. I believe that to be the most profound moral idea in human history.

There is however an obvious question. Why is it that love, which plays so great a part in the book of Deuteronomy, is so much less in evidence in the earlier books of Shemot, Vayikra (with the exception of Lev. 19) and Bamidbar?

The best way of answering that question is to ask another. Why is it that forgiveness plays no part at least on the surface of the narrative-in the book of Bereishit? (I exclude, here, midrashic readings of these texts, some of which do make reference to forgiveness.) God does not forgive Adam and Eve or Cain (though he mitigates their punishment). Forgiveness does not figure in the stories of the Flood, the Tower of Babel or the destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain (Abraham's plea is that the cities be spared if they contain fifty or ten righteous people; this is not a plea for forgiveness). Divine forgiveness makes its first appearance in the book of Exodus after Moses' successful plea in the wake of golden calf, and is then institutionalised in the form of Yom Kippur (Lev. 16), but not before. Why so?

The simple, radical, answer is: God does not forgive human beings until human beings learn to forgive one another. Genesis ends with Joseph forgiving his brothers. Only thereafter does God forgive human beings.

Turning to love: Genesis contains many references to it. Abraham loves Isaac.

Isaac loves Esau. Rebecca loves Jacob. Jacob loves Rachel. He also loves Joseph. There is interpersonal love in plentiful supply. But almost all the loves of Genesis turn out to be divisive. They lead to tension between Jacob and Esau, between Rachel and Leah, and between Joseph and his brothers. Implicit in Genesis is a profound observation missed by most moralists and theologians. Love in and of itself-real love, personal and passionate, the kind of love that suffuses much of the prophetic literature as well as Shir

Ha-Shirim, the greatest love song in Tanakh, as opposed to the detached, generalised love called agape which we associate with ancient Greece-is not sufficient as a basis for society. It can divide as well as unite.

Hence it does not figure as a major motif until we reach the integrated social-moral-political vision of Deuteronomy which combines love and justice. Tzedek, justice, turns out to be another key word of Deuteronomy, appearing 18 times. It appears only four times in Shemot, not at all in Bamidbar, and in Vayikra only in chapter 19, the only chapter that also contains the word 'love.' In other words, in Judaism love and justice go hand in hand. Again this is noted by Simon May:

"[W]hat we must note here, for it is fundamental to the history of Western love, is the remarkable and radical justice that underlies the love commandment of Leviticus. Not a cold justice in which due deserts are mechanically handed out, but the justice that brings the other, as an individual with needs and interests, into a relationship of respect. All our neighbours are to be recognised as equal to ourselves before the law of love. Justice and love therefore become inseparable." (Loc. Cit. pg.17)

Love without justice leads to rivalry, and eventually to hate. Justice without love is devoid of the humanizing forces of compassion and mercy. We need both. This unique ethical vision-the love of God for humans and of humans for God, translated into an ethic of love toward both neighbour and stranger-is the foundation of Western civilization and its abiding glory.

It is born here in the book of Deuteronomy, the book of law-as-love and love-as-law. © 2012 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“**A**nd now Israel, what does the Lord Your G-d ask of you, only to revere the Lord your G-d and to walk in all of His ways, and to love Him and to serve the Lord your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul. To observe the commandments of the Lord and His statutes, for your good..." (Deuteronomy 10:11-13)

Is that all? In the words of the Sages of the Talmud, "And is that such a small matter to accomplish?" (B.T. Berakhot 33b) How can the Torah express such a difficult request in such an offhand manner?

A significant experience at the beginning of my teaching career intensifies the question. Almost four decades ago, when teaching Talmud at the James Striar School of Yeshiva University for those without previous yeshiva background, the star of the class was a brilliant young man from Montreal who progressed from barely being able to read the words in Aramaic to real proficiency in analyzing a difficult Tosafot (super-

commentary). At the end of the year, he decided to leave both Yeshiva University as well his newly found Torah observance!

His explanation has remained imprinted in my consciousness all these years: "As a non-religious Jew, I would get up each morning asking myself how I wished to spend the day; as a religious Jew, I must get up each morning asking myself how G-d wants me to spend the day. The pressure is simply too intense for me to take..."

I was sorely disappointed - but I did understand his tension. Indeed, he "got it." He understood that true religious devotion is more than praying at certain times each day and subscribing to specific dos and don'ts; true religious devotion means dedicating every moment to a higher ideal, to answering a Divine call whose message you can never be certain that you correctly discern. It is difficult and even pressurizing to be a sincerely religious Jew. So how can the Bible query "What does the Lord your G-d ask of you but only... to love Him and serve... (Him) with all your heart and with all your soul?" But only?! And how can it be "for your good," *Letov lakh*?

This question may be linked to a curious comparison made by the text of our Torah reading between the land of Egypt and the land of Israel - within the context of a lyrical exposition of the grandeur of the Holy Land and the luscious quality of its fruit: "For the land which you are coming to inherit is not like the land of Egypt which you left, where you (merely) seeded your seed and watered with your feet a garden of vegetation (the water came naturally from the overflow of the Nile River); the land which you are crossing there to inherit is a land of mountains and valleys, (making you dependent upon) heavenly rains to drink water; it is a land which the Lord your G-d constantly investigates, the eyes of the Lord your G-d being upon it from the beginning of the year until end-year" (Deuteronomy 11:10,11). Are then the facts that Israel does not have a ready and plentiful source of water as has Egypt, that the land of Israel is dependent upon the rains of Divine grace which come as a result of the Jewish people's moral and ethical standing and that agricultural activity is a much more arduous and precarious a task than it is in Egypt the reasons for praising Israel? It seems to me that Egypt is a far better option, if we were to be given the choice!

It is fascinating to note that both of the issues we have raised thus far, the Torah - which is the source of our responsibilities towards G-d - and the land of Israel - which is the medium through which our nation will flourish and impart the message of ethical monotheism to the world - are both uniquely called *morasha* by the Bible (Exodus 6:8, Deuteronomy 33:4). *Yerusha* is the usual term for inheritance; *morasha* is translated as heritage. The Jerusalem Talmud explains that an inheritance is often received through no expenditure of effort on the part of the recipient; a

morasha, on the other hand, implies intense exertion, physical and/or emotional input, commitment and even sacrifice on the part of the recipient.

The verb form of *morasha*, *l'horish*, also means to conquer, and conquest implies struggle and even sacrifice. At the same time, the basic verb form around which *morasha* is built is *vav*, *resh*, *shin* - almost the very same letters as *shin*, *yud*, *resh* (*yud* and *vav* are virtually interchangeable in Hebrew) - which spells *shir*, or song. And the Midrashic Sages already noted the linguistic comparison between *morasha* and *m'orasa*, meaning fiancée, or beloved.

All of this leads us to one inescapable conclusion: those objects, ideals and people for which we have labored intensively and sacrificed unsparingly are the very ones we love the most and value above all others. The Mishnah in *Avot* teaches, "In accordance with the pain is the reward." My teacher and mentor Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik teaches, "In accordance with the pain is the sanctity;" we learn from the word *morasha* that "in accordance with the pain is the love." Note the experiences which in retrospect give the most satisfaction and which everyone loves to recount are rarely the days of lazy relaxation we spend on vacation, but more usually the sacrifices during periods of poverty or the battles in time of war. Ask any parent about the special love he/she has for the one child who needed the most care and commitment because of a serious illness or accident and you immediately understand the inextricable connection between conquest and song, commitment and love, intensive effort and emotional gratification. A life without ideals or people for whom one would gladly sacrifice is a life not worth living; a life devoid of emotional commitments is a life which has merely passed one by but which has never been truly lived.

Erich Siegel was wrong when he said that "to love means never to have to say I'm sorry," but it is correct to say that one who is loved need not say thank you to the one who has sacrificed, expended effort, on his/her behalf. Jacobs's fourteen years of hard work for Rachel were "as only a few days" because of his great love for her, attests the Bible. A husband who has the privilege of easing the pain of his beloved wife, if but for a few moments, is grateful for the privilege. And our commitment to G-d - with all our heart, soul and might - is a small thing to ask, as long as it is an expression of our mutual love. In the final analysis, it is certainly for our good, because it gives ultimate meaning, purpose and eternity to our finite lives. © 2012 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The parsha ties together the observance of the Torah commandments, especially the warnings against paganism and idolatry, with the earthly

blessings of longevity and prosperity. Over the ages this has caused great philosophic debate and discussion, for this cause and effect relationship is not always apparent in the national or personal lives of the Jewish people.

Many commentators hasten to add that these biblical promises refer to biblical times when the Divine Spirit was palpably present amongst the Jewish community and the spirit of prophecy was also present and prevalent in the Land of Israel. This means that it was applicable to First Temple times only, for in Second Temple times the spirit of prophecy was absent in the Jewish commonwealth.

Perhaps this is an insight as to why the rabbis attributed the destruction of the First Temple primarily to idolatry - a fulfillment of the cause and effect system of justice as outlined in this week's parsha - while the demise of the Second Temple was attributed to social dispute and baseless hatred, an issue never specifically mentioned in this week's Torah presentation.

It appears that different equations, moral gauges and causes affected the Jewish commonwealth's spiritual status during Second Temple times than were present in First Temple times when prophecy and Divine Spirit were current and abundantly visible. In any event, it is apparent that the direct cause and effect relationship between observance of God's commandments and blessings and prosperity and disobedience causing punishment and disaster has not always been evident in the annals of Jewish history and life, especially in our long years of exile and persecution.

The very fact that the Torah in this week's parsha makes this cause and effect relationship so patently clear, and in fact repeats it a number of times, raises the age old problem of why the righteous suffer and the wicked are rewarded, in this world at least. This basic faith dilemma has its biblical origins in the book of Iyov where the problem is raised, debated and thoroughly discussed, but basically left unanswered.

Over the long Jewish exile with its attendant difficulties and pogroms this gnawing problem of faith has always accompanied us in every generation and circumstance. The events of the Holocaust, almost unimaginable in its numbers and horror, has certainly been a test of faith for many Jews, even for those who themselves were spared that actual experience. Yet the faith of Israel is that somehow in the unfathomable system of God's justice, all will be set right.

In reality, this is the main message of this week's parsha. It informs us that our actions have consequences and that there is a guiding hand to Jewish and world history and events that will eventually reveal itself. So our task remains, as it always was - to fulfill God's commandments and to behave morally and justly. The whole system of God's justice, opaque as it may seem to us to be, is simply to remind us of our potential and greatness, of the importance of our

behavior in the grand scheme of things, and to reinforce our sense of destiny as individuals and as a people
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RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Although we may live lives dedicated to following the commandments of the Torah, the core question of "What does God ask of us?" is posed in the Torah portion this week. It offers the following answer; "Only," to "fear" and "love Him"...and to "observe the commandment of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13)

The fact that the Torah uses the word "only" seems to imply that following the commandments is a minimal request. Yet, keeping 613 commandments is far from a small demand, it is, indeed, a major commitment that requires all of the self.

Some suggest that these words, offered as they were by Moshe (Moses), were said from his perspective. For him, it was a minimal request because for Moshe, the prophet of prophets, keeping all of the mitzvot (commandments) came naturally. This is a bit troubling for it seems that by using the term "only," Moshe, who was a master teacher was making a grievous error by not speaking on the level of the people. He was not speaking in the "language" they could understand. The key to understanding the use of "only" may lie in resolving the larger question of why God gives the commandments at all. Are they primarily given for His sake, or for ours? One could look at the mitzvot as God's way of expressing rulership over us. When we keep His laws we profess allegiance and commitment to Him.

There is, however, an alternative approach. The mitzvot are not haphazard laws given by a God who wants "only" to rule us just for the sake of ruling us. Instead, the commandments express what God feels is best for His people. They are for our sake. It's God's way of saying, I've created a beautiful world - follow these laws and you will find inner happiness. In the words of God to Avraham (Abraham), "hithalekh le-fanai veyei tamim, walk before Me, and you will find fulfillment." (Genesis 17:1) Note the similarity between hithalekh and halakha. God tells Avraham, follow the commandments, follow the halakha-and you will find inner peace and inner meaning.

By focusing on three major Jewish rituals, family purity, the dietary laws and Shabbat, we can better understand that the mitzvot are for our sake. These rituals correspond to the three basic human drives. Family purity corresponds to the sexual encounter, the dietary laws to eating, and Shabbat to the human quest for power. Since Judaism views

human passions as God's gifts to us, the halakha is meant in part as a mechanism to sanctify these passions, allowing us to better appreciate and find greater meaning in life itself.

Many have felt that a God of love would never have initiated commandments which seem to limit and restrict human beings. Yet, this week's parsha tells us while these "limits" and "restrictions" are complex and sometimes difficult to follow, they are the key to living a life of meaning and holiness. When Moshe tells us what God wants, he uses the word "only" - a minimalistic request - teaching that God gives the laws out of his great concern for our welfare, for what is best for us.

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RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah continues the theme of comfort and presents the strong feelings of the Jewish people in exile. The prophet Yeshaya captures their concern and presents their deeply sensed feeling of rejection. Yeshaya quotes, "And Zion said Hashem has forsaken and forgotten Me." (49:14) The long, dark years of exile have caused the Jewish people to sincerely believe that Hashem has abandoned them never to return. There are no indications of redemption in the air and the rapid spiritual decline of the times certainly does not reflect the glorious era of Mashiach. Therefore, the Jewish people reluctantly conclude that the master plan must have changed and their long awaited redemption will never come to fruition.

To this, Hashem responds and informs the Jewish people that they are gravely mistaken. Hashem says, "Can a mother ever forget her child; cease to have compassion for him?! Even if she could, I will never forget you!" (49:15)

Hashem revealed to His people that His concern for them extends beyond all human concerns. The Jewish people are too meaningful to Hashem to allow Him to forget them. Hashem adds, "Behold I have engraved you on My palm; your glorious walls are constantly before Me." (49:16) Hashem tells His people that, in reality, they remain His constant focus every single day. The Malbim (ad loc.) explains that the ultimate purpose of the world can only be accomplished through the Jewish people. The glorious era of redemption revolves around them and it is only they who can reveal to the entire world the truths of Hashem. Hashem therefore awaits their return with anxiety in order that His master plan can come to fruition. He has, figuratively, affixed them to the palm of His hand and always sees them in their final stages of redemption. In actuality, He is constantly maneuvering world events in order to bring about the redemption. The Jewish people are therefore, by definition, the center of all world

events. Contrary to the Jewish people's opinion, Hashem never takes His mind off His people and is always anxiously awaiting their return.

The prophet continues to share breathtaking glimpses of our final redemption and then raises the obvious question. Why don't the Jewish people sense this special relationship? If, in fact, Hashem cares so much for them why don't they feel it? Why does Zion consider herself so neglected and forgotten? The prophet answers this with a penetrating question from Hashem, "Why have I come and no one was there; have I called and no one responded?" (50:2) Hashem indicates that He has extended Himself on numerous occasions but the Jewish people did not respond and didn't even bother to be there. In essence, Hashem has done His part in helping us sense His concern but we have not responded.

Our Chazal in Mesichta B'rochos (6B) share with us their painful insight regarding this issue and explain this passage in a most vivid form. They inform us that when Hashem brings His presence to a synagogue in anticipation of a quorum of ten and does not find them there He is immediately angered. To such situations Hashem responds, "Why have I come and no (quorum) was there for Me; have I called and no one responded." This statement suggests that we have overlooked a serious dimension of our relationship with Hashem. To begin we quote the Gemara in B'rochos (6A) which informs us that when a quorum congregates for the sake of prayer Hashem's presence goes out to greet them. Hashem's desire to be with His people is so significant that He even goes out to meet them, awaiting their arrival to His sanctuary? From this we understand that prayer is far greater than an obligation or responsibility. Prayer is an opportunity to unite with our Creator and associate with Him. So significant is this relationship that Hashem even precedes His people and anxiously awaits their arrival to His home.

We should cherish this opportunity and attempt to foster this relationship at all costs. It goes without saying that we should never ignore this opportunity and abuse this relationship. If Hashem deems it appropriate to be there we should certainly do our part to respond to His kindness and warmth. If we fail to attend we are causing Hashem to extend Himself in vain and can not expect positive results to follow.

Hashem is truly angered by our arrogance and accepts our behavior as a sign of indifference or rejection. Yeshaya concludes, "How can we expect to sense Hashem's warmth and concern?" If we truly desire a relationship with Him we must do, at the least, our part to receive Hashem's gesture of warmth and to be there when His is there.

The prophet continues this theme and asks, "Who amongst you reveres Hashem, listens to the voice of His servant, but went into darkness leaving no radiance for himself. He should trust in Hashem and rely upon Him." (50:10) Chazal, (Brochos 6B) again

interpret this passage in a unique manner and reveal another important insight about prayer. They explain that the prophet was referring to the daily minyan attendee who failed once to attend his prayer services due to a pressing personal appointment. In response to this absence Hashem brings the situation to the attention of others. They ask, "What has happened to this G-d fearing individual who was accustomed to approaching Hashem on a daily basis?" Now, the man has gone to a place of darkness and no light from Hashem will shine upon him. He should have relied upon Hashem rather than failing to keep his appointment with Hashem in His office. (see Rashi ad loc.)

This response also seems quite harsh to us. After all, the person was always a G-d fearing individual who constantly attended prayer services. Why is he being so severely denounced for this and even worse, regarded as going to a place of darkness? The answer seems to be in the concluding words, "He should trust in Hashem and rely upon Him." Apparently we are noticing a change of attitude and a principal deviation here. Prayer represents our recognition that everything, our livelihood included, is in the hands of Hashem. Our first appointment of the day is with Hashem wherein we request that all of our day's experiences will be met with success. Our happiness, health and wealth are all up to Hashem and we therefore request of Him that He pay serious attention to all our needs.

However, one who cancels his daily appointment with Hashem demonstrates that he considers matters to be in his personal control. He couldn't meet with Hashem today because a more pressing need existed. Excluding Hashem for the moment, this personal appointment was necessary in order to secure his personal finances. If he didn't attend he could forfeit his opportunity of producing financial success.

Hashem responds that this person has forgotten the most basic principal of life. He should have trusted in Hashem because ultimately even the success of this meeting depends upon Him. Hashem would have "shined His light upon him" if he would have followed the formula. But now, after demonstrating his lack of faith, he has gone away from Hashem. From this point and on his relationship has been severely effected and Hashem chooses not to allow this person to sense His true concern for him.

Yes, Zion feels neglected and doesn't sense Hashem's interest in her. But, as the prophet reveals, this is not Hashem's doing. We have always had the opportunity of prayer and could always enjoy a warm personal association with Hashem in His very own home. However it is we who abuse our privilege and force Hashem to keep His distance from us. If we would take prayer more seriously we would always feel the helping hand of Hashem. How appropriate are these lessons which are read in conjunction with this week's

parsha, Eikev. Because, in fact, the central theme of the parsha is to never forget Hashem and His kindness. This week, Moshe Rabbeinu reminds us that our sustenance and livelihood are in Hashem's hands, rather than our own.

In addition, Moshe Rabbeinu introduces the opportunity of fervent prayer and informs us that continued success and satisfaction are the natural results of such perfect service. (See Devorim 8:17,18 and Devorim 11:13-15)

May we merit to continuously develop our relationship with Hashem through our prayer and receive the radiance of Hashem always. © 2012 Rabbi D. Siegel and torah.org

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg

Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

In the tractate of Menachot (99b), Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai disagree about the limits of the mitzva of studying Torah. Rabbi Shimon states that it is sufficient to recite the Shema in the morning and in the evening, while Rabbi Yishmael replied as follows to his nephew who asked if he was allowed to study Greek wisdom: "It is written, 'Study it (the Torah) day and night' [Yehoshua 1:8] -- Go find a time that is neither day nor night, and you can study Greek wisdom then."

However, in Berachot, the two sages switch roles. Rabbi Yishmael says, "'Study it day and night'- Should we take this literally? It is written, 'And you shall gather your grain' [Devarim 11:14] -- continue to act in a natural way." [35b]. And Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai says, "Can it be that a man will plow in the plowing season, plant in the planting season, etc? But then what will happen to the Torah? The answer is that when Yisrael observe the will of G-d their labors are done for them by others. And when they do not observe the will of G-d they must do the work themselves, as is written, 'Gather your grain.'" Berachot 35b]. This is the opposite of what appears in Menachot!

In addition, how can the phrase 'you shall gather your grain' refer to a time when the people do not observe the will of G-d? After all, it appears in the passage of the Shema that begins, "And it will come to pass, if you listen to My mitzvot" [Devarim 11:13]. Tosafot reply to this question as follows: "The nation observes the will of G-d but not in a complete way, which would mean that they are perfectly righteous." But this brings up another question: What is the definition of a perfectly righteous person as opposed to one who is not?

The answer to the apparent contradiction appears in Chagiga. There the Talmud comments on the verse, "You will return and see the difference between a righteous and an evil person, between one

who serves G-d and one who does not." [Malachi 3:18]. One who is righteous does everything that he has been commanded to do but not one iota more. On the other hand, some righteous people are idealists and serve G-d in such a way that they are always searching for ways to improve their behavior.

The disagreement in Menachot is with respect to the obligation to study Torah. Rabbi Shimon feels that for this reading Shema morning and evening is enough, while Rabbi Yishmael feels that a man is obligated to study during every free minute. The argument in Berachot is about a different subject- what is the ideal of Judaism, and what does G-d ultimately want from us? In this case, Rabbi Shimon feels that G-d wants us to study all the time, while Rabbi Yishmael feels that a person should continue his involvement in all the regular occupations and study Torah only in his free time. Rabbi Shimon indeed feels that one who studies the minimum during the day and at night has fulfilled the obligation and is considered righteous, but he is not considered a servant of G-d because he is not an idealist. He is not observing the will of G-d, but not in the sense that he is committing a sin. That is what the Tosafot are referring to as a man who is righteous but not perfectly so.

The Talmud's conclusion in Berachot is, "Many people tried the way of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, and they did not succeed." Sefat Emet explains that most people were not uplifted by this technique because it is not a way that is suitable for most people. The majority of the people should follow the practice of Rabbi Yishmael.

In our times, the Chazon Ish wrote that much depends on the attitude of the wife. "If she has a great love for the study of Torah, over and above the average... it is not enough for her to say, 'I don't mind that you study'... In spite of everything, one should be wary of poverty and flee from it." [Bar-On, the Chazon Ish, page 300]. © 2012 Rabbi A. Bazak and Machon Zomet

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Parshat Ekev introduced us to the popular phrase "Man does not live by bread alone" (8:3). However, end of that verse is far less famous, although the second part contains the true message. It reads, "Rather, by everything that emanates from the mouth of G-d does man live." If the point is that G-d's emanations are the source of our lives, why use bread as the subject, when bread only becomes edible through the toils of man? Wouldn't fruits be a better example of G-d's influence on the world?

I heard Rabbi Shmuel Greenberg and saw Rav Hirsch explain that bread is used as the subject because it exemplifies the toils of man, and that the message here is that even when you toil for the bread you eat, don't forget that Hashem (G-d) has toiled for

everything that we have, and His goal is not just to sustain us, but to help us live physically AND spiritually. Man should not only seek physical nourishment from the work of his hands, but should seek spiritual nourishment from the word of his G-d. © 2012 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“And you shall teach them (words of Torah) to your sons, to speak about them when you are sitting in your house and when you are traveling on the road and when you lie down and when you get up" (D'varim 11:19). This verse, part of the second paragraph of "Sh'ma" said every morning and every evening, is almost a mirror image of a verse from the first paragraph of Sh'ma (D'varim 6:7); the only difference is that instead of "teaching them to your children, and speaking about them at all times" we are told to "teach them to your children by speaking about them at all times." [Perhaps this difference is based on the context of the verses, i.e. which "words" are being taught and discussed. When discussing the "yoke of heaven," we are told to teach it to our children, but not spend every teachable moment on it; it is only when our children are not around-and the learning is for our own growth-that we should speak about it "when sitting in your house, when traveling, when you lie down and when you get up." Performing mitzvos, on the other hand, the topic of the second paragraph, should be the primary subject matter when we are with our children.]

Both verses include speaking about Torah "when you lie down and when you get up," referring to saying Sh'ma every evening and every morning. The Talmud (B'rachos 2a-b) discusses when the time "you lie down" begins, with numerous frames of reference given (each being a different time). The Mishnah (and other Tannaic sources) says that the obligation to say Sh'ma begins "when Kohanim [who had been ritually impure] start to eat their t'rumah (priestly dues)," which the Talmud says is at "tzeis ha'kochavim," when the stars come out, i.e. when the day is over and the night begins. (Saying the evening Sh'ma is based on "when you lie down," i.e. when people start to turn in for the night, not when night actually starts. Although the "Kohain starts to eat his t'rumah" when the night begins, the time for saying Sh'ma is not automatically tied to when the day ends and night begins, but to when people start to go to sleep.) Other possible starting points include when a poor person starts eating his bread with salt, when people start eating their bread on Friday nights (their Shabbos meal), and when most people start eating their (weekday) evening meal.

Rashi explains why Friday night meals start at a different time; since everything has to be prepared before Shabbos starts, there's no reason to wait until the normal "dinner time." Weekday meals are prepared

after sundown (and possibly later), so the meals start later (unlike many families nowadays, where the Friday night meal starts later than during the week because we daven before we eat, and are not afraid to walk home after dark). Kohanim who had been ritually impure may start eating earlier than others because they had been unable to eat t'rumah, their primary food source, and therefore start to eat it as soon as they are allowed to. It is also possible that the reference is to when they are allowed to start eating t'rumah (as the wording of the Chachamin and Rabbi Y'hoshua indicates), not to when they actually start eating it. What about the poor person? Why does he eat his meal at a different time? Rashba (d"h R' Chanina) implies that the poor person eats later than others, or at least later than when Kohanim can eat, because he works for others and doesn't come home until it starts getting dark. Ritva (d"h ks"d) says that since a poor person only has bread and salt, his meal takes little time to prepare and is ready sooner. (He also implies, in d"h R' Yehudah, that shopkeepers eat later because they hang around to shmooze after they close for the day.) Rashi has what seems to be a more straightforward approach; the poor person can't afford candles for his meal. The implication is that he must eat his meal before it gets dark (see Vilna Gaon and the notes in the Oz V'Hadar edition of the Talmud, who reference Yuma 74b, that food only satiates when you can see what you are eating). However, the Talmud concludes that the poor person eats his meal after the Kohain can eat his t'rumah. Since the Kohain can't eat t'rumah until after "tzeis ha'kochavim," the poor person must be eating his meal after it has already become dark. How could the reason the poor person eats at a different time than most be based on his not having candles if he eats in the dark anyway?

It would be difficult to say that Rashi only made this suggestion in the "hava aminah," the early parts of the Talmud's thought process, but not when the Talmud concludes that the poor person eats after "tzeis ha'kochavim," for several reasons. First of all, when Rashi says something that only applies early in the Talmud's thought process, he often tells us so ("ka salka daatuch"). Secondly, if the original reasoning no longer applies, we would expect Rashi to explain that something has changed. Additionally, if there is now a different reason why a poor person eats at a different time, why didn't Rashi share this new reason? Why couldn't this reason be the same one the Talmud started with? Why did the Talmud first want to present it as if the poor person ate earlier, and how does Rashi see this in the Talmud's words? Even if Rashi didn't know why the poor person eats later (so couldn't suggest a reason), why did he feel the need to make a suggestion that can't be the real reason? (It is also uncharacteristic for a change to be about a physical reality; either the poor person eats before it gets dark or well after it has become dark.)

Netziv makes a similar suggestion, but does so by pointing out that there are two different types of people referred to as "poor." Initially, Rashi suggested that the Talmud was referring to the type of poor person who can't even afford candles for his meal, with the assumption that he therefore ate before everyone else did. According to the Talmud's conclusion, it is a worker, who is also called poor (see D'varim 24:14-15, where a worker who gets paid daily is called a poor person; see also Tiferes Yisroel 73 on Keilim 16:7). This type of poor person can afford candles (so doesn't need to eat his meal early); he eats later than most because he is so tired from his physical labor that he only eats after resting for a while. Most of the issues I mentioned in the previous paragraph apply to this approach as well; if anything, changing the definition of which type of poor person is under discussion makes it even more necessary for Rashi, and perhaps even the Talmud itself, to inform us of this change.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, z"l (Igros Moshe O"C 1:24) says that there is still plenty of light after "tzeis ha'kochavim," so even without candles the poor person can see well enough to eat-even though he eats after "tzeis." Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, z"l (Emes L'Yaakov on B'rachos) has a similar approach, suggesting that Rashi follows the opinion of the Gaonim that "tzeis ha'kochavim" is only 3/4 of a mil (13.5 minutes) after sunset. This is a very straightforward approach, if we don't mind limiting Rashi to those opinions that "tzeis" occurs well before it is too dark to see without candles. Otherwise, by the time three stars are visible together, I'm not sure there is enough light to be able to enjoy/become satiated by the food (especially in the Middle East, where darkness comes much more quickly after sunset than here in the U.S.). Nor would there be as much of a need for Shabbos candles on the table if the meal was eaten shortly after sunset and it was still light outside. (The Talmud seems to say that "tzeis" is after the sun has completely cleared out-see Rashi d"h idki, which implies that is no longer providing light.)

Another possibility is based on comparing the reason why a poor person eats earlier to why people eat early on Friday nights. People don't eat earlier on Friday because the meal itself has to be eaten earlier, but because it had to have been prepared earlier. Similarly, because the poor person has no candles, he has to prepare his meal earlier, before it gets dark. It can be eaten after dark, if it is ready and on the table, but the preparation has to be done while there is still enough light to put everything together. The wording of this frame of reference is therefore "when he starts to eat his bread with salt," i.e. when he actually starts eating the meal itself, not when the food is being prepared or the table is being set. Those things have to be done while it is still light, since, as Rashi told us, the poor person "has no candle to light for his meal." By the time he actually starts to eat, though, "tzeis ha'kochavim" has passed. © 2012 Rabbi D. Kramer