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Ohrnet Special Feature — The Three Weeks

Why Cry? — A Tale of Two Cities

By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

How can a Jew weep on Tisha B'Av for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Beit Hamikdash which took place thousands of years ago, when he sees how beautifully Jerusalem has been rebuilt in our days?

Perhaps we can learn a lesson from Rabbi Gershon Kitover, brother-in-law of the Ba'al Shem Tov, who arrived in Jerusalem two and a half centuries ago with the first group of Chassidim to settle in the Holy Land. He looked around at a city which sported foreign legations and all the signs of a serene community restored, in sharp contrast to the desolation described by Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban) in his famous letter reporting on his visit to the city some five centuries earlier.

Rabbi Gershon broke into tears. Now, he said, I fully understand the words of the prayer that Jews say at the end of the final *ne'ilah* service on Yom Kippur, when the gates of Heaven are about to close. As they stand at this dramatic moment, weakened in body from a long day of fasting and strengthened in spirit from prayer and repentance, they strive to send one more prayer heavenward, invoking the 13 attributes of Divine mercy. The opening lines, sounding more like a Tisha B'Av lamentation than a Yom Kippur prayer, cry out: "I recall, O G-d, and I am overcome by emotion, as I see every city solidly built *on its foundation*, while the City of G-d is reduced to the depth of the grave. Nevertheless, we are with G-d and our eyes are turned to G-d."

Until Rabbi Gershon saw the rebuilt Jerusalem of his day, he assumed - as we all do - that the above lament contrasts a desolate Holy City with the mighty capitals of the world, Rome, Paris, London and Berlin. But when he saw the beginnings of a rebuilt Jerusalem and contrasted it with the ruins of the Beit Hamikdash he sensed a deeper meaning in those words:

'Every city' - said Rabbi Gershon - refers to the *Jerusalem of Below*, the city of brick and mortar; while the 'City of G-d' refers to the *Jerusalem of Above*, the heavenly city characterized by the Beit Hamikdash.

It is certainly painful to contrast these ruins with the prosperity of foreign cities. But the pain is indescribably greater when one sees the contrast between material prosperity and spiritual ruin before his very eyes. Small wonder that this great man of spirit, who finally realized his lifelong dream of reaching Jerusalem, was moved to tears when he sensed the awful contrast.

The above account of Rabbi Gershon Kitover's experience and observation is recorded by one of the great halachic authorities, Rabbi Yosef Tumim, who served as rabbi of Frankfurt, Germany, two centuries ago. In his classic commentary on *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim*, "*Pri Megadim*" (661a *Eshel Avraham*), he quotes his father as the source for this moving story about Rabbi Gershon Kitover.

A footnote to this is the sentiment expressed in the last line of the above-mentioned prayer - "*Nevertheless, we are with G-d and our eyes are turned to G-d.*" This sense of hope amidst mourning reminds us of the story of a father who took his young son to the Western Wall for the first time. It was Tisha B'Av, and the youngster asked his father why grown men were weeping.

"Here," said the father, "our Beit Hamikdash once stood. The *Har Habayit* (Temple Mount) on which it stood was surrounded by four large walls. Now the Beit Hamikdash is destroyed, as well as the walls around the *Har Habayit*. All we have left of all our sacred glory is this one wall where you see people praying. Is it any wonder that they cry when they remember what once stood here?"

"But Father," responded the son, "isn't it true that Mashiach will soon come to redeem us, rebuild the Beit Hamikdash and the four walls around *Har Habayit*? We should take comfort in the fact that one of those walls is already standing, and there are only three more to go!"

Parsha Q&A

Matot

Questions

1. Who may annul a vow?
2. When may a father annul his widowed daughter's vows?
3. Why were the Jewish People not commanded to attack Moav, as they were to attack Midian?
4. Those selected to fight Midian went unwillingly. Why?
5. What holy vessels accompanied the Jewish People into battle?
6. Those who killed in the war against Midian were required to remain outside the "*machane*" (camp). Which *machane*?
7. Besides removing traces of forbidden food, what else is needed to make metal vessels obtained from a non-Jew fit for a Jewish owner?
8. "We will build sheep-pens here for our livestock and cities for our little ones." What was improper about this statement?
9. During the conquest of the Land, where did *Bnei Gad* and *Bnei Reuven* position themselves?
10. What promise did *Bnei Gad* and *Bnei Reuven* make beyond that which Moshe required?

Answers

1. 30:2 - Preferably, an expert in the laws of *nedarim*. Otherwise, three ordinary people.
2. 30:10 - If she is under 12 and 1/2 years old and widowed before she was fully married.
3. 31:2 - Because Moav only acted out of fear against the Jewish People. Also, Ruth was destined to come from Moav.
4. 31:5 - They knew that Moshe's death would follow.
5. 31:6 - The *aron* and the *tzitz*.
6. 31:19 - The *Machane Shechina*.
7. 31:23 - Immersion in a *mikve*.
8. 32:16 - They showed more regard for their property than for their children.
9. 32:17 - At the head of the troops.
10. 32:24 - Moshe required them to remain west of the Jordan during the conquest of the Land. They promised to remain after the conquest until the Land was divided among the tribes.

Masei

Questions

1. Why does the Torah list the places where the Jewish People camped?
2. Why did the King of Arad feel at liberty to attack the Jewish People?
3. What length was the camp in the *midbar*?
4. Why does the Torah need to specify the boundaries that are to be inherited by the Jewish People?
5. What was the *nesi'im*'s role in dividing the Land?
6. When did the three cities east of the Jordan begin to function as refuge cities?
7. There were six refuge cities, three on each side of the Jordan. Yet, on the east side of the Jordan there were only two and a half tribes. Why did they need three cities?
8. To be judged as an intentional murderer, what type of weapon must the murderer use?
9. Why is the *kohen gado* blamed for accidental deaths?
10. When an ancestral field moves by inheritance from one tribe to another, what happens to it in *yove*?

Answers

1. 33:1 - To show G-d's love of the Jewish People. Although it was decreed that they wander in the desert, they did not travel continuously. During 38 years, they moved only 20 times.
2. 33:40 - When Aharon died, the clouds of glory protecting the Jewish People departed.
3. 33:49 - Twelve *mil* (one *mil* is 2,000 *amot*).
4. 34:2 - Because certain *mitzvot* apply only in the Land.
5. 34:17 - Each *nasi* represented his tribe. He also allocated the inheritance to each family in his tribe.
6. 35:13 - After Yehoshua separated three cities west of the Jordan.
7. 35:14 - Because murders were more common there.
8. 35:16 - One capable of inflicting lethal injury.
9. 35:25 - He should have prayed that such things not occur.
10. 36:4 - It remains with the new tribe.

Devarim

Questions

1. How do we see from the beginning of *Parshat Devarim* that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish Peoples honor?
2. How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
3. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
4. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
5. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?
6. Why does the Torah single out the names of the *avot* in connection with the giving of the Land?
7. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
8. "*Apikorsim*" (those who denigrate Talmud scholars) observed Moshe's every move in order to accuse him. What did they observe, and what did they accuse him of?
9. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
10. Moshe told the judges, "The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?
11. Why did Moshe describe the desert as great and frightful?
12. Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
13. Which city did Calev inherit?
14. How many kingdoms was Avraham promised? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
15. Why were the Jewish People forbidden to provoke Ammon?
16. Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
17. How did Hashem instill the dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
18. Why did Moshe fear Og?
19. Who was instrumental in destroying the Refaim?
20. What was the advantage of Reuven and Gad leading the way into battle?

Answers

1. 1:1 Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.
2. 1:2 - 40 days.
3. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
4. 1:4 So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the Land as he promised?"
5. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the *mishkan* and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
6. 1:8 - Each of the *avot* possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
7. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
8. 1:13 They observed the time he left home in the morning. If Moshe left early, they accused him of having family problems (which drove him from his home). If he left late, they accused him of staying home in order to plot evil against them.
9. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzlofchad asked him a *halachic* question, the law was concealed from him.
11. 1:19 - Because the Jewish People saw huge, frightening snakes and scorpions in the desert.
12. 1:23 - Levi.
13. 1:36 - Hebron.
14. 2:5 - Avraham was promised the land of ten kingdoms. Yehoshua conquered seven. The lands of Moav, Ammon and Esav will be received in the time of the *mashiach*.
15. 2:9 - This was a reward for Lots younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
16. 2:23 - Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
17. 2:25 - During the battle against Og, the sun stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw this.
18. 3:2 - Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham
19. 3:11 - Amrafel.
20. 3:18 - They were mighty men, and the enemy would succumb to them.

Parsha Insights

MATOT

BENTLEY FOR A DAY

“Pens for the flock shall we build here for our livestock and cities for our small children...” (32:16)

Two people. One standing at the counter of ExecuRent-a-Car, the other sitting in Jack Barclay’s, the Rolls Royce/Bentley dealers. Two people about to get their new Bentley Continental GT (price — a mere \$210,000 and change). One is taking delivery of his new car. The other is renting for a day.

Which one has the most pleasure from his Bentley, the fellow who’s buying the car, or the one who’s renting?

Even as he takes the car keys from the ExecuRent rep., somewhere in the back of his mind the fellow who’s renting the car has a “Cinderella moment”. He knows that in 24 hours he’s going to have to give the car back. The other feels that the car is his. Forever. Well almost forever.

Things bring us pleasure in life to the extent that we perceive we own them.

Which is why physical things never give us that much joy. For in the back of our minds we are aware that we can never hold on to physical things. The Bentley can be stolen. It can break down (Yes! Even Bentleys break down. Shhhh!)

A person is never that happy with physical things because he knows that tomorrow someone else could be living in his house, wearing his suit, driving his Bentley.

When we feel we really own something — that gives us pleasure. And the only things we really own are spiritual things: our *mitzvot* and our good deeds. Those can never be taken away from us, and therefore they are the only things that ultimately make us happy.

The two tribes of Reuven and Gad asked Moshe if they could receive their portion of the Land of Israel on the eastern bank of the Jordan. This was an ideal place for them, as it was well suited to grazing the large amount of livestock they had acquired. Moshe was concerned that their settling the east bank before conquering the rest of the Land would deal a severe blow to the morale of the Jewish People in the coming confrontation with the nations of the Land. He accused them of forsaking their brothers in a time of need. They explained to Moshe that their intention had never been to settle at this point and go no further rather, they wanted to build *“Pens for the flock shall we build here for our livestock and cities for our small children...”* After which, each and every one of them would lead the Jewish People in the conquest of the west bank of the Jordan.

Moshe agreed to their proposal and said, *“Build for yourselves cities for your small children and pens for your flock.”*

Interestingly, Moshe reversed the original order of the sentence. The tribes of Reuven and Gad spoke of the building the animal shelter before that of their children, whereas Moshe spoke first of the children and then of the animals. This was an implicit criticism for being more focused on their property than on their offspring. “Why did you speak of building stables for your cattle before cities for your children? It seems you attach more importance to your possessions than to your children.”

In Hebrew, the word for “possessions” is *nechasim*. The word *nechasim* is related to the word *mechuseh* which means “concealed”, for after a person passes from this world he no longer possesses his “possessions”, they are concealed from him by being given to someone else. Similarly, the coin known as a *zuz* derives from the verb *lazuz* which means “to move”, meaning that money is restless. The Hebrew word for money itself *mammon* is a contraction of *“Ma atah moneh?”* “What are you counting?” which means “What are you counting — it’s nothing.”

Nothing more than a Bentley that’s going to turn into a Pumpkin Continental GT.

- *Source: Adapted from Rabbi Noach Orlowek*

Masei

A MATCHLESS MATCHMAKER

“When you cross the Jordan to the land of Canaan, you shall designate cities for yourselves, cities of refuge...” (35:10-11)

Not long ago, the much-loved wife of a great Rabbi passed away. In due course he was married to a lady many years his junior. The second marriage was also very happy. Someone commented to him that he had been blessed to find such a good second match. “Well,” he commented, “you see, I had the best matchmaker in the world.” “Oh really, who was that?” asked the other. The Rabbi replied, “Shortly before my first wife, may she rest in peace, passed away, she said to me in the hospital one day, “Yankel, when I pass away, I want you to go to Eretz Yisrael. There’s a great friend of mine who lives in Jerusalem. I’ll give you the address. I want you to marry her. She’s a wonderful person. I can rely on her to look after you properly.”

In this week’s reading the Torah mandates the establishment of “cities of refuge”. Someone who had killed inadvertently could take refuge in one of these cities and escape the blood avenger of the victim’s family. The Torah chose as the sites of the refuge cities, the cities of the Levi’im. Why? Why did G-d choose the cities of the Levi’im as the cities of refuge?

When someone kills, he doesn’t just kill a person. He kills a son, a brother, a sister, a father, a mother. It’s rare indeed that no one is affected by a murder save the victim himself. Killing someone always has a ripple effect. A relative feels implacable resentment against someone who kills a member of his family. The Levi’im, however, did not react in this way. Since it was G-d’s Will that there should be cities to which accidental murderers could run, they would accept a murderer into their community without any resentment even if they were related to the deceased. Such was their spiritual level that they subordinated their feelings totally to G-d’s Will.

Man is not an animal. Being human means being able to subordinate our instinctive feelings to our higher selves, however difficult it is to imagine being on the level of selflessness of the Levi’im or that rebbeztzin on her deathbed. Nevertheless, just knowing that there are people like that in the world may encourage us to be a little less selfish.

For the right match can kindle a lot of light.

Devarim

SON OF G-DZILLA

“And it will be that if you hearken to My commandments.” (11:13)

One of the ten economic commandments of Hollywood is “If it makes money, let there be born unto it a Son. A sequel. Or a prequel. “Let it contain all the same stars, and let the plot be so close to its progenitor that you’re not sure if you’re actually watching a different film or the original one.”

The second paragraph of the Shema looks like ‘Son of Shema.’ It has the same *mitzvot*: to love G-d and to serve him with all your heart etc.; to speak of the *mitzvot* when you’re sitting in you home and walking along the way, to wear tefillin; to put up a mezuzah.

Haven’t we heard all this before?

The best thing, the only thing that really can be described as ‘good’ in this world is to be close to G-d. Trouble is we don’t always do what’s good for us.

All over the world there are speed limits on roads. In the States it’s a mind-numbing 55 MPH. In England it’s 70 MPH. A speed limit is placed on a road to prevent you killing yourself. Seeing as that’s the reason, why should we need a system of fines and penalties to stop people speeding? Isn’t losing your life a far more persuasive reason to slow down than losing \$75 dollars for a speeding ticket?

A smaller but more immediate danger can impact us more than a danger which is greater but more remote.

In the first paragraph of the Shema, no results are stated for doing or not doing the *mitzvo*t because it's self-evident that doing the *mitzvo*t brings us close to G-d. And that's the real good.

Human nature being what it is, however, the Torah saw a need to go back and repeat those same *mitzvo*t in this week's Torah portion, but this time it adds that if we do them we will have rain at its proper time; we'll gather our grain, our wine, our oil. G-d will provide grass for our cattle. We'll eat and be satisfied. And if we don't keep the *mitzvo*t, then there will be no rain, the ground won't yield its produce, and eventually we will be exiled.

None of these blessings and curses can compete with the true good of being close to G-d; it's just that sometimes the threat of \$75 speed ticket is more eloquent than possibility of not making it home at all.

ASK!

Building with Tears

From: Tzvi

Dear Rabbi,

Every thinking and sensitive Jew will recognize the need to regret the lack of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. However, since the practices associated with the period up to and during Tisha b'Av are so much about mourning, it makes me wonder whether we should feel the loss so palpably that we should actually cry. Is this possible? Is this what we should be aiming for?

Dear Tzvi,

Consider the following scenario:

"Why are all these people sitting on the ground and crying?" This was a natural question for six-year old Chaim to ask his father on his first visit to the Western Wall, the Kotel, on Tisha b'Av.

"Well, my son, right next to the place we are standing there once stood the holiest building in the world, the Beit Hamikdash. This is where Jews served G-d with sacrifices throughout the year, and here all Jews came at least three times a year. It was the most magnificent building ever seen. It stood on the mountain where our forefather Avraham brought his son Yitzchak and was prepared to offer him as a sacrifice to G-d. Surrounding this Har Habayit (Temple Mount) were four walls. But because of our sins the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed on this day almost 2,000 years ago, and all that is left of the walls around the mountain upon which it stood is this Kotel. Isn't that enough of a reason for Jews to cry?"

With the eternal optimism that is such a beautifully innocent part of childhood, Chaim looked up at his father, whose eyes were filled with tears, and said:

"But Abba, don't we believe that Jerusalem and the Beit Hamikdash and the walls around it will someday be rebuilt? Look at it this way - one wall is already up, so we only need to put up three more!"

The concept of rebuilding Jerusalem and the Beit Hamikdash is not limited to the arrival of Mashiach. That the Divine Redeemer will merely complete the job that we have started is evident from our daily prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The prayer that begins with the plea for G-d to "return His Divine Presence to Jerusalem and rebuild it, soon in our days, as an eternal structure" concludes with the words praising G-d as the "One Who is building Jerusalem." The use of the present tense indicates that this construction is taking place right now, and leads the great Biblical commentator Rabbi Moshe Sofer (Chatam Sofer) to present an interesting approach to understanding the meaning of this title:

"The Third Beit Hamikdash, which represents Jerusalem's ultimate building, will not be the product of human effort. The Midrash informs us that it will come down from Heaven as a finished product. This indicates that its construction is going on all the time. But what are the materials with which Hashem is building this sacred edifice? The answer is our tears! The tears which are shed by Jews on Tisha b'Av and throughout the year are supernaturally transformed into the brick and mortar used by the Divine Builder Who now is building Jerusalem."

Each generation in which the Beit Hamikdash is not rebuilt, say the Talmudic Sages, is considered as if it was guilty of its destruction. On the surface this seems like a pretty heavy indictment of so many generations of saintly Jews during the past two millennia who did not merit to see the Beit Hamikdash

rebuilt. But if we consider the aforementioned concept of building with tears, the indictment is limited only to those who take the absence of the Beit Hamikdash with complacency.

This is the issue which has faced every generation since the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash on Tisha B'Av so long ago, and which faces our own generation. Do we realize how much is missing in our personal and national self-fulfillment because we lack this spiritual generator? And is this sense of unfulfilled spiritual potential profound enough to move us to tears?

Both Chaim and his father were right. We only have three more walls to build. But it is the tears in the eyes of his father and all the other Jews at the Kotel and throughout the world, throughout the years, which are building those walls today!

TALMUDigest

Chullin 30-36

- Two people performing *shechitah* on the same animal
- Beheading the animal rather than slitting its throat
- *Shechitah* caused by a knife which fell
- Halachic applications of intention
- When a pause disqualifies *shechitah*
- Other things which can disqualify *shechitah*
- When disqualification creates *nevalah* and when *treifah*
- The status of a bloodless *shechitah* in regard to the laws of ritual impurity
- The laws of food contaminating other foods with ritual impurity
- Which sort of blood makes food that it touches susceptible to ritual impurity

A Different Kind of Shechitah

Although he was apparently an expert archer, Rabbi Yonah bar Tochlefa needed to make some important halachic preparations before shooting an arrow at a bird in flight to achieve kosher *shechitah*.

First of all he had to ask the Sage Rava to examine the arrow he was planning to use to ensure that it had no flaws in the smoothness of its cutting edge, which would disqualify it for *shechitah*.

Then came the issue of fulfilling the Torah command to cover the blood of a slaughtered bird.

Putting soft earth atop the blood would hardly be a problem. The halacha, however, requires that soft earth must also be beneath the blood. How would he know where to prepare such earth since it was impossible to calculate exactly where the blood of the slaughtered bird would fall?

The answer given by our *gemara* is that he prepared the entire area to serve as the bottom cover. Rashi offers two possibilities for how this was achieved. One is that he manually softened the earth. Another possibility is that the earth in that area was already soft and only required that he verbally declare that he intended to use it for the purpose of fulfilling the mitzvah of covering blood.

Chullin 30b

What the Sages Say

"If one throws a knife with an intention that it sticks in a wall and it performs *shechitah* on an animal while in flight it is considered a valid *shechitah*."
Rabbi Natan - *Chullin* 31a

TALMUDigest

Chullin 37-43

- *Shechitah* of an animal in the process of dying
- The elevated standards of the Prophet Yechezkel
- *Shechitah* of an animal belonging to an idolater
- Thoughts which can disqualify *shechitah*
- *Shechitah* for things in nature which he serves as an idol
- When someone can make an animal belonging to another forbidden by serving it or slaughtering it for idol worship
- *Shechitah* into the waters or into a hole
- *Shechitah* of a non-sacred animal with intention for a sacrifice
- The conditions which make an animal a *treifah*
- The debate over the damaged gall bladder

Public and Private

May one be permitted to do something in private which is forbidden in public?

The *gemara* elsewhere (*Mesechta Shabbat* 64b) rules that any action which the Sages prohibited in public because it gives the appearance of a violation may not be performed in private as well. The case there is the rabbinical decree forbidding one whose clothes became wet on Shabbat to hang them up to dry, because those who see them hanging may assume that he washed them on Shabbat, and thus be misled into assuming that such laundering is permitted. Even though this fear would seem to be inapplicable to hanging such wet clothes in the privacy of the home, the ban extends to this as well.

In our own *gemara* we learn that one may not slaughter an animal or fowl over a hole because it is an idolatrous practice to gather blood in a hole. If one does the slaughtering in his own private yard and wishes to avoid dirtying the area with blood, he may do the slaughtering next to the hole he has prepared, and allow the blood to flow into the hole. But even this arrangement is forbidden if done in public because it still appears to be an encouragement of the idolatrous practice.

Tosefot raises the question as to why the rule mentioned in *Mesechta Shabbat* about not distinguishing between public and private practice does not apply here. The answer given is that despite the low probability of someone seeing clothes hanging in the home, if he does see them he will suspect that they were washed on Shabbat and the decree therefore applies even in private. In the case of someone happening to see slaughtering taking place near a hole in a private yard, he will assume that it is being done there in order to avoid dirtying the area and there will be no suspicion that it is an idolatrous practice.

Chullin 41a

What the Sages Say

"G-d held up every species of animal, showed it to Moshe and told him which were permitted to be eaten and which not."

The Yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael - *Chullin* 42a

TALMUDigest

Chulin 44-50

- Consistency in following halachic opinions
- The status of an animal with a broken trachea
- The source for *glatt kosher*
- Hatred of gifts and its reward
- Damage to the skull, the spine and the liver
- What creates the status of *treifah* in the lungs
- The delayed circumcision and Rabbi Natan of Babylon
- The damaged lung next to the animal's side
- A needle found in the lung of a slaughtered animal
- The blessings of the *kohanim*
- Some laws concerning the forbidden *cheilev* (fats of animal)
- *Treifah* of the stomach

A Hatred of Gifts

"He that hates gifts shall live." (*Mishlei* 15:27)

This advice of the wisest of men is quoted by Rabbi Chisda as applying to one who withholds from consuming a slaughtered animal because there is some doubt about its kosher status.

Rashi's explanation is that the animal in question belongs to him and since he is prepared to suffer this loss rather than find some justification for eating its flesh, we can assume that he is reluctant to accept gifts from others.

There is, however, a different approach based on what the *gemara* relates a few lines later. When the *nassi* sent Rabbi Elazar something, he refused to accept it, and when invited to dine with him he did not go. "Don't you want to see me live!" was his explanation based on the above passage.

This leads Maharsha to suggest that Rabbi Chisda was referring to one who refuses to eat from someone else's slaughtered animal because he does not rely on the kashrut standard of others. Rabbi Elazar's refusal to accept the meat sent to him or to dine at another's table was also based on this consideration.

According to this approach following the advice to not accept gifts will save one from compromising his standard of observance and thus give him life.

Chullin 44b

What the Sages Say

"Who is considered a Torah scholar (to whom you can return his lost object based only on his own recognition — *Tosafot*)? One who rules that an animal is forbidden even when there is only a doubt about its status."

Rabbi Chisda - *Chullin* 45a

Israel Forever

Parshat Matos

Years of Tears

Almost two millennia have passed since the destruction of the Second Beit Hamikdash and Jews continue to shed tears when they recall that tragedy.

The three weeks between the Fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz, when the walls of Jerusalem were breached by the Romans, and the Fast of the Ninth of Av, when they destroyed the Beit Hamikdash, are called *bein hametzarim*. This is a term describing the anxiety of a period between two tragedies which demands of us a sense of mourning.

The gentile world, from Napoleon to the simplest observer, have marveled at the ability of a people to mourn a loss suffered so long ago. Our commentaries have suggested that the tears we shed in these days are the building blocks being used by G-d to create the Beit Hamikdash in Heaven which will eventually be brought down to earth to sanctify Israel forever.

Israel Forever

Parshat Masei

Sharing the Inspiration

A major part of this week's Torah portion is dedicated to the division of Eretz Yisrael among the tribes.

Although the Tribe of Levi did not receive a portion like all the others, the Levites did inherit 48 cities which were apportioned to them by all the other tribes.

It is interesting to note that these cities were thus located far away from each other, and each of them was in an area occupied by one of the tribes.

The reason for this it seems is that G-d wanted all parts of the nation to be exposed to the spiritual inspiration they could gain from the example of the Levites, the "legion of G-d."

In modern Israel we find today's "legion of G-d", those who dedicate themselves to the study and teaching of Torah, spread out throughout the land and providing the kind of inspiration which will secure Israel forever.

Israel Forever

Suicide Bombers Then and Now

"The Amorites who dwell on that mountain... pursued you as the bees would do and struck you." (*Devarim* 1:44)

In recounting, in this week's Torah portion, the abortive attempt of the *ma'apilim* to enter Eretz Yisrael after being condemned to forty years in the wilderness, Moshe compared the Amorite attackers to bees. Rashi explains that just as the bee dies upon burying its stinger into a victim, so too did the Amorites die upon striking the Jews.

And now for a modern suicide killer story.

Knesset Member Aryeh Eldad (Ichud Leumi) recently distributed a story about an Arab woman from Gaza who was hospitalized in Beersheva after her family burned her because she was suspected of misbehavior. At the time he was head of the plastic surgery department at the Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Jerusalem and was asked to supply skin for the recovering patient from the hospital's National Skin Bank. She was successfully treated by an Israeli doctor and was invited for regular follow-up visits to the outpatient clinic in Beersheva.

One day she was caught at a border crossing wearing a suicide belt intended for exploding herself in the outpatient clinic where they saved her life. It seems that her family promised her that if she did that they would forgive her for her sin.

Only by communicating to a hostile world that the war between Jews and Muslims in Eretz Yisrael is, in Eldad's words, "a war between civilization and barbarism" can we eliminate foreign pressure which threatens our hopes for Israel forever.

What's the Right Thing to Do?

A Sleep Thief

Question: I share an apartment with some other single fellows and we have different schedules regarding going to sleep both because of our varying jobs and sleep habits. I sometimes make noise when I arrive late and am scolded by one of my apartment-mates for being a "thief" although I don't recall ever taking anything from him. What should my reaction be to such an accusation?

Answer: "Thou shalt not steal" is not limited to money or property. An employee paid by the hour who loafes on the job is guilty of stealing time from his employer. This prohibition also applies to one who deprives another of sleep. There is justification, therefore, for your being labeled a thief if you fail to show consideration for your apartment-mates need for sleep.

I am sure, however, that you are not intentionally committing this robbery of sleep but that you consider the noise you make an unavoidable inconvenience. Experience has shown, however, that problems such as the one you describe have always found solutions, such as rearrangement of beds for compatible neighbors, or agreed upon curfews. But in order to seek such solutions one must first be sensitive to the fact that disturbing another's sleep even involuntarily is theft, and no decent person would pick someone else's pocket, even involuntarily.

Love of the Land

A Comforting Thought for the Three Weeks

The three-week period between the 17th day of Tammuz when the Roman invaders breached the walls of Jerusalem and the 9th of Av when these enemies destroyed our Beit Hamikdash is a period of mourning for the Jewish nation.

As we reflect on the exile that our people suffered as a result of the tragedies that took place during this period, we reflect on a comforting thought provided by the Ramban in his commentary on the Torah. In the warning given to the Jewish nation that their betrayal of G-d will be punished by exile the Torah declares that our enemies will be taken aback by the desolation they see in the land they conquered.

This is a comforting promise, writes the Ramban, that our holy land will never welcome our enemies. It will prosper only when the people to whom it was granted populate it.

The Human Side of the Story

Lifesaving Brit Milah

"My baby is acting very strangely", the distraught new mother complained to her doctor. "He cries so much and I cant seem to calm him down."

The initial response of the doctor was to dismiss the complaint as maternal post-partum jitters. But when she came back a second time he decided to trust her maternal intuition and sent her to a hospital for a thorough examination of the infant. What the test showed vindicated her fears. A serious infection, probably beginning in the urinary tract, threatened to spread to the kidneys and spine, which could have the most serious implications. Antibiotics were administered and additional tests were made in a struggle to save the baby's life.

Then came the big surprise! The physician in charge recommended to the parents that they have the child circumcised in order to facilitate his recovery. As assimilated Jews the parents had refused to give their son a brit milah despite the pressure from their traditional families to do so. Now it became a matter of lifesaving urgency and they went through with a proper brit. To their amazement there was a dramatic improvement in the child's condition following this sacred surgery. Now that he had finally "entered the Covenant of our Patriarch Avraham" he became a perfectly normal child whose experience will hopefully inspire his parents to fulfill even more *mitzvot*.