

OHRNET

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Torah Weekly: Insights on the Weekly Torah Portion

Banned By YouTube

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

“You shall observe My commandments and perform them; I am Hashem. You shall not desecrate My holy Name; rather I should be sanctified among the Children of Yisrael; I am Hashem Who sanctifies you.” (22:31-2)

In the middle of Chol HaMoed, I received the following email from YouTube:

“Hi Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair, it looks like “The Jews Run the World!” - Parshat Va'etchanan didn't follow Community Guidelines. To help keep our community safe, we removed it from YouTube... Warning... We think your content didn't follow our hate speech policy. Content that incites hatred against individuals or groups based on their protected group status isn't allowed on YouTube. This may include dehumanization, using slurs and stereotypes, inferiority claims, and/or conspiracy theories...”

What was it that provoked the electronic ire of YouTube? Clearly the title, “The Jews Run the World!” was provocative, but a title that doesn't provoke isn't worth its title. Every title cries out “Read Me!” and it's competing against an ever-swelling glut of on-line ‘content’.

If YouTube would take more than a cursory look at the video, they would see that I have done no more than paraphrase Rabbi Chaim Velozhin's seminal work, “Nefesh HaChaim.” In Nefesh HaChaim, the author explains that Hashem runs the world in accordance with the actions, words and thoughts of the Jewish People. When the Jews do what they are supposed to, i.e., when we keep the mitzvot, Hashem rains down on the world His bounty and blessing, and, G-d forbid, when we transgress the Will of Hashem, the world at large suffers from our lack of performance. This is what I meant by “The Jews Run the World.”

An anti-Semitic American Protestant pastor quoted my video on his website in an article entitled: “We Are All Amelekites.”

This is a quotation from his article:
Don't believe me?

Listen to what this very influential Jewish rabbi recently said:

“It really doesn't matter if Donald Trump or Donald Duck wins the elections. It really doesn't matter if Kamala Harris or Kermit the Frog wins. When it comes to international affairs, anything that impinges on the future of this world, Donald Trump, Kamala Harris have no freedom of choice.

They become like puppets. And who pulls the strings of those puppets? We do. The Jewish People.”

Of course, what I was saying was none other than what Chazal say, that ‘the heart of kings and ministers is in the Hand of Hashem’ (based on Proverbs 21:1).

I was troubled by the thought that I was giving ammunition to those who hate us, and so I sent an email to HaRav Yitzchok Breitowitz, *shilta*, asking whether I should remove the video.

This was his reply: “This is very regrettable, but I am inclined not to remove it. Torah is Torah and we should not allow ourselves to be censored because Jew-haters distort our words.”

The prophet Chavakuk writes: “For the earth shall be filled to know the glory of Hashem as the waters cover the sea.”

There’s something unusual about this verse. How can the waters cover the sea? The sea *is* water.

Maybe we can understand this with the explanation of Rabbi Shimon Schwab. Rav Schwab said that in the days of the Mashiach, everyone will have some knowledge of Hashem, but it won’t be uniform. Just as some areas of the sea are shallow and others are deep, so too will people experience the Divine revelation on different levels, depending on their preparation, merit, and spiritual development.

In the days of Mashiach, those whose knowledge of Hashem is shallow and use the Torah to fan the flames of hatred and antisemitism will have enough knowledge to understand where their punishment is coming from.

But those who spent their days diving in the sea of Torah will be as close as a human can be to the Divine. May that day come, speedily in our days!

Talmud Tips
by Rabbi Moshe Newman
Guarding Shabbat and Remembering Shabbat
Shavuot 16-22

A beraita teaches: Zachor (“Remember” – in Shmot 20:8) and “Shamor” (“Guard” — in Devarim 5:12) were said in one utterance (“b’dibbur echad”) — a feat that a mouth cannot speak and an ear cannot hear.

These two words are actually what we see in two different verses in the Torah. “Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it” is written in the Torah regarding the First Tablets of the Ten Commandments (Shmot 20:8) — and “Guard the Shabbat day to sanctify it” is written regarding the Second Tablets (Devarim 5:12).

Our *sugya* records that Rabbi Abahu learns an important Jewish law based on the fact that *Zachor* and *Shamor* were said simultaneously. He states, “Women are obligated in the mitzvah of *Kiddush* according to Torah law, since the verse states ‘Remember’ and ‘Guard’ — which teaches that whoever is obligated in the mitzvah to ‘Guard’ is also obligated in the mitzvah to ‘Remember’ — and since women have a Torah obligation to ‘Guard’ (since it’s a ‘negative

commandment', a mitzvah *to not do* certain activities on Shabbat called '*melacha*' — which obligates men and women), they likewise have a Torah obligation to 'Remember,' meaning, according to Rabbi Abahu, that they also have a 'positive commandment' — a mitzvah *to do* something, taught here as being the mitzvah to make *Kiddush* for the Shabbat."

Although women are generally *exempt* from a mitzvah that needs to be done at a specific time (also known as a *mitzvah she'hazman grama*), and we would think they should be exempt from the Torah mitzvah of making *Kiddush* on Shabbat (which needs to be done on a specific day of the week), Rabbi Abahu teaches that the mitzvah of *Kiddush* is an exception to the rule, and that women are indeed *obligated* to fulfill this mitzvah according to Torah law.

Tosefot cites a *gemara* in *Masechet Nazir* (4a) which seems to indicate that the mitzvah to make *Kiddush* over a cup of wine on Shabbat is not a Torah mitzvah, but rather a Rabbinical mitzvah. This seems to pose a contradiction to our *gemara* which states that *Kiddush* is in fact a Torah mitzvah. One answer that Tosefot offers, which seems to be the main approach of the authorities, is that there is definitely a mitzvah of Torah origin to say the words of the *Kiddush* — as we do in the blessing of *Kiddush* that is said over a cup of wine — but the requirement to do so "over a cup of wine" is only of Rabbinical origin. A second approach that Tosefot suggests is that saying *Kiddush* over a cup of wine is indeed a Torah mitzvah, but the *halacha* that the person saying the *Kiddush* should also drink from the cup is a Rabbinical mitzvah.

Rashi and the Ramban in Chumash both explain that the mitzvah "Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it" applies to every day of the week. The Ramban cites the *Mechilta* that explains that this mitzvah entails constantly remembering the Shabbat — every day of the week. By doing this we will constantly be reminded of the Creation, and we will constantly acknowledge that there is a Creator who gave us the Shabbat as a special sign between Him and us that He is the Creator of everything and guides our way throughout life.

Based on this idea, the Ramban notes that we should count the days of the week in the order of their relationship to Shabbat, thereby fulfilling this Torah mitzvah. Instead of giving each day of the week a name based on "whatever" — such as the sun and the moon — we should call the first day of the week "*yom rishon b'Shabbat*" and the next day "*yom sheini b'Shabbat*" — and so on. By doing so we fulfill the mitzvah of constantly remembering Shabbat. (Therefore, when we say the *Shir shel Yom* — "the Psalm of the day" — as we do in the morning prayers, we preface it by saying: "Today is *the first day to Shabbat*, on which day the Levites would say in the Beit Hamikdash" with intent to fulfill the Torah mitzvah to "Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it".)

- *Shavuot 20b*

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

BY RABBI REUVEN LAUFFER

KRIAT SHEMA AL HAMITAH (PART 12)

"The amount of sleep required by the average person is five minutes more."

Wilson Mizener – American Playwright

"Kriat Shema al Hamitah" continues with chapter 91 from Tehillim: "One who dwells in the refuge of the Most High – shall dwell in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Hashem: He is my shelter and my fortress, my G-d in Whom I trust. For He will save you from the snare that traps from devastating pestilence. With His wing He will cover you, and under His wings you will be protected; His truth is a shield and armor. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that

flies by day. Nor the pestilence that walks in the gloom, nor the destroyer who destroys at noon. A thousand will fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not approach you. You will but gaze with your eyes, and you will see the annihilation of the wicked. Because you have said, "Hashem is my refuge," you have made the Most High your dwelling. No harm will befall you, nor will a plague draw near to your tent. He will command His angels on your behalf to protect you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you, lest your foot stumble on a stone. You will tread on the lion and the viper; you will trample the young lion and the serpent. For he yearns for Me, and I shall rescue him; I shall elevate him because he knows My name. He will call Me and I shall answer him; I am with him in distress; I will release him and I shall honor him. I will satisfy him with long life and show him My salvation."

The Talmud (*Shavuot* 15b) relates that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi would recite chapter 91 of Tehillim before going to sleep. Our Sages call this chapter "*Shir shel Pegaim* – Song Against Evil Occurrences" because it is a request that Hashem protect us from the destructive powers and influences that constantly surround us and try to overwhelm us. When we are asleep, we are not conscious of the potential dangers around us so we recite chapter 91 as a protection.

Rashi, in describing what it means to "dwell in the refuge of the Most High," writes that if a person takes shelter under the "wings" of Hashem – that is, if a person truly believes that Hashem will protect them – they will be shielded by Hashem.

Rashi's beautiful portrayal of living with Hashem always reminds me of a lady who lived nearby to us. She settled in Israel as a widow in her late eighties, living alone but close to her son and his family. On reaching ninety, the family decided that she needed to have some kind of help during the day. A female companion who could keep her company when she was home and who would accompany her when she went out. So they turned to the government office that deals with these kinds of matters with a request for help to find an aide for her. The department sent a social worker to assess their mother's general physical and mental wellbeing to see if she was eligible for government assistance. Arriving at the mother's apartment, the social worker was invited in. After being offered a drink, she began to ask a series of questions. At one point, she asked the mother if she lives alone, to which the mother answered with an emphatic, "No!" The social worker, being perfectly aware that the mother lived by herself, was surprised at this answer. When she pointed out to the nonagenarian that her family had made it clear that she lived alone, she answered, "But, I don't. Hashem is with me every single minute of the day!" And, on hearing her absolutely pure and sincere reply, the not-yet-religious social worker began to cry.

Sometimes we imagine that dwelling in the "refuge of the Most High" is something reserved for only the most righteous and saintly among us. Rashi is teaching us that this is not so. Living with Hashem is something that is attainable for everybody. That it is perfectly reasonable for all of us, from the least spiritually-sophisticated to the most, to truly believe that Hashem is with us at all times and in every place. Just like the mother, we all have the ability and the potential to include Hashem in our lives "every single minute of the day."

So potent is our chapter that my Rebbe told me to recite it at least three times a day. Together with that, he told me that I should recite it at times when I feel any kind of danger around me. And, since then, that is what I do. And, by doing so, I truly feel protected.

What's in a Word? — Synonyms in the Hebrew language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Emor: A Window into Widows (Part 1/2)

In Parashat Emor, the noun *almanah* (“widow”) appears twice: Once when stating that a Kohen Gadol is forbidden from marrying an *almanah* (Lev. 21:14), and once when stating that a Kohen’s daughter who married a non-Kohen and then her husband died may return to her father’s family to eat *terumah* (Lev. 22:13). In this two-part essay we will closely examine the word *almanah* and its possible etymologies. Along the way, we will encounter words that are seemingly synonymous with *almanah* and show that they are actually just different forms of that word.

Looking at just the Bible, the word *almanah* appears 56 times — many of those cases in the context of warning a person not to abuse or otherwise afflict the widow (for example, Ex. 22:21, Deut. 24:17, Isa. 1:17, 1:23, Jer. 7:6, 22:3, Zech. 7:10), or in describing Hashem as the One who takes care of the widow (Ps. 68:6, 146:9). There are also legal rules that apply specifically to widows, like the rule of a widow’s vow (Num. 30:10) and the requirements to leave special tithes for widows and other paupers to take (Deut. 24:19-21, 26:12-13). In an additional four places, the word *almenut* (“widowhood”) also appears in the Bible (Gen. 38:14, 38:19, II Shmuel 20:3, Isa. 54:1). Likewise, in Biblical Hebrew, a widower (that is, a married man whose wife had died) is called an *alman* (Jer. 51:5), and the state of being a widower is *almon* (Isa. 47:9). Each of those last two words only appear a single time in the Bible.

On the surface, the word *almanah* seems to derive from the quadriliteral root ALEPH-LAMMED-MEM-NUN, with the additional HEY at the end to denote the feminine. However, it is quite rare for Hebrew words to derive from four-letters roots. As we have mentioned in the past, many Hebrew grammarians argue that Hebrew words whose roots are ostensibly four- or five- letters are oftentimes loan words from other languages.

In the case of *almanah*, Rabbi Yonah Ibn Janach in his *Sefer HaShorashim* traces this word to the trilateral root ALEPH-LAMMED-MEM, whose core meaning refers to “muteness” (as in the word *ilem*, which refers to a “mute” person). The way he explains it, a woman whose husband has died is left in a “muted” state because she has nobody to argue on her behalf if anybody should fight with her. According to this explanation, the letter NUN is a grammatical suffix to denote the noun agent, just like *rachamim* (“mercy”) can have a NUN appended to it to become *rachaman* (“the merciful one”). This explanation is cited approvingly by Radak in his *Sefer HaShorashim*, Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Parchon in his *Machberet He-Aruch*, and Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (in his comments to Ex. 22:21). Interestingly, Menachem Ibn Saruk in *Machberet Menachem* totally omits the words *almanah/alman*, so we have no way of knowing how he understood their root.

When we turn to Rabbinic Hebrew, there is an interesting phenomenon: the term *almanah* becomes what linguists call a synecdoche — that is, a term that refers to a general category and also a specific thing within that general category. This is because *almanah* can refer in general terms to any woman who was once married and has become unmarried, whether by becoming divorced or widowed, and also to a woman who was once married and has become widowed. In this way, the Mishnah states that while the *ketubah* of a *betulah* (“virgin/maiden”) is 200 *zuz*, the *ketubah* of an *almanah* is only 100 *zuz* (*Ketubot* 1:2). In that case, the term *almanah* refers to any woman who had previously been married — whether that marriage was terminated by way of divorce or by way of her husband’s death. But even in Rabbinic Hebrew, the word *almanah* usually refers to a “widow,” just like it does in Biblical Hebrew.

When discussing the aforementioned Mishnah, the Talmud (*Ketubot* 10a) felt the need to expound on the word *almanah* (see *Ben Yehoyada* there), and cites Rabbi Chana of Baghdad's explanation. He says that the Biblical Hebrew word *almanah* serves as an allusion to the future rabbinic enactment that a widow's *ketubah* entitles her to only a *manah* (the equivalent of 100 *zuz*) of compensation should her new husband divorce her or predecease her. It seems that the rabbis parse the word *almanah* as comprised of two elements *al* and *manah*, with the second word alluding to the sum entitled to a widow who remarries by her *ketubah*.

But what does the *al* element here represent? Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh of Modena (in *HaBoneh to Ein Yaakov Ketubot* 10b) explains that *al manah* means "not a *manah*" in reference to the fact that there is an additional *manah* written into the *ketubah* of a *betulah* that an *almanah* does not get. A similar explanation is cited by Rabbi Betzalel Ashkenazi (in *Shittah Mekubetzet to Ketubot* 10b) in the name of the Geonim. Rabbi Ashkenazi also explains Rashi (to *Ketubot* 10b) as understanding that *al manah* means *elah* (spelled with an extra ALEPH) *manah*, meaning "rather/only one *manah*" (as opposed to a *betulah* who gets two). Rabbi Shmuel Strashun (*Hagahot Rashash* there) explains the word *al*, in this context, as referring to the definite article ("the"), just as it does in Arabic.

Interestingly, the Ritva (to *Ketubot* 10b) stresses that this Talmudic passage is saying that even though the word *almanah* etymologically derives from the root ALEPH-LAMMED-MEM (per the grammarians cited above), the rabbis were explaining that the additional NUN serves to coin a word that alludes to the value of the *almanah's ketubah*. In the same spirit as this Talmudic passage, *Peirush Rokeach* (to Lev. 21:14) writes that the *gematria* of the word *almanah* equals that of the Aramaic phrase *meah zuzin* ("100 *zuz*").

Rabbi Moshe Sofer (responsa *Chatam Sofer, Even HaEzer* vol. 2 §170) also discusses the word *almanah*. He cites the aforementioned Talmudic exegesis on the word as alluding to the future enactment of granting a widow 100 *zuz* in *ketubah*, but adds that this must obviously refer to something that occurred in post-Biblical times because the *manah* currency was only introduced after the Biblical period. In addition, he raises several salient points that require further elucidation concerning the rabbis' etymology of *almanah*: Firstly, he points out that it is illogical that a widow should be called *almanah* on account of the amount of money that is written in her *ketubah* if she should get remarried. It would have made more sense if the rabbis said that *almanah* refers to a woman who was widowed and then remarried, but not for them to say it refers to the widow herself (even without remarrying). Moreover, he explains that while the rabbis explained why a widow is called an *almanah*, they have failed to explain why a male widower is likewise called an *alman*.

In light of these and other difficulties that he raises, Rabbi Sofer offers an alternate, novel explanation of the word *almanah*: He parses the word as comprised of ALEPH-LAMMED ("no/not") and MEM-NUN ("portion/substance," as in *mahn*, "manna"). By doing so, he explains that when a couple gets married, a bilateral relationship is forged, wherein the man is supposed to serve as the provider of sustenance to his wife and, conversely, the wife is supposed to serve as the provider of sustenance to her man. Accordingly, when either spouse dies, the other spouse is left bereft of their source of "sustenance," and are hence called an *almanah* or *alman* respectively.

A similar explanation is proffered by Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (*HaKtav VeHaKabbalah* to Ex. 22:21), who explains *almanah* as referring to the fact that when a man and woman are married, they fuse together as one person, so when one spouse dies, the remaining spouse lives as if a "part" (*manah*) of them is "not" (*al*) existent.

All that said, Rabbi Sofer makes it clear that this understanding lies within the realm of the homiletic, but in the plane of the literal there is no basis for expounding on noun words in Biblical Hebrew in such a way. To illustrate this point, he ironically states that one cannot expound on the word *lechem* ("bread") as though it was derived from the verb form of *milchamah* ("war"), to say

that one may not eat bread until he has fought it over (although some exegetes have offered comparable explanations of the word *lechem*).

Speaking of widows, I was asked to mention a unique book for widows in the Jewish community. It's called "[*Invisible Tribe*](#)" by Sara Miriam Gross. This wonderful compilation contains stories of strength and encouragement to serve as a much-needed community resource for widows and orphans coping with the loss of a father.

TAAMEI HAMITZVOS- Reasons behind the Mitzvos

By Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

"Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance." (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)

CHADASH

Mitzvos #303-305; Vayikra 23:14

We may not eat from new grain crops (*chadash*) until the Omer offering has been brought from it on the 16th of Nissan, and in the absence of the Beis HaMikdash, after that day has passed. Outside Eretz Yisrael, where the first Yom Tov of Pesach is observed for an additional day, the prohibition extends until after the 17th.

Sefer HaChinuch and *Alshich* explain that since grain products are people's staple food, it is fitting to bring a portion of the new crops as an offering to Hashem before partaking from it ourselves. He compares this to the obligation to recite a *berachah* before partaking of any pleasure in this world. The Omer offering consists of barley because it is the first grain to fruition. It is waved in all directions to show that the entire world belongs to Hashem and that we and all we own are dedicated to Him. Once we recognize this, we are worthy of enjoying His bounty meriting further blessing.

Taking a different approach, *Rav Menachem HaBavli* links the prohibition to the counting of Omer, which leads up to the time of the Giving of the Torah on Shavuot. This insight will shed light on why the mitzvah of Chadash applies even in the absence of the Omer offering. He explains that the new crop alludes to Creation; it is as if Hashem's creation of produce repeats itself every year. We have a mitzvah to refrain from eating from the new crop until we begin counting toward the Giving of the Torah to demonstrate that the world was only created so that we fulfill the Torah and come to know the Creator. We are showing that without the Torah, there is no reason for Hashem to continue sustaining His world with the new crop. As the Mishnah in *Pirkei Avos* (3:17) puts it: If there is no Torah, there is no flour. Every time we refrain from eating Chadash, we honor the Creator and bring deeper into our hearts the reason for our existence (*Olelos Ephraim* §108).

Insights Into Halacha

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

5785 – The Rarest Year of Them All Part XI – *BeHa”B* vs. *Pesach Sheini*

As detailed in previous installments in our series, our current year, 5785, is not only a rare one, but calendarically speaking, actually the hands-down **rarest** of them all. 5785 is classified as a *HaSh”A* year in our calendars. This abbreviation is referring to Rosh Hashana falling out on Thursday (*hei*), both months of Cheshvan and Kislev being *shalem* (*shin* - 30-day months instead of possibly 29; these are the only months that can switch off in our set calendar), and Pesach falling out on Sunday (*aleph*).

A *HaSh”A* year is the rarest of years, and out of the 14 possibilities in *Tur*’s 247-year calendar cycle, this year type occurs on average only once in about 30.19 years (approximately 3.3 percent of the time). Indeed, at times there are 71 years (!) in between *HaSh”A* years. The last time this year type occurred was 31 years ago in 5754/1994. The next time will be 20 years hence in 5805/2044. The next several times after that are slated to be 27 years further, in 5832/2071 and then a 51 year gap in 5883/2122.

The reasons and rules governing the whys and whens this transpires are too complicated for this discussion; suffice to say that when the *Mishnah Berurah* discusses these issues he writes “*ain kan makom l’ha’arich*,” that this is not the place to expound in detail, which is certainly good enough for this author.

Obviously, such a rare calendar year will contain many rare occurrences. This series sets out to detail many of them. Let’s continue on our journey through our unique year.

As discussed in a previous article in this series, this year hosted a rare and joyous Yerushalayim *Purim Meshulash* as well as the complicated *Erev Pesach Shechal B’Shabbos*. Although these are rare phenomena that always occurs in a *HaSh”A* year, they can also occur in other year combinations as well. In fact, over the entire twentieth century they occurred eleven times, or eleven percent of the time. This was the fourth occurrence in the twenty-first century.

***BeHa”B* or *Pesach Sheini*?**

What happens when there is a rare convergence of *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B*? You see, during this exceptional year, 5785, the third and final day of the *Chodesh Iyar BeHa”B* falls out on *Pesach Sheini* (this week), as it does any year that contains a *Purim Meshulash* and *Erev Pesach Shechal B’Shabbos*. But before we can address this question, a bit of background is in order.

BeHa”B

BeHa”B is a semi-annual period that is a series of “Days of *Tefillah*.” This acronym stands for Monday (*Beis* - 2nd day of the week), Thursday (*Hei* - 5th day of the week), and the following Monday (*Beis*). These days are commonly observed on the first Monday, Thursday, and Monday following the earliest *Rosh Chodesh* after Pesach (*Rosh Chodesh Iyar*), and likewise after Sukkos (*Rosh Chodesh Marcheshvan*).

The custom of utilizing these specific days for prayer and supplication is already mentioned almost 900 years ago by the *Baalei Tosafos*, its importance reiterated by the *Tur*, and unbeknownst to many, actually codified in *halacha* by the *Shulchan Aruch* as a proper *minhag*.

Yet, interestingly, although *BeHa"B* is traditionally meant to be a fast day, still, very few actually do fast, as in our generations people are considered weaker. Instead, most make do with *Selichos* (and perhaps *Divrei Mussar*), with the majority also reciting *Avinu Malkein*. This rationale is found in many *sefarim* over the years.

Pesach Sheini

"*Pesach Sheini*," commemorates the day when those who were unable to bring the annual *Korban Pesach* (special Pesach sacrifice - Pascal lamb) at its proper time (*Erev Pesach*), were given a second chance to offer this unique *Korban*. Although technically not considered a true holiday, and despite the fact that it is (astonishingly!) not listed in the traditional *halachic* sources as one of the days that *Tachanun* is not recited, nevertheless, the custom for many is not to recite *Tachanun* on *Pesach Sheini*, in order to 'tap into' the merit that this particular day had during the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

Although there are those who maintain that *Tachanun* should be recited on *Pesach Sheini* - as the original day it is commemorating was only meant for individuals in unique circumstances, and its absence of mention in the traditional *halachic* sources as one of the days that *Tachanun* is not recited speaks volumes, nevertheless, most authorities rule that one should not say *Tachanun* on this day.

So our question essentially is: What does *Klal Yisroel* do? Which do we observe? The joyous *Pesach Sheini* or the official fast of *BeHa"B*?

BeHa"B vs. Pesach Sheini

As with many *inyanim* in *halacha* or *minhag*, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. This debate seems to be based on *Megillas Taanis*, which states (see *Chullin* 129b) that *Pesach Sheini* is a day when one may not eulogize (indicating it is a full-fledged holiday), hence strongly implying that one may certainly not fast on it.

Yet, others counter that *Megillas Taanis* is no longer considered authoritative or binding (see *Rosh Hashanah* 18b-19b, which concludes that *Megillas Taanis* was voided with the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*, except for observance of the Rabbinic holidays of *Chanukah* and *Purim*), and *Pesach Sheini*, as it is essentially a make-up *Yom Tov* for those who were unable to offer the *Korban Pesach* on *Erev Pesach*, cannot be considered any more stringent than *Erev Pesach* itself. And *Erev Pesach* is known for its *Taanis Bechorim*, Fast of the Firstborn. So perhaps fasting is not only permitted on *Pesach Sheini*, but actually mandated when it coincides with *BeHa"B*. So, what do we do?

Although several *poskim* say to fast only until *chatzos* on that day as a sort of compromise solution, or hold not to fast at all and rather push *BeHa"B* observance off until the next day (Tuesday) or several days later to the coming Thursday or the next Monday, it is possible that this is only regarding actual fasting, which the vast majority does not currently do anyway.

The *Chazon Ish*, who generally was of the opinion of observing no special *inyanim* for *Pesach Sheini*, held that one may fast as usual. And in fact, in *Orchos Rabbeinu*, it cites that this is what he and his brother-in-law, the Steipler Gaon, did - i.e., reciting *Selichos* and *Tachanun* as usual. The Brisker Rav did so as well.

No Contradiction

Interestingly, there is little mention of this issue in any early source, so it seems that there truly is no real discrepancy. As pointed out by Rav Sroya Deblitzky, *Sefardim* generally did not recite *Tachanun* on *Pesach Sheini*, whereas *Ashkenazim* did, until the “not saying” *minhag* crept out and spread to *Ashkenazic* circles, via *minhag* Eretz Yisroel, as the original *Ashkenazic* communities in Eretz Yisroel adopted several *Sefardic minhagim* over the years. On the other hand, only *Ashkenazim* classically observed *BeHa”B* fasting and *tefillos*. Hence, in the classic sense, “ne’er the twain” actually met, as whenever a convergence occurred, *Sefardim* would observe the “no *Tachanun*” of *Pesach Sheini*, whereas *Ashkenazim* would keep the *Selichos* of *BeHa”B*.

Yet, nowadays, when most of the world (*Ashkenazim* as well) does not recite *Tachanun* on *Pesach Sheini* anyway, the *minhag* of many is to synthesize the two: recite a somewhat abbreviated version of *BeHa”B Selichos*, utilizing precedent from other times when *Selichos* and “no *Tachanun*” coincide, such as when a *bris* occurs on a fast day (as per *Orach Chaim* 131:5), while also skipping *Tachanun*. This is probably the most common *minhag* in *shuls* where *BeHa”B* is normally recited.

The *psak* to still recite *Selichos* (and perhaps fast when applicable) when *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B* coincide was taught by many *poskim*, including Rav Yaakov Emden, the *Chasam Sofer*, the Maharam Ash, the *Maharsham*, the *Aishel Avrohom* (Butchatch), and *Orchos Chaim* as the proper *minhag*.

Practically - Pesach Sheini

On the other hand, on a practical note, as most *shuls* in the world (unfortunately) do not “do *BeHa”B*” nowadays, this debate is essentially a moot point, and *Pesach Sheini* would trump. There actually is strong basis for this *hanhagah* in our case, as Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, and Rav Yisroel Yaakov Fischer ruled to skip a whole day of *BeHa”B* for *Pesach Sheini*, following the main *Yerushalmi minhag* per the Tukachinsky *Luach*, the *Aderes*, and Rav Yisroel Nissan Kuperstock, as apparently this is indeed “old *minhag* Eretz Yisroel” that *Pesach Sheini* entirely trumps and displaces the third and last *BeHa”B* when they coincide.

This *minhag* first seems to be cited in Rav Shalom Schwadron’s notes on his grandfather’s *Shu”t Maharsham*. The *Maharsham*, the renowned Rav Shalom Mordechai Schwadron of Berezhin, maintains that one should fast when *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B* coincide, arguing on Rav Yosef Shaul Nathanson’s *Yad Shaul V’Yosef Daas* - who held not to fast. Rav Schwadron added that *Minhag Yerushalayim*, as he was informed by Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop that the *Gedolim* of Yerushalayim already dealt with this issue, as was cited in the *Pinkas* (ledger) of Rav Shmuel Salant’s *Beis Din* in the Churva Shul in 5663/1903 (a year when *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B* coincided), was to specifically not fast or recite *Selichos* on that day.

This would also certainly hold true according to the opinion of the *Cheshek Shlomo* who writes that it is prohibited to fast on *Pesach Sheini*, as it is a *chag* listed in *Megillas Taanis*, which he asserts was not discontinued, as *Pesach Sheini* is not a holiday that was established due to miracles.

BeHa”H?

Yet, there are those who nowadays argue that the obscure source that Rav Schwadron was quoting was recently reprinted, and it actually stated that *Pesach Sheini* only trumps **that** specific day, but *BeHa”B* observance should nonetheless still be kept – by pushing it off to that upcoming

Thursday, creating a rare *BeHa”H* (Monday, Thursday, Thursday). This is also the conclusion of the Maharsham, that although he is of the opinion that *Selichos* should be recited, on the other hand, if one follows an alternate *minhag* and skips *BeHa”B* observance on that day, he should nonetheless make-it up on the following Thursday or Monday. On a more contemporary note, Rav Sroya Debilitzky concludes similarly as well. However, as noted previously, this is not the common *minhag*.

There is a recent *sefer* titled “*Pischa Zeira*,” which discusses various subtopics related to *Pesach Sheini*, who devotes a full chapter to this topic and debate. He posits that there may be a differentiation between a *Bris* and *Pesach Sheini* when coinciding with *BeHa”B*. Regarding a *Bris* on a *Taanis*, it is still a day that is meant for fasting, hence *Selichos* are still recited, just not *Tachanun* in that specific location, due to the local *simcha* of the *Bris*. This is opposed to *Pesach Sheini*, which many maintain that as it is a minor holiday and mentioned in the Torah, simply cannot be overruled as a day intended for fasting.

So, we see there is no clear-cut contemporary consensus to the observance of this rare convergence, and each *Kehillah* should and I’m certain will, follow their own *minhag*. But in this author’s mind, it is quite fascinating that this remarkable coincidence will occur in our exceptional year.

Our fascinating journey detailing the many remarkable facets of our rare year will *iy”H* be continued...

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch famously wrote that “the Jew’s catechism is his calendar.” It is this author’s wish that by showcasing the uniqueness of our calendar year and its rare *minhagim*, this article will help raise appreciation of them and our fascinating calendrical customs.

This author wishes to thank R’ Yosef Yehuda Weber, author of ‘Understanding the Jewish Calendar,’ for being a fount of calendrical knowledge and for his assistance with this series.

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EMOR — Questions

1. Which male descendants of Aharon are exempt from the prohibition against contacting a dead body?
2. Does a kohen have a choice in becoming ritually defiled when his unmarried sister passes away?
3. How does one honor a kohen?
4. How does the Torah restrict the Kohen Gadol with regard to mourning?
5. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who "approaches holy objects" while in a state of tumah (impurity) is penalized with excision. What does the Torah mean by "approaches"?
6. What is the smallest piece of a corpse that is able to transmit tumah?
7. Who in the household of a kohen may eat terumah?
8. If the daughter of a kohen marries a *zar*, she may no longer eat terumah. What is a *zar*?
9. What is the difference between a *neder* and a *nedavah*?
10. May a person slaughter an animal and its father on the same day?
11. How does the Torah define "profaning" the Name of G-d?
12. Apart from Shabbos, how many days during the year does the Torah designate as days when work is forbidden?
13. How big is an omer?
14. On what day do we begin to "count the omer"?
15. Why do we begin counting the omer at night?
16. How does the omer differ from other *minchah* offerings?
17. The blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is called a *zichron teruah* (sound of remembrance). For what is it a reminder?
18. What is unusual about the wood of the esrog tree?
19. Who was the father of the blasphemer?
20. What is the penalty for intentionally wounding one's parent?

EMOR — Answers

1. **21:1** – *Challalim*—those disqualified from the priesthood because they descend from a relationship forbidden to a kohen.
2. **21:3** – No, he is required to do so.
3. **21:8** – He is first in all matters of holiness. For example, a kohen reads from the Torah first and typically leads the blessings before and after meals.
4. **21:10–12** – He may not allow his hair to grow long, mourn his close relatives, or accompany a funeral procession.
5. **22:3** – "Approaches" means eats.
6. **22:5** – A piece the size of an olive.
7. **22:11** – He, his wife, his sons, his unmarried daughters, and his non-Jewish slaves.
8. **22:12** – A *zar* is a non-kohen.
9. **22:18** – A *neder* is a personal obligation, while a *nedavah* is an obligation tied to a specific object.
10. **22:28** – No.
11. **22:32** – By intentionally violating the commandments or conducting oneself in a way that desecrates G-d's Name.
12. **23:7–36** – Seven days: the first and seventh of Pesach, one day of Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the first and eighth days of Sukkot.
13. **23:10** – One-tenth of an *ephah*.
14. **23:15** – On the second night of Pesach.
15. **23:15** – Because the Jewish calendar day begins at night.
16. **23:16** – The omer is brought from barley, unlike most *minchah* offerings, which are from wheat.
17. **23:24** – It serves as a reminder of the binding of Yitzchak, in whose place a ram was offered.
18. **23:40** – It has the same taste as its fruit.
19. **24:10** – The Torah does not name him, but his mother was from the Tribe of Dan and his father was Egyptian.
20. **24:21** – Death.

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