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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

O So Very Humble!

“Moshe replied to G-d, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?’” (3:11)

The Day of Judgment. Millions of eyes turn to the West. Trembling fingers open the envelope of destiny. "Ladies and Gentlemen, the award for the best actor in a leading role is: *Fill-in-the-name.*"

Every camera in the building zooms in on the carefully-rehearsed "spontaneous" outpouring of emotion of the victor. Rising from his seat, he emotes all the way to the microphone and that little golden idol called Oscar. He ascends the stage. The lights dim. In a voice that drips the sincerity of a leaking faucet, he begins his acceptance speech.

Members of the Academy. Dear friends. I can't tell you what an honor it is to be standing here.

There are so many people that I have to thank. My director. My producer. My cameraman. All the crew who worked so hard on my film.

Yes, there are so many people to whom I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. But there is one person who deserves special thanks. One person without whom I would not be standing here today. One person, above all, who has been responsible for making me a legend in my own lunchtime. I know he's going to be very embarrassed when I mention his name because not only is he a leading talent, one of the most brilliant people in the industry, but he is also undoubtedly the *humblest*.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to thank.....Me!

You have no idea what it was like to work with Me. The incredible generosity and inspiration of spending so much time with Me. The unbelievably unselfish way that Me had in every scene we had together. The feeling that I had really formed a lifelong friendship with Me. All I can say is that I can't wait to work again with Me.

They say that this is a dog-eat-dog industry, that you can't trust anybody. But I know that whatever may happen, even if the world turns me down, I can still trust Me.

I know that at this moment Me is probably cringing with embarrassment, but I want you to know that a person can have the best script in the world and the best director in the world and the best editor in the world, but the most important person in the world is Me!

Thank you and remember: I did it my way."

There was a holy Jew who left this world of illusion not so long ago. Once, someone showed him a picture of himself. He looked at the picture and exclaimed, "Who is this holy Jew from whose face shines the awe of Heaven?" He had never looked in a mirror and had no idea what he looked like!

When G-d tells Moses to lead the Jews out of Egypt, Moses replies, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and to take the Children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Moses' reluctance is puzzling. How could he supplant G-d's judgment with his own? G-d told him to do something, so why should he fear failure?

Moses understood that G-d wanted him to use his own human powers of persuasion on Pharaoh, and his own charisma to inspire the Jews, not relying on Divine intervention. Moses thought the task was on his shoulders alone, and so he hesitated. He wasn't sure he had the necessary qualifications.

About a hundred years ago in Europe, the Chafetz Chaim dispatched one of his students to serve as rabbi in a large, distant and unlearned community. The potential rabbi balked. "The job is not for me," he said. "I'm afraid I'll make mistakes." The Chafetz Chaim replied, "Should I send someone who's not afraid of making mistakes?"

It's easy to mistake humility for a lack of confidence and low self-esteem. Yet they are very different. Realizing your limitations is the first step to greatness. It's only someone with a lack of self-confidence who believes that he is a legend in his own lunchtime.

• Source: Midrash, Shemot Rabbah 3:5

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Chullin 16-22

The Custom of No Return

Rav Ashi said, "Since he had no intention to return to his original place he is not bound by their customs, and is permitted to eat the meat in accordance with the custom of his current place of residence."

The *gemara* relates a case about Rabbi Zeira. After he went up to the Land of Israel, the *gemara* tells us that he ate meat from an animal that was slaughtered in a way that was a matter of dispute. The Sages Rav and Shmuel, great authorities in Bavel from which Rabbi Zeira had come, ruled that the *shechita* was not fit, rendering the meat *neveila* and forbidden to eat. This was the custom in Bavel. Authorities in Eretz Yisrael, however, ruled that meat that resulted from this *shechita* was permitted. And this was the custom in Eretz Yisrael.

The *gemara* asks a question: We know that we are taught elsewhere in *Shas* (Pesachim 51a) that he who travels from one place to another must abide by the *stringencies* of both places. Therefore, asks the *gemara*, why did Rabbi Zeira find the meat in question to be kosher for consumption?

Two answers are offered to this question on our *daf*. The Sage Abayei answers that the rule of observing the strict views of both places does not apply when a person *travels up to Eretz Yisrael*. In such a case, which is the case of Rabbi Zeira, the person may rely on the ruling and custom in Eretz Yisrael, despite its being more lenient than the ruling in Bavel. Eretz Yisrael is superior to Bavel and is the primary source for Torah teachings.

The second answer is that given by Rav Ashi: "Since he had *no intention to return to his original place he is not bound by its customs*, and is permitted to eat the meat in accordance with the custom of his current place of residence." According to this answer, the person's intent regarding whether he plans to remain or to return is what determines what custom he must follow, and is independent of the identity of the specific places involved.

The halacha is in accordance with the second answer, the teaching of Rav Ashi. Therefore, the traveler's intent is

what matters. If he plans to return home, he must continue to observe the stringent ruling of his original location. But if he plans to remain in the new place, he should observe the customs of the new place, regardless of whether they are stricter or more lenient than his original location. Rabbi Zeira intended to stay in Eretz Yisrael, according to Rav Ashi, and could therefore be lenient in this matter, in keeping with the custom of Eretz Yisrael.

There is a qualification found to Rav Ashi's rule in practice. Even if a person came from a lenient place, and indeed intends to return to his original place, although he may be lenient in private, *publicly* he must still observe the strict view of his current place so as not to separate himself from the community and appear contentious. (*Rabbeinu Nissim*)

A similar type of reasoning might perhaps be applied to Abayei's answer as well. If the custom of his original place was to be strict, and he traveled to another place which was *not* Eretz Yisrael and was *lenient*, he would *not* continue to be strict while visiting the place with the more lenient custom since his acting *frummer* than the local populace might lead to argument and enmity. He would therefore rely on the lenient ruling of where he is temporarily found.

But, according to Rav Ashi, if the person who traveled intends to stay and remain in the new place to which he has traveled, he should embrace the custom of his new residence, and is not bound by the ruling and custom of his former location. He should always observe the customs of his new home.

(Note of disclaimer: Of course, in a practical matter of halacha, such as one that involves the subject discussed in this article, or in any of the articles in this series, one should ask a qualified halachic authority for an individual ruling, specifying all pertinent details of the case.)

• Chullin 18b

PARSHA Q & A

1. Why does the verse say "And Yosef was in Egypt"?
2. "...And they will go up out of the land." Who said this and what did he mean?
3. Why did Pharaoh specifically choose water as the means of killing the Jewish boys? (Two reasons.)
4. "She saw that he was good." What did she see "good" about Moshe that was unique?
5. Which Hebrew men were fighting each other?
6. Moshe was afraid that the Jewish People were not fit to be redeemed because some among them committed a certain sin. What sin?
7. Why did the Midianites drive Yitro's daughters away from the well?
8. How did Yitro know that Moshe was Yaakov's descendant?
9. What lesson was Moshe to learn from the fact that the burning bush was not consumed?
10. What merit did the Jewish People have that warranted G-d's promise to redeem them?
11. Which expression of redemption would assure the people that Moshe was the true redeemer?
12. What did the staff turning into a snake symbolize?
13. Why didn't Moshe want to be the leader?
14. "And G-d was angry with Moshe..." What did Moshe lose as a result of this anger?
15. What was special about Moshe's donkey?
16. About which plague was Pharaoh warned first?
17. Why didn't the elders accompany Moshe and Aharon to Pharaoh? How were they punished?
18. Which tribe did not work as slaves?
19. Who were the: a) *nogsim* b) *shotrim* ?
20. How were the *shotrim* rewarded for accepting the beatings on behalf of their fellow Jews?

Answers

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

1. 1:5 - This verse adds that, despite being in Egypt as a ruler, Yosef maintained his righteousness.
2. 1:10 - Pharaoh said it, meaning that the Egyptians would be forced to leave Egypt.
3. 1:10, 22 - He hoped to escape Divine retribution, as G-d promised never to flood the entire world. Also, his astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer's downfall would be through water.
4. 2:2 - When he was born, the house was filled with light.
5. 2:13 - Datan and Aviram.
6. 2:14 - *Lashon hara* (evil speech).
7. 2:17 - Because a ban had been placed on Yitro for abandoning idol worship.
8. 2:20 - The well water rose towards Moshe.
9. 3:12 - Just as the bush was not consumed, so too Moshe would be protected by G-d.
10. 3:12 - That they were destined to receive the Torah.
11. 3:16, 18 - "I surely remembered (*pakod pakadeti*)."
12. 4:3 - It symbolized that Moshe spoke ill of the Jews by saying that they wouldn't listen to him, just as the original snake sinned through speech.
13. 4:10 - He didn't want to take a position above that of his older brother Aharon.
14. 4:14 - Moshe lost the privilege of being a *kohen*.
15. 4:20 - It was used by Avraham for *akeidat Yitzchak* and will be used in the future by Mashiach.
16. 4:23 - Death of the firstborn.
17. 5:1 - The elders were accompanying Moshe and Aharon, but they were afraid and one by one they slipped away. Hence, at the giving of the Torah, the elders weren't allowed to ascend with Moshe.
18. 5:5 - The tribe of Levi.
19. 5:6 - a) Egyptian taskmasters; b) Jewish officers.
20. 5:14 - They were chosen to be on the Sanhedrin.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the people of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

Rabbi Akiva's Parable

When the Romans decreed that anyone learning Torah would be put to death, Rabbi Akiva defied the ban and continued to publicly teach Torah. Papus ben Yehuda criticized him for endangering himself and his students by thus ignoring the power of the Roman rulers to punish them.

"I will give you a parable," replied the great Sage. "A fox was once walking alongside a river in which fish were frantically scurrying from one place to another. When he asked them for the cause of their flight they explained that they were escaping fishermen who were trying to catch and kill them. The fox suggested that

they would be safe from danger if they joined him and all other animal life on dry land. To which the fish replied that the fox, reputed to be the cleverest of animals, was speaking utter foolishness. If they were so endangered in their natural habitat, they argued, what chance would they have for survival outside the water?"

We Jews, concluded Rabbi Akiva, face the same situation, for Torah is to us what water is to the fish. If while we are learning Torah, of which it is written "It is your life and length of days," we are in danger, what chance do we have for survival if we abandon it?

PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shemot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males.

Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother Yocheved to be his nursemaid.

Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mount Sinai),

Moshe witnesses the burning bush where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael, the Land promised to their ancestors.

Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the people's eyes: transforming his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker, G-d tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

ASK!

Your Jewish Information Resource – www.ohr.edu
by Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman

Pertinent Prayer

From: Rachel

Dear Rabbi,

My question regards mistakenly continuing to pray for someone when that prayer is no longer relevant for that person. And I have two specific cases in mind:

One involves continuing to daven for sick people after they have already passed. This can happen when people don't update a list of cholim (sick people) to be prayed for, such that those who have died continue to be davened for without an update. Is there any benefit to continue davening in the Refuah section of Shemoneh Esrei for a choleh who has since died?

Another case is the opposite: continuing to daven for cholim who no longer need it because they got well. In this case, is there any harm praying for a healthy person among a list of cholim, as if he were still sick?

Thank you rabbi for your answers!

Dear Rachel,

These are intriguing questions. It is true that ideally one's prayers should be as specific and accurate as possible. So, in your first case, praying for the recovery of one who has already passed is certainly off the mark.

And furthermore, since our "power of speech" does have an effect, we avoid even unintentional negative speech, like saying to someone by way of illustration, "Suppose you were sick..." We avoid this for fear that these words of speech will actually bring sickness upon the well person. So, your second case, referring to a well person in the powerful context of prayer as sick, might be harmful.

However, that being said, the Talmudic Sages taught that mistaken but well-intentioned prayer is received lovingly by G-d, who considers the prayer as if it had been uttered in the correct form. In Song of Songs, metaphorically describing the loving relationship between G-d and the Jewish People, Israel says about G-d, "I accept His banner (*diglo*, דִּגְלוֹ) lovingly" (4:2).

The Talmud teaches that G-d's version of this verse in praise of Israel is reversed: "I accept his mistake (*dilugo*, דִּילוֹג) lovingly".

Accordingly, if for no other reason than one is sincerely praying for the welfare of another, even in mistaken form, G-d endearingly receives the prayer as if it had been offered in the correct way. So, whether one is praying for the recovery of another who has already passed, or, alternatively, for one who has already recovered, such prayer will be directed toward the appropriate venue to benefit the one being prayed for.

What's more, it seems that in the scenario you are asking about, namely praying for people you don't know personally, and about whom you might not be updated regarding a change in their status, it might be appropriate and helpful to have the following idea in mind.

It is true that praying for a *refuah*, recovery, refers to the person's return to health in this-worldly terms. However, one can also have in mind that in case the person has since passed, the intention of the prayer should be to remove spiritual malady, curing the departed soul and restoring its original spiritual health so that it may thrive in the spiritual realm together with G-d.

Conversely, one can also have in mind that in case the person has been cured of the specific malady, the intention of the prayer should be to remove all and any residual or lingering effects or traces of that malady, or any other form of imbalance, be it physical, mental, emotional or spiritual, which would render the person not entirely well (and, indeed, who, even among the healthy, can say they are entirely free of any ailment?) such that including him among the prayers of recovery for the sick would not be entirely unfounded.

In this way, your benevolent prayer on behalf of others, whether they are still plagued by their current illness, or have passed on and seek spiritual well-being, or have been cured of the specific illness but could benefit, as we all can, from even better health and more strength in any number of ways, is beneficial and accepted lovingly by G-d.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Prophets and Visionaries

When G-d appoints Moshe as His emissary to redeem the Jewish People from their Egyptian bondage, He splits the leadership position into two by saying that Moshe will speak whatever G-d commands of him, and Aharon will relay those messages to the Pharaoh. In doing so, G-d says to Moshe, “Aharon your brother will be your *navi*” (Ex. 7:1). We generally take the word *navi* to mean “prophet” and *neviim* to mean “prophets”, but in what way can Aharon be said to be Moshe’s “prophet”? Moreover, the Bible has another two words which also mean “prophet”, namely *chozeh* and *roeh* (see *Avot d’Rabbi Natan*, ch. 34). Do those words differ in meaning from *navi*, and if so, how?

Both Rashi (to Exodus 7:1 and Nech. 6:7) and his grandson Rashbam (to Gen. 20:7) connect the word *navi* with the word *niv* (NUN-YUD-BET), based on the appearance of the phrase *niv sefatayim* (Isa. 57:19), which roughly means “the fruit of the lips”. Rashbam further defines whom G-d calls a *navi* as somebody “who is regularly with Me, and he speaks My words, and I love his words and listen to his prayers.” According to this, the word *navi* denotes he who has fruitful lips (in terms of prophecies and successfully prayers).

Nonetheless, Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1167), in his commentary to Ex. 7:1, rejects this understanding. He explains that it untenable to claim that the root of *navi* is NUN-YUD-BET because, as he notes, every time the word *navi* and its cognates appear in the Bible there is always an ALEPH. This suggests that the ALEPH is part of the root, such that *navi*’s root is actually NUN-BET-ALEPH. Rabbi Yonah Ibn Janach and Radak in their respective lexicons (both entitled *Sefer HaShorashim*) also adopt this approach. [I do not know how this jibes with Radak’s comment elsewhere (to I Sam. 9:9) that *navi* is related to *niv sefatayim*, which is in consonance with Rashi and Rashbam’s explanation.]

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Gen. 20:7) also accepts NUN-BET-ALEPH as the root of *navi*. He deduces its meaning by extrapolating from a similar root: NUN-BET-

AYIN, which means “to flow from” or “to become the source of.” Rabbi Hirsch thus concludes that a *navi* is the source from whence the word of G-d issues, the vehicle through which His spirit speaks to man.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1714-1814) maintains that the root of the word *navi* is the biliteral combination BET-ALEPH, which means “come” or “bring”, because it is the prophet’s job to “bring” the word of G-d to its intended audience. In the context of Moshe and Aharon,

Aharon was Moshe’s *navi* because his role was that of a spokesman to “bring” Moshe’s words to the Pharaoh.

Way back in the year 2018, archeologists found a seal with the name Yishaya (Isaiah) inscribed on it, followed by the letters NUN-BET-YUD. Could this seal be that of Isaiah the Prophet? It could be that this depends on how one understands the root of the word *navi*. If the letter ALEPH is part of the word’s root, then the absence of an ALEPH on this seal would suggest that the word after Yishaya does not read *navi*, but reads something else (such as “Nobite”). But if the letter ALEPH is not part of the root of *navi*, then it is possible that this seal actually belonged to Isaiah the Prophet.

The Bible explicitly tells (I Sam. 9:9) that what was called a *navi* in later times was the same role as what used to be called a *roeh* in earlier times. The Malbim explains that in earlier times a prophet was called a *roeh* because the main function of the prophet was to “see” with his Divine Inspiration, and use that to help individuals discover that which was hidden from them (whether in terms of lost items or self-improvement). For example, when Shaul lost his father’s donkeys, he sought out the prophet Samuel to either help him find them or figure out what sin he had committed which led to this loss (I Sam. 9). In essence, a *roeh* was sought out by those wished to consult with them.

In later generations Jewish society degenerated, and a new type of prophet emerged: A *navi* was G-d’s messenger sent to rebuke the nation for their sins, and bring them back to the proper path. The *navi* did not generally speak to the individual, but to the public at large. As opposed to the *roeh* who was sought out, the *navi* was a feared character, from whom people tended to run away.

The Vilna Gaon (to Prov. 22:12, Isa. 1:1) explains that the terms *navi* and *roeh/chozeh* focus on different aspects of a prophet’s function. The word *navi*, as we mentioned above, is related to the word *niv* which refers to the prophet’s mouth.

That word focuses on the prophet’s role in relaying with his mouth G-d’s message.

However, the words *roeh* and *chozeh* refer to the prophet “seeing” a certain vision which he is to convey to others. Within this role of the prophet, the Vilna Gaon explains, there are two types of Seers: One is called a *roeh*, which is the Hebrew word for “he who sees”, and was the term used for the earliest prophets, whose clarity in the visions they saw

was quite sharp. A later prophet, by contrast, is called a *chozeh*, the Aramaic word for “he who sees”. Because Hebrew is considered a more spiritually-attuned language than Aramaic, later prophets are referred to by an Aramaic term for “Seer”. This shows that those prophets were not as clear on the meaning of their visions as the earlier prophets were. For this reason, a later prophet is called a *chozeh* (and his vision a *chazon/machaze*), and an earlier prophet, a *roeh* (and his vision is called a *mareh*).

Indeed, *machaze* denotes a lower level of prophecy. As Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843-1916) points out, this is the type of prophecy experienced by Abraham before his circumcision.

(Gen. 15:1), and later by the heathen prophet Bilaam (Num. 24:4; 24:16).

Okay, so now we understand how, in general, the word *navi* refers to a “prophet”. But in the context of Moshe and

Aharon, G-d tells Moshe that Aharon will be “your [i.e. Moshe’s] *navi*.” This *navi* does not seem to mean “prophet”, but something else. Targum Onkelos (to Ex. 7:1) and Rabbi Saadiah Gaon (there) explain that when G-d tells Moshe that Aharon will be his *navi*, this means that Aharon was to serve as Moshe’s *meturgaman* (“interpreter”, “translator”, “spokesman”) before Pharaoh. Interestingly, the root of the word *meturgaman/targum* seems to be REISH-GIMMEL-MEM, a root which has no other cognates in Hebrew, but in Ugaritic means “saying”. So there you have it. The Hebrew word for “translating” from/to another language is actually derived from the word for “saying” in a different language!

For another look at the etymology of the word *navi*, check out Mitchell First’s new book *Roots and Rituals: Insights into Hebrew, Holidays, and History* (Kodesh Press, 2018).

- For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at ricklein@ohr.edu

MEZUZAH MAVEN

by Rabbi Ze’ev Kraines

Entrance Halls and Mudrooms

Question: The front door of our new house opens from the street to a tiny area which we don’t use for anything except to place our wet umbrellas and galoshes. I think it’s called a “mudroom.” Immediately in front of this door is our real front door that opens onto our house. If you live in the New York area, you’ll know what I’m talking about. It’s definitely not four-by-four amot according to any calculation. Do I need to put mezuzahs on both front doors?

Answer: Yes. The Gemara calls this area a *beit sha’ar*, literally a gate-house. Although it does not meet the minimum size of a living space, since it serves as a passage into a living area, it needs a mezuzah, albeit without a *beracha*.

Commonly, people like to put their halachically best mezuzah scroll on their front door. In your case, it would be preferable to place that one on what you call the “real” front door,

which is fully obligated with a *beracha*. Then, you could proceed to place a mezuzah on the outer door.

Of course, you may place your most beautiful mezuzah “case” on the outer doorway, if you choose.

Entranceway Opening into Living Room

Question: My neighbor has an entranceway similar to our mudroom, only he doesn’t have a door at the end of the entrance. The narrow room simply opens into his living room. He only has a mezuzah on the outer door. Is that correct?

Answer: Yes. Since there is no division between the entrance and the living room, the whole area is considered one large room. The outer door, then, is the door for the whole area, and is fully qualified for a mezuzah with a *beracha*.

- Sources: *Kuntres HaMezuzah* 286:152; *Agur B’ohalecha* 36:37-8, 1:54; *Teshuvos Maharsham* 3:154
- Got a mezuzah question or story? Email rabbid@ohrsandton.com or submit on my website mymezuzahstory.com. Free “Mezuzah Maven” book for every question or story submitted (when published in the near future!)

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch
by Rabbi Yosef Herman

Humility – Prerequisite of a Jewish Leader

After witnessing the wondrous sight of the burning bush, Moshe receives his first prophecy. G-d calls out to him, “Moshe, Moshe,” and Moshe responds: “*Hineni!* [Here I am!].” The Almighty proceeds to tell Moshe that the time has come to save the people from their suffering and affliction in Egypt, and to bring them to the Promised Land. “Now,” says G-d, “go, I will send you to Pharaoh and you shall bring My people... out of Egypt.” But this time, “*heneni*” is much less forthcoming. It would be seven days of negotiation before Moshe would agree to assume the position of leader.

Moshe’s immediate response to the directive is, *Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the Children of Israel out from Egypt?* Moshe in effect said, “You set for me two formidable tasks: to defeat Pharaoh and to lead Israel. But I feel that I possess not the slightest strength or aptitude for either of these tasks – *Who am I that I should be assigned such a mission?*”

Now, Moshe is later described as “extremely humble, more than any other man on earth.” He knew now that he possessed none of the stuff of which demagogues, leaders, generals, heroes and rulers are made. It was only natural that a man of Moshe’s humility would recoil from such a mission, even though the call came from G-d Himself. Considering his own inadequacy, he feared he would be timid and weak in Pharaoh’s presence, and fail in the mission. It was also quite natural for Moshe to doubt whether he had the imposing, overpowering strength of personality required to transform a nation of slaves into a people of G-d.

Indeed, in G-d’s response we see that Moshe may not have had these traits. Instead of reassuring him of his own ability, G-d responds, “Because I will be with you! Precisely this will be the sign for you that it is I Who have sent you.” Those traits that in Moshe’s view made him unsuited for this task are the very ones that make him most qualified to carry it out. Precisely because Moshe sensed that he lacked the capacity to accomplish this mission by human power, Moshe was the one best-suited to accomplish G-d’s mission. This very inadequacy will be the “sign” that this leader is G-d-sent to carry out a Divine mission. Without this proof, the salvation of the people of Israel would be regarded as another event in world history, explicable by human forces, and contributing to human glory.

At the end of the seven days, Moshe remains unconvinced of his ability, and begs G-d to send another man, more worthy, wise and capable. This utter lack of confidence in himself and in his ability is in itself the most vivid proof of the Divine origin of all that was done and spoken by Moshe. It is living testimony that the Torah was *not* given by Moshe, the charismatic leader, but rather *through* Moshe, the humble emissary.

- Source: *Commentary Shemot, 3:11, 4:13*

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Profiles of Ohr Somayach students, alumni and staff
by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

Ophir Ospovat
Age: 23

Born in Jerusalem, Israel
Raised in Westborough, Massachusetts

Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee
BEng. Biomedical Engineering; Molecular and Cellular
Biology; Neuroscience; Mathematics; Minor in
Chemistry and Physics, 2017

Ophir's parents emigrated from the former Soviet Union to Israel. His father's family was able to get out in the 70's, when a small window of opportunity opened for Jews to leave. His father went to high school in Israel, going on to serve in the Israeli army and graduating from university with a degree in mechanical engineering.

Ophir's mother's family came to Israel in 1990, and graduated from university with a degree in Speech and Language Pathology. Ophir's father worked for Intel in Israel as a Technical Engineer. The family lived in Jerusalem. When Ophir was five years old his father took a job with Intel in Massachusetts and the family moved to the town of Westborough, about an hour outside of Boston.

Westborough has a Chabad House, and Ophir's parents were active members. The family became observant when Ophir was eight years old. There were no Jewish schools in town, so Ophir attended public school. By the time he was in 10th grade, he was the only Jew in the school with a yarmulke on his head.

Vanderbilt is a university in Nashville, which, although well-known as one of the best schools in the South, never recruited much in the Northeast. However, it started to do

so a few years ago. Ophir was attracted by its excellent reputation in the STEM curriculum (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). As can be seen by the fields in which he attained degrees, he took advantage of all of

them. While he was in school, and for about six months after graduating, Ophir worked in a laboratory in Vanderbilt, doing research in Cellular Biology. He is one of the authors, along with a postdoctoral researcher and a professor at Vanderbilt, of a paper that was published by the peer-reviewed journal "RNA".



Ophir plans to go to graduate school in the fall of 2019 to earn a PhD in Synthetic Biology, or a related field. But before doing so he wants to fill out his somewhat deficient religious education by studying in Yeshiva. After college he became friendly with a student who had spent some time at Ohr Somayach who suggested to Ophir that he might like the Center Program. Ophir met with Rabbi Shlomo Weiner, one of the heads of the Center

Program, and decided to come for the Winter Zman. He is learning full-time. "It's going very well, and I'm very happy with the schedule and the style of learning and with the other *bochurim*."

Ophir lives in Ramot with his role model – his maternal grandfather, Dr. Mark Steintzgaig, the founder of the famous "Dr. Mark's" bread company. Dr. Steintzgaig had emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1990 and shortly after his arrival became a *baal teshuvah*. He worked as a medical doctor in Israel for a few years. Dr. Steintzgaig decided that preventing disease was at least as important as treating disease, and so he turned his hobby of baking bread into his main occupation, starting a factory to make his famous healthy breads. He recently sold the company and now learns three *sedarim* a day.

BUSINESS ETHICS

by Rabbi Ari Wasserman

Sharing food with a Non-Observant Co-Worker

QUESTION

A non-observant Jewish co-worker often asks me for some of the chocolate, rice cakes or other snacks I have lying around. I am happy to share my “stash,” but am I allowed to?

I am concerned that I am causing a fellow Jew to sin inadvertently by encouraging him to eat, knowing he will not make the requisite blessings (before and after the snack). Am I violating the Torah prohibition of “do not place a stumbling block before the blind” (*lifnei iver*) in doing so?

HALACHIC BACKGROUND

The Torah warns “do not place a stumbling block before the blind (*lifnei iver*).” This prohibition, according to the Rambam, applies to anyone who helps somebody to sin or who causes somebody to sin by placing the temptation before him. Rambam’s ruling is based on a Talmudic discussion which makes it clear that the Torah is not only speaking literally of blind people, but of anyone – including unsuspecting, ignorant or weak people – and forbids causing them to sin.

As for the sin of eating without a blessing, a number of halachic rulings apply.

First and foremost, the Talmud prohibits giving someone bread to eat if that person is not going to wash his hands as prescribed by Jewish law. States the Talmud: “One shouldn’t place a slice [of bread] in a servant’s mouth unless one knows the servant washed his hands.” This is also the ruling of the Tur, the Shulchan Aruch and the Rema.

Secondly, Rabbeinu Yonah cites an opinion that extends the Talmud’s ruling to the recitation of blessings: “[From the Talmudic maxim that] one shouldn’t place a slice [of bread] in a servant’s mouth unless one knows the servant washed his hands, some learn that it is fitting to feed only that person whom one knows will recite a blessing.” Rabbeinu Yonah then makes an exception: “However, if

one intends to do the mitzvah of providing food as a form of charity, it’s permissible [to give it even to those who won’t recite a blessing].”

That brings us to the question: “Who can be given food?”

In response, relying on Rabbeinu Yonah, the Bach states: “If one *knows* that [the recipient of the bread] hasn’t washed his hands and one puts [the bread] in his mouth or hands it to him in order to feed him, he violates the prohibition of ... *lifnei iver*. But if one [serves food to a poor person] *not knowing* whether the recipient will recite a blessing or not, one violates nothing. On the contrary, he fulfills the mitzvah of giving charity to the poor, and if the poor person doesn’t recite a blessing, the giver doesn’t violate *lifnei iver* when he gives the food, and, what is more, he fulfills the mitzvah of giving charity.”

The Chofetz Chaim is also in favor of supplying food as a form of charity, stating in the *Mishnah Berurah*: “We don’t uproot the mitzvah of charity just because [the recipient] *might* not recite a blessing.” But then he adds: “However, if one is *certain* that [the recipient] won’t recite a blessing, it’s forbidden to give him [the food] even in the form of charity. [This ruling applies] only if he *refuses* to say a blessing... but if he simply *can’t* recite one, the mitzvah of charity should not be uprooted because of this.”

Piskei Teshuvos cites a number of prominent *Achronim* who absolve from the violation of *lifnei iver* those who serve food to non-observant Jews under certain circumstances:

“We should tell those who host non-observant Jews and give them food or drink that they should teach them to wash their hands [before eating bread] and say a blessing before and after eating and drinking. And it’s a very good idea to also offer them a head covering when reciting the blessing. Nonetheless, if they’re not receptive and don’t say a blessing beforehand or afterward, that’s not our concern, and we have not violated the prohibition of *lifnei iver* of assisting sinners....”

“Furthermore, all halachic authorities of our day concur that if [the non-observant Jew] might take offense at the suggestion that he say a blessing... it’s better not to suggest it. Nonetheless, one may offer him food or drink if withholding refreshments will be a *chillul Hashem* [causing him to think badly of G-d and His Torah]... or if he will then say that observant Jews are impolite and disrespectful, leading him to anger and hatred toward all who walk the Torah path.

“Therefore, it is possible even to invite [non-observant Jews] over or to attend their family celebrations and the like if they might draw closer to Judaism thereby, even though we know they won’t wash their hands or say blessings over their food.”

Finally, *Teshuvos VeHanhagos* addresses the issue right on point by answering the question: “If a worker asks for food and drink but won’t say a blessing, may one give it to him?”

Teshuvos VeHanhagos answers that one may do so, adding: “The main thing seems to be that if not offering food or drink is liable to interfere with cordial relations, then it’s permissible to offer it.”

Teshuvos VeHanhagos goes on to explain that the prohibition of *lifnei iver* is based on the fact that one is causing harm to another by leading him into sin. But in an instance such as this, the intention is the opposite – one is trying to do something that will *benefit* the other, i.e. that he will draw near to Judaism and not feel antagonism towards it. Furthermore, the one setting down the food and drink is being passive – it is not as if he feeds the worker with his own hand. Therefore giving food to a non-observant worker is permissible, but it seems that one must at least suggest that the worker cover his head and say a blessing.

The bottom line, says *Teshuvos VeHanhagos*, is that if the worker requests food or water, one must give it to him in order not to create a *chillul Hashem* and to maintain cordial relations. But it is proper to ask the other to say a blessing.

RESPONSE

If your refusal to share your “stash” would cause friction with your co-worker, it’s permitted to do so. Especially if you shared with others but refused to share with this one, it might cause hurt, offense and bring about interpersonal tension.

However, it’s best that you let the co-worker take the food himself and not actively hand it to him. In that way you are not directly involved in handing over the food and in violation of halacha when he eats it without a blessing.

Best of all, if you could see this as an opportunity to bring someone closer to G-d and His Torah, that would be wonderful! For example, you might mention that you personally say a blessing before and after eating even snacks and how good it makes you feel to acknowledge G-d’s bounty even in small things. And then you might recommend that he/she say a blessing with you.

It’s been my experience that, in general, non-observant Jews do agree to say a blessing if asked, and are willing to repeat the words after me. Doing this would be especially important if the snacking is a recurring habit and not just an occasional event.

- *L’iluy nishmas Yehudah ben Shmuel HaKohen Breslauer*

The Ohr Somayach Building Campaign – Phase 1

For 30 hours beginning at 7 p.m. Jerusalem time on December 12th and ending at 1 a.m. on December 14th, Ohr Somayach conducted a fundraising campaign.

The goal was \$3.75 million dollars, with \$3,000,000 to be raised to assist in building our new Beis Medrash (see www.ohr.edu/building for an amazing virtual tour of the new complex) and \$750,000 for the Derech budget. Prior to the campaign, “matchers” were found who were willing to post three-quarters of the goal for the Ohr Somayach Building Campaign and two-thirds of the Derech goal, leaving \$1,000,000 to be raised on “game day”. That money was raised largely by small donations, which means that thousands of supporters contributed. Although it was touch and go for a few hours, by the end of the drive the goal was reached and even exceeded.

The campaign was conducted on both sides of the Atlantic. Rabbi Avraham Rockmill, the head of the Intermediate Program at the Yeshiva, and Rabbi Richard Jacobs, the head of the Hertz Ohr Lagolah program, captained the campaign on the Israeli side, while the renowned entrepreneur and alumnus Danny Lemberg rallied the troops and brought home the victory for the Yeshiva in the Western Hemisphere.

These three captains were ably assisted by a wide variety of Mentors, *baalei batim*, the *rabbeim* of Ohr Somayach and the whole of its student body. Both the Yeshiva’s Main Beis Midrash along with the Derech Beis Midrash were transformed for those 30 hours into call centers, with hundreds of students and faculty calling America throughout the night, and then calling Europe, Asia, South

Africa and Australia during the day. Throughout the campaign we ran a live-stream, featuring interviews with staff, students and alumni of the yeshiva, as well as Torah thoughts, *shiurim* and videos about Ohr Somayach and the new Beis Midrash Complex.

The atmosphere during the campaign was electric. Rabbi Rockmill, in summing up the effort said: “It’s rare to have the chance to unite with the entire Ohr Somayach family in so powerful an experience of hard work and *siyata d’Shamaya* as we had in the successful Charidy campaign. Our hopes and prayers are that the *bracha* that *Hashem* has sent us will indeed enable us to continue to be a Torah center which is a magnet for Jews of all backgrounds seeking their roots. On behalf of the Yeshiva I wish to thank everyone who participated and donated to the campaign, and in that merit may our lives be filled with all the blessings of the Torah and the coming of the *Mashiach*, *b’mhara b’yameinu*.”

