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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Show Me the Waze To Go Home

“Come to Cheshbon” (21:27)

I well remember, before setting off on a trip, pulling out my somewhat dog-eared maps and carefully planning my route. I carefully considered the prevailing traffic at my estimated times along journey, and committed to memory the route, jotting down the names or numbers of the highways that I would need to take.

Who'd a-thought that that just a few short years later, my maps would be gathering mold at the bottom the trunk of my car, and a satellite miles above me in the sky would be guiding me to my destination on a screen in my car? And not only that, but if the traffic situation changed, it would reroute me as I was driving!

Waze sure is a wonderful invention. Only problem is if the satellite doesn't work, or your phone can't pick up the signal.

A few years ago, one of my sons was attending a Yeshiva in the south of Israel, and my wife and I made several trips to visit him. I jumped in the car, fired up Waze, and off we went. We must have made the journey at least five or six times, when one day I realized that Waze had gone “on the blink.” I suddenly started to pay attention to the road signs and cast my eyes to the left and the right, trying to recognize the scenery.

I had absolutely no idea where I was.

Or how to get to where I wanted to get.

Our lives are full of labor-saving devices that can make our lives full of labor.

When the personal computer first came out, I suggested that every computer that left the factory should have a little sticker on it saying, “You can waste your life saving time.”

One of the most dangerous things in life is to travel through it on “auto-pilot.” Although we may have traveled though similar situations in the past, life choices require constant reevaluation. The “Negative Drive” is a master of misrouting. And what may have been a necessary strategy in the past – or even a mitzvah – now, on this particular journey, the road that we are on may take us far from our goal.

“Come to Cheshbon.”

The Talmud (Bava Batra 78b) expounds this verse in this manner: “Therefore, the allegorists say, ‘Come to Cheshbon.’ ... Those who rule over their negative drive say, ‘Come and evaluate the *cheshbon* (“balance sheet of the world”) – the loss of a mitzvah versus its gain – and the gain of a transgression versus its loss...’ ”

When we fail to do life’s essential map work, we may find ourselves far “awaze” from where we want to be.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The laws of the *Parah Adumah*, the Red Heifer, are detailed. These laws are for the ritual purification of one who comes into contact with death.

After nearly 40 years in the desert, Miriam dies and is buried at Kadesh. The people complain about the loss of their water supply that until now has been provided miraculously in the merit of Miriam's righteousness. Aharon and Moshe pray for the people's welfare. Hashem commands them to gather the nation at Merivah and speak to a designated rock so that water will flow forth. Distressed by the people's lack of faith, Moshe hits the rock instead of speaking to it. He thus fails to produce the intended public demonstration of Hashem's mastery over the world, which would have resulted had the rock produced water merely at Moshe's word. Therefore, Hashem tells Moshe and Aharon that they will not bring the people into the Land.

The Jewish People resume their travels, but because the King of Edom, a descendant of Esav, denies them passage through his country, they do not travel the most direct route to Eretz Yisrael. When they reach Mount Hor, Aharon dies and his son Elazar is invested with his priestly garments and responsibilities. Aharon was beloved by all, and the entire nation mourns him for 30 days. Sichon, the Amorite, attacks *Bnei Yisrael* when they ask to pass through his land. As a result, *Bnei Yisrael* conquer the lands that Sichon had previously seized from the Amonites on the east bank of the Jordan River.

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Q & A

Questions – Chukat

1. "Take a perfect *Para Aduma* (red heifer)." What does the word "perfect" *temima* mean in this context?
2. How many non-red hairs disqualify a cow as a *Para Aduma*?
3. A man dies in a tent. What happens to the sealed metal and earthenware utensils in the tent?
4. What happens to the one who: a) sprinkles the water mixed with the ashes of the *Para Aduma*; b) touches the water; c) carries the water?
5. Why was the *mitzvah* of the *Para Aduma* entrusted to Elazar rather than to Aharon?
6. Why does the Torah stress that *all* of the congregation came to *Midbar Tzin*?
7. Why is Miriam's death taught after the law of *Para Aduma*?
8. During their journey in the *midbar*, in whose merit did the Jewish People receive water?
9. Why did Moshe need to strike the rock a second time?
10. When Moshe told the King of Edom that the Jewish People would not drink from the well-water, to which well did he refer? What do we learn from this?
11. The cloud that led the Jewish People leveled all mountains in their path except three. Which three and why?
12. Why did the *entire* congregation mourn Aharon's death?
13. What disappeared when Aharon died?
14. Which "inhabitant of the South" (21:1) attacked the Jews?
15. For what two reasons did G-d punish the people with snakes specifically?
16. Why did the Jewish People camp in Arnon rather than pass through Moav to enter *Eretz Canaan*?
17. What miracle took place at the valley of Arnon?
18. What was the "strength" of Amon that prevented the Jewish People from entering into their Land?
19. Why was Moshe afraid of Og?
20. Who killed Og?

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

Answers

1. 19:2 - Perfectly red.
2. 19:2 - Two.
3. 19:14,15 - The metal utensils are impure for seven days, even if they are sealed. The sealed earthenware vessels are unaffected.
4. 19:21 - a) Remains *tahor*; b) He, but not his clothing, contracts *tumah*; c) He and his clothing contract *tumah*.
5. 19:22 - Because Aharon was involved in the sin of the Golden Calf.
6. 20:1 - To teach that they were *all* fit to enter the Land; everyone involved in the sin of the spies already died.
7. 20:1 - To teach that just as sacrifices bring atonement, so too does the death of the righteous.
8. 20:2 - Miriam's.
9. 20:11 - After he hit it the first time, only a few drops came out since he was commanded to *speak* to the rock.
10. 20:17 - To the well that traveled with the nation in the *midbar*. This teaches that one who has adequate provisions should nevertheless purchase goods from his host in order to benefit the host.
11. 20:22 - *Har Sinai* for receiving the Torah, *Har Nevo* for Moshe's burial, and *Hor Hahar* for Aharon's burial.
12. 20:29 - Aharon made peace between contending parties and between spouses. Thus, everybody mourned him.
13. 20:29 - The clouds of glory disappeared, since they sheltered the Jews in Aharon's merit.
14. 21:1 - Amalek.
15. 21:6 - The original snake, which was punished for speaking evil, is fitting to punish those who spoke evil about G-d and about Moshe. And the snake, to which everything tastes like dust, is fitting to punish those who complained about the manna which changed to any desired taste.
16. 21:13 - Moav refused them passage.
17. 21:15 - The Amorites hid in caves in the mountain on the Moabite side of the valley in order to ambush the Jews. When the Jews approached, the mountain on the *Eretz Canaan* side of the valley moved close to the other mountain and the Amorites were crushed.
18. 21:24 - G-d's command, "Do not harass them" (*Devarim* 2:19).
19. 21:34 - Og had once been of service to Avraham. Moshe was afraid that this merit would assist Og in battle.
20. 21:35 - Moshe.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Biblical Refuseniks

When the Jews appealed to the Edomites for permission to travel through their territory *en route* the Holy Land, the Edomites flatly refused and even threatened military action. The word used in the Bible to denote the Edomites' "refusal" is *vayima'en* (Num. 20:21). That same word is used when Jacob "refuses" to be consoled over Joseph's apparent death (Gen. 37:35), when Joseph "refused" to philander with Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:8), when Jacob "refused" to place his right hand on Joseph's firstborn (Gen. 48:19), when Amon deviously feigned sickness by "refusing" to eat (II Shmuel 13:9), and in several other places in the Bible. Nonetheless, the more familiar Hebrew term for "refusal" is not *mi'un* – a cognate of *vayima'en* – but rather *siruv*. In this essay we will discuss these two synonyms and attempt to find the differences between them.

While cognates of the Hebrew word *mi'un* appear forty-six times throughout the Bible, its seemingly synonymous counterpart *siruv* only occurs once in the entire Bible, making it a *hapax legomenon* – and even that example is not universally agreed upon. When G-d tells the Prophet Yechezkel not to fear any repercussions from the Jewish People as the result of his prophecies, He refers to the nation as *saravim* and *salonim* (Yechezkel 2:6). The commentators agree that *salonim* are a type of "thorns," but when it comes to the word *saravim*, there are two different approaches.

Menachem Ibn Saruk (920-970), Rashi (1040-1105), Radak (1160-1234), and others explain that *saravim* means that the Jews were "rebels" and "refusers." Menachem even defines *meridah* ("rebellion") as *sarvanut*, just like he defines *saravanim* as *mardut* ("rebellion"). According to them, this is the only instance of the root SAMECH-REISH-BET in the Bible in the sense of "refusing." Nonetheless, Menachem's famous interlocutor Donash Ibn Labrat

(920-990) disagrees with this assessment, instead proffering that when Yechezkel calls the Jews *saravim*, this term refers to a type of "thorn," just like *salonim* does.

Interestingly, in that chapter of the Book of Yechezkel, G-d uses cognates of *meri/meridah* ("rebellion") when discussing the Jewish People six times, and in each of those times the Targum renders the word in Aramaic with a cognate of *siruv*. What's even more interesting is that when Yechezkel uses a cognate of *pasha* to mean "rebellion" in that chapter (Yechezkel 2:3), Targum renders that term in Aramaic with an Aramaicized cognate of the Hebrew *meridah*.

That said, all commentators agree that *sarvan* in later Rabbinic Hebrew refers to a "refusenik." For example, the Mishna (*Brachot* 5:3) rules that if the *chazan* made a mistake during the prayers, then he should immediately be replaced with another *chazan*, warning that the second *chazan* should not be a *sarvan* under such circumstances. Maimonides and Bartenura explain that under normal circumstances a person asked to function as the *chazzan* should show some humility, and initially "refuse" the honor (*sarvan*), but in this case, where the second *chazan* is appointed to replace the first *chazan*, it is inappropriate for him to "refuse" (*sarvan*) the honor.

Similarly, a person who pesters another and unrelentingly tries to convince him of something is called *misarev* (*Nedarim* 8:7), because he "refuses" to give up on changing the other person's mind (see *Tosafot Yom Tov*). Sometimes, an extra HEY is added before the final letter of this word to yield *mis'harev* for "pestering" (see Rashi to *Bava Kama* 28a, 32b, *Chullin* 94a).

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) writes that the word *mi'un* is related to the word

ein/ayin (“no,” “is not,” “has not”), because a person who “refuses” does not engage with that which he has rejected, but instead stubbornly tries to ignore it.

Rabbi Eliyahu HaBachur (1469-1549) points out in his works *Sefer HaTishbi* and *Meturgaman* that most instances of the Hebrew words *meridah* (“rebellion”), *meri* (“rebellion”), and *mi’un* (“refusal”) in the Torah are rendered by the Targumim as *siruw*. In light of this, it seems that the two Hebrew words for “refusal” – *mi’un* and *siruw* – are indeed synonyms, but that they are sourced in different languages. *Mi’un* and its cognates that appear multiple times in the Bible seem to be genuine Hebrew, while *siruw*, which at most only appears once in the Bible, seems to be a borrowed Aramaic loanword, and thus became more popular in post-Biblical Hebrew when Aramaic had a stronger influence on the language.

However, there is another approach to this question.

An early commentary to Targum Onkelos ascribed to Rabbi Yaakov Dienna (published under the various names *Patshegen*, *Tzintzenet HaMann*, and *Sefer HaYair*) asks the following question: Given that Targum Onkelos typically renders *mi’un* as *siruw*, then why in Exodus 22:16 does he not do so? That verse states that if the father of a girl who was seduced “refuses” to give his daughter to the seducer for marriage, then the seducer must pay a penalty. The Hebrew text there reads *im ma’en yima’en* (“and if the father refuses”) – yet Onkelos translates the verse into Aramaic as though it says, “and if the father does not wish...” The meaning does not necessarily change, but the wording is unexpected.

Rabbi Dienna resolves this question by positing that *mi’un* and *siruw* are not perfect synonyms, and that their meanings do not always line up. He explains that *mi’un* refers specifically to a case wherein somebody was asked to do something (perhaps a favor) and “refused” to comply. On the other hand, the term *siruw* implies a stronger refusal than simple non-compliance. *Siruw* implies the utter rejection of a certain proposition. In the case of the seducee’s father, because he publicly declares in front of the court and in front of his daughter that he does not want her to marry the seducer, he can be expected to use a more toned-down verbiage. Because of this,

Onkelos did not want to translate the Bible’s *mi’un* as *siruw*, which would imply a more intense language than the father would likely use in public discourse.

Similarly, when Balaam reported that he cannot accompany Balak’s men, he says: “G-d has refused (*me’en*) to allow me to go with you” (Num. 22:13). Targum (there) again refuses to translate *mi’un* as *siruw*, instead rendering the clause “there is no will before G-d to allow...” Rabbi Dienna accounts for this unexpected phraseology by explaining that Onkelos felt that using the more vulgar term *siruw* regarding G-d’s refusal is considered somewhat disrespectful towards Him. Therefore, Onkelos creatively rendered the passage a bit differently. According to this approach, the difference between *mi’un* and *siruw* lies not just in their etymological roots, but also in their meanings, as *siruw* somehow implies a more intense form of “refusing” than *mi’un* does. (On the difference between *ma’en* and *me’en*, see Midrash *Sechel Tov* to Exodus 7:27.)

Another fascinating point related to this discussion is that colloquially the terms *mi’un* and *siruw* refer to two totally different legal procedures. The term *mi’un* appears numerous times in the Mishna (for example: *Moed Katan* 3:3, *Yevamot* 13:1-6, *Bava Metzia* 1:8, *Sanhedrin* 1:3, *Chullin* 1:7) in reference to the legal procedure by which a girl who was wed in a marriage not recognized by the Bible, but recognized by the Rabbis (e.g., if she was orphaned from her father, and her mother or brothers married her off), can “refuse” her husband and be allowed to marry someone else. In contrast, the term *siruw* refers to a person who “refuses” to heed a summons when called to appear before Jewish Court or “refuses” to listen to the court’s ruling. Such a person, who is held in contempt of the court, may be subject to sanctions that resemble excommunication and/or may allow the *dayanim* to give permission to the opposing litigant to petition a non-Jewish court.

(By the way, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the *-nik* suffix in English is borrowed from Yiddish and Russian, and is said to have especially come in vogue after the Russians successfully launched the Sputnik satellite. Hence, the English terms *beatnik*, *no-goodnik*, *peacenik*, and *kibbutznik*.)

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

TO BELIEVE IS TO BEHAVE (PART 10)

(LAILAH GIFTY AKITA)

“These are the precepts whose fruits a person enjoys in this world, but whose principal remains intact in the World to Come. They are: honoring one’s parents; acts of kindness; early arrival at the study hall in the morning and the evening; hosting guests; visiting the sick; providing the wherewithal for a bride to marry; escorting the dead; praying with concentration; making peace between two people; and Torah study is the equivalent of them all.” (Tractate Shabbat 127a)

Mitzvah number nine is making peace between two people who have fallen out with each other. So great is the mitzvah that the Talmud teaches us in Tractate Yevamot (65b) that there are even occasions where it might be permissible to say something that is not [entirely] true in order to further the cause of goodwill between two quarrelling parties. Furthermore, in Tractate Ketubot (17b) there is a fascinating dispute between the School of Shamai and the School of Hillel as to how one should praise a bride. The School of Shamai is of the opinion that it is forbidden to say anything that is not true. In the words of the School of Shamai one must praise a bride “how she is” – i.e. not to say anything that is not true, and not even to embellish the truth in any way. According to the School of Shamai the pursuit of truth is so intrinsic to our identity as believing Jews that it is forbidden to say anything that is untrue. The School of Hillel, on the other hand, disagrees. According to the School of Hillel maintaining *shalom* – peace – is of paramount importance and it is permissible for a person to say that the bride is “beautiful and pious” even if it seems that she might not be.

The definitive ruling as found in the Code of Jewish Law, Even HaEzer 65:1, follows the opinion of the School of Hillel. We are allowed to say something that is not necessarily the truth in order to preserve the peace, or to enhance the feelings of goodwill between two people.

Rabbi Yom Tov ben Avraham Asevilli, 1260-1320, known by his acronym, Ritva, the universally revered head of the famed Yeshiva in Seville and the author of one of the classic commentaries on the Talmud, writes that even though there is a very clear admonishment in the Torah that it is forbidden to lie, nevertheless, it is permitted to do so when for the sake of *shalom*. Many of the authorities of Jewish Law clarify this position and rule that it is only permissible when what is being said does not deviate explicitly from the truth. Therefore, to say something ambiguous would be permissible but to say something that is unquestionably not true is forbidden. If so, how is it possible to balance the prevailing view of the authorities with the opinion of the School of Hillel?

Rabbi Yehuda Loewe, known as the Maharal of Prague, one of the most brilliant scholars in the sixteenth century, whose commentary on the Torah and his many philosophical works are considered to be classic masterpieces, and whose influence is still keenly felt today, explains, *Netiv HaEmet*, that whilst it is true that it may not be possible to praise a bride for her physical beauty, nevertheless, there are a plethora of other praiseworthy qualities that she has. It is those traits that are being praised because, in the eyes of her husband, they make her truly beautiful.

It is reminiscent of the witness in court who, when instructed to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” asked the judge which one was wanted. The truth. The whole truth. Or nothing but the truth!

Unfortunately, if a person does not understand clearly what the Rabbis are teaching they may come to the erroneous conclusion that not being truthful is acceptable. That is absolutely not true (pun intended...). According to all authorities it is completely forbidden to say things that are distortions of the truth on a regular basis. And, as the Maharal points out, even in those specific scenarios when Jewish Law might permit a person to say something that does not *seem* to be completely truthful, it is always forbidden to say something if it is *obviously* not true.

The Maharal, *Tiferet Yisrael* 7, in defining *shalom*, writes that when each person stays within his own boundaries *shalom* can exist between people. It is when a person begins to encroach on the personal space of another that *shalom* begins to unravel. Aharon, the brother of Moshe Rabbeinu, was the paragon of making peace between people. Our Sages describe the almost limitless extent that he was prepared to go to in order to ensure that there were no disagreements and arguments between people – especially between husbands and wives. In fact, so great was his ability to inspire couples to live in harmony, that the Midrash relates (*Avot d’Rabbi Natan* 12) that thousands of children born in the desert were named after him. If not for his efforts to make peace between their parents, those children would never have been born. Even the

knowledge that, very often, trying to make peace between two opposing factions causes the peacemaker to become sullied in the process could not stop Aharon from pressing ahead in his holy efforts to foster love and benevolence among the Jewish Nation.

Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky (1886-1976) was one of the foremost leaders of Lithuanian Jewry. After escaping communist Russia, he headed the rabbinical courts in London for seventeen years before moving to Israel. Rabbi Abramsky used to ask rhetorically why a pot is black. And then he would answer: “Because the pot makes ‘peace’ between the fire and the water. And whoever is involved in making peace always ends up getting dirty!”

In conclusion, the Maharal further goes on to explain, *ibid.* 62, that the Torah is comprised of three fundamental tenets: *mishpat* – judgment, *chesed* – kindness, and *shalom* – peace. Eight out of ten of the mitzvahs that are mentioned in our list contain one of these tenets. Making peace between people, however, is comprised of two – judgment and kindness. Learning Torah is all-encompassing as it includes all three tenets. That is why, writes the Maharal, making peace is followed by learning Torah.

To be continued...

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Chukat: Yoma 58-64

The Right of the Way

Rami bar Yechezkel said, "All turns that you make must be towards the right."

This statement of the direction for turning is found a number of times in *Masechet Yoma*, as well in other places in *Shas*. However, in the context of the *mishna* and the *gemara*, this "turning teaching" refers to the correct direction for a *kohen* to turn when on the Altar while maneuvering about in his service of Hashem in the Beit Hamikdash.

If we might consider this Torah Sage's words to be literally "speaking for themselves," we might ask if this teaching – "all turnings that you do are only to the right" – applies to aspects of life outside of the Beit Hamikdash as well. In particular, does this teaching have halachic implications nowadays, when there is no Beit Hamikdash? In our present mitzvah observance, does the distinction between "right" and "left" play a halachic role?

But, before any further words, a strong disclaimer must be made. The words "left" and "right" in this article are absolutely in no way related to any political terminology or significance. One who even begins to imagine any such link is purely mistaken – and, dare I add, a fool.

Another disclaimer: Although we have previously written a general disclaimer regarding the correct method of any practice addressed in this series, it must be repeatedly emphasized that in any matter of practical halacha one should not rely on what is written here, but should rather ask a competent halachic authority for a ruling. It is not uncommon to find a dispute among the great halachic authorities regarding the halachic conclusion to be drawn from the *Shas* and the writings of the *Rishonim*.

It is important to note that the significance of "right and left" and "right vs. left" should be viewed as two separate concepts, although there may be a correlation at some level of understanding. One idea, the more basic idea, is that we find in nature that the right is stronger. For example, for the majority of people, the right hand is naturally strong and with greater coordination. For this reason, when fulfilling a mitzvah, one should do it with one's right hand in order to show one's love for Hashem and the dearness one has for His mitzvahs. A few examples: taking the *lulav* with one's right hand, holding the Kiddush cup in one's right hand and giving *tzedaka* with one's right hand.

On a "deeper" level, right and left represent what we have been taught to perceive as the traits that Hashem reveals when interacting with the Creation – in particular, with people. A correct, Torah understanding of these concepts can help us better understand the hows and whys and *kavanas* (intents) for everyday life, helping us follow the way of Hashem. In a superficial manner, "right" often represents the Divine trait of strict justice. "Left" represents Hashem's merciful nature. One of many examples of this is the halacha found in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim (95:3): to stand in prayer with one's right hand over one's left hand, over one's heart. Why the right over the left? Prayer in this manner indicates a plea from one's heart to Hashem,

that His Divine attribute of mercy “conquer” strict judgment, so to speak. In this manner we pray that Hashem will *mercifully* grant our requests – even if our merits are lacking. We seek His mercy to receive His countless gifts, such as sustenance, good health and wisdom, and that He guide and help us to repent and grow closer to Him. This explanation of standing with the right hand over the left hand in prayer is taught in the writings of the *Arizal*. The Aruch Hashulchan (91:6), however, notes: “Each person is different and for some it is difficult to pray like this (with the hands over the heart, as written in the Shulchan Aruch). Instead, these people place their hands on a *shtender* (for stability). Each person should do whatever is best for him in order to pray with focus and concentration, standing in awe before the King of kings and turning to Him in prayer for all his needs.”

• *Yoma 58b*

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The students, alumni, staff and events of Ohr Somayach

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

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Ohr Somayach Center Program 2017-2019

Works in Security and Family Business

Dovid grew up in a leafy suburb south of Chicago, the second of three sons, in a Jewish but non-observant family. His parents are both Chicago natives. Ever since he was a young boy he had dreamed of becoming a police officer. After high school he earned an Associate’s degree in Criminal Justice, and began applying to police departments and security companies in the Chicago area. Dovid had not yet thought deeply about any religion, but when a Moslem co-worker began questioning him about Judaism, Dovid was ashamed to admit that he knew almost nothing. A curious young man, he started researching religions on the Internet and decided



that being Jewish was something to be proud of. He immediately put on a *kippa* and wore it to school and work as a symbol of his pride. Now, however, since he was openly identifying as a Jew, he realized that he needed to know more than he did.

In researching a question from his co-worker, he stumbled across a verse: “*M’dvar sheker tirchak*” – “Keep far away from a lie,” and as a corollary to that, “Don’t falsely portray yourself.” If he was going to wear a *kippa*, that meant he was identifying as a Jew who keeps mitzvahs. Dovid thought to himself, “I either have to keep mitzvahs, or take off the *kippa*.” He started

reading an English translation of the *Chumash* and doing those things that he understood were incumbent upon Jews, such as avoiding shellfish and wearing a *kippa* and *tzitzis*. Because he was not yet in touch with a Rabbi or any religious Jews, he did not know what he did not know. His observance was admirable, but not yet halachic.

After reading about attacks on Jews in the Ukraine in 2014, he decided to make *aliyah* and join the Israeli army, the IDF. He also resolved to begin keeping Shabbos when he arrived in Israel. He came in 2015 and went directly to *ulpan* for almost a year. After attaining proficiency in Hebrew, Dovid joined *Plugat Tomer*, a *charedi* unit in the elite combat Givati Brigade. He served for approximately two years. Those years strengthened his observance and taught him how to live as a Jew.

Upon discharge, he returned to Chicago to finish his BA degree in Criminal Justice. He completed the degree in 2017 and then turned down offers to join various police departments because he wanted to learn in yeshiva in order to build a foundation for his future life. Dovid came to Ohr Somayach's Center Program that year.

During his second year at the Center, he simultaneously earned his Masters Degree in Government at IDC in Herzliya, with specialties in

Counterterrorism, Homeland Security; Counter Cyberterrorism – and a Cluster Certificate in Cyber Security.

He returned home at the end of 2019 and started working a security job at a top-secret data center in the Chicago area. He later joined his father in the family's Home Improvement business.

Dovid returned to Israel for a visit the week before Shavuot in 5781 (2021). It was probably the most momentous week in Dovid Uhlmann's life. He was nearly murdered by a bloodthirsty mob of Arabs shortly after Hamas began its missile attacks from the Gaza Strip on May 10th. For more on this gripping story, please read the article on our website at: <https://ohr.edu/articles/Trapped.html>.

At a *siyum* on *Makkos*, which he made at the Yeshiva on Thursday night after his miraculous escape, he ended his speech with the following words:

“It doesn't matter where you are in the world. You can be in Jerusalem, South Africa, South America or the USA. Bad things can happen anywhere. You can even be in the middle of an angry and dangerous anti-Semitic mob. If Hashem does not give permission for something to happen, nobody can touch you.”

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LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

Three Benefactors

In one chapter, we learn of the death of Miriam and Aharon. This chapter is preceded by the great *Parah Adumah* chapter (Red Heifer), which teaches the Jewish concepts of immortality and of moral freedom which transcend the physical forces of our nature. The section of *parah adumah* is an important introduction to these deaths, for it declares that what made Miriam into Miriam and what made Aharon into Aharon did not die when Miriam and Aharon died. Just as their work and legacy live on forever in the Jewish People, their true essence is eternal, and their souls will return to G-d.

Our Sages teach that the juxtaposition of these two chapters teach that the just as the sin-offering character of the *parah adumah* effects atonement, so too does the death of the righteous. Perhaps this means that the truth of immortality and moral freedom – the teachings expressed in the *parah adumah* – are also taught by the death of the righteous. The death of the righteous offers convincing proof of immortality. Only one who is spiritually blind would identify the *tzaddik* with his inert corpse. When a corpse only a short time before had employed thought and will with spiritual strength and moral power, it is all too clear that the corpse is merely the garment of a soul who departed.

When the three great leaders of that generation, Miriam, Aharon, and Moshe, die, their loss was manifest in external phenomena. Immediately after the death of Miriam, the text records that there was no water. From this, our Sages learn that the well of water that accompanied the people in the desert dried up when Miriam passed away. The text records that the people “saw” that Aharon had perished – which leads the Sages to conclude that the loss was “visible” because the cloud, that until then had protected and guided them in the wilderness, departed. The resultant state of defenselessness left the people vulnerable to the subsequent attack by the Canaanite king, Arad. When Moshe departed, the Heavenly manna food stopped falling. Thus, the

three leaders were responsible for three critical benefits that sustained and protected the people during the years in the desert: the well, the cloud, and the manna.

The prophet Michah refers to these three great leaders in his exhortation that moral strength alone, and no other act or circumstance, is the condition for national existence. (Michah 6:4) Their personalities attested to the task whose accomplishment was crucial to the future of the nation. Michah then describes the three-part task of the Jew: *What does the L-rd demand of you? But to do justice, to love loving-kindness, and to walk modestly with your G-d.*

Rav Hirsch suggests that these three elements of our moral mission characterize the work of the three great leaders.

Mishpat, the norm of justice, shapes one’s whole life in accordance with G-d’s will. This was primarily the mission of Moshe, and is represented in the *manna*, the bread of existence

Ahavat Chesed, the love of loving-kindness – the heart’s inclination to joyfully relinquish what one is rightfully entitled to, the attribute of compassion – are the traits of Aharon, which spread a cloud of protection from the clear penetrative rays of justice.

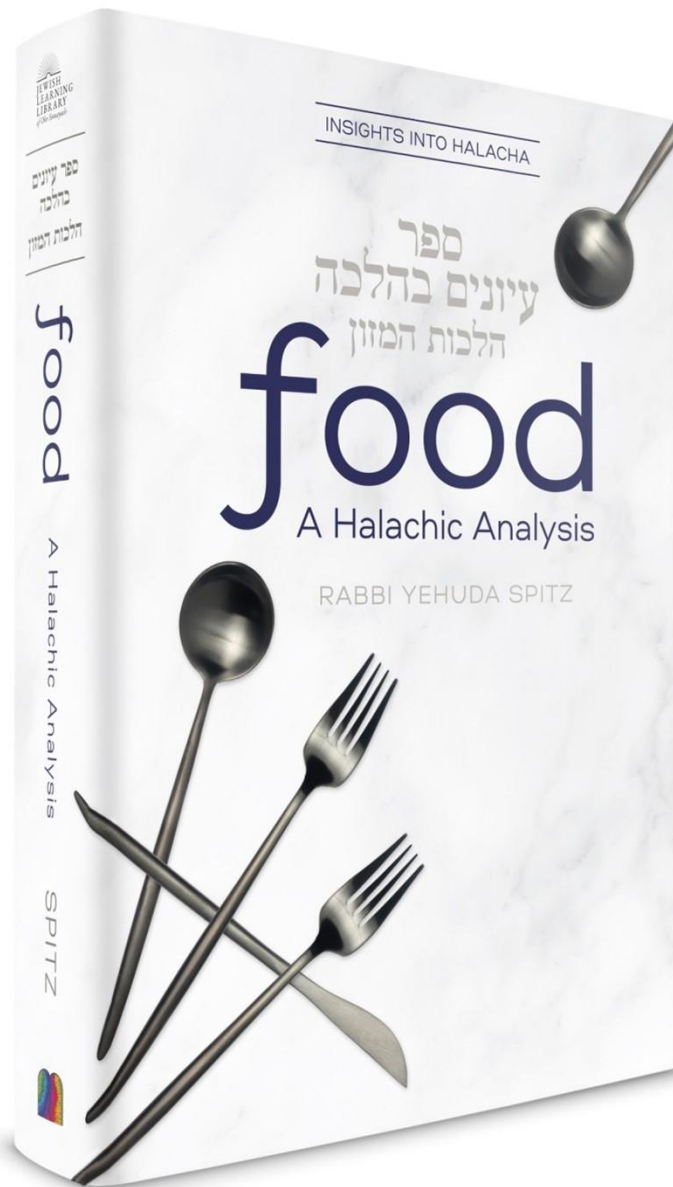
Hatzenea Lechet, walking unpretentiously and modestly with G-d, is the fundamental character of Jewish womanhood, and was fostered under Miriam’s influence – the quiet, hidden “spring” from whose depths all holiness flows. Thus, the physical gifts that these benefactors provided the people with, in turn, represent the more enduring gifts that would provide for the nation’s spiritual well-being long after their departure.

- Sources: Commentary, Bamidbar 20:29

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