

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

BEHAR-BEHUKOTAI

Haftarah: Yirmiyahu 16:19-17:14

MAY 11-12, 2018 27 IYAR 5778

Rosh Hodesh Sivan will be celebrated on Tuesday, May 15.

DEDICATION: Happy Anniversary and Happy Mother's Day !

Mahrook to Allison and Jesse Sutton on the birth of a baby boy !

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EDITORS NOTES

On Sunday morning we finished praying at about 8AM and came down to have breakfast and the question was asked as we sat down, "Does it make that much of a difference if I came to synagogue to pray with the minyan or if I just pray at home? And assuming you will answer as every other rabbi answers, that it does, what exactly is that difference"?

We referred back to last week's portion and a class we had based on the writings of the Shvilei Pinchas and where we read, "VeNikdashiti - I shall be sanctified amidst Bnei Yisrael; I am Hashem Mekadeshchem Who sanctifies you." So I asked, every day in our prayers, we sanctify Hashem. In what specific prayers do we do that?

And as you all know, each day, we say Kedusha a number of times and each day we say kaddish a number of times. These are specific prayers which seem to fulfill this command to sanctify Hashem. But we also know that we are limited as to when we can say these prayers as they can only be said with a minyan. In fact the Mishnah tells us that all matters of kedusha, such as the reading of the Torah, the priestly blessings and the marriage blessings are all prohibited to individuals and must be said in a minyan.

Furthermore, we learned in the Gemara, a person's tefilah is only heard in the "bet kenesset" in the synagogue. There the Talmud asks from where is it derived that Hashem is found in a synagogue and answers that it states: "Hashem stands in the divine assembly." So when we come to pray with the Sibbur, the congregation, or the minyan, we are coming to be with Hashem's presence.

So someone asked, what about a wicked person who joins the congregation. Does he ruin their prayers and force the Shechinah out? So we quoted our daily prayers. Hashem said to Moshe: "Take yourself spices—'nataf,' and 'shechelet' and 'chelbonah'—spices and pure 'levonah'; they shall be equal one to another." Rashi explains: "'Chelbinah' is a spice whose smell is foul. Why would we add a foul smelling spice? The Torah counted it among the ingredients of the 'ketoret' to teach us that we should not consider it insignificant to include the sinners of Yisrael with us as members of the congregation for our prayers so that they should be counted among us. In fact without the Chelbonah, the ketoret is unacceptable. We reminded ourselves that we say before we pray, "My tefilah should be considered as a 'ketoret' before You". Our minyan may be like the ten good spices mixing with one bad one. Rabbi Abittan would explain a Sibbur is Sadikim, Ben Onim and Reshaim. One needs all three to optimize the group. We explained that there are those who suggest that a minyan is not made of ten individuals, but those ten coming together form a completely new entity which combines with the shechinah which rests on the group. In fact this group coming together LeShem Hashem for prayer creates a moment of Et Razton – an auspicious time where prayers are answered.

This is a profound concept; for there is no prosecutor for the "sibbur"; because the "sibbur" possesses the status of the general public. From the perspective of the general public, sin does not exist; because the sin only pertains to its individual components. Regarding, the group as a whole, the notions of sin and blame do not pertain. And therefore we are told in Pirkey Avot, "Do not depart from the Sibbur". Do not depart from their protection.

We learn tremendous insight from the Talmud which tells us of the custom of Rabbi Akiva. When he prayed with the "sibbur," he would shorten his tefilah and finish ... When he would pray by himself, a person would leave him standing in this corner and find him in another corner. It seems as if his prayers when he was

alone would go on forever. The Rambam explains: one who prays with the “sibbur” should not overly extend his tefilah; by himself, however, it is permissible. Why? Its seems that with the sibbur our prayers are more readily answered.

Finally we concluded with an amazing idea. The Talmud tells us that the Shechinah resides with all gatherings of ten (Yehudim who come together for Heaven’s sake). The rabbis explain, it is well-known that the holy Shechinah is the source of all the neshamot of Yisrael; they are all united there. The shechina is also called Kennest Yisrael. She is the source of the gathering of all of the neshamot of klal Yisrael.” It turns out, herefore, that when we draw the presence of the Shechinah down to earth to rest upon the neshamot of Yisrael, we cause all of the neshamot of Yisrael—which are united at their source--to unite and bind together.

This is an amazing concept. When I come together in the synagogue with ten others LeShem Hashem, regardless of who has joined us, we bring upon us a time of Et Rason and the shechinah dwells upon us and within the shechinah are all the souls of Israel. So I can imagine as we pray, my father is there, my drandfather and great grandfather, Moses and Aaron, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. All join together with my prayer. How awesome?

So the next time you want to sleep a bit more and skip minyan with the thought that you’ll pray at home, just think about what and whom you will be missing and energize yourself to be part of the Sibbur. Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

The IDF’s Unit 9900: ‘Seeing’ their service come to fruition (May 4, 2018 / JNS)

A program designed to integrate young people on the autistic spectrum into the military—in fields where they have a relative advantage—is proving to be a “win-win” for all involved.

The program, dubbed “Seeing Afar,” which is jointly run by the IDF and the Ono Academic College, is now in its fifth year. It includes a training course that teaches autistic youths to decipher aerial and satellite visual-intelligence images, based on their enhanced visual ability and their tendency towards patience, which allow them to explore the minutest details—an essential attribute for this role, an officer from an intelligence unit that received the volunteers has told

The secretive and sensitive Unit 9900, which specializes in visual intelligence and plays an essential role in the activities of the Israel Defense Forces, has received some 100 autistic volunteer soldiers so far.

Cpl. O (full name withheld) is one of them. He spent 10 months deciphering visual-intelligence images, helping the IDF track down suspicious enemy movements, before working to train others like him to do the same.

“When I first arrived here, I still felt like a civilian,” Cpl. O told JNS in an interview. Gradually, however, he began to feel like an organic part of the military. He described what it was like to sift through intelligence images, searching for that needle in the haystack.

“You search and search, and don’t find it at first. Sometimes, it feels like forever until you find it. But when you do, it certainly brings satisfaction,” said Cpl. O. “There were whole days that I couldn’t find what I was looking for. On other days, I’d locate it in every picture—six pictures in a row. On those days, I wanted to look for more! Sometimes, it feels empty; other times, full. Everything I found has given me satisfaction. It was a step forward that brought us all toward the goal.”

Asked what it takes to get good at this unusual work, which is critical to national security, Cpl. O said: “Deciphering aerial images is like everything else. You need experience and endurance. No one was born knowing how to decipher aerial images. [Guitar legend] Jimmy Hendrix got good with practice. We also trained, and then we started working, getting to know this work. It takes time until you become professional—a lot of time.”
From project to program

Lt. L [full name withheld], who is Cpl. O’s commanding officer, explained that her department in Unit 9900 not only qualifies its personnel, but also offers them a full-range of support in light of their varying conditions. This includes specialized caregivers, occupational therapists and the commanding officers themselves, who have become qualified to support autistic soldiers.

“They are learning this from scratch,” she said. “The idea of this program is about creating a ‘win-win situation.’ How do we take people with very high capabilities, who are on the autistic spectrum, put them in very high demand roles and enable them to contribute to the military?”

The idea began with three co-founders: Ranan Hartman, CEO of the Ono Academic College;

physicist Leora Sali; and ex-Israeli Defense Ministry official Tal Vardi. They approached the commander of Unit 9900 in 2013 with the idea of placing highly functional autistic volunteers in the unit.

The commander said that in the next 20 years, machines will not be able to replace humans for such jobs, and as such, "there will always be a shortage. Everyone who can contribute to this is welcome. He accepted the idea."

Added Lt. L: "This is how the 'marriage' began. It started as a project, which went through two cycles. Now it's a program, and it has extended beyond deciphering to include open-source intelligence and quality assessment of software. The 11th training course is now beginning."

Entering the job market after service

The volunteers are highly motivated and very capable of serving their country, said Lt. L. On a personal level, the officer said, "I gain every day. From the dialogue I have with them, the ideas, the dilemmas that come up, and finding ways to deal with it."

In such a working backdrop, the volunteers inevitably mature during their time in service, noted Lt. L. Afterwards, the military helps them find jobs in the civilian world. "During the course, we talk about autism—how to accept it and how to become more independent," she added. "We have already helped people get into the job market."

She said she has become inspired by her work with these soldiers and plans on working with autistic people in the civilian world after completing her own military service.

Cpl. O. described how far he had come since the day he identified himself as having Asperger's syndrome as a teenager—a self-diagnosis that was later confirmed by professionals. He received an exemption from military service before his mother found out about the "Seeing Afar" program.

"I still wanted to the serve," he said. "My mother had a senior role in intelligence. This gave me motivation. There is a debt to the country that I needed to repay."

On a social level, the unit has enabled him to flourish, improving his ability to initiate communication, in part due to the fact that his fellow unit members have something in common with him.

"Socially, it helped me grow up," he said. "I have learned how to research things here. And how to not immediately put all of the responsibility on others."

Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

This parasha discusses the mitsva of shemita (the obligation not to work one's field on the 7th year). And the pasook says "ve'kiy tomroo ma nochal ba'shana ha'sheviyit (if you will ask, what will we eat in the 7th year) hen lo nizra ve'lo nosef eht tevoov'atenu (after all we are not sowing or gathering our crops)", Hashem says "ve'sivitiy eht birkatiy lachem ba'shana ha'shishit (I will place my blessing upon you in the sixth year), ve'asat eht ha'tevuah le'shlosh shanim (and you will get a portion in the sixth year that will last you through the shemita). I heard in a class from Rabbi Yedid a nice question on this pasook. The pasook sounds like only if we ask and question Hashem will we get a double portion in the sixth year. If we don't ask or question we won't get a double portion? And he brings a beautiful answer from the Sforno (I think it was the Sforno) that yes, if we don't question we won't get extra. Rather what will happen is that we will get the same portion we always got. But there will be beracha in that portion! Even though we don't have more still it will last us through the shemita. And in essence the one who asked and got a double portion it wasn't necessarily a beracha. He had to reap and sow a double portion. He had to work twice as hard. It appears that the higher level is that person who had simple emuna that since he is doing Hashem's will everything will work out. And for this person there will be beracha in his portion even though he is not getting double. And I thought this idea was really profound because we see that in life it's not about how much we get. It's about if there is beracha in what we get. If there is beracha then what we get will last us and bring happiness to us and our families. But if there is no beracha so even if we get a lot it will not endure and it will not bring us happiness. May Hashem bless us with the beracha of ve'sivitiy eht birkatiy. Whether we have a little parnasa or a lot may Hashem bless us that there is beracha in that parnasa. May Hashem bless us that is should last us and bring shalom and happiness! Shabbat Shalom!

Behar - Holiness regarding land (shmita and yovel)

- 1- The issur of working the land on the years of shmita and yovel
- 2- Honesty in business, buying and selling land in regards to yovel, don't harass your fellow
- 3- The reward for keeping shmita, the issur of selling land permanently
- 4- Buying back the land of a relative who sold due to poverty
- 5- Buying back land. Preventing poverty by lending one who needs help. The obligation to lend w/o interest.

- 6- Laws regarding one who owns a Jewish slave or a non-Jewish slave
- 7- A Jew who sells himself to a non-Jew. The obligation to redeem him

Behukotai - Blessings for those who do and curses for those who don't keep the mitzvot

- 1- The berachot for keeping Hashem's mitzvot - parnasa
- 2- The berachot for keeping Hashem's mitzvot-peace, proo oorvoo, a renewed covenant
- 3- The curses if we do not keep Hashem's mitzvot - 45 curses
- 4- Items pledged to the Beit Hamikdash - one who pledges the value of a person, one who pledges an animal
- 5- Items pledged to the Beit Hamikdash - one who pledges a field he inherited
- 6- Items pledged to the Beit Hamikdash - one who pledges a field he bought, consecrating property
- 7- Maaser by fruit and by animals, maaser sheni

**Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman - Observing Shemittah
VIA saulkassin.com**

The year of 5768 was approaching which would be a Shemittah year. The owner of an organic olive grove, who was a large farmer, was a traditional Jew and decided that he wanted to observe the laws of Shemittah with all the Chumrot (stringencies), instead of relying on the Heter Mechirah, as he had done in the past. When the Shemittah year started he left his fields alone, having confidence that Hashem would help him and bless his efforts.

On that Yom Kippur, this farmer was devastated when he was given the news that arabs set his olive grove on fire. The messenger insisted that he hurry to his field to try and save whatever he can, but the farmer refused to desecrate the Holy day of Yom Kippur. It was only after Sukkot that the farmer went to inspect the damage and found the entire grove burnt, black and bare. All that remained from his beautiful trees were charred trunks. Experts were not hopeful that there was any way to save the trees, but said the only slight possibility to minimize the damage would be to immediately do a drastic pruning and possibly then the tree might produce fruits again.

The farmer then asked the Rabbanim of Keren HaShvi if there was any way the pruning could be Halachically permissible during Shemittah? They said the farmer should ask this question to Rabbi Mendelson the Rabbi of Komemiyus, who did not wish to answer this question by himself, but wanted

to consult with The Gadol Hador Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman. The two Rabbis sat together discussing the issue. After finding proofs from the Gemara, Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman held that pruning was forbidden.

Rabbi Mendelson sent a message to the farmer that The Gadol Hador was inclined to forbid it, but if it was difficult for him to accept that decision, they would try to find a Halachic loophole that would allow him to do it bedieved.

The farmer was very moved that his question reached The Gadol Hador and immediately declared, "When I planted the olives I Davened that my olives should produce oil for the Beit HaMikdash. And oil for the Beit HaMikdash must be made 100% according to Hashem's will, without any loopholes! Therefore I accept the decision and will not do anything to save my trees!"

Firm in his Emunah the farmer returned home. The olive grove stood black and charred until the month of Shevat, when suddenly at the end of the month, against all logic, the burnt trees began to produce fruit. To the amazement of all experts the tree became healthy again, all on its own. When The Gadol Hador Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman heard about this he remarked, "Such is the reward for someone who observes Shemittah.

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"The land shall observe a Shabbat rest for Hashem." (Vayikra 25:2)

The Torah commands us to rest the land once every seven years. This is called shemittah. This misvah gives us the opportunity to work on bitahon, to trust in Hashem. Rabbi Raymond Beyda relates a beautiful story in the name of Rabbi Shlomoh Busu.

Efi is a farmer from the Jordan Valley. He was essentially an unobservant Jew. However, after hearing a lecture from a prominent Rabbi about the importance of shemittah, and the Rabbi promising him he would not lose out by taking on this misvah, he decided to go for it. He closed down his farm for the shemittah year and took a desk job as a clerk. His fellow farmers laughed at him, but he didn't listen. After the year was over he tried to purchase seed but he couldn't get any seed. He went to a government agency that helps farmers get seed, but they didn't have any. They only had a huge amount of celery seed. No one wanted it so they gave him the celery seed for free.

That year Efi planted the celery seed. It grew three times the height of normal celery. The only

problem was that there were no customers for all of that celery. Again people mocked him, because what was he supposed to do with all of that celery. He responded that he did his job, now it's up to Hashem to do His.

One day Efi's phone rang. It was the friend from the government agency that gave him the celery seed. He asked if he ever planted the celery. Efi answered that he did, and he had tons of celery and everybody calls him the celery-man. His friend said the going price for celery is fifty cents a head, but now he can sell it all for a few dollars a head! There was a heavy cold spell in Europe and everything froze. The Europeans love their soup especially with celery in it, but there is no celery in Europe. All importers are scrambling, trying to find celery! You can be Europe's celery distributor!

Efi hired hundreds of workers who worked around the clock. There were lines of trucks that took the celery to the airport to send it to Europe. In thirty days the entire inventory was sold. Efi became very wealthy. He bought a Cadillac that he called "My Shemitah Cadillac." He said, "They laughed at me for a year, and now look who has the last laugh!" Efi became more observant, and now lectures to the community.

This true story demonstrates that we should trust that one will never lose out by keeping Torah and misvot! Rabbi Reuven Semah

"If you go in the path of my decrees" (Vayikra 26:3)

The beginning of Parashat Behukotai guarantees tremendous blessing for the person who "goes in the path of Hashem's decrees." The Ohr Hahayim gives 42 different explanations to the meaning of this phrase. In explanation #4, he says that if a person does his normal, daily activities with the intent of enabling himself to serve Hashem better, he has fulfilled this misvah. This means that two people can be living the exact same life, and one can earn abundant blessings from Hashem, while the other does not. The difference is in his state of mind.

A story is told of a young kollel man who always showed up on time for learning, and then he suddenly started showing up a little late every day. The Rosh Yeshivah questioned him, and he replied, "Last week, I was all ready to come on time when I noticed a woman desperately trying to take care of her five children. One daughter was searching for her shoes, a son was running late for his bus, the baby was crying, and the mother was trying to finish preparing the lunches for the others to take to school. So I stopped to help her get the situation under control. When I was about to leave, the mother, with tears in her eyes, begged me to come back and help

her every day. This is why I have been getting here late every day."

The Rosh Yeshivah said, "This is a great misvah you are doing. Is there anything else she needs? Is she a widow?" "No," said the young man, "she is my wife."

Without even realizing it, we do countless acts of hesed throughout the day. We (hopefully) help our spouse and our friends and family members when they need a hand, we go to work in order to support our family and to send our children to yeshivah, we sometimes help to care for an elderly parent or grandparent. For some reason, when we help a total stranger, we view it as hesed, but when we help a family member, we consider it a chore. We just need to change our way of thinking. Many of our interactions with others can be classified as an act of hesed if we train ourselves to think that we are doing it in order to serve Hashem. Even our mundane actions like eating, sleeping and exercising can be elevated if we put it in our minds that we are doing it in order to be healthy and strong so that we can serve Hashem better. In this way, we inject a level of spirituality to our physical actions, and merit all the blessings recorded in this parashah. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR The Desire for Control

The Torah in Parashat Behar presents the law of Yobel, the jubilee year, when all servants were set free. A Jew who sold himself as a servant was offered to be released after six years of service, but if he preferred remaining with his master, he was allowed to continue serving until the Yobel, at which point all servants were set free.

The onset of the jubilee year would be announced on Yom Kippur, with the sounding of the Shofar throughout the land. The Sefer Ha'hinuch writes that the release of servants was announced specifically on Yom Kippur because that is the day of repentance and introspection, when people are most inclined to do the right thing. If there is one day a year when people feel inspired and motivated to obey G-d's commands and avoid wrongdoing, it is Yom Kippur. And thus the Torah, knowing how difficult it is for masters to release their servants, instituted that the announcement be made on Yom Kippur, when the people are most drawn toward compliance and obedience, and most willing to make sacrifices to fulfill their obligations to G-d.

Historically, we know that this was indeed a very difficult challenge for the Jewish people. We read in the Book of Yirmiyahu that the prophet admonished the people to comply with the Torah's command and release their servants, and they obeyed his instructions. Shortly thereafter, however, they changed their minds and brought their servants back under their control. They couldn't bring themselves to continue living without the assistance of servants.

Why is this such a difficult Misva to observe? What made it so tempting for the people to keep their servants in defiance of the Torah?

The answer lies in the innate human desire for control, to exert authority over other people. Very few people could realistically aspire to formal positions of power, so they sought to satisfy this craving by having servants under their control. This is simply a function of human nature; we were created with this innate drive to control other people. The law of Yobel was instituted to rein in on this tendency, and to help temper the drive for control. It establishes that although it is acceptable to have servants under one's authority, this control must be limited, and after six years – or at least on the jubilee – the servants must be released.

This Misva conveys a very vital lesson even nowadays, when we do not have servants. The desire to exert control is the cause of many problems in relationships. Marriages are strained when a spouse seeks to exert control over the other, and children rebel when parents try to be too controlling. In friendships and professional relationships, too, the desire for control can prove very destructive and ruin an otherwise fruitful and beneficial relationship. The Misva of Yobel teaches us to give others their space and overcome the natural desire for control. We should not be trying to mold our spouse, children, friends, neighbors and associates into precisely the kind of people we want them to be. We need to learn to let go, to let people be a bit different from us, and be tolerant and accepting. Full control over people belongs only in the hands of the Almighty, and we must never make the mistake of trying to usurp His exclusive position of authority

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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Rabbi Wein Days in May

There are times in life that one is able to see the beginning and end of an idea or movement in its entirety. When I was a child I remember vividly that the first day of May was called May Day and was the day of celebration of the proletariat Left. Fiery speeches, and loud bands, tens of thousands of marchers waving red flags all dominated the media and street of the day.

The mood of the day warned of the coming revolution that would sweep all injustice and inequality from the face of human society and bring forth the great new future as proclaimed by Marx and reinforced by Lenin and Stalin. May Day was set aside as a day of warning to the capitalist bosses that the example of the Soviet Union would be repeated throughout Europe and even in the United States.

Labor unions had amassed great political and economic power, and class warfare seem to be inevitable. My parents would not allow me to go out on the street on May Day to watch the parade, lest I also would somehow become infected with the Marxist virus that then seemed to be so unstoppable. When the Soviet Union became part of the coalition of the Allied countries it became almost unpatriotic not to at least mark May Day as a worthy addition to the calendar of civilization. Suddenly we all became part of the revolution of the proletariat.

There is another noteworthy day of, this one on the Jewish calendar which always found itself in the month of May. This day, Lag B'Omer is a traditional commemoration marking events that occurred many centuries ago. The Talmud teaches us that the students of the great Rabbi Akiva were decimated by a plague that ravaged them. It is not clear to us what that plague was, man-made or otherwise, but the root cause of it was the lack of respect from one human being to another.

Somehow all on that day, the 33rd day of the counting of the Omer, the plague ran its course and the students who survived no longer succumbed. Over the centuries this day took on a mystical and Kabbalistic orientation and became connected to the great Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, who lived under Roman persecution in second century Palestine. Today it is a rallying call for Jewish physical strength and proficiency in archery and other such exercises.

It was always a subdued day of celebration, especially during the dark stretches of the Jewish exile. But the day was always remembered and observed in spite of its seeming irrelevance. People

were convinced that it was a day that marked the past but did not see it as being a harbinger of the future. As such, outside of the observant Jewish world, it had little resonance amongst the progressive, forward thinking, always relevant Jews who saw themselves as being the unstoppable wave of the future.

Therefore, for a considerable part of this past century it seemed clear that there were more May Day Jews amongst us than Lag B'Omer Jews. This was true even here in the Land of Israel through most of the years of the past century. However, as is true in almost all other man-made commemorations and cutting-edge pronouncements, somehow May Day has withered and practically disappeared from current generations. The fate of May Day has been sealed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and much of the Communist ideology that it represented and fostered.

The dictatorship of the proletariat turned out to be as evil a dictatorship as the world had previously witnessed. Class warfare was only another form of illegal violence and venal corruption. May Day proved itself to be of little value in the progress of civilization or in the history of positive events in human kind. However, especially here in the land of Israel, Lag B'Omer, with its attendant bonfires, children's parades and pilgrimages to Meron continues to gain popularity and adherents. To me at least, there is something deeply satisfying regarding this turn of events.

The hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews who have arrived in Israel over the past few decades have no desire to celebrate May Day, but they are all now well aware that there is another special day in May, Lag B'Omer, that is worthy of commemoration. In my youth, I never thought that I would live to see such a turn of events and such a glorious change in Jewish society

Rabbi Yosef Farhi

One of the biggest problems facing the Orthodox Jew is the belief that a Jew can keep "the 613" while living the lifestyle of "keeping up with the gentiles". Who is setting the standard of what we want and what we don't want in life? The way we live, the path of behavior we take, will affect our fate more than anything else. In order for us to understand how to solve this problem we need to understand where it comes from, and find the tools to defeat it. The very first thing that Ruth told her mother-in-law, Naomi, when she was certain that she wanted to convert to Judaism was **אבא רשע**. Wherever you go, I will go. The Midrash Rabbah explains this.

"Naomi said to Ruth: My daughter, it is not the way of a Jewish girl to go to the theatres of the goyim." Naomi told Ruth that to become a Jewess, one cannot follow the celebrities of the goyim and associate with them. Their way is not our way.

Why was this the most important, first message Naomi gave to her daughter-in-law who was about to convert, even before mentioning the 613 Mitzvoth? And why did Naomi need to hear Ruth say, Wherever you go, I will go, that she would stop going to the theatres, before Naomi was willing to convert her?

Because the path that you are going in life, the lifestyle you follow, is the expression of your ultimate decision as to what type of Jew you will be. There is a huge difference between an Orthodox Jew and a Torah Jew. What is the difference? Orthodoxy means keeping 613. Not being 'reform' or 'conservative'. As long as I do not alter even one commandment, I am still Orthodox. But, how I live my life, what car I drive, what type of wedding I make, my lifestyle - as long as it does not transgress the 613, I still fly under the radar of Orthodoxy. A Torah Jew is something else. The word Torah has a similar root to the word Morah, which means teacher, guide, someone who shows the way. A Torah Jew, then, is a Jew who lives his lifestyle in line with the spirit of Torah. He constantly asks himself, What is the Torah lifestyle that I can adopt? What is the Torah's path? Naomi wanted to make sure that Ruth was going to be a Torah Jew. Not just an Orthodox one.

We sometimes forget how to enjoy the beauty of a Torah lifestyle and focus on the deeper truth of life. And once we forget, the glamour of the celebrity lifestyle flashes at us from every billboard, in every advertisement. It makes it so easy to lose track. There are only two tracks in life, and they are mutually exclusive. We are always going on one of these two tracks. It's just a matter of which one we choose. Allow me to explain.

What is an angel? The word 'anglos' in old Greek means messenger. The angel does not have thoughts of his own, nor does he have free choice. He is but a robot. He does whatever you program him to do. The human being is the opposite. No matter how you program him/her, you can never know if they are going to follow your directions. The difference between angels, who do not have free choice, and us is that angels are always referred to as **מידמות**, standing still, while Humans are always referred to as **מידמות**, always going. This concept of going is the purpose of your life. The uniqueness of the Human. All of your life, you are going from point A to point B. You chose your point B. You can be getting closer to

the life of the celebrities, the life of the gentiles, more Olam Hazeh. Or, you can be getting closer to your Neshama, your purpose in this world. The first mitzvah commanded to the first Jew was *הלך לך*, "Go to you". What does it mean - to go to you? G-d told Avraham to go towards himself, to advance towards his purpose, towards his Neshama. Every Jew comes down to this world with that same command: *הלך לך*. Go toward your purpose. That is the Torah's path.

What is the Gentile's path? Probably one of the most crucial moments in the whole Tanach is the moment when Bitya is at the Nile River to immerse for conversion, and she sees little Moshe in a basket. *וַיֵּץ עַל-הַיָּאֵר וַיְנַעֲרֶתֶיהָ הַלְלֵת עַל-יָד וַתֵּרֶד בַּת-פְּרַעֲהַ לָרַח. הַיָּאֵר וַתֵּרֶא אֶת-הַתִּבְבֶּה בַּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת-אֶמְתָּהּ וַתִּקְחָהּ. בִּיתָא דְעַמְלֵיָהּ הֵלְלָה וְהַמַּדְבְּרִים הָיוּ מְשַׁלְּחִים אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמֹת. וְהַמַּדְבְּרִים הָיוּ מְשַׁלְּחִים אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמֹת.* Bitya decides to reach out to baby Moshe and save his life. The Talmud points to the words *הָיוּ מְשַׁלְּחִים* and her maidservants were walking. Where were they going? Weren't they supposed to be next to the princess Bitya?

R Yochanan answers the question. The word *halicha*, here, means death, as we see in the words of Esav, *Behold, I am going to die*. The maidservants said to Bitya, "Are you crazy? If no one else is obeying Pharaoh's command to kill the Jewish boys, wouldn't it make sense that at least his own daughter would listen to him?!" When the maidservants spoke with those words, the angel Gavriel came and struck them dead!! (See Sotah 12b, Torah Temimah Shemot 2; 5)

Although Esav was busy hunting food, occupying himself with idolatry and women, always "on the move", he was moving towards death. *הלך לך*. That was his direction. The life of a celebrity, here and now. If they do not have Olam Haba, they might as well have Olam Hazeh.

Yaakov, on the other hand, was an *בשוי מת שיא* *בשוי מת שיא*, a simple man sitting in the study hall. Although he was not moving physically, but he was steadily advancing in the direction of the Torah learning that would lead him to Olam HaBa. All of us have these same two options in life: to live Esav's celebrity life, a life that ends up as a *תומל רלוה*, or to live a life of purpose, in the image of G-d. But whatever you do, you are a *רלוה*. You, a human being, are moving in a direction.

Our Rabbis learn the words of the beginning of the Parashah *מאקוּבַח*... *וּכְלַת יִתְקוּבַח וְהֵתַשׁ*. If you follow My statutes, to mean that you shall toil in Torah, learn it in depth. All of the blessings of the Torah are reserved for one who learns Torah in depth. Why does "following in G-d's statutes" refer to

toil in learning? Maybe it just means to live an Orthodox life of 613?

When the Parasha tells us "to go in My statutes", it doesn't mean externally. It means internally. It means to go into your heart. It means going towards a deeper truth and making it part of your real self. Because that is the way of a Torah Jew.

BH, I have been living in Yerushalayim for 18 years. The greatest damage western culture had on me was to make me believe that "the easier the better", and "the faster the better". The Torah is teaching us that, *אִם-בְּחִקְתִּי תֵלְכוּ*. I want you to toil in Torah. If someone offers you a chip to put in your brain that will give you the knowledge of a doctor, a lawyer or a psychologist, why not? Many things in modern times are instant! But it is not so regarding Torah knowledge. G-d wants us to toil to achieve it. Although an unborn baby has learnt the entire Torah, we do not stand up, in respect, for that baby. Why not? R Chaim Shmulevitz says because that child did not toil for his Torah! This is true in regard to all self-development, and in all aspects of *lech lecha*, going to your life's purpose. All of the 48 ways to acquire Torah require really hard work and toil. In stark contrast to the requirements for priesthood or royalty, those requirements are presents, not things you need to work on.

The second untruth marketed by western culture is 'the faster the better'. That is not the case regarding self refinement. The greatest enemy to change is speed. *וְאֶת-מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ*. If you go in My statutes and you watch My Mitzvoth... The Torah does not say to keep the Mitzvoth, *מִיִּיקֵל*. It says to watch the Mitzvoth, to wait anxiously for an opportunity to observe them. Not to get them over with, when the time comes. But to anticipate them. To count 49 days to wait for the Torah. To count the days toward Shabbat. Patience. Hard work. Striving for Truth. Real Truth. Living with purpose. Mastering contentment. This is a Torah lifestyle.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks We Are What We Do Not Own

The late Maurice and Vivienne Wohl were one of the most remarkable couples I ever met. They were a study in contrasts. Maurice was quiet, introspective, reflective and reserved. Vivienne was outgoing and vivacious, a people person in the truest sense. They complemented one another perfectly: two halves of a whole.

What made them special, outwardly, was that they were givers on a monumental scale. In Israel, for

example, they donated the 19-acre rose garden next to the Knesset and the striking Daniel Libeskind-designed cultural centre at Bar Ilan University. They endowed medical facilities in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, as well as at King's College and University College, London. They supported Jewish schools in Britain and yeshivot in Israel – and all this hardly touches the surface of their philanthropy.

What was really moving, though, was how they became a couple in the first place, because Vivienne was thirty years younger than Maurice. When they met, Maurice was in his late forties, a dedicated businessman seemingly destined for a life of bachelorhood. Vivienne, not yet 20, was the daughter of friends of Maurice who had asked whether she could work for him during a vacation.

One day, Maurice offered to take her for lunch. On their way to the restaurant, they passed a beggar in the street. Maurice gave him a coin, and walked on. Vivienne stopped and asked Maurice if he would be kind enough to give her in advance a substantial sum – she named the figure – from this week's wages. Maurice handed over the money. She then walked back and gave it all to the beggar. "Why did you do that?" asked Maurice. "Because what you gave him was not enough to make a change to his life. He needed something more."

When the week came to an end, Maurice said to Vivienne, "I am not going to give you your full wages this week, because you gave away part of the money as a mitzvah and I do not want to rob you of it." But it was then that he decided that he must marry her, because, as he told me shortly before he died, "Her heart was bigger than mine."

I tell this story because it illustrates a dimension of parshat Behar we often miss. Leviticus 25 deals with a problem that is as acute today as it was 33 centuries ago. It is about the inevitable inequalities that arise in every free market economy. Market economics is good at the creation of wealth but bad at its distribution. Whatever the starting point, inequalities emerge early on between the more and less successful, and they become more pronounced over time.[1]

Economic inequality leads to inequality of power, and the result is often the abuse of the weak by the strong. This is a constant refrain of the prophets. Amos speaks of those who "sell the innocent for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; who trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground, and deny justice to the oppressed"(Amos 2:6-7). Isaiah cries, "Woe to those who make unjust

laws and issue oppressive decrees ... making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless" (Is. 10:1-2). Micah inveighs against people who "covet fields and seize them, houses and take them away; they oppress householder and house, people and their inheritance" (Micah 2:1-2).

This is a problem for almost every society and age. What makes the Torah distinctive is that it refuses a one-dimensional answer to what is a genuinely complex problem. Equality is a value, but so too is freedom. Communism and socialism have been tried and failed; but the free market generates its discontents also. One principle that can be inferred from Tanakh is that the market was made to serve human beings; human beings were not made to serve the market. The fundamental question is therefore: what best serves humanity under the sovereignty of God?

A careful reading of Behar reveals that the Torah's approach to this question operates at three completely different levels. One is political, a second is psychological, and the third is theological.

The first level is simple. Behar proposes two cycles of redistribution, Shemittah and Yovel, the seventh and fiftieth year. The intent here is to restore a level playing field through a combination of debt remission, liberation of slaves, and the return of ancestral land to its original owners. This is a way of redressing accumulated inequalities without constant intervention in the economy. That is the political dimension.

The psychological dimension is what the French revolutionaries called fraternity. Ten times the laws in Behar use the word "brother." "Do not wrong your brother." "If your brother becomes poor." "The nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold." This is sound evolutionary logic. We know from the work of W. D. Hamilton and others on kin selection that the most basic driver of altruism is the family. We make sacrifices most readily for those most closely related to us.

That, in no small measure, is why from the beginning of the Jewish story to today, Jews have thought of themselves as a single family, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah. It is one thing to legislate altruism, through such institutions as the seventh and fiftieth year. It is another to frame a society in such a way as to make people feel bound together in an unbreakable bond of shared responsibility. Hence the narratives of Genesis, focused overwhelmingly on the people of Israel not as a nation but as a family. Law and

narrative here go hand in hand. Because the entire Jewish people is a single vastly extended family, therefore we must help when one of our brothers or sisters becomes destitute. This is ethnicity in the service of morality.

Finally, though, and most profoundly comes the theological dimension. For it is here, in Lev. 25, that we hear with unparalleled lucidity what I believe to be the single most fundamental principle of biblical law. Listen carefully to these two passages, the first about land, the second about Hebrew slaves:

The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine: you are strangers and sojourners with me. (v. 23)

If your brother becomes poor and sells himself to you, you shall not work him as a slave ...For they are My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. You shall not rule over him ruthlessly but shall fear your God. (vv. 39-43)

The Torah is making a radical point. There is no such thing as absolute ownership. There is to be no freehold in the land of Israel because the land belongs ultimately to God. Nor may an Israelite own another Israelite because we all belong to God, and have done so ever since He brought our ancestors out of slavery in Egypt.

It is this principle that alone makes sense of the Torah's narrative of the creation of the universe. The Torah is not a book of science. It is a book of law. That is what the word "Torah" means. It follows that the opening chapter of the Torah is not a scientific account but a legal one. It is not an answer to the question, "How was the universe born?" It is an answer to a different question entirely: "By what right does God command human beings?" The answer is: because He created the universe. Therefore He owns the universe. Therefore He is entitled to lay down the conditions on which He permits us to inhabit the universe. This is the basis of all biblical law. God rules not by might but by right – the right of a creator vis-à-vis his creation.

Nowhere is this clearer than in parshat Behar, where it becomes the basis of legislation about land ownership and slavery. Jewish law rests on the principle that only God owns anything. What we possess, we do not own but merely hold in trust. That is why the concept of tzedek/tzedakah is untranslatable into English, because it means both justice and charity. In English, justice and charity are radically different. We do justice because we must;

we give charity because we may. If I give you £1,000 because I owe it to you, that is justice. If I give you the same amount because I owe you nothing but I think you need it, that is charity. An act may be one or the other but not both.

In Judaism, by contrast, what we possess is not ours. It belongs to God. He has merely placed it in our safekeeping. We are looking after it on behalf of God. One of the conditions of that trust is that if we have more than we need, we should share it with those who have less than they need. That is tzedakah: justice and charity combined.

That was how Maurice and Vivienne Wohl lived their lives. God had given Maurice success, and he knew that the wealth he had accumulated was not really his at all. God had given it to him to look after, trusting that he would use it wisely to enhance the lives of others. Maurice, though, was honest enough to realise [1] that he was probably better at making money than giving it away, and that [2] if he did not give it away to people and causes that needed it, he was failing in his duty to God and his fellow humans. That is why, when he met Vivienne and saw how sensitively she understood the needs of others and how willing she was to make sacrifices for them, he knew he had to marry her. So, throughout their almost 40 years together, they used the blessings God had given them to bring blessings into other people's lives. It was a privilege to know them.

The larger truth of Parshat Behar is that you cannot create a just society by political measures alone (debt remission, restoration of ancestral property and so on). There are psychological and theological dimensions that are also vital.

But at a simple personal level, it contains a genuinely life-changing idea. Think of what you possess not as something you own but as something you hold in trust for the benefit, not only of you and your family, but also of others. In life, ask not, "what can I gain?" But "what can I give?" You will travel more lightly and with greater joy. You will enhance the lives of others. You will feel that your life has been worthwhile. Hardly any of us can give on the scale of a Maurice or Vivienne Wohl, but when it comes to giving, scale does not matter. Be a blessing to others and you will find that life has been a blessing to you.

Rav Kook on the Perasha Judicial Corruption

The parashah describes terrible calamities — disease, war, famine, and exile — that occur when the Jewish people abandon the Torah. According to

Talmudic tradition, a primary cause for punishment is one particular offense: judicial corruption.

“As a punishment for [unnecessary] delay in executing judgment, perversion of judgment, and neglect of Torah — sword and plunder increase, pestilence and famine ensue. People eat, yet remain hungry; and they eat their bread by weight.” (Shabbat 33a)

Uprooting Corruption: Why does judicial abuse bring about such harsh punishments? When the court system is corrupt, acquitting the guilty and convicting the innocent, instead of advancing social justice, it promotes injustice and exploitation. A dishonest judicial system indicates that the fundamental social order has unraveled; society has degenerated to gangs of rapacious wolves, as the rich and powerful prey upon the weak and unprotected. In such a disastrous situation, the institutions of society must be completely revamped. If society refuses on its own to champion justice, Divine providence intervenes to uproot society, so that it may be rebuilt on foundations of justice and truth.

Neglect of Torah: What did the Sages mean by bitul Torah — ‘neglect of Torah’? How is this connected to judicial corruption? The term bitul Torah refers to a moral decay in society’s inner spirit, when the people reject the Torah as an inspiration to seek justice. Its teachings no longer serve as a guideline for spiritual and ethical goals. Bereft of spiritual aspirations, life degenerates into the self-centered pursuit of materialism. Goals are reduced to the mere fulfillment of physical wants and desires. This egocentric attitude undermines one’s willingness to work for the communal good and the proper respect for the rights of others.

Hunger of the Soul: The Sages taught that people suffer by “eating, yet remaining hungry.” Why this particular punishment? Our sense of self-worth is based on feelings of honor and integrity. When the principles of law and order are ignored, our positive self-image is damaged. The human soul naturally aspires to the ideals of goodness, enlightenment, and fairness. When our goals are limited only to that which the hand may grab and the tooth may chew, the soul becomes unfulfilled and dissatisfied. We eat to fill our bellies, yet remain feeling empty and discontented.

Bread by Weight: The Sages also taught that “they eat their bread by weight.” What is the nature of this hardship? Bread is usually sold by unit, not by weight. But in times of famine, bread becomes a scarce commodity and is sold by weight. This change

helps reinforce a heightened sensitivity toward the property rights of others. Our former unconcern regarding theft, our indifference toward the property of others, is corrected by a keen awareness of the value of every gram of a loaf of bread. (Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III, pp. 185-186.)

**AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z"TL
“If you walk with me by chance and you will not be willing to listen to me, I will add to you (retribution) seven times upon your sins” (26:21)**

“If I bring troubles upon you for punishment, and you consider them as mere accidents, I will again send you some of these ‘accidents’ as you call them, but of a more serious and troublesome character.” Why is the punishment for this attitude seven times as much as the punishment for the sin itself? The answer is that the sin of disbelief is seven times worse than any other sin. Therefore, when misfortune comes, we are expected to understand it as a message from Hashem. But when it is explained as a result of chance, this constitutes a very grave iniquity. Thus, the awareness that Hashem conducts all the affairs of the world is even more important than the fulfillment of the Mitzvot.

This is the same as saying “Idolatry is most severe, for all who deny idolatry are considered as accepting the entire Torah” (Nedarim 25A). To attribute misfortune to chance is an idolatrous attitude, because any cause that is credited with power other than Hashem constitutes idolatry. Hashem indeed utilizes the causes, but they are His agents. When men credit the causes but do not think of the Master of the causes, they are thereby guilty of idolatry. Atheism is therefore the very worst idolatry.

According to this interpretation of ‘Keri’ (“by chance”), what is intended when Hashem declares that because of this attitude “I too shall walk with you by ‘Keri’” (26:24)? This is explained to mean that Hashem shall cause misfortunes to come in a manner that would seem as if He no longer supervised the affairs of His people and that He allowed chaos and random disorder to take charge.

But since the verse states “I too shall walk with you by ‘Keri’” it thereby implies that He continues to manage our affairs, and He merely creates the impression that they are chaotic accidents. This is the ‘Hester Panim’ (“concealing His face”) which is elsewhere mentioned. (Devarim 31:18). Quoted from “A Kingdom of Cohanim” by Rabbi Miller ZT'L