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Chukas 5785

SELF-TRANSFORMATION THROUGH TORAH

RABBI AVRAHAM KOVEL (Aish.com)

When physicists first observed electrons behaving like waves and particles simultaneously, they faced an intellectual crisis. The experimental data was undeniable, but it shattered every assumption about reality. A century later, we've built entire industries around these "impossible" phenomena, yet the underlying mystery has never been solved. Modern science has taught us a humbling truth: some of the most powerful realities in our universe operate beyond the reach of human comprehension.

King Solomon, the wisest man to ever live,¹ discovered this same principle three thousand years earlier. In studying the Red Heifer, he declared in defeat: "I thought I could fathom it, but it eludes me!"² Like quantum mechanics, this mitzvah has earned its reputation as completely inexplicable, but somehow essential.

Yet at the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Rashi makes a startling declaration about this inexplicable law: "The Red Heifer atones for the sin of the Golden Calf."³

If you're paying attention, you'll notice that this statement is a glaring contradiction: If the Red Heifer defies comprehension, how can Rashi definitively declare its purpose? Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik⁴ asked this very question—and his brilliant answer doesn't just solve the paradox, it reveals a profound truth about how we're meant to relate to divine wisdom.

YOU THINK YOU KNOW BETTER?

In order to understand this apparent contradiction, we must revisit the sin of the Golden Calf for which the Red Heifer apparently atones. How did this catastrophic sin come about? When Moshe vanished into the divine cloud for 40 days, panic set in. The people couldn't bear losing their intermediary to G-d, so they engineered a solution. Take some gold, melt it down, shape it into a calf—problem solved!

But despite their good intentions, their methodology revealed the most fundamental of errors - thinking we know better than G-d. Instead of consulting Aharon, a known prophet with decades of experience, and instead of recognizing that their actions violated the second commandment they'd heard directly from G-d just 40 days earlier, they took matters into their own hands, plowing forward with their flawed plan.

This fundamental sin appears in the story of Adam and Eve. The Arizal⁵ explains that Eve wasn't merely tempted by appetizing fruit and the wisdom it promised. She was a brilliant strategist. She realized that if G-d designed the world to reward proper use of our free will, then humanity needed the most challenging choices possible to earn maximum rewards. By eating from the Tree of Knowledge, she would amplify the difficulty of future decisions, maximizing humanity's potential.

Her logic was sound. Her intentions were noble. But despite her sophisticated reasoning, there was one inconvenient obstacle: G-d had commanded her not to eat. Yet eat she did, and through her eating, she plunged humanity into a reality of pain and suffering she had not even imagined possible. Her sin? Like the Golden Calf and like every sin since—believing we know better than G-d.

ACTION BEFORE UNDERSTANDING

After Adam and Eve's sin, humanity fell to a spiritual level they would never rise from again—with one exception.

At the moment before the Jewish people received the Torah at Mount Sinai, Moshe asked whether they would accept Hashem's commandments. They responded, "Naaseh v'Nishma"—"We will do, THEN we will understand."⁶ This declaration, according to the Talmud, elevated the Jewish people to the spiritual state of Adam and Eve before their sin.⁷ What could possibly be so powerful about this simple phrase that it undid thousands of years of spiritual exile?

Because Naaseh v'Nishma represents the ultimate acceptance of G-d's will over human understanding. It means action comes before understanding—fulfilling G-d's will takes priority over our comprehension of it. Any understanding that follows serves only to deepen our intention, never to override His commands with our own reasoning.

Through this complete commitment to divine authority, the Jewish nation perfectly rectified Adam and Eve's original error, catapulting themselves to humanity's pre-sin spiritual level. Unfortunately, when Moshe delayed his return, the people repeated that ancient mistake with the Golden Calf, crashing their spiritual level back down to earth.⁸

HUMBLING BY THE UNKNOWN

Now we can unravel the paradox. We asked how Rashi could explain something that defies explanation—how he could give a reason for something that transcends reason. Here's the brilliant insight: Rashi isn't explaining the Red Heifer at all. He's revealing that precisely BECAUSE the Red Heifer is completely inexplicable and beyond logic, THAT is why it atones for the Golden Calf!

The Red Heifer becomes the perfect antidote to humanity's fundamental error. Our humble acceptance of G-d's will beyond our comprehension atones for all the sins that resulted from our rejection of His will in favor of our own understanding. A Torah with the Red Heifer demands we acknowledge that G-d knows best. We don't have all the answers, and we never will. Therefore, our mission isn't to figure it all out—it's to follow His infinite intelligence instead of relying on our own limited understanding.

ACCEPTING G-D'S MORALITY

I'd like to suggest a way to integrate this perspective of trusting G-d's will over our own. Anyone who encounters the Torah today—whether through study or simply hearing about its controversial teachings—will face moral challenges. I faced these struggles when I first began reading the Torah as an adult—many issues challenged my 21st century liberal sensibilities. My good friend reminded me that while I was right to have a sensitive conscience, I must also recognize that G-d's morality operates from infinite wisdom while mine is necessarily shaped by my cultural moment.

And cultural morality is simply unreliable. Pre-Nazi Germany led the world in science, art, and technology, yet committed history's worst genocide. Hitler himself campaigned against animal cruelty while orchestrating humanity's greatest atrocity. Where society's morality proves fallible, G-d's morality remains consistent and objective. If our moral sensitivities grate against the Torah's teachings, our first response shouldn't be to reject them, but to approach them with humility. Sometimes the wisest thing we can do is admit, like Solomon, that some truths are beyond us, yet trust in G-d's wisdom despite our limitations.

May we find the courage to say "Naaseh v'Nishma" in our own lives, trusting in divine truth even as we continue to learn and grow.

- ¹ 1 Kings 4:29-31: "And G-d gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men..."

2. Ecclesiastes 7:23
3. Rashi on Numbers 19:2
4. (1820-1892), known as the Beis HaLevi, grandfather of the Brisk Rabbinic Dynasty.
5. Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572), known as the Arizal (meaning "the Lion"), was a 16th-century Kabbalist whose mystical teachings became foundational to modern Kabbalah.
6. Exodus 24:7
7. Tractate Shabbat 146A
8. Tractate Shabbat 88A - When the Jewish people said "Naaseh v'Nishma," 600,000 angels came and placed two crowns on each person's head. However, when they sinned with the Golden Calf, they lost these crowns, representing their fall from the elevated spiritual level they had achieved.

MOVING ON

AVROHOM YAAKOV

This week's parsha leads off with the Red Hefer, whose ashes are used in the purification of someone who comes in contact with a human corpse or bone or walks over a grave.

"And in the open, anyone who touches a person who was killed or who died naturally, or human bone, or a grave, shall be impure seven days." (19:16)

Why is the impurity of contact with a human cadaver so severe?

Chizkuni suggests that "... The reason appears to be that the Torah wishes to insure that living human beings not spend their time with the corpses out of their love for the departed, nor out of the mistaken belief that these corpses could reveal secrets of the afterlife to them, or that they would make idols of the skins of such corpses, seeing that the skins could be preserved indefinitely when turned into leather... Even if the motivation is simply to treat the dead with respect, the Torah prohibits this as not the way to mourn and show respect for one's ancestors."

There is no one who at some time has not lost a loved one, relative, friend or acquaintance. We mourn them and are saddened by their departure from this world. But we cannot be mired in that sorrow forever. We need to move on and live and continue our personal growth.

Therefore the Torah forces us to separate ourselves from the dead and continue with our own lives.

REALLY NEEDEY PEOPLE

RABBI STEPHEN BAARS (Aish.com)

Back in the 1970s there was a hit song, "People who need people." The lyrics went on to say that these kind of people are the luckiest people in the world.

Somehow I don't think the "needy" people at traffic lights holding up signs, "Homeless: Need food" are very lucky. If needy people are so lucky, why do we lock the car doors when they get close? I don't see parents telling their children, "One day you might grow up to be one of them... if you are lucky!" This leads to an interesting question, who are the really lucky people?

Don't tell me it's the people who win the lottery, because the stories are countless of fortune winners ruining their lives.

The people who have truly lucked out on life are the people who are needed by people.

In this week's parsha, Miraim dies and immediately the well that had supplied the Jewish people's water for 40 years ceased. It is from here that we learn that the Jewish people had this well on Miriam's merit - millions of people needed her for 40 years.

I often ask couples who come in for counseling if they could ever leave their children.

"Of course not," comes the stern reply, "they need me so much!"

Five minutes later that same parent will exclaim, "It's not my kids who are the problem, it's my husband, he is so neeeeeded!"

The same thing, which is endearing in your child, is the cause for all kinds of marital discord.

What gives?

First, being needed is the ultimate expression of self fulfillment. A human being enters this world with nothing to offer, and their goal on this good earth is to leave it being needed. What a tragedy it would be if we died and no one noticed.

Second, our sense of self worth is directly related to how needed we are.

A student of mine told me of her father who fed the poor of his town. Single-handedly, he ensured his entire small village had no one who went to sleep hungry. When he died, the whole town closed down.

I will share with you one of my goals. When I die, I want the world to stop. In other words, I want to be needed.

Third, is to recognize our own internal dichotomy. On the one hand we

want to be called upon to fulfill some eternal destiny, and on the other we want to be left alone and not bothered.

You just can't have both.

Imagine if the President of the United States called you personally to fulfill a mission that no one else can do.

How would you feel? The truth is that if no one else could really do it, then you might not appreciate being called upon.

The reason is that the more we perfect ourselves and offer to the world our unique characteristics for which we have been placed on this planet, then the more people will call on us to share it with them.

Because of this, the novelty will soon give way to a feeling of annoyance. "Can't these people just leave me alone?"

And they can't. Because no one can do what you can do.

And therefore, if we think about it we will realize that our children need us for things that are not unique to us. Their needs are generically the same regardless of who are their parents and therefore their demands are not as draining.

Not so for a spouse. We marry each other for qualities we don't have and therefore our need for them is unique to them. Similarly, their need for us is unique to us.

At some point in your life you are going to have to decide between being needed or being left alone. You can't feel a real sense of meaning or purpose unless you are surrounded by people who need you. Alternatively, if the people around you don't need you, you will feel immense unimportance.

As I said to a very wealthy person who was complaining why people needed him so much, "It could be much worse."

"How could it be worse?" He asked.

I responded, "You could have nothing that people need."

If the people around you need you, then you are where you ought to be.

And if the people around you don't need you, then find some really needy people.

PIVOT LIKE MOSHE

RABBI AHARON LOSCHAK (Chabad.org)

I told a friend of mine the other day that I was traveling to the wedding of a mutual friend of ours. I asked him if he was going, too. "Nah, it's not my thing. It's too far away, and I can't kill a whole day. I'm just not the wedding-hopper type. You go and send my regards."

I was a bit taken aback, but hey, it's his prerogative.

The conversation got me thinking.

Is "It's not my thing" a good line of reasoning?

If something is way out of your comfort zone, must you feel guilty for not doing it?

Of course, it stands to reason that if someone is getting beaten to death and you abstain from intervening because fighting just isn't your thing, you're probably losing the moral game that day. But what about less dramatic scenarios? Must you always beat yourself up to accommodate others?

TWO RESOURCES ARE LOST

Parshat Chukat records the loss of two invaluable resources: Miriam's Well which provided water throughout their desert sojourn, and the Clouds of Glory that protected them while they traveled and when they camped.

The loss of the Well occurred just after Miriam's passing, prompting the people to clamor against Moshe with bitter complaints:

The entire congregation of the Children of Israel arrived at the desert of Zin in the first month, and the people settled in Kadesh. Miriam died there and was buried there. The congregation had no water. (20:1-2)

The ending of this story was, unfortunately, pretty ugly: G-d instructed Moshe to speak to the rock, but when that didn't work the people got worked up and Moshe responded by hitting the rock instead. This act invoked G-d's wrath, and Moshe was punished with the worst thing imaginable—he was denied entry into the Land of Israel.

The Clouds of Glory vanished next. The background of this tragic loss is rooted in another tragedy, the death of Aharon the High Priest, which happened shortly after the saga with the Well.

WHY NO COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE CLOUDS?

One would imagine that when two critical resources are cut off, the people would respond with an outcry. Indeed, when the well dried up, they were quite vocal about it. So why don't we see any such outcry when the Clouds of Glory disappeared? The protection they afforded was just as critical as the water.

The simple answer is that the Clouds of Glory immediately returned. Though Aharon had passed, the Talmud (Taanit 9a) tells us that they returned in Moshe's merit instead.

MANNA IS FOR MOSHE, CLOUDS ARE FOR AHARON

And herein lies a powerful lesson. To get there, we will need to unpack the association between the character and the benefit. Why were the Clouds of Glory attributed to Aharon?

If you think about it, the Clouds of Glory were a great equalizer, enveloping the entire nation as one. As such, it only makes sense that these Clouds of Glory, which highlighted unity and peace, would come in Aharon's merit. After all, Aharon was famous for being the great peace-maker, always seeking to reunite quarreling parties.

Moshe, by contrast, was decidedly not a "Clouds of Glory" type of person. As the leader, his role was that of a shepherd, one who specializes in individualized care, not equality for all. Moshe knew this from his early days as a literal shepherd, when he was concerned with offering younger sheep more attention and softer grass, while giving older sheep more sustainable food and freer range.

As the nation's faithful shepherd, Moshe needed to be attentive to the individual needs of every person. That is why the same Talmud tells us that yet a third resource—the manna—came to the people in his merit. Though the manna did fall every morning and was accessible to all, the Talmud tells us that G-d distributed it to different people in different ways, based on their level of righteousness (or lack thereof). The individuality of the manna was uniquely suited to Moshe's role.

All of this talk of neat compatibility brings us to the following question: If the Clouds of Glory were so closely associated with Aharon, how did they all of a sudden return in Moshe's merit after Aharon died? What changed? Did Moshe go through some sort of makeover and transform into his brother to bring back the Clouds?

MOSHE'S PIVOT

Surprisingly, the answer is, yes!

To be more precise, Moshe didn't transform per se, rather he pivoted and changed things up when he saw that his brother had passed and taken the Clouds with him.

Internally, in Moshe's soul, you could say it went something like this: Really, I'm a manna person; the clouds have nothing to do with me. But now my brother is gone, and the people need clouds. Something must be done. So I must summon up something inside of me that is "cloud-related" to be there for the people.

And this is the lesson for you and me: We all have our "thing," and then there's a whole bunch of stuff that really isn't our thing: "That's not for me." "I'm not that type." Moshe's remarkable transformation teaches us that when someone else needs it, you do what it takes to make it your thing.

When it comes to someone else, there are no excuses. If G-d plants someone in your circle of influence who needs you, be there for them—even if it's not your thing.

Your friend's loved one passed away? Be there for her. Even if being around death is uncomfortable and associating with the grieving family is awkward for you, it doesn't matter. She's your friend, she needs you, and so you must be there for her. Go over to her house, give her a hug, listen to her talk about her mother, and just "be." Even if you're squirming inside.

Does the beggar on the corner make you queasy? Okay, but he needs your help. Give him a sleeping bag, buy him lunch, and say something nice.

Do you know a bit of Torah that your neighbor does not? Can you read the weekly Torah portion? If yes, then go ahead and share it with them. Offer to study together. Oh, it's not your thing? Well, they need you, and there's no Aharon or Miriam to take care of them.

Be like Moshe and be their Moshe.

This essay is based on Torat Menachem 5713:3 (9), P. 45-46.

MIRIAM'S WELL

RABBI NAFTALI REICH (Torah.org)

Without water, life cannot survive. Nonetheless, millions of Jewish people survived in the parched and barren desert for forty years. How was this possible? Only through a miracle. During their travels through the desert, the Jewish people were accompanied by a rock from which an abundant supply of water constantly flowed. It was called Miriam's Well, because it existed in the merit of Moshe's older sister Miriam, who was a righteous woman and a prophetess in her own right.

In this week's portion, we read about Miriam's death only months before the entry of the Jewish people into the Holy Land. The Torah also tells us that Miriam's Well ceased to function after she died, and the people were faced with a critical water shortage. They besieged Moshe and demanded that he provide water for them, for otherwise they would die. G-d told Moshe to take his staff in hand and speak to the rock. Instead of speaking, however, Moshe struck the rock with his staff. The waters gushed forth again, but Moshe forfeited the opportunity of entering the Holy Land. Because of his mistake, he passed away while the Jewish encampment was

massed on the east bank of the Jordan River.

A number of questions come to mind. Why was the water given to the Jewish people only in the merit of Miriam? Why couldn't the water continue after her death without Moshe speaking to the rock? Why didn't G-d want to leave the faucet open for the Jewish people?

The commentators explain that one of the most striking features of water is that its viscosity allows it to adapt perfectly to its surroundings; water will naturally assume the shape of any container into which it flows. Symbolically, Miriam represented this quality. She was able to adapt her faith and her steadfast fealty to G-d's will under any and all circumstances. Come what may, Miriam shone as the paragon of staunch faith.

Miriam was born during the darkest chapter of the Jewish bondage in Egypt. Her name, recalling the word marah, bitter, evokes the bitterness of the Jewish condition. When she was just a young girl, Pharaoh decreed that all male babies be thrown into the river. Husbands and wives separated in order to avoid producing children who would be drowned, but Miriam persuaded her parents to have faith and remain together. As a result, her brother Moshe, redeemer of the Jewish people, was born. Miriam was the famous midwife Puah, who crooned to the infants when they were born.

Like water, Miriam adapted to the oppression and the suffering and remained strong in her faith. Therefore, in her merit, G-d provided the Jewish people with miraculous water in the desert. And when she died, a new demonstration of supreme faith was required. G-d wanted Moshe to draw water from the rock by speaking alone.

A man hired a wagon driver to take him to a distant city. As they traveled through dense forests and over craggy mountains, the passenger sat relaxed in his seat, enjoying the scenery.

Suddenly, a thunderstorm arose. The passenger told the wagon driver to pull over, but he insisted that they could not do so safely. They had to push on through the storm.

The passenger began to tremble with fear.

"Don't worry," the wagon driver reassured him. "All will be well."

"But how do I know that?"

"Because I am telling you so," the wagon driver replied. "You were not afraid when we were travelling through dangerous forests and over steep mountain roads on the edge of sheer cliffs. You relied in my skills. Well, do you think I've never driven through a thunderstorm? You can trust me."

In our own lives, we find it easier to have faith when things are going reasonably well. When we seem to be on the road to success and encounter trials and struggles, we have faith that we will ultimately succeed. But what happens when things are falling apart, Heaven forbid? What happens when they become stormy? Those are the times that test our faith. Those are also the times when our faith can spell the difference between hope and despair.

WHEN SUCCESS COMES KNOCKING

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (Ohr.edu)

"Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock twice" (20:11)

One of my daughters is a successful architect. But it was not always that way. She spent many years honing her craft and learning by her mistakes. She said to me the other day, "Baruch Hashem, I didn't become successful until I was ready!"

Sometimes we achieve precocious success and we're not ready for it. And then we step up to the microphone in Carnegie Hall and show that we're not the brilliant singer that everyone imagined we were.

Years of "paying your dues" provides us with a depth of ability which, when our big moment comes, stands us in good stead. We can go up to the mic with confidence.

Indeed, timing is important not only in our personal lives but also in the life of the Jewish People and its leaders.

Hashem commanded Moshe to speak to the rock that had previously given water, but Moshe couldn't find it. So, he spoke to a different rock. Nothing happened. Moshe reasoned that if he couldn't find the original rock that would yield water merely by speech, he would have to strike another rock and that would have the same effect. He was following the precedent in the Book of Exodus where indeed he had performed that miracle by striking the rock. His logic followed from the fact that Hashem had told him to bring his staff. Why else would Hashem have instructed him to bring his staff if not to strike the rock?

He struck the rock but only a trickle of water emerged. He struck it a second time and then a flood of water began to flow forth.

But that was not the way Hashem wanted the miracle to take place.

Moshe should have gone to every rock and spoken to it until he found the right one.

The right rock – at the right time.

SYMBOLISM OVER SUBSTANCE

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

In one of the most difficult episodes in the Torah, this week we read how Moshe loses his entitlement to enter the Land he so desired to inherit. What happened is as follows: during the desert journey, a miraculous well traveled with the Jews. This well existed in the merit of Miriam. When she died, it ceased to flow. The Jews complained bitterly that they were thirsty. Hashem commanded Moshe to “take his staff and speak to the rock,” thereupon the rock would disgorge water to nourish a parched people. Moshe did not end up speaking to the rock. The nation was upset and impatient. When Moshe chose the wrong rock they chided him. “He in turn turned to them and said, “Listen you rebellious folk. Do you expect me to draw water from this rock?” (20:10) Immediately Moshe hit the rock instead of speaking to it and water flowed from it.

Hashem is angered by Moshe’s actions. “Because you have not sanctified me in the eyes of the nation, you will not enter the the land of Israel. (Numbers 20:12) Rashi, the classic medieval commentator, departs from his standard text-based explanation and bases his explanation of this verse upon the Midrash. “Imagine,” said Hashem, “if the Jewish nation would have seen that scenario. A rock, that does not talk nor hear and does not need sustenance, produces water by the request of the Almighty. Surely, they would have taken heart when Hashem speaks to them! The impact would have been far more reaching!

Moshe’s prelude to his action is noteworthy: “Listen, you rebellious folk. Do you expect me to draw water from this rock?”

The nation just wanted water, they did not ask for miracles or rock-wells. It was Hashem who told Moshe to approach the rock. Moshe knew that the water would come. Then why was his admonition given in the inquisitive mode, rather it should have been decreed in the declarative mode! Listen you rebellious folk! I am going to extract water from a rock? It seems that Moshe, himself, (Heaven-forbid) doubted his own authority. (Though many commentaries explain the question as rhetorical.)

Surely, the rock-water connection cannot be taken at face value. All who have merely dappled in the writing of our sages are familiar with the water as Torah and the rock dry and parched. Obviously, Hashem meant to send a message that even the driest stone can produce water. Why then did Moshe not play on that lesson to the rebellious folk and tell them that even the driest amongst them could become a wellspring of Torah?

Reb Shraga Faivel Mendelovitz was the founder of Yeshiva Torah Voda’ath. Once he stayed in Miami for Shabbos at the home of a former student. The man escorted the Rebbe home from synagogue, but when he opened the door the young man was shocked and embarrassed. His wife, exhausted from a week’s worth of child rearing, and the responsibility of keeping a home was sprawled on the couch. The Shabbos table was half-set, the dishes placed in a pile next to the kiddush cup and wine. In front of the head seat were two large challos sitting uncovered.

The custom is to cover the challos when making kiddush. As the blessing over bread normally precedes that of wine it is a somewhat an metaphorical embarrassment to the bread thus it is covered during the kiddush.

The student, who was embarrassed at the state of affairs, called out to his wife in a somewhat demeaning manner. “Please let us prepare the table in its entirety.” Turning to his mentor, he exclaimed, “I’m sure that leaving the bread uncovered was an oversight! Everyone knows,” he exclaimed shifting his self-inflicted embarrassment upon his wife, “that we must cover the challah before the kiddush.

Reb Mendelovitz was annoyed at the man’s self-righteous behavior and turned to him. “Over the years, I have heard many problems that people faced. Students, couples, and adults from all walks of life have entered my office to discuss their personal situations with me. Not once did a challah ever enter my office, suffering an inferiority complex because it was left uncovered during kiddush! Do you know why?

Because we are not concerned with the challah! We are concerned with making ourselves cognizant of feelings. We worry about chalлахs because the goal is to worry about people. How than can you embarrass your wife over not covering the challah when the act of covering is supposed to train you in sensitivity?”

Moshe understood the valuable lesson that Hashem wanted to teach His nation. But if all that was on their minds was water to drink and not the great lessons for eternity, he questioned his mission. Listen you rebellious folk,” he questioned. “Do you expect me to draw water from this rock?” Do you expect that the lessons of the great parable can be taught to those whose minds are only set on the parable itself? Perhaps that is why Moshe cast the great lessons aside and hit the rock, thus disobeying Hashem’s initial command. Perhaps he felt that a nation that focuses solely on the flow of drinking water couldn’t understand the wellsprings of its spirituality. In the corporeal world that our sages call a “foyer to the World To Come,”

we must realize that everything is a preparation for eternity. All of life’s experiences can teach us how to grow and how to strive. But like extracting water from a well, we must all dig a little deeper.

NEWS OF AHARON’S DEATH

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND (Torah.org)

And the Canaanite king heard . . . and he waged war with Israel. (21:1)

When the Canaanite King heard the news, he decided that the time was auspicious for an attack on the Jewish people. What news did he hear? The Talmud tells us (Rosh Hashanah 3a) that he heard about the death of Aharon and the subsequent departure of the Clouds of Glory.

Why did Aharon’s death cause the Clouds of Glory to depart? Why did his death leave the Jewish people vulnerable to attack?

The Ateres Mordechai explains that Aharon was the glue that held the Jewish people together. The Mishneh states (Avos 1:12) that Aharon “loved peace and pursued it, loved people and brought them near to the Torah.” He reached out to people with a boundless, embracing love, and they could not help but respond.

Whenever Aharon saw a Jew doing something wrong, he did not respond with anger. He did not throw stones. He did not berate and criticize the transgressor. He greeted him with a smile, with an expansive “Good morning.” He asked how he was and beamed with genuine pleasure when the news was good. When they parted, the transgressor felt warmed by Aharon’s love. He felt good. And the next time he had the opportunity to sin, he held back. “How can I do such a thing?” he asked himself. “Aharon, who was so warm and loving to me, would be upset if I did such a thing. Perhaps I shouldn’t do it.” In this way, Aharon drew people to the Torah and inspired them to do teshuvah.

Mr. Harry Wolpert, a long-time supporter of Torah causes in Baltimore, had once been a student of Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibovitz, the Rosh Yeshivah of Kaminetz. When Mr. Wolpert came to Baltimore in the early 1900’s he faced the test of Sabbath observance time and again. Today, we don’t have such problems, baruch Hashem. Rare is the job or profession that presents an impediment to Sabbath observance today. But in those days, it was different. It was very common for an employer to say, “If you don’t come in to work on Saturday, don’t bother coming in Monday either.” What kept Mr. Wolpert from succumbing was the memory of Reb Baruch Ber’s tremendous love for each and every one of his students. Not his Torah. Not his Mussar. Just his love.

The Avos d’Rabbi Nassan observes that when Aharon died, “the entire House of Israel mourned” — both men and women. But when Moshe died, “the sons of Israel” — the men only — mourned.

Moshe loved the Jewish people with all his heart, but his role was teacher and judge. He had to show the people the way, to correct their errors, to issue uncompromising judgments. The people respected, admired, revered and loved him, but there was a certain inevitable distance in the relationship. But Aharon was all love, and the people responded with unreserved love of their own.

Aharon pursued peace. He was the epitome of peace and acceptance. When Moshe came to Egypt as the messenger of Hashem, Aharon did not have the slightest fleeting touch of jealousy. His joy was genuine. He was at peace with the situation, with his brother, with everyone else in the world. He also did everything in his power to spread peace among other people. When he knew of two people that were quarreling, he would approach one and say, “I know that the other fellow wants to make up with you, but he’s just too embarrassed to come to you. If you are willing to make up with him, I’ll be happy to serve as the go-between.” The person undoubtedly accepted the offer of the illustrious Aharon. Then he went and told the same thing to the other fellow, and that was it. Peace!

The Yalkut Shimoni states that Hashem was reluctant, so to speak, to tell Aharon directly that it was time for him to die. Rav Meir Bergman, in Shaarei Orah, points out that nowhere do we find that Hashem was reluctant to tell Moshe that his time had come. Rav Bergman suggests that it was Aharon’s merit of spreading throughout among the Jewish nation that gave him this special status.

But now, concludes the Ateres Mordechai, this great pursuer and paragon of peace passed away. The harmony among the Jewish people began to fray. Spats and disputes erupted here and there. People began to fight. There was suddenly machlokes again among the people. The Clouds of Glory departed, and the Jewish people became vulnerable to attack.

The Ateres Mordechai further connects this idea with the verse in Sefer Bereishis (12:6), “There was a quarrel between Avram’s shepherds and Lot’s shepherds, and the Canaanites were in the land at the time.”

For what purpose does the Torah tell us that the “Canaanites were in the land at the time”? As long as there was peace between the shepherds of Avram and Lot, their unity protected them against the Canaanite foe. But as

soon as the quarrels broke out, the Canaanites appeared in the land, just as they later would arrive as soon as Aharon died.

GOOD NEWS IS NOT NEWS

RABBI ELISHA GREENBAUM (Chabad.org)

I've often thought that the generation sentenced to forty years traipsing around the desert is unfairly portrayed in history as a bunch of whiners and moaners who stumbled continually from one crisis or rebellion to another, with no time off for good behavior.

In truth, we can hardly be blamed for this negative perception when the Torah describes their sins and failings in excruciating detail. Apparently, the Torah doesn't feel the need to record that most Jews, most of the time, remained loyal and steadfast no matter how far from home they were led on their historic adventure, and that even the ones who fell learnt, in the main, from their mistakes.

It's just like starting a small business: most mistakes are made at the beginning. The failures in life never learn; for them, disappointment becomes a pattern. The successful entrepreneurs learn from their mistakes, set up systems to avoid them in the future, and eventually reap the rewards of their efforts. Similarly, the forty years in the desert were a huge sociological experiment in successfully transforming a rabble of slaves into a proud, independent people. Sure, they overreacted on many occasions, and tried to prematurely close up shop on G-d; but through the smelting process of experience, they achieved independence of thought and earned their passage to Israel.

JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS

The difference between learning from one's mistakes and replicating them is tiny, but so significant. Think back a few weeks, to when we read about the disaster with the spies. Right at the beginning of their travels, Moshe sent them to scout out their future homeland and report on the best way to go about conquering it. They overstepped their mission and, instead of just describing the task that lay ahead, they analyzed the problem and decided they they'd never succeed. As punishment for breaching orders, the Jews were condemned to an extra forty years of wandering.

This week we read about a similar situation, only this time a different outcome came about. Moshe sent spies to discover the best way to conquer the land of Yaazer. The spies again overreached themselves, and instead of reporting back to base, undertook to make war on the nation all by themselves. In an astonishing display of self-reliance and resolve, their risk paid off and their surprise attack succeeded.

After the disaster of forty years previously, the spies could well have been excused were they to have insisted on sticking rigidly to the tenets of their task, not deviating from Moshe's instructions by the proverbial inch. Just as some businessmen become traumatized by the mistakes of their early career and refuse to ever again venture into uncharted territory or speculative investments, it must have been so tempting for the Jews to play it safe and await further orders.

To do so would have demonstrated that the years in the desert had impacted their psyche only superficially. The lesson to be learnt from the story of the first spies was not that G-d discourages independent thought and autonomy of choice, but rather that G-d despises negativity and pessimism.

To believe in G-d, one does not have to suspend individual judgment. Quite the contrary, a believer must constantly be on the lookout to understand and fulfill his personal mission. The mistake the first time around was not that they deviated from their instructions, but that they abandoned the plan altogether.

The new set of spies had the gumption and confidence to aspire for immediate success, and demonstrated that they had truly learnt the lesson of the ages by daring to dream and committing themselves to accomplishing G-d's will, irrespective of any dangers that lay ahead.

News & Views

ISRAELI MAYOR BANS HAARETZ OVER ANTI-IDF 'BLOOD LIBEL'

DAVID ISAAC (June 30, 2025 / JNS)

Arad Mayor Yair Maayan announced on Friday that he would ban the left-wing daily Haaretz from his city over what he said was a "false blood libel" in a feature article accusing the Israeli Defense Forces of "deliberately" firing on Gazans near aid distribution sites.

"The municipality will not allow false incitement against IDF soldiers and the State of Israel, certainly in times of war. The municipality will act to prevent the entry of the inciting newspaper into the city in accordance with the Prevention of Incitement Law," Maayan told JNS.

The mayor wouldn't say if the ban would include door-to-door deliveries of

Haaretz to subscribers, although that number is likely negligible given the newspaper's relatively small Hebrew print distribution.

The Haaretz article, by Nir Hasson, Yaniv Kubovich and Bar Peleg, titled, "It's a Killing Field: IDF Soldiers Ordered to Shoot Deliberately at Unarmed Gazans Waiting for Humanitarian Aid," cites anonymous Israeli soldiers and officers who accuse the IDF of firing on Gazans using tanks, artillery and snipers to prevent them from approaching areas where they weren't permitted.

The IDF rejected the accusations, saying its directives "prohibit" intentional attacks on noncombatants. "The IDF did not instruct the forces to deliberately shoot at civilians, including those approaching the distribution centers," the IDF Spokesman's Office said in a statement.

Even so, the IDF said it would "thoroughly" examine "any allegation of a deviation from the law or IDF directives... and further action will be taken as necessary."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz also rejected the Haaretz report, declaring in a joint statement that "these are vicious lies designed to discredit the IDF—the most moral army in the world.

"The IDF operates under difficult conditions against a terrorist enemy that operates from within the civilian population and hides behind it as a human shield and operates a whole industry of lies to harm the legitimacy of the State of Israel," they continued.

The Haaretz report followed one by the United Nations on June 24, which claimed that 410 Palestinian Arabs were killed by Israel's military while attempting to procure aid from U.S.- and Israeli-run distribution hubs of the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF).

The U.N. report appears to be based on a June 22 statement by Jonathan Whittall, head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) OPT (Occupied Palestinian Territories).

"I've been told over 400 have been killed," Whittall said during a visit to the Gaza Strip.

The number may have originated with the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry. According to a Sunday statement by GHF Interim Executive Director John Acree:

"We have experienced a growing pattern of false information seemingly formulated by the Gaza Health Ministry, an arm of Hamas, and then reported first by Al Jazeera and then echoed by the U.N."

GHF, which has delivered more than 51 million meals since its launch, said that it's Hamas doing the shooting, and not at GHF's hub but at sites run by others. "Our GHF news monitoring continues to reveal inaccurate news coverage by international media outlets linking GHF sites to violent incidents that did not occur near our sites, but in fact occurred at United Nations' (U.N.) convoy sites or other humanitarian groups who operate near our site," the statement said.

This is not to say that GHF sites aren't at risk. The group has received "credible reports" that Hamas had placed "bounties" on the heads of its U.S. security personnel and Gazan aid workers—"offering cash rewards to anyone who injures or kills them."

Its local staff has already been targeted, with 12 killed and others tortured, according to GHF.

"In recent days, Hamas has also pre-positioned armed operatives near humanitarian zones in an effort to disrupt the only functioning aid delivery system in Gaza," GHF added.

The Haaretz article didn't refer to Hamas culpability in the Gazan deaths, though it quoted one source, a military officer, as saying, "I know there are Hamas operatives among them [the people receiving aid]."

According to Haaretz, some of the fatalities near aid centers were caused by militias opposed to Hamas and supported and armed by Israel's military.

Arad's mayor, in announcing his ban of the paper, said Haaretz was "inventing a false blood libel against IDF soldiers. They provide antisemitic material to the whole world with false accusations."

Haaretz editor-in-chief Aluf Benn said in response, "We will continue to loyally serve our readers in Arad, just like everywhere else."

The newspaper quoted Michael Sfard, an attorney and left-wing political activist, as saying that Arad's mayor had no authority to halt the newspaper's sale in the city.

"Not only does a mayor not have the authority to decide what can or cannot enter his city, he doesn't even have the power to determine which newspapers are sold in the city hall cafeteria," said Sfard.

Arad's mayor insisted to JNS that he could implement his ban, saying Haaretz's latest libel was of a piece with previous statements, noting newspaper publisher Amos Schocken's comments at a London conference in Oct. 2024, in which he called Palestinian terrorists "freedom fighters."

"These are the bloodthirsty Nukhba killers who murdered babies," said Maayan, referring to Hamas' "Nukhba force," which spearheaded the terror

group's invasion of southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

Schocken's remarks caused a storm in Israel and led the government the following month to cut all state-paid advertising, state-funded subscriptions and other connections to Haaretz.

On June 1, Israeli Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara sent a letter to the directors-general of government ministries instructing them to ignore the Cabinet's November decision.

Israeli Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi sent a follow-up email criticizing the attorney general's interference as "another expression of the arrogant rule of clerks that refuses to accept a decision of the nation."

"In a democracy, the government is elected. The clerks are appointed. This order cannot be reversed. We will continue to uphold the government's decision and will not fund the libelous newspaper Haaretz in any way," he said.

UN 'COLLABORATED WITH HAMAS'

MIKE WAGENHEIM (July 1, 2025 / JNS)

The United Nations, which "has never had a competitor," collaborated with Hamas and had several staffers who participated in the Hamas-led terrorist attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, a senior U.S. State Department official told reporters on Tuesday.

"They've had a monopolistic, sort of non-competitive hold over these sorts of areas," the official said.

The United Nations "is unhappy that we're making them compete now in areas of the world," the official said. "The U.N. has an institutional interest to lie, as they have repeatedly, about these things."

The global body tends to ignore violence at U.N. aid sites, according to the official, who told reporters that there has been "a lot of aid diversion to Hamas."

"They never want to talk about that," the official said.

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which the United Nations has denounced and said cannot replace its own efforts to deliver aid, recently stated that it has delivered 50 million meals to Gazans. The State Department said that it will give \$30 million to the foundation for its work.

"We will continue to work with them to ensure that security is handled appropriately at those sites, and that they can deliver as many meals as possible," the U.S. official told reporters.

The official spoke with reporters as the State Department is set to officially absorb the U.S. government's foreign aid administrator. As of Tuesday, foreign aid decisions are being held through a new Foggy Bottom mechanism after the Trump administration shuttered the U.S. Agency for International Development, amid criticism of waste and abuse at the latter.

"We gave them a small infusion of cash," the U.S. official said of the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation.

"We continue to see how it's performing, and if and when they continue to deliver, and if they do that safely and securely and consistent with the principles that we've laid out for them, then we're happy to invest more in them," the official said.

The alternatives to supporting the foundation are not providing any aid or supporting the United Nations, "which is in league with Hamas, unable to secure its own sites and has failed to serve the people of Gaza for decades," per the official.

The official referred reporters with questions about violence at or near foundation distribution sites to the Israeli embassy in Washington and "folks that are closer to the ground" in Gaza.

Reports of massacres at foundation sites are "untrue or uncorroborated," according to the U.S. official. "The GHF is not responsible for any of that violence."

Given its new funding from the U.S. government, the foundation will have "an obligation to submit to us extensive financial reports, operational details, to answer questions about these sort of issues," per the official.

"They're in very close contact with the folks on the ground," the official said.

The State Department will be looking for delivery of meals at scale "in a way that is not funding Hamas, and we continue to work with them on ensuring that they have an adequate security posture," the official added. "We think that GHF itself is doing an excellent job on that."

THIS IS AN ANTI-FASCIST

BRENDAN O'NEILL (Spiked-online.com 30-6-25)

The name we should remember from this weekend is not Bob Vylan. Or Pascal Robinson-Foster, to give the Israelophobic punk who caused such a stink at Glastonbury his real name. No, it's Yisrael Natan Rosenfeld. For as Bob Vylan was whipping the smug mob of Glasto into a frenzy of violent loathing for the IDF, this young IDF soldier, himself a Brit, was laying down his life for the Jewish people. He was killed in Gaza on Sunday as he did battle with that army of anti-Semites, Hamas. Now that's anti-fascism.

Natan – as he was known – was 20 years old. He was born in London and moved to Israel 11 years ago. He was a sergeant in the 601st Combat Engineering Battalion of the IDF. He was killed by an explosive device in northern Gaza. His sister's boyfriend, also an IDF soldier, died in combat during Hamas's pogrom of 7 October 2023. Natan's father paid tribute to him this morning. He was fighting "for his parents, his family, his people", he said. 'I feel he has a place in history.'

This is the Briton we should be talking about – not the sozzled, moneyed brats of Glastonbury who got a sick thrill from chanting 'Death, death to the IDF', but this fresh-faced warrior against Islamofascism. Not that Bob Vylan faux-punk who hollered for the death of the Jewish State's soldiers, but this soldier of the Jewish State, this British Jew just out of his teens, who ventured into enemy territory to fight the Islamists who butchered so many of his people. Not the fake anti-fascists of Britain's wet, vain left, but this real anti-fascist who put his life on the line for the Jewish homeland.

That Natan died just hours after thousands of his one-time compatriots chanted 'Death, death to the IDF' is chilling in the extreme. One can only hope that in his final few hours he did not see any clips of these privileged, hateful Gentiles in the country of his birth dreaming of the death of Jews like him. How betrayed he would have felt. To look from Natan's smiling face to the malicious gurning of that Glasto mob is to behold the Two Britains: one brave, optimistic and willing to fight for what it believes in, the other indolent, self-regarding and only able to derive meaning through its hatred of others.

Here's what horrifies me. Two groups of people were thinking 'Death to the IDF' on Saturday – the keffiyeh classes at Glastonbury and the barbarous militants who planted the device that ended Natan's precious life. Britain's middle classes were saying out loud what that neo-fascist militia was thinking as it laid its deadly trap for the soldiers of the Jewish nation. There was a meeting of minds, a most sickening meeting of minds, between the fashionably Israelophobic of the West and the murderously Israelophobic of Hamas. 'Death, death to the IDF', roared affluent Britons; 'Okay', replied Hamas.

If this does not force a moral reckoning in 21st-century Britain, nothing will. It is incumbent on everyone who cares for the future of this country to confront this profoundly disquieting fact: that the fortunate, educated Britons who make up Glasto's audience share with the brutish, racist, regressive army of Hamas a yearning for Israeli death. I never again want to hear the self-righteous of the Israelophobic left say 'We're pro-Palestine, not pro-Hamas'. Because we all heard it. We all saw that mob of puffed-up festivalgoers chant 'Death, death to the IDF' as Hamas was plotting that very thing, as it murdered one of our own, as it slayed a young British lad who became a soldier for the Jews.

What a stark, unsettling insight into the crisis of our times. Those grim wails of 'Death to the IDF' are all the proof we need that many in the West have taken the wrong side in the great civilisational clash of our time. Hamas's pogrom opened up a whole new front in the war for the future. It pitted medieval butchery against modern democracy. The apocalyptic bigotry of Islamism against the rights of the Jewish nation. The anti-human delirium of the neo-fascists of Hamas against all that the West is meant to hold dear: freedom, tolerance, reason, truth. And many of our young aligned themselves, not with Israel, not with the West, not with the Enlightenment, but with the furious, hateful enemies of those things. So much so that they now give voice to Hamas's own battlefield cry: Death to the IDF.

Not everyone, though. Not Natan. This was one Briton – and there are many more – who knew what was right. His death shatters the lie that what is happening in Gaza is a genocide. His death is proof – crushing proof – that it is a war. He is the 20th soldier of the Jewish State to be killed in Gaza this month alone. Almost 900 IDF troops have died in battle since 7 October 2023. The depiction of the war in Gaza as a Nazi-like extermination of Palestinians is the sickest calumny of our times. It is the blood libel resuscitated. The truth, as Natan's death in combat attests, is that the IDF is fighting Hamas, and Hamas is fighting back.

To see an anti-fascist, forget the poseurs and haters of Glastonbury – look, instead, to the short, valiant life of Yisrael Natan Rosenfeld. Where 'anti-fascism' to the lethargic narcissists of the Western left means little more than yelping 'Fuck Farage' and eating vegan ice-cream at a music festival, to Natan it meant signing up for war against the men who carried out the worst mass murder of Jews since the Holocaust. In the face of the racist lies of our Israelophobic elites who damn the IDF as genocidal demons, Natan, this modern-day Maccabee, fought for his nation and his people against their fascistic tormentors. His uncommon courage heaps shame on the lowlifes of Glastonbury who wished for his death.

BRAVO, PRESIDENT TRUMP AND PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU — YOU ARE DOING WHAT THE WHOLE WORLD FAILED TO DO

MAJID RAFIZADEH (GateStoneliInstitute.org 28-6-25)

For decades, when it came to confronting the Islamic Republic of Iran, the so-called "international community," particularly the Western powers that pride themselves on being defenders of democracy and human rights, chose cowardice over conviction. Instead of drawing a red line then sticking to it, they drew circles. Instead of acting, they offered concession after concession. They fed the beast and even funded its industry of death. They threw Israel under the bus again and again to placate tyrants. They talked about diplomacy while Iran built centrifuges, enriched uranium, and spread terror throughout Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and even inside Iran. This year alone, 2025, Iran's regime has already conducted 1,700 executions – and it is only June.

All the while, Iran has kept pushing, inch by inch, toward its dream of acquiring nuclear weapons — and no one had the courage to stop them. No one... except Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald J. Trump.

After the savage invasion of Israel on October 7, 2023 by Iran-backed Hamas, in an age where global leaders are more concerned with virtue signaling and hosting summits that accomplish nothing, it took the Jewish state — tiny, isolated, hated by the media and universities — to stand up and say, "Enough." While the West wrung its hands, and its bureaucrats talked about "proportionality" and restraint, Israel acted – not just for its own survival, but for the security of the free world. Israel did what the international community, the West and the United Nations would never do – and what NATO would never even dream of. What the international community and Western powers lacked the spine to do, tiny Israel, under Netanyahu's steady leadership and Trump's historic decision, put an end to the charade and finally delivered the blows that needed to be dealt.

Since the horrific October 7 massacre, when Hamas butchered, raped, burned, and kidnapped Israeli civilians — men, women, the elderly, children and even babies — Israel has been on a relentless and unapologetic campaign to uproot terrorism at its roots. This has not just been about retaliation; it is about making sure that evil does not get rewarded with more money and more legitimacy – again. Israel dismantled Hamas's infrastructure in Gaza, and decimated Lebanon's Hezbollah, which had for years provided Syria's Assad regime with critical military support.

Israel took out weapons shipments and terror command centers in Syria, which directly led to the collapse of the Assad regime. Late in 2024, in a period of 10 days, the designated terrorist Ahmed al-Sharaa advanced his forces and finally ended the reign of slaughter and chemical attacks by Bashar al-Assad.

Israel did not stop there. Israel, with Trump delivering the difficult final blow, launched the most daring, comprehensive, and devastating strikes inside Iranian territory in modern history. Israel's operation alone, called "Rising Lion," targeted more than 100 strategic sites tied to Iran's nuclear weapons program. That program, costing the Iranian people \$2-3 trillion, and decades in the making, took a fatal hit in less than 37 hours. This was not just a series of airstrikes – it was a message to every tyrant: if you aim to annihilate Israel, if you chant "Death to America," if you fund terror across the globe, there will be consequences.

Thanks to Trump and Netanyahu, the world now knows what real leadership looks like.

Even more impressively, Israel managed to assassinate some of the highest-ranking military leaders of the Iranian regime. The commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Major General Hossein Salami, is dead. IRGC Chief of Staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri is dead. At least 14 nuclear scientists, critical to Iran's atomic weapons program, have been neutralized. These were men plotting a second Holocaust while hiding behind diplomacy and Western cowardice. Israel did not wait for permission. It did what needed to be done.

What Israel, along with the United States, has done in the past two years far surpasses anything the self-proclaimed defenders of freedom in Brussels or Berlin have done in the past 80 years. As European leaders lecture Israel about ceasefires, "de-escalation", "proportionality" and "restraint" from the comfort of their distant homes and elegant dinners, Israel has dismantled, destabilized, and struck a crippling blow to four terrorist regimes and organizations, the Iran and its proxies as well as Syria's Assad regime — all while under constant attack. It is a miracle of military strategy, intelligence precision and moral clarity. The world owes this tiny, demonized nation, its defense forces, Netanyahu and Trump a massive debt of gratitude as well as a Nobel Peace Prize.

Israel did what Winston Churchill warned that the West needed to do back in the 1930s —when appeasement gave Hitler the space he needed to

unleash World War II. Churchill's warning could not be more relevant today: "An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile hoping it will eat him last."

The West has been feeding a lot of crocodiles for far too long. Giving the Iranian regime sanctions relief, nuclear deals, and diplomatic back channels, the so-called liberal world order enabled the rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its lavishly funded war machine. Israel has been doing the dirty work that Western powers refused to do – all of them.

Israel has not just been fighting for its own people — it is fighting to prevent World War III. If Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons, no capital in the free world would be safe. Iran's ruling ayatollahs do not just hate Jews. They hate Christians and all "unbelievers" in Allah. They hate the West. They hate freedom. There is no reason to think they would not have used a nuclear bomb. Just look at what their barrages of ballistic missiles without nuclear warheads did to one tiny nation, the size of New Jersey.

Now that Israel, its military, Trump and the great U.S. Air Force have acted with unmatched courage, the question becomes: will the West finally grow a spine and stand with Israel? Will they stop hiding behind "peace conferences" and empty UN resolutions, and finally support the one country that is actually securing peace through strength? At the very least, if they are too scared to lead, they should fully support the small country that led unapologetically. Let Israel lead. Let Israel strike. Let Israel save the world from the nightmare that the rest allowed to fester.

Peace is not achieved through weakness, funding the enemy, legitimizing terror organizations or tolerating genocidal regimes. Peace comes from defeating them. The world learned this the hard way in the 20th century, and too many people have become too dangerously close to forgetting it. Netanyahu and Trump did not forget. That is why they stand alone — victorious. It is time to stop treating Israel like a burden or a pariah, and start recognizing it as the moral and military powerhouse that it is.

The democracies of the world – the peace lovers, the free thinkers, the believers in Western civilization – owe Israel not just thanks, but allegiance. In just two years, this tiny nation has done more to safeguard global security than the entire EU, the UN, and most of the free world combined – which were busy condemning it and protesting against it. Israel deserves admiration, not sanctimony. It deserves support, not sanctions. If the rest of the free world is too cowardly to act, then at the very least, they should hide behind Israel's courage and pray that, with the partnership of the far-sighted Trump, it keeps winning. If Israel falls, the rest of the West is next. Stand with Israel, or fall with your silence.

Kosher & Halacha Korner

The following article may be at variance to local Kashrus Agencies. When in doubt, contact your local reputable Agency. In Australia, direct any questions to info@kosher.org.au or visit www.kosher.org.au

BITUL B'SHISHIM - NULLIFICATION

OU HALACHA YOMIS (OUKosher.org)

QUESTION: *What is the source that the taste of non-kosher food is nullified if it is cooked with kosher food that is sixty times its volume?*

ANSWER: The Gemara (Chullin 98a) cites the ruling of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi in the name of Bar Kapara that in general non-kosher food can be assumed to be nullified in sixty parts (i.e., the non-kosher part equals 1.63% or less of the mixture). At this point, we expect that the taste of the non-kosher food will no longer be detectable. The Gemara provides the following proof. One who made a vow to become a nazir must, upon completing his vow, bring a ram as a korban. Any Jew may eat from the meat of this korban with the exception of the zeroa (arm). The zeroa portion of the ram has elevated sanctity and may only be eaten by a Kohen. Yet, the Torah commands that before the zeroa is separated, it must be cooked together with the rest of the ram. The rabbis measured and found that the zeroa portion of the ram is one part out of sixty-one of the entire ram. Even though the zeroa is not kosher for a non-Kohen, he is permitted to eat the rest of the meat which was cooked with the zeroa. This indicates that the taste of the zeroa is nullified in sixty parts of kosher food.

Tosfos (Chullin 98b s.v. Uman) points out that this is not a rigorous proof: On a Biblical level, a simple majority is enough to nullify the taste of non-kosher meat when cooked with kosher meat that has the same taste. Still, Chazal saw an allusion to the measurement of sixty. In theory, a bland food could potentially be nullified with less than sixty, but since we are not experts at making this evaluation, unless we know otherwise, we follow the rule of sixty.

QUESTION: *How do we measure “bitul b'shishim” (nullification in 60 parts)? Is this measured by weight or by volume?*

ANSWER: It is clear from Poskim that this evaluation must be made by

volume and not by weight. The Pischei Teshuva (YD 98:2) offers many sources for this fundamental principle. Weight should only be used as an approximation. Sometimes by weighing the items, especially if they are of similar densities, it will be obvious whether there is shishim, and then there will be no need to measure by volume. Measuring by volume can be very complicated since, as Pischei Teshuva points out, if some of the food items are full of air pockets, you must press out the air in order to make a proper assessment.

QUESTION: A non-kosher piece of meat fell into a pot of soup and was removed. Only a small amount of the non-kosher meat dissolved in the soup. For bitul (nullification), must we measure 60 times the entire piece of meat, even though most of it was removed, or do we only measure against the amount that remains behind?

ANSWER: The Gemara Chullin (97b) discusses a similar question and concludes that we must measure against the entire piece of meat. Since we do not know how much flavor was emitted, Chazal require us to measure as though the entire piece of meat dissolved in the soup. The Ran (Chullin 35b – cited by the Beis Yosef YD 98) explains this as follows: Since there is no way to properly evaluate how much taste came out of the meat, if it was left to everyone to make their own approximation, some would estimate less and some would estimate more. Therefore, Chazal saw fit to have one unified method which requires using the maximum measure, which is 60 times the volume of the entire non-kosher item.

QUESTION: A piece of chicken fell into a dairy pot of soup. I put aside the chicken, but I cannot tell if the soup is 60 times the volume of the chicken. Since I cannot figure it out, can I eat the soup or must I throw it away?

ANSWER: Mixing chicken and milk is a Rabbinic prohibition. One might think that since this is a case of doubt involving a Rabbinic prohibition, we should apply the rule of safek d'rabbanan l'kula (one can be lenient regarding doubts involving rabbinic prohibitions). However, this is not the case. Shulchan Aruch (YD 98:3) writes that in this case, the soup is forbidden even though it is a safek d'rabbanan. This is because theoretically it is possible to measure the chicken and measure the soup and find out if there is enough for bitul. This type of doubt is referred to as a “safek chisaron yedia,” a doubt due to lack of attainable knowledge. This does not qualify as a doubt in halachah. Even though finding this information would be a very tedious task, since the information theoretically can be found out, we cannot permit the soup.

QUESTION: A slice of cheese with the volume of one fluid ounce fell into a pot that was cooking sixty-four fluid ounces of meat sauce. What is the status of the pot? What is the status of the sauce?

ANSWER: In this case, the sauce was more than sixty times the volume of the cheese. Since the cheese was batel b'shishim (nullified in more than sixty parts of sauce), we assume that the cheese is incapable of imparting taste into the sauce, and the pot does not require kashering. However, the status of the sauce itself is not so simple. As long as any strands of cheese are discernible in the sauce, those strands are not batel and the sauce may not be eaten. Furthermore, one may not stir the sauce with the intention to cause the cheese to melt and disappear into the sauce, since one is not permitted to be mevatel issur lichatchila (actively nullify forbidden foods). One should throw away the meat sauce, since it contains strands of cheese, but one does not need to kasher the pot, since the cheese is less than 1/61th of the mixture.

QUESTION: A chunk of butter with the volume of one fluid ounce fell into a pot that was cooking sixty-four fluid ounces of meat soup. What is the status of the pot? What is the status of the soup?

ANSWER: In this case, since the soup is more than sixty times the volume of the butter, the taste of the butter will be batel b'shishim (nullified in 60) in the soup and there will be no requirement to kasher the pot. However, because butter is a fat, when left to cool, it will float to the top of the soup. Whenever there is a method to remove a forbidden food from a mixture, one is not permitted to leave it behind. The Rema (YD 98:4) discusses a similar situation in which forbidden fat fell into a pot of soup. Even if it is batel b'shishim, the soup still may not be eaten until one first cools the soup and skims off the fat. Therefore, in this case too, one must cool down the soup and skim off all the congealed butter before the soup may be eaten.

Note that even though the butter will be removed in the end, there still must be sixty times more soup than butter. We do not say that removing it in the end means that we have removed its taste as well (Taz and Shach YD 98:4). This is based on what was discussed in a prior Halacha Yomis. It is not enough to have sixty times what actually dissolved into the soup. We need shishim against all possible taste that may have been imparted by the issur.

QUESTION: If grape juice concentrate or milk powder was mixed into a food, would it be batel (nullified) in sixty parts, or will it take more for it to be batel because these are concentrated ingredients?

ANSWER: Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt”l (Minchas Shlomo 1:4) writes that since milk powder is a more concentrated form of milk, it is not batel in sixty parts. For example, if one cup of powdered milk can yield four cups of regular milk when reconstituted with water, then powdered milk will

require two-hundred-forty times dilution to be batel. The Minchas Yitzchak (11:60) writes similarly regarding powdered milk and grape juice concentrate. However, Rav Shamai Gross (Nesiv Hachalav p. 64) writes that he discussed this issue with Rav Elyashiv zt”l and was told that milk powder would be batel in sixty parts just like other ingredients, so long as the taste of milk is not noticeable in the food. This was also the opinion of Rav Ovadya Yosef zt”l and Rav Belsky zt”l. Rav Belsky explained that not all foods have the same level of taste. Some foods are more flavorful and some are more bland. Still, the requirement of sixty was established by the rabbis as a lo plug (an across-the-board measure) for all cases to avoid confusion. Just like an onion can be nullified in 60 parts and we do not say that the taste of an onion is four times stronger than milk, so too milk powder is nullified in 60 parts even though it is concentrated.

A similar idea is discussed in Pischei Teshuva (YD 98:2). He writes that although congealed butter and liquid butter have different volumes, if the butter fell into a pot while congealed, we measure the sixty based on that size. Yet had it first been melted and then fallen into the pot, we would measure based on its liquid volume.

QUESTION: A non-kosher soup mix that includes a concentrated beef flavor was accidentally added to a pot of soup. The beef flavor mix is less than one part in sixty measured against the entire soup. Is the soup permitted?

ANSWER: In a previous Halachah, it was explained that even if a food is concentrated and is therefore more flavorful, Rav Belsky zt”l held that it would still be batel if mixed into a food that was sixty times its volume. However, there is a category of ingredients referred to as “avida l'taama” (ingredients whose whole intent is to give flavor). The Rema (YD 98:8) writes that an ingredient whose purpose is to give flavor is not batel in sixty parts, and perhaps not even in a thousand. As long as the flavor is still discernible, it is not batel. The Taz writes that spices such as pepper and salt are “avida l'taama” because their taste is very pronounced. On the other hand, although meat is flavorful, it is not considered “avida l'taama” because it does not have such a pronounced taste. However, if one concentrates beef flavor so that it is many times more flavorful and it becomes the dominant flavor in the soup, this too might be “avida l'taama.” Even in 60 parts, it cannot be assumed to be nullified.

QUESTION: A few drops of fish juice fell into my chulent. They are clearly less than 1 part in 60. Is the chulent still acceptable?

ANSWER: With respect to the mixing of meat and milk, or kosher and non-kosher there is a well-known principle of bitul b'shishim, nullification in sixty parts. Thus, if an ounce of milk accidentally fell into sixty ounces of chicken soup, the milk is batel and the soup may be eaten.

Do the rules of bitul also apply to fish and meat, which are a concern of sakana (danger) rather than issur (prohibition)? This is a matter of dispute.

The Shach (Nekudas Hakesef, YD 116), Chochmas Adam (68:1) and Pischei Teshuva (116:3, citing many responsa) rule that just as bitul applies to meat and milk, it likewise applies to fish and meat. In contrast, the Taz (Y.D. 116:2) writes that the rules of bitul do not apply to sakana. According to the Taz, any amount of fish and meat poses a danger and is therefore forbidden.

Rav Belsky zt”l was of the opinion that the lenient view is primary. As such, the chulent in our question may be consumed. However, Rav Belsky zt”l added that there are individuals who follow the stringent view of the Taz and would refrain from eating the chulent.

QUESTION: Many Worcestershire sauces contain anchovies. Is it permissible to add Worcestershire sauce to meat?

ANSWER: There is a dispute among Poskim as to whether fish which is nullified in 60 parts still presents a sakana (danger) if mixed with meat. The OU follows the lenient position. As such, Worcestershire sauce that contains anchovies at a ratio of 1:60 may be labeled OU, without a fish designation. However, if the anchovies are more than one part in sixty of the sauce's components, the product must be labeled OU-Fish. The question remains whether it is permissible to intentionally add an OU certified Worcestershire sauce, which contains a small percentage of anchovies, to a meat dish? With respect to non-kosher foods, bitul only applies after the fact, should an accidental mixture occur, but it is not permissible to intentionally effectuate bitul (in the words of Chazal, ain mivatlin issur lichatchilla.) Does the same apply to fish, such that it would be prohibited to intentionally introduce fish to a meat dish at a level where the fish would be batel? One can argue that fish is not a prohibited item, but rather a food that poses a danger. Nullification removes the danger and therefore it may be permissible to intentionally nullify the fish component. Rav Elyashiv, zt”l (quoted in P'nei Ish) maintains that one may in fact add a small amount of fish to meat. As such, one may intentionally add OU certified Worcestershire sauce to a meat dish and consume the final product. This is particularly the case with Worcestershire sauce, since the anchovies were already batel in the sauce itself. For simplicity's sake, some companies prefer to label all their Worcestershire sauces with an OU-Fish symbol regardless of whether the amount of fish is nullified or not, and the OU accommodates such requests. One may contact the OU office at kosherq@ou.org to inquire if the amount of fish in a specific brand of sauce which bears an OU-Fish logo is indeed

nullified.

QUESTION: A piece of fish fell into my meat stew. It is more than 1 part in 60, and therefore the fish and meat both are forbidden. If I remove the fish and the meat, can I eat the rest of the food?

ANSWER: The Gemara (Pesachim 76b) states that there is a sakana (danger) to eat fish and meat that were roasted together. The same applies to meat and fish that were cooked together. Poskim compare the mixture of fish and meat to poison. Once there is a mixture of fish and meat, not only may the fish and meat themselves not be eaten, but if any of the fish or meat is absorbed into other foods, those foods are forbidden as well. Just as it is forbidden to endanger oneself by eating poison, so too it is forbidden to eat foods that absorbed the poison.

QUESTION: A drink contains a very tiny amount of carmine (a color obtained from crushed beetles). It is much less than one part in sixty, but it colors the entire drink red. I realize that carmine is not kosher, but since it is such a small amount, is the drink kosher?

ANSWER: This is a matter of dispute among poskim.

The Pri Chadash (102:5) writes that non-kosher items that give color into other foods are not batel (nullified) even in sixty parts. This is based on the Gemara (Bava Kama 101a). The Gemara discusses wool which was dyed with something that was forbidden—is the wool forbidden, or since all that remains in the wool is the color, perhaps color does not have significance? The Gemara leaves this question unresolved. Therefore, the Pri Chadash (102:5) writes that we must apply the rule safek d'oraisa l'chumra (we must be strict regarding doubts that involve a Torah prohibition). If a colorant such as carmine, which can be a Torah prohibition, is mixed into a food, so long as we see its effect, we must be strict to consider the color as though it is not batel, and the food will remain forbidden.

However, the Minchas Yaakov (74:5) and Beur Ha'Gra (YD 102:6) disagree with the Pri Chadash and explain that this Gemara is discussing only issurei hana'ah (items from which it is forbidden to benefit). Since one may benefit from carmine, they maintain that the question discussed in this Gemara is not relevant.

The Pri Megadim (YD Mishbetzos 100:1) and the Chasam Sofer (see Darchei Teshuva 102:30) cite this dispute and conclude that it remains unresolved, and one must be concerned for the ruling of the Pri Chadash. Rav Belsky zt"l as well ruled that carmine, even at levels of parts per million, still adds noticeable color and must be considered non-kosher.

QUESTION: Many yogurts contain less than one percent gelatin. Since the gelatin is a small amount, can it be argued that the gelatin is batel b'shishim (nullified in sixty parts), and that the yogurt is kosher?

ANSWER: Gelatin is added to yogurt as a gelling agent to give body and texture to the product. Ingredients that significantly change the consistency of a food item are referred to in halacha as a davar hama'amid (a supporting agent), and are not batel b'shishim. As such, although the percentage of gelatin in a yogurt is very small, the rules of nullification in sixty parts do not apply, and such yogurts are non-kosher.

There is an additional reason that the gelatin is not batel in yogurt. Typically, the gelatin is first dissolved in a premix slurry, where the ratio of gelatin to the premix is greater than 1:60. The premix slurry is then combined into the final batch of the yogurt production. In this case, the entire premix would be forbidden in accordance with the principle of "chaticha na'aseis neveila" (i.e., a piece of meat that absorbed a non-kosher substance becomes a non-kosher entity). Since the ratio of premix to yogurt is generally greater than 1:60, the premix is not batel and the yogurt is not kosher.

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