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FEDERATION

Halachah

MAASERTEXT WEEK 8: DISCOVERING MAASER ON SHABBOS

Maasertext was launched to encourage members of the public to separate terumos and maasros. Previously seen as a complex mitzvah and one which is difficult to perform, the system is designed to be easy and user-friendly.

This week, as our series draws to a close, Rabbi Y.M. Guttentag examines what happens when the Israeli source of one's produce is only discovered on Shabbos.

May one take *terumos* and *maasros* on Shabbos?

A *mishna* in Maseches Beitza (36b) teaches that *maaser* may not be separated on Yom Tov. On Shabbos, the *mishna* says one may certainly not *maaser* produce. Rambam (Shabbos 23:14) teaches that this ruling is founded on two *halachic* concerns – firstly, it is seen as fixing the fruit and forbidden in a similar vein to the case of *tevilas keilim* on Shabbos. Secondly, it is seen as enacting a *kinyan* on Shabbos and forbidden like making an item *hekdesh*.

Are there any exceptions to this rule?

I have been *mekabel* Shabbos but forgot to *maaser* the potatoes used in the kugel – can I still *maaser* the produce to permit the food?

During the Friday evening/ Shabbos twilight period - called *bein hashemoshos* – certain leniencies apply. In cases where one has no other Shabbos food, Chazal were lenient and allowed produce to be *maasered* where he won't have Shabbos food.

The same applies for one who is *mekabel* Shabbos early on Friday afternoon from *plag hamincha* and on, (Mishna Brura: 261:28). Therefore, if the bulk of one's Shabbos meal would be at risk due to its *tevel* status, one may *maaser* during this period. If the *tevel* in one's food is only a side dish (eg just a salad), it is questionable whether this permission applies.

Once the local community have been *mekabel* Shabbos, the *bein hashemoshos* leniencies are suspended. On a long summer Friday afternoon, there typically would be time to *maaser* shortly after being *mekabel* Shabbos, but on a short Friday afternoon, this would be more problematic as it would be likely that the *tzibbur* have already been *mekabel* Shabbos.

Shabbos has already begun, and I forgot to *maaser* our vegetables, I learnt in *mishnayos* that sometimes you can *maaser* with a *tenai* on Shabbos itself, how do I go about doing this?

This question is based on the teachings of *mishnayos* in Maseches Demai which teach of scenarios in which the householder may *maaser* produce on Shabbos itself.

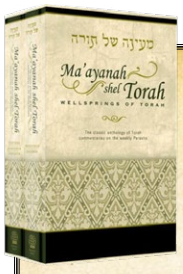
The mechanics of this method require that a preliminary declaration is made on *erev* Shabbos – a tenai. This means that any suggestion of adopting this approach to save a family's Shabbos *cholent* with its Israeli potatoes would only work if the householder recognises the issue before *shekiya* on *erev* Shabbos. Once Shabbos has begun, this approach would not be relevant.

Can produce which was not *maasered* be eaten on Shabbos?

Produce which has not been *maasered* is *tevel* and may not be eaten.

In extenuating circumstances where *maaser* was not separated and major aspects of one's Shabbos meal would be at risk, one should ask a Rov before deciding not to eat the food in question.

These articles have been published in response to popular demand for further information on how our service runs. For further questions relating to the use of Israeli produce or to MaaserText in general, feel free to contact Shailatext by texting 07403 939 613



A Quick Vort: Ma'ayanah shel Torah

BY YISROEL AVROHOM KAYE

The posuk (Devorim 4:39) says "Know this day and lay in on your heart that Hashem He is G-d"

The Ma'ayanah Shel Torah brings Chidushei HaRIm who explains another aspect to this posuk with which we are all familiar. He says that if the main thing is to "lay it on the heart" it follows that the heart must be cleansed before in order to make room for all this knowledge so that it may take root there.

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Federation

JUST SAY NO!

הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים – All is in the hands of Heaven, except for the fear of Heaven

This famous principle, articulated by R Chanina in the *gemara*, is based on the *passuk* in this week's *parsha*, where Moshe relays the plea from Hashem to the people – "*All I ask from you is to fear me*"

In 1982, the phrase "Just Say No" first emerged when Nancy Reagan was visiting Longfellow Elementary School in Oakland, California. When asked by a schoolgirl what to do if she was offered drugs, the First Lady responded: "Just say no." Just Say No club organisations within schools and school-run anti-drug programmes soon became common, in which young people were making pacts not to experiment with drugs.

This may sound pretty banal and uncontroversial, but the idea of placing responsibility and accountability squarely upon the person making the moral decision, irrespective of other conditioning factors, such as poverty, peer-pressure, socio-economic deprivation, weak character, etc, continues to offend the liberal mindset. The idea that we are responsible for our own actions is increasingly being challenged on many fronts[1]. *The Guardian*[2] published an article containing the following quotes;

"It (Nancy Reagan's 'Just Say No' campaign) spread fear and ignorance instead of information, placing all responsibility on the individual while denying them the tools they need to make key decisions. Unless we radically change course and acknowledge the realities of American drug use and its underlying socioeconomic factors, millions of kids like me will continue to grow up and say yes."

The idea that we act as autonomous moral agents, that of *bechira – free will,* is arguably the most fundamental idea in Judaism. Absent that facility, and we are no different to animals, driven irredeemably by instinct, inclination and environment. We become victims, rather than perpetrators, blaming everyone but ourselves, and the consequence is a blame-free culture.

The Rambam identifies *bechira* as that which sets us apart, the marker which defines what it means to be human. However, fascinatingly, he builds the case in a two-step process.

In the beginning of the fifth *perek* of Hilchos Teshuva[3], the Rambam identifies the uniqueness of Man with his ability to **discern** Good and Evil, **and** act freely upon (despite?) that realisation.

His prooftext, is a surprising one.

הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו לדעת טוב ורע

'Now man has become like one of us, knowing good and bad'

The Rambam then proceeds to elaborate and explain the *possuk* to us, though, arguably, it is a straightforward statement, not requiring elucidation.

כלומר: הן מין זה של אדם היה יחיד בעולם ואין מין שני דומה לו בזה הענין, שיהא הוא **מעצמו בדעתו ובמחשבתו** יודע הטוב והרע ועושה כל מה שהוא חפץ, ואין מי שיעכב בידו מלעשות הטוב או הרע

That is as if saying: "Behold, this species, man, stands alone in the world, and there is no other kind like him, as regards this subject of being able of his own accord, by his reason and thought, to **know** the good and the evil, **and** to do whatever his **inclination** dictates him, with none to stay his hand from either doing good or evil;

The first observation, surely, is that the Rambam is identifying this as elementally human, this is unconnected with being Jewish! To be human is to have a G-d given intelligence, capable of correctly identifying good and evil, as well as having the ability to act autonomously. Furthermore, he uses no less than three separate nouns to stress Man's ability to utilise his brain **independently** to determine what is good and what is evil - **מעצמו בדעתו ובמחשבתו**

After arguing passionately and unapologetically in the subsequent *halacha* against the fools who argue for what is known today as Determinism, ie the denial of free will, he then does an astonishing thing.

ודבר זה עיקר גדול הוא, והוא עמוד התורה והמצוה, שנאמר: "ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים", וכתיב: "ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום", כלומר שהרשות בידכם, וכל שיחפוץ האדם לעשות ממעשה בני האדם עושה - בין טובים בין רעים

"And, this matter is a great fundamental, the very pillar of the Torah and its precepts, even as it is said: "See, I have set before you this day, life and good, and death and evil" (Deut. 30.15), and it is, moreover, written: "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and curse" (Ibid. 11.26). This is as if saying, the power is in your hand, and whatever human activity man may be inclined to carry on he has a free will to elect either good or evil"

A seemingly redundant *halacha* – he has already established the axiom of free will, and evidenced it from the *passuk* in Bereshis. What purpose is served by repeating it, and offering another *passuk* as a source?

The answer, I suggest, is that there are two layers to Free Will. The first is universal, and integral to the uniqueness of the צלם אלוקים, and is entirely unconnected to being Jewish. To be Human is to have the basic ability to recognise Good and Evil (albeit in its most blatant forms), to give expression to that Divine component, the brain, and, ultimately, to bow to it, and heed its call.

Hence, the pagan societies of the generation of the *mabul* were held accountable for theft (despite not being explicitly commanded)[4], Sodom for their institutionalised indifference to *tzedoko* and social justice, and one after another, they failed to live up to being human, and were thus rejected and spurned, unworthy of the next stage in the development of Humanity, which was the revelation at Sinai and direct communication from Hashem in the form of the Torah.

This **process** is being emphasise by the Rambam – the crux of the idea being that it is utterly impossible to progress to stage two, if one has not first acknowledged and mastered the art of being human in its fullest and truest sense[5].

The depth of Hashem's plea to us, is now clear. I run the world, I am in charge of absolutely everything, except for one tiny, but crucial dimension, where you are like Me – I endowed you with a *tzelem* Elokim, the ability to think, and understand what is right and wrong. Additionally, you have a *neshama*, capable of connecting to My Torah.

The only area that I have relinquished to you, is the arena of moral choices. To express humility[6] and Fear of Me, to choose *autonomously* to submit and yield to My wishes.

Paradoxically, choosing not to do, is the most exalted and majestic form of self-expression.

1 Witness the challenges to free will from the very respectable discipline of neuroscience (B Libet, S Harris, et al) to craft a scientific narrative for determinism.

2 Tuesday March 8th 2016

3 Why it isn't in הלכות יסודי התורה where arguably it ought to belong, is beyond the scope of this article

4 עיין רמב"ן בראשית ו' י"ג, ו' ב', ר' בחיי בראשית י"ח כ', חזקוני בראשית ז' כ"א, הקדמת ר' נסים גאון לתלמוד בבלי, שערי תשובה ג' ט"ו (וע"ע משך חכמה ויקרא ו' כ"ג)

5 עיין בהרחבה בדעת חכמה ומוסר ח"א מאמרים ה' - י' דברים נפלאים

6 עקב ענוה יראת השם

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PARSHAS RE'EH

Parshah

Imagine you were the military officer responsible for monitoring the airspace in the UK or better yet the United States. Your evening shifts are filled with quiet and calm, but you diligently monitor the screen knowing the chain of command and your responsibility. Your country, friends and family rely on you and their security rests in your hands. Suddenly, late one night when all seems quiet, the siren starts HOWLING and in big letters on your screen is the word 'LAUNCH'! It is the highest alert possible and everything checks out in order. What do you do? As you sit there the alarm goes off again and a second missile has been launched! Then a third and a fourth and a fifth! The computers no longer say missile 'launch' but 'missile strike'. Every second you delay puts your countrymen, friends and family one step closer to destruction. What would you do now? On September 26, 1983, this was Stanislav Petrov's dilemma. The fate of the world rested in his hands and making one decision would plunge the world into nuclear war and the other, peace during the Cold War.

The *parsha* begins with Moshe telling the Jewish People, *'See, this day I have set before you blessing and curse. Blessing, if you obey the mitzvos of Hashem your G-d that I command you today and curse if you do not obey the commandments of Hashem your G-d…'*. When looking at the *pasuk* in Hebrew one is struck by several questions. Firstly, why does the *pasuk* use the term 'see' when Moshe is speaking to *klal* Yisrael? Secondly, the *pasuk* begins in the singular by stating see/רְאֵה, and then it switches to the plural when it says before you/לִפְנֵיכֶם. Rashi tells us these are the blessings and curses that will later be recited on Har Gerizim and Har Eval. If this is so, then why does Moshe say he is setting before *klal* Yisrael blessings and curses '*this day*' when it takes place after the Bnei Yisrael cross the Jordan river when standing at Har Gerizim and Eval? Finally, the *gemarah* in Sota tells us that when the Bnei Yisrael stood at Har Gerizim and Eval they were divided by tribes. Six stood on Har Gerizim and six stood on Har Eval. Why were the Jewish people split in half at the time of the giving of the blessings and curses rather than having them all stand together as a whole?

The *sefer* Be'er Yosef provides an insightful answer to our questions based on the Talmud in Kiddushin 40b. The Talmud says that each person should see themselves as if they are half guilty and half innocent. If they do one *mitzvah* they tip the scales to innocent and if they do one *aveirah* they tip the scales to guilty. Furthermore, Rabbi Eliezer bar Rabbi Shimon says if the world is judged according to the majority and if a person does one *mitzvah* they are praiseworthy and the whole world is judged meritoriously and if they do one *aveirah* they tip the scales and the whole world is judged accordingly. This is why the *bnei* Yisrael were split up on Har Gerizim and Har Eval to instil in them the enormous obligation they bear for each other and the world. They were to see that blessing and curse hang in the balance and one *mitzvah* or *aveirah* would tip the scales. Additionally, this is why they were told see/רְאֵה because they actually needed to see for themselves that they were split into two halves and the well-being of *klal* Yisroel and the world depended on them! Moreover, the *pasuk* continues in the plural saying before you/לִפְנֵיכֶם to impress upon every individual that the Jewish community and people are dependent upon them and one action means the difference between blessing and curse. Finally, the *pasuk* tells uses the word '*this day*'/היום to stress to us that every day each of us must see our lives as literally hanging in the balance. One *mitzvah* or *aveirah* changes everything not only in our own lives but the entire world!

About 10 years ago, on our way to shul during Rosh Hashanah a friend and I were discussing the concept of judgement and the negative associations many people had with it. During the conversation, he made the most stunning and life changing comment that has stuck with me all these years. It is one I have taught my children and family. He said judgement can be a good thing because it means your actions have importance and impact. It means you, and what you do, matter. As we stand prepared to embrace the month of Elul and make the necessary preparations for Rosh Hashanah maybe there are two messages we need to take with us. One that we need to truly view ourselves, *klal* Yisroel and the world as hanging in the balance and one *mitzvah* can change everything. Secondly, that each one of us and our actions are important.

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the types of toys that they expect are nothing short of top-notch. And we find ourselves with an ever-increasing cost of living. When barely surviving in our communities means that we are expected to earn **three** to **four** times the national median household income, something is wrong with our lifestyle.

We live in times of mass prosperity where the average person is rich, but to enjoy that great *bracha*, we must maintain control. Everything in this world was created for man's use – but it must be used properly, in balance, in the right time, and in the right measure. When man does that, he enjoys his short stay on this planet and accomplishes his purpose in Creation.

For more on this topic please listen to Shmuz #156 Get out of Debt

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Parshah

The *parsha* this week, Parshas Shoftim, deals primarily with the establishment of a system of leadership and judicial roles in every city in Eretz Yisroel. The *parsha* says, "Magistrates and officers you shall appoint at all of your gates." Rashi (16:18) explains that **magistrates** refer to those who pass judgment, and **officers** means those who implement the law. This *passuk* is also reflected in the prophecy of Yeshaya (1:26), "I will restore your **judges** as they were at first, and your **advisers** as they were in the beginning". It is similarly found in *shemonah esreh*, where we mention 'Return your **judges** as of old and your **advisors** as in the beginning".

There is a blatant difference as to how it is presented in our *parsha*, where it mentions 'Shoftim **veShotrim'** - magistrates and policemen, and in *shemoneh esreh* and Novi Yeshaya, where it mentions Shoftim **veYoetzim** - meaning magistrates and advisors. What is the reason for this seeming discrepancy? In our *parsha* it refers to the times of exile - a time when the *bnei* Yisrael are in *galus*. Therefore, it mentions police officers, as they are needed to enforce the law. The Midrash Tanchuma (Shoftim 2) stresses the need for both of these roles: 'Without the policeman, there is no judge. For if the court finds a person guilty, once he leaves the courtroom the judge is powerless unless the policeman takes control." The Novi Yeshaya is referring to *yemos hamoshiach* - the era of redemption, an era of no selfishness and evil - when the words of the judges will be sufficient, and it won't be necessary to have those laws enforced. The judges will be needed to teach Torah and provide direction to the *bnei* Yisrael.

Why then does the Novi mention judges and advisors? Why do we need an advisor if we will all be following the words of the judges? There is an underlying difference between a judge and an advisor. When a judge proclaims a verdict, whether one understands the word of law or not, the judgement must be followed in full. However, an advisor will explain the subject matter to the extent that the individual receiving advice understands and appreciates why it is important to follow. The emphasis on *moshiach* is him being an advisor, in addition a judge, someone who speaks at a level that all can understand and see that it is to their benefit. These two methods of instructing can be compared to the difference between the words of Torah, and prophecy. Whilst Torah is the pure word of Hashem, transcending all human wisdom, and prophecy is the word of Hashem as it is embodied and articulated in the mind of the prophet.

To expand this concept, allow me to share a novel approach to the difference between *sefer* Devorim and the first four books of the Torah. I was always troubled by a *gemora* in Masechta Megillah (31b) stating that the first four *seforim* were said Mipi Hagevurah but the last *sefer* "Moshe Mipi Atzmo Omron" - Moshe said it on his own.

The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuvah *perek* 3 *halacha* 8, says that if someone entertains the thought that Moshe Rabbeinu said even one word of the Torah on his own, he is a *kofer*, a heretic!

You must say that the *gemoro* never intended that Moshe actually created the content, as Rashi does indeed explain that he repeated what he heard from Hashem.

If that's the case we're back to square one. What is the difference between the first four books and the last, if they were both from Hashem?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l introduces a fascinating insight that not only answers the question but sets the foundation to allow us to understand important concepts in *yahadus* that are crucial to our Torah comprehension and our *emunas* Hashem and His *neviim*.

Moshe Rabbeinu served as an intermediary between Hashem and the Jewish People. However, there are two ways that a message could be processed through an intermediary. One way is that the message simply "passes through" (*derech maavir*) without integrating into the faculties of the intermediary himself, affecting no change at all, and one that is integrated (*derech hislabshus)* or ;dressed into' the intellect of the intermediary. In the latter, the message has been somewhat altered and changed in such a manner that allows the final recipient to receive and comprehend the message which he could not have beforehand.

The first four *seforim*, Moshe served merely as a *shliach shel odom k'moso*, (A messenger is literally like the sender) retaining the words it in its purest form *mipi hagevurah*. The last *sefer*, Devorim, however, was said *b'ruach hakodesh*, Moshe served as an emissary in such a way that he integrated the *nevuah*, *mipi atzmo*, into his intellect and understanding so that he could convey it to *klal* Yisroel on their level.

The reason why the last book of Devorim was different and Moshe had to say it on 'his own', the Rebbe explains, is because if the Torah would have only been conveyed by 'passing through' the intermediary, without allowing it to be integrated, the Torah would never have 'come down' from Sinai and the Jewish People would never be able to truly grasp the essence of Hashem's Torah which is higher than the intellect of Human beings. However, once Moshe Rabbeinu served in the capacity of a "*memutza derech hislabshus*" who integrates the message to the level of the recipients, this completed the true essence of the Giving of the Torah, whereby the incomprehensible word of Hashem could be integrated into the human mind of the Jewish People.

This approach sheds light on our topic of discussion of the difference between Torah and prophecy. While Torah is the complete unadulterated word of Hashem, prophecy is conveying Hashem's word through the intellect and emotions of the prophet. You could say that Moshe Rabbeinu wore two hats. At times he was completely uninvolved and at times he 'put his word in', while maintaining the word of Hashem in its entirety. This set the stage for the integration of Hashem's Torah to permeate the world and elevate our human side to appreciate Torah and Yiddishkeit from our perspective as well.

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QUIZ TIME Living with Mitzvos
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2. Can a king forgo the honour accorded to him?

Dayan Yehonoson Hool

Federation Beis Din

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COMING UP WITH THE GOODS

Parshah

The Torah tells us that although we can accept *geirim* from almost all the nations of the world, when it comes to *geirim* from Amon and Moav, they will not be allowed to marry in to the Jewish people. The reasons given for this are,

עַל דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא קִדְּמוּ אֶתְכֶם בַּלֶּחֶם וּבַמַּיִם בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם וַאֲשֶׁר שָׂכַר עָלֶיךָ אֶת בִּלְעָם בֶּן בְּעוֹר מִפְּתוֹר אֲרַם נַהֲרַיִם לְקַלְלֶךָּ: דברים פרק כג (ה)

"Because they didn't come out towards you with bread and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because he hired Bilom the son of Be'or from Pesor, Aram Naharayim, to curse you."

These actions indicate ingrained negative *middos*, which are antithetical to the holy nation of *klal* Yisrael.

The Sifsei Chachomim raises a question, though. It is apparent from *pesukim* in Devorim that the Moabites did in fact sell the Jewish people bread and water:

דברים ב':כ"ו-כ"ט

וָאֶשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים מִמִּדְבַּר קְדֵמוֹת אֶל סִיחוֹן מֶלֶךְ חֶשְׁבּוֹן דִּבְרֵי שָׁלוֹם לֵאמֹר: אֶעְבְּרָה בְאַרְצֶךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ אֵלֵךְ לֹא אָסוּר יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאול: אׇכֶל בַּכֶּסֶף תַּשְׁבְּרֵנִי וְאָכַלְתִּי וּמַיִם בַּכֶּסֶף תִּתֶּן לִי וְשָׁתִיתִי רַק אֶעְבְּרָה בְרַגְלָי: כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לִי בְּנֵי עֵשָׂו הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּשֵׂעִיר וְהַמּוֹאָבִים הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּעָר עַד אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱבֹר אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ נֹתֵן לָנוּ:

Moshe relates that he sent messengers to Sichon, the king of Emori, asking for permission to pass through his land. He requested that the Emmorites allow passage for *klal* Yisrael, whilst offering that the Jews pay for any food and water provided, just as the *bnei* Esov had done, and *as had the Moabites done*! Son the Moabites did actually provide food and water.

The Sifsei Chachomim answers that the Moabites were criticised because although they provided food and drink for *klal* Yisrael, they didn't give this for free but charged for everything. The Ammonites didn't offer anything at all, and as for the Moabites, although they offered provisions, they wouldn't give them for free.

Now, this criticism seems a little harsh. To provide for a huge nation of 600,000 men, plus woman and children, would be hugely expensive. Were the Moabites really expected to provide food and water for the whole of *klal* Yisrael, for free?

The answer, says the Dubno Maggid, is understood, as ever, by a parable.

A man promised to support his future son-in-law financially for several years, but shortly after the wedding the father-in-law reneged on his promise and declared that he could not continue supporting the young couple. The next day the son-in-law left town, and did not return. After some months, the father-in-law, seeing his daughter's distress at being left alone, offered a large financial reward for anyone who would bring his son-in-law home. Soon after, the recalcitrant husband was found and brought home, and brought before the town's *rov*. The young man claimed that he ran away from town because his father-in-law had reneged on his promise of financial support. When the *rov* asked the father-in-law why he had in fact reneged on his promise, he replied that he didn't have much money, and simply couldn't afford it.

"I find that difficult to believe," replied the *rov*. "When you really wanted to, you were able to find plenty of money to pay for a reward to anyone who found the son-in-law!"

The Moabites provided food and water for the Jewish people, and perhaps couldn't be faulted for charging for this if they couldn't afford to provide for free. But the truth was exposed in the next part of the *pasuk*. "And he hired Bilom the son of Be'or from Pesor, Aram Naharayim, to curse you." In order to entice Bilom to come and curse the Jewish nation, the Moabites offered huge sums of money. So, they did have plenty of money. They "couldn't afford" to offer sustenance to the Jewish people for free, but to hire Bilom to curse them, they had no problem drawing upon enormous financial resources.

With this in mind, we can reread the verse and see new interpretations: "Because **they** [i.e. Ammon **and** Moav] didn't come out towards you with bread and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, [Ammon didn't provide at all, and although Moav did provide, they charged for it, and not because they needed the money, for] and because **he** [i.e. Moav] hired Bilom the son of Be'or from Pesor, Aram Naharayim, to curse you." If Moav had plenty of financial resources, they should not have charged for the bread and water provided for the passing Jewish people.

The lesson is clear. If someone simply doesn't have the financial resources, the physical or the emotional strength to dedicate himself to Torah and *mitzvos*, he may possible have an excuse. But if, somehow, he manages to find and apply these resources for other activities, his excuses will fall flat.

It is only if a person looks honestly at the sum of his activities that he can discern what he himself is really capable of.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Tzadikim Tahorim do not complain of the dark, but increase the light; they do not complain of evil, but increase justice; they do not complain of heresy, but increase faith; they do not complain of ignorance, but increase wisdom.

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3. **The Gemora Sanhedrin 71a states that this rebellious son never happened and never will happen. Why then is it mentioned at all in the Torah if it is not relevant?**

Rabbi Danny Kirsch

Chairman of JLE, Federation

The author can be contacted at rabbikirsch@jle.org.uk

FEDERATION

Parshah

It's hard to believe, but yes it's *erev selichos*! A year has passed and we find ourselves just a few days away from Rosh Hashanah. The *sefarim* teach that these are precious and powerful days, with real opportunities to examine our past deeds, change our behaviour and make resolutions for the future.

Our *sedra* begins with the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*. What message can we see and learn from this beautiful *mitzvah*, which will enable us to be better prepared for the Yom Hadin?

In the third *perek* of Mishnayos Bikkurim the *mishnah* outlines the process of separating *bikkurim*

כֵּיצַד מַפְרִישִׁין הַבִּכּוּרִים. יוֹרֵד אָדָם בְּתוֹךְ שָׂדֵהוּ וְרוֹאֶה תְּאֵנָה שֶׁבְּכָרָה, אֶשְׁכּוֹל שֶׁבְּכָר, רִמּוֹן שֶׁבְּכָר, קוֹשְׁרוֹ בֶּגֶמִי, וְאוֹמֵר, הֲרֵי אֵלּוּ בִּכּוּרִים.

A person goes into his field and sees the figs, grapes and pomegranates ready to ripen.

The *meforshim* are bothered, why does the *mishnah* specially mention these three fruits? Eretz Yisrael is blessed with other fruits as well! One answer is that these are the first to ripen and are therefore highlighted

HaRav Menachem Zemba zt"l Hy"d, quoting the Arizal, suggests an alternative idea, which offers us a fascinating insight into the power of *teshuvah* and the opportunities which are given to us to re-evaluate and move forward from past failures.

Klal Yisrael's entrance into Eretz Yisroel should have taken place many years earlier. However, Moshe sent the spies to view this glorious and unique land. Sadly, they returned 40 days later with a false and perverted report. They also brought back fruit to verify their claim.

וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־נַחַל אֶשְׁכֹּל וַיִּכְרְתוּ מִשָּׁם זְמוֹרָה וְאֶשְׁכּוֹל עֲנָבִים אֶחָד וַיְשָׂאֻהוּ בַמּוֹט בְּשְׁנָיִם וּמִן־הָרִמֹּנִים וּמִן־הַתְּאֵנִים׃

"They reached the valley Eshkol, and there they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes—it had to be borne on a carrying frame by two of them—and some pomegranates and figs." [Bamidbar 13:23]

The spies spoke in a derogatory way about Eretz Yisrael and they sinned showing the rest of the people the grapes, pomegranates and figs.

So, when eventually *klal* Yisrael go into their promised land, they bring the gifts of that land, their *bikkurim* their first fruits! And which are the fruits that they mark first in their field by tying a thread? Grapes, pomegranates and figs; the very same category of fruits that brought about their original downfall!

The *meforshim* explain that the *tikun* is to take the very thing that caused the sin, and correct the sin by elevating it in the most exalted way.

If I conclude that in the past I have not spoken correctly, then now is the perfect time to analyse my speech and find opportunities to communicate in a positive way. If on reflection my hands have not helped others in need, then let me direct my energies to insure my hands are put to productive use. If my grim and uncommunicative face has not been welcoming to strangers then let my smile be the first thing that greets you.

If we misused the fruits of Eretz Yisrael. Then our *tikun* is to bring the very same fruits and use them to praise Hashem and His wonderful, truly blessed Land.

May we all be blessed for a *Kesiva v'chasimah tovah*

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2. **The Mishna in Bikurim notes that there is a difference between a rich and poor man when bringing bikurim. The rich man gets back his basket while the poor man forfeits his to the Kohen. Surely it should be the other way around?**