

פארברענגען עם הרבי

התועדות
י"ט כסלו ה'תשמ"ב

FARBRENGEN *WITH THE* *REBBE*

ENGLISH



פארברענגען עם הרבי

פארברענגען עס הרבי

י"ט כסלו תשמ"ב

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770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213

Tel: 718 771 9674

Email: sichos@vaadhatmimim.org

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Maamar

Maamar

Padah

Beshalom

Peace in our Avodas

Hashem

Padah Beshalom – peace in our Avodas Hashem.

MAAMAR

1.

“He delivered my soul in peace from battles against me, because of the many who were with me.” The Alter Rebbe writes in his letter that this verse relates to his liberation, for while reciting this verse, before reciting the following verse, he was notified that he was free. Consequently, many maamarim said on Yud Tes Kislev begin with, and are based on this verse. We can therefore conclude that the verse has a deeper meaning. The literal meaning is: Dovid Hamelech was speaking as an individual, about his own battles. The inner meaning is that Dovid Hamelech was speaking as “The Sweet Singer of Israel,” and “battles” refers not only to his battle, in the past, but as the “Singer of Israel” of all generations, he speaks of the “battle” of every Jew, and in this verse we ask God – and He accepts our request – to deliver us from this battle “in peace,” “because of the many who were with me.”

2.

The way to achieve this “redemption” is found in Torah Shebal Peh – the commentary on the Torah Shebichsav, in Maseches Berachos: “When one studies Torah, does deeds of kindness, and prays with the community – I consider it as though he delivered Me and My children from amongst the nations, as the verse says, ‘He delivered my soul in peace from battles against me, because of the many who were with me.’” “Peace” refers to Torah: “All its paths are peace.” “Peace” also refers to acts of kindness, which bring peace between giver and recipient. “The many” – this refers to communal prayer. These are the “three pillars upon which the world stands,” including the small world of every individual: for man to be delivered “from amongst the nations,” i.e. from things that oppose Jewishness, he needs the three pillars of “Torah, worship, and acts of kindness.” “Worship” is prayer, which is a substitute for the korbanos, and the main korban

was the Korban Tamid, which was a communal offering – so “worship” means communal prayer, corresponding to the Tamid, the foremost sacrifice. It is upon these three activities – Torah, prayer, and deeds of kindness, that each individual relies on, in order to triumph in his own battle.

3.

Now, “battle” – krav, also means “near” – karov; a battle waged at close quarters. The Alter Rebbe says in Tanya that “the heart spreads to all of the limbs,” and the heart has two compartments, “The heart of the wise man is on the right, the heart of the fool is on the left.” “Fool” refers to the Evil Inclination, and “wise” refers to the Divine Soul, a “part of God above.” The two are in close proximity to each other, both residing in the same heart, and the heart is a battleground, waging battle. One side is “right” and one is “left,” and they are locked in a constant struggle, as explained in Tanya, that “when one rises, the other falls.” Now this “battle” can be won in different ways, and we ask that it should be won “in peace,” “because of the many who were with me.”

4.

One explanation of “in peace” is as follows: Usually, to elevate the mundane one must wage a battle, as the verse says “That I took from the Emorites with my sword and bow,” which means “with my prayers and entreaties,” – a battle to elevate the mundane. But it is possible also to wage a battle, and to triumph “in peace.” The Talmud says that “peace” refers states Torah, which is an “antidote to the Evil Inclination.” When one learns Torah in great quantity, the light of Torah dispels the darkness. And being that even a little light dispels the darkness of the Evil Inclination, how much more so an abundance of Torah light vastly “increases peace in the world.” As the Sages say: “Torah scholars increase peace in the world, for it is said: All your children shall be students of God,” that every Jew, – whom God declares as “His firstborn son” – each is also a student of

God. This is because every Jew – as described in the Code of Maimonides, who is the “Guide of the Perplexed” for his generation and all generations – has a “heart that is awake to God and His Commandments,” his “heart is awake,” and as a result, his true desire, even as a living person in this world, is to actually fulfill God’s will practically; his heart is “awake” even when he seems “asleep in Exile.” This description has legal ramifications, even while in Exile, with the full force of Law. When we wage the “battle” by studying Torah we are delivered “in peace”: Instead of going to battle, and being subject to its setbacks and limitations, the Jew instead studies Torah, which is “wider than Earth and broader than the ocean,” and studies diligently, transcending the limitations of the body and of the Animal Soul; we increase Torah light, and “light dispels darkness,” the darkness of the Evil Inclination, for Torah is an “antidote – tavlin – to the Evil Inclination.” The Sages use the word tavlin, which means “a spice”: a spice sweetens the dish which is otherwise bitter. Similarly, through Torah, one can “love God with all your heart,” with both Inclinations, for the “spice” sweetens and elevates the Evil Inclination. Thus the Evil Inclination achieves its ultimate goal, that from “wicked” should become “day,” and it begins to radiate light. This is the “redemption in peace,” which comes through learning Torah. This also brings “increased peace in the world,” and in the personal “world” of each individual: he does not fight his Evil Inclination in an arduous battle, rather, he achieves victory through a short and easy battle – through abundant Torah study in a way that leads to action, the fulfillment of Mitzvos in the best way possible.

5.

Then, though there may be “mighty and powerful” obstacles, nevertheless, because we “occupy ourselves with Your Torah,” and we fulfill the mitzvot in the best way possible, in the “most enhanced form,” therefore, “the mighty are delivered into the hands of the weak.” While it is true that Torah scholars are termed “weak and sickly,” but this is a weakness that

comes from Torah, which itself is called “strength,” so it is a “weakness” that results in redemption “from battles against me,” specifically in a manner of peace. This includes the part of Torah which is “peace” – the inner dimension, Chassidus, which is free of “difficulties, disputes, or contradictions,” as the Rebbe explains at length in Tanya, quoting Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai: “With this work of yours, the Zohar, the Jewish people will leave Exile mercifully,” meaning, “in peace.”

6.

This is the practical teaching for every Jew in every place and in every time. We must increase our Torah study and our fulfillment of the mitzvot in the best way possible, preceded by “reciting the blessings on the Torah,” and this begins with “communal prayer,” and the Chassidic definition of “community” is praying with all ten faculties of the Godly Soul, which also envelop the ten faculties of the Animal Soul. Then the evil assists the good, just as we find in the verse, when Absalom’s men assisted King David. So too, for every Jew, in his battle of the souls. The battle is waged at close quarters, for the Godly Soul is close to and can contend with and defeat the Animal Soul, for “God does not ask of one more than he is capable of.” So each individual can win the battle the way God, The Lord of Peace, desires, a victory “in peace.” The Talmud states: “One who studies Torah for its own sake brings peace above and below,” and the Alter Rebbe explains that “Below” means peace between the Godly Soul and the Animal Soul, “love God with all your heart,” with both Inclinations. And this also impacts “below” in the literal sense – our mundane and physical world, that we elevate the mundane, and the physical is then illuminated with the light of Torah and Mitzvos, similar to the Chanukah lights, which we kindle “at the door facing the outside,” in order to illuminate also the public domain, to the extent that “the feet of the Tarmudians leave the marketplace.” This refers to the nullification of even the lowest stage – those who rebel – Tarmudai referring to who rebel, Moredes, so that only God reigns everywhere, in a

revealed and unconcealed way, "God will be One, and His Name will be One."

7.

This begins when the person, in his own small world, engages in Torah study, deeds of kindness, and communal prayer. By accomplishing these three things properly, the world "stands" and "endures," and this brings stability to the world, literally, as well – it becomes a world which is in harmony with the Divine Will. And God's will is that "Israel should prevail," as we read this past Shabbos in last week's Torah portion: "Esau fell on Jacob's shoulder and kissed him," which means that even "Esau" provides assistance to every Jew, man or woman. May this occur in our day, as the Mitteler Rebbe cites in his discourses, "Kings shall be your nursing fathers and their princesses your wet nurses" "in peace," without any opposition, as in the days of King Solomon, which were days of "peace and tranquility." May it be so speedily in our time, with the coming of our righteous redeemer. May he come and redeem us and bring us to our Land, and usher in an era of "peace and tranquility," when "all nations will serve God, with clear language, as one man." May it be speedily in our days, with joy and gladness of heart.

S I C H A

1

Not the Same Old Story

**Recounting the Yom
Tovs Missim Year After
Year.**

With the approach of each holiday, Torah instructs us to recount its story, for it carries a timely message; by discussing the story, we encourage ourselves to implement the lesson in our daily lives.

Yud Tes Kislev commemorates the Alter Rebbe's liberation from Czarist imprisonment. He was arrested for spreading Torah and Chassidus fearlessly, and his liberation opened new vistas in the expansion of Chassidus.

Recounting this story, therefore, should awaken us to similar ideals, to spread Chassidus far and wide, with self-sacrifice and perseverance.

Sicha 1

1. Commemoration With a Purpose

It is the Jewish custom that when we gather to commemorate a particular event, we explore the cause of the meeting.

Now, this anniversary has been celebrated many times, so we can assume that everyone already knows the reason for the gathering.

And the Torah teaches us that every single moment is precious; not a moment may be wasted, God forbid, merely repeating that which is already known; surely, the moments of an “auspicious day”, as Yud-Tes Kislev is called in the Sefer Shaalos U’Teshuvos Min Hashamayim, such time is even more precious.

Furthermore, time is connected with space:

We are in a place of prayer of Torah study, and public Torah-study, therefore every moment is even more significant, as well as every word.

On the one hand, according to Torah, deed is greater than speech. On the other hand, the entire sequence of creation began with speech, the Asara Maamaros by which the world was created, and similarly, all of Torah is included in the Aseres Hadibros. Torah teaches us this fact as a lesson, teaching us the value of each and every word of a Jew, even mundane speech.

A Jew must attempt to utilize everything in the world, as our Sages – whose every word is measured out, yet carries infinite depth of meaning – declared, “God did not create even one thing in His world for nothing.” This applies not only to created objects, but also to every single moment in time and every bit of space; they, too, “were not created,” God forbid, “for nothing.” In fact, this is compelled by simple logic, since everything was created by God Himself, the One and Only Creator of every single detail – every object, as well as time and space – which are also creations.

Now even a human would not do something without purpose; if he does it, he obviously has some rationale, some reason. The same must be true of each bit of space, and every moment in time; they all have a purpose. And similar behavior is required of a Jew, since “I was created only to serve my Master.” Jews must be “God’s righteous nation”; and “the righteous resemble their Creator.” Thus, every moment in time must be valued, every aspect of one’s behavior: speech, and certainly deed, and certainly thought; one must be especially careful with thought, even more so than speech and deed. Rambam explains in the Laws of teshuva that teshuva is not only – as some would assume – for deeds alone; teshuva is even more important for thoughts, which then become expressed in speech.

2. Turning Words Into Deeds

Considering all of the above, the accepted custom seems very unusual:

Every time we commemorate an event, Torah tells us to recount it – even as a Biblical obligation, as in the case of Passover; the verse also tells us, “These days shall be remembered,” a specific directive to read the Megillah every year, to recount the story of Purim – verbally.

Why must we recount the events that caused the gathering and repeat the reason for the celebration, in all its details?

The explanation can be found in the words of the very same verse:

“These days are remembered and observed” – when the events of the day are recalled verbally, then they will also be “observed,” the words will be translated into action.

Everything a Jew does has an intent and a purpose. The main purpose is “to serve my Master.” The Torah of Life states that “action is the main thing” – “service of the Creator” must be translated into deed.

In order to be certain that it will be translated into real and tangible action, we cannot suffice with last year’s discussion of the events. And it is not enough just to reflect upon the events, it must translate at the very least into a “minor action” – speech. And when events are recounted, speech leads to true remembering, and then can we be certain that the remembrance will result in action.

And then, as the person grows older and reaches the same occasion again, like this Farbrengen, we must continue to grow. We are taught in the conclusion of Tractate Brachos: “The Righteous do not rest; they always advance from strength to strength.” And with each year that he grows older and goes from strength to strength, he must once again retell the story, because he is expected to achieve more than last year.

3. To Recount it Publicly

But with what should we begin?

Based on the “the great principle of the Torah – Love your fellow as yourself.”

The emphasis is “as yourself.”

Therefore, when Jews gather together, it becomes important for all the assembled that we retell at least the main reasons for the gathering¹. Again, this does not mean, God forbid, that anyone is lacking in knowledge. On the contrary, every Jew is “assumed to know the entire Torah in its entirety,” including the importance of this event.

1. Since this will be helpful to others, as the Rebbe goes on to explain.

But each time it is recounted verbally, it goes out into the world, and, "it is in all limbs of the body," as the Talmud states, and "then is it preserved" – it is spoken with chayus and the words draw energy from all his limbs.

And then the listener strives to "accept the truth from whomever says it."

All truth is rooted in the Almighty's "True Existence." Certainly then, when we recount the words of God in His holy Torah, the Eternal Torah, [it will be accepted by the listener].

The Alter Rebbe writes on the title page of Tanya: "It is very close to you indeed, in your mouth and heart to do it." It is not difficult – on the contrary, it is "close," in all three areas of thought, speech and deed. But the first step is "in your mouth" – it begins with speech. Telling the story arouses the heart, and this results in actual deed.

4. Greater Light After the Darkness

The same is true regarding the events of this auspicious day:

The essential point is that the Alter Rebbe – an authority on Torah's inner dimension, as author of the Tanya, and an authority on Jewish law, as author of the Shulchan Aruch, both of which are parts of the eternal Torah of Life – was imprisoned. He was well aware beforehand that his activities for Judaism were liable to result in imprisonment – an imprisonment that literally endangered his very life; the charges leveled against him warranted capital punishment. Yet, this did not stop his efforts, and he proceeded in an ever-greater measure, everywhere he could reach.

In general, Torah requires a Jew to follow "the law of the land." Yet, when secular law contradicts Jewish law, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, quoted his father and predecessor: "Only our bodies, not our souls, were sent into exile" – in matters of Jewish observance, nobody has authority over Jews and Judaism.

This theme is underscored on this day, the "Chag Hageulah."

"Geulah" is possible only after an imprisonment. He was libeled and imprisoned for his spreading of Judaism, and for his spreading of Torah in particular – for spreading Torah's double light, – both Torah's revealed dimension and Torah's inner dimension.

Our Rebbes explain that this is alluded to in his very name, "Shneur – Two lights." He did not teach them² as two separate parts, God forbid, rather, they are united like one name – even in Jewish law, "Shneur" is considered one name. "Shneur," therefore, means: two lights united as one.

Now, the Alter Rebbe was imprisoned for 53 days. Chassidim relate that the days of the

2. Nigleh and Chassidus

Alter Rebbe's confinement correspond to the chapters of Tanya. 53 is also the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word "Gan – Garden," and every Jew and all Jews make this world "God's own garden."

And so, the ultimate purpose of the imprisonment and liberation became clear in a good and revealed way; greater light comes out of the darkness; and greater wisdom in the dissemination of Torah specifically coming after the darkness and foolishness of the false charges against him, and the resulting imprisonment.

While in prison, he was temporarily prevented from disseminating Torah, teaching Torah publicly, etc., but in his redemption, "the light and vitality of our souls was granted to us," as the famous letter about Yud Tes Kislev describes.

5. The Lesson

And as a result of recounting at least these main points: that we are gathered on this day to commemorate the Alter Rebbe's ordeal which resulted from disseminating Judaism and Torah without limitations, disregarding all obstacles, even to the point of risking his very life – we, too, must have the same dedication, with joy and gladness. And we are certain that just as it was "in those days" – that the arrest was followed by liberation and greater dissemination of Judaism in general, and Torah and Mitzvos in particular, so too it will be manifest in our times – "in practice."

Every single Jewish man and women, and also the children on their own level, must participate all of the above:

Beginning with telling the story of the arrest and liberation, and channeling it into concrete action for that which the Alter Rebbe risked his life. And we are guaranteed victory; we will conquer all confinement, darkness, and foolishness, until we will defeat the darkness of exile.

During the "footsteps of Moshiach" there is intensified darkness, but this should not, God forbid, cause despair – on the contrary, it increases our joyous expectation of Redemption. On this day, we take on good resolutions, in action, in all areas and teachings of the Alter Rebbe.

We are assured complete victory, just like it was then – and in fact, we will continue to achieve even more and more until darkness will be entirely nullified, the Redemption will begin, followed immediately by the full, true, and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

May he come and redeem us, and lead us upright to our Land, speedily in our days.

L'chaim.

S I C H A

2

A Voice with No Echo

Hashem's Greatest Accomplishment

In the letter disseminated after his release, the Alter Rebbe focuses on peace, rather than Torah and Judaism. Why? At the Giving of the Torah, Hashem proclaimed, “I am the L-rd your G-d Who took you out of Egypt”. Why didn’t He say, “Who created heaven and earth?” Hashem’s true greatness is revealed when opposites are united. Therefore, elevating Egypt is superior to the creation of heaven and earth; it is, in fact, the ultimate purpose of creation. Therefore, at Har Sinai, Hashem’s voice had no echo. All of creation absorbed His voice and was united with Him. Hashem’s ultimate revelation is thus a concept of unity and peace. For this reason the Alter Rebbe focuses on peace; his work was in order to reveal Elokus in the world, which is the ultimate peace – a peace between creator and creation

Sicha 2

6. The Day's Unique Focus

Torah's emphasis on action

– “it is very close to you, in your mouth and heart to do it” –

applies equally to all of Torah and Mitzvos. However, particular times carry particular obligations, as each of the *Yomim Tovim* has its own specific mitzvos and customs. So too, our ongoing service of God, should be imbued with the spirit of the unique mitzvos and customs of that particular time of year.

Likewise, our actions today should focus on those matters for which the Alter Rebbe manifestly risked his life. True, he lived his entire life with unending self-sacrifice, but even in a life of self-sacrifice, certain matters can be singled out, for particular emphasis and focus. A similar unique focus applies to today's date.

7. Redeemed in Peace

Although there are many different areas in which the Alter Rebbe displayed special self-sacrifice, the letter he wrote about his liberation highlights that he was freed “in peace” “by the God of peace,” as he read in Tehillim the pasuk stating “He redeemed my soul in peace.” At that very moment, before reciting the next pasuk, he was informed of his impending release, and he “went out in peace.”

The word that he repeatedly highlights is “peace.”

This is most surprising.

Torah consists of 613 mitzvos; Even if you are to count “peace” among them, or related to one specific mitzvah, it is most certainly not the first and foremost foundation of Torah and mitzvos, the first commandment:

“I am the Lord your God Who brought you out of the Land of Egypt.”

The experiences of a Jewish leader, a Nasi of our people – [relate to all people:] his imprisonment relates to the entire Jewish people, and surely his liberation is also a deliverance for all Jews. The Alter Rebbe was imprisoned for spreading Judaism; Torah and mitzvos. So the liberation that followed surely emphasizes the ideal of self-sacrifice beginning with “I am the Lord your God Who brought you out of the Land of Egypt.” But we see that, in his letter, the Alter Rebbe highlights an entirely different ideal – peace. -?-

8. Unifying Opposites

This can be resolved based on the discussion regarding the pasuk, “I am the Lord your God Who took you out of Egypt.”

There is a well-known question:

Why did God not say, “Who created heaven and earth?”

The answer:

God emphasized the Exodus because it represents His ability to unify opposites.

“I am the Lord your God” is the ultimate expression of God’s unity. And this is followed immediately by mentioning the polar opposite, “Who took you out of Egypt,” the embodiment of impurity. Therefore, God specifically mentions Egypt, and Egypt as it is at the heyday of its evil –, from which He needs to redeem the Jews.

These two opposites are brought together in the same pasuk and in the same statement not as two separate remarks, but as one statement: “I am the Lord your God” connected and one with, “Who took you out of Egypt.” The Exodus, specifically, brings one to believe in God, to faith in His absolute Unity, with all that follows from that belief.

The entire Torah is included within the Ten Commandments, which, in turn, are included within the First Commandment. The first commandment, therefore, focuses on peace. These are not two conflicting ideals: “I am the Lord your God” battling with the ideals represented by Egypt; rather, the goal is to make “peace”: To elevate “Egypt” and “take it out” and thus bring the world to the true state of God’s Unity.

In a similar vein, Maimonides explains the superiority of a baal teshuva over a complete Tzaddik. Though the Tzaddik has never sinned nor strayed and has remained righteous throughout his life, nevertheless, one cannot be certain of his response if he is put to a test, or even if confronted by an unusually tough challenge. A baal teshuva, by contrast, who has faced the same situation where he previously sinned, and has defied temptation, and “the Master of Secrets will testify that he will never again relapse,” one can then be certain that he will maintain his repentant stance, no matter what changes take place in his environment, which is the entire world.

Thus repentance, too, is not a battle in which one side conquers the other. Rather, both sides give rise to a third situation, a constructive dynamic of peace and perfection.

9. The Journey of the Soul

How is this connected to the Alter Rebbe’s liberation?

Just as one may ask for what purpose was the Jewish people’s exile in Egypt, the same

question may be asked about every man and woman's personal exile - their personal battles.

There are two possible approaches:

One tactic is to fight and conquer.

The other tactic is "He redeemed my soul in peace." In this manner, the opposition is elevated and harnessed for good.

The same is true of every Jew's journey in this world, as a soul in a body. The soul descends "from a lofty height to a deep pit." It is the deepest and furthest descent possible.

Why does God do this? What is His purpose?

The answer:

"I am the Lord your God Who took you out of Egypt."

God created Egypt with an ultimate purpose - their being the most evil nation, and their forcing the Jewish people into exile along with God Himself, as God said, "I will go down with you to Egypt," was all planned by God to lead to His revelation.

10. The Purpose of the Journey - Recognizing God

And then when God did reveal Himself, the Midrash relates, all of creation was silent and attentive, and was imbued with God's words, "I am the Lord your God;" it permeated every space as well as every creature on earth.

This also explains the statement of the Midrash that God's voice at Sinai had no echo.

What is the purpose and meaning of this miracle?

As explained once at length:

An echo occurs when the sound reaches a barrier which causes the sound to bounce back. But when the barrier ceases to obstruct the sound, and instead absorbs it - becomes one with it - then there is no echo. And this is what occurred with the Ten Commandments. God's voice did not bounce back, because it permeated everything it reached; whatever heard God's words, "I am the Lord your God," ceased to be an entity separate from God. It sensed and experienced true reality that "There is nothing else besides Him."

This is why the soul descends into this world, a "deep pit." God made some places profoundly low, with the intention that the soul reveal the Godly purpose and harmony in everything, until God's voice reaches, and is heard from every direction, proclaiming, "I am the Lord your God."

This is the point of creation.

The existence of God, His unity, preceded the creation of man. But for all creations to actually recognize God – an independent created being which, in turn, knows God’s power and deeds [is required, and] – this was not yet a reality [until humankind was created].

How is this recognition accomplished?

Not by means of destruction, God forbid, but constructively.

Every Jew plays a part in this, as our Sages teach, every Jew can participate in “building” the world. By building a home for God; building the Tabernacle in the desert from gold, silver, and copper – spoils “elevated” from Egypt and the Red Sea – similarly, the Tabernacle’s beams were made specifically from the cedar trees that were planted in Egypt. These actions brought a perfection to the world by bringing peace and harmony between the heavenly realm and the earthly realm.

This can be achieved only through Torah, whose “ways are pleasant, and all its paths are peace.” When a person studies Torah, whatever his initial motivation, he will ultimately study it for its own sake, and the Sages say that he thereby makes peace, both “in the heavenly realm and in the earthly realm.”

11. Your Peace Affects the Whole World

And on this auspicious day our ability to do so is intensified. An open miracle took place on this day, which “was witnessed by all the nations and their leaders,” throughout the land, as he writes in his letter.

The peace a Jew generates is then a true peace:

As God says of the peace offering in the Temple, both “peace between Me and My world,” and also “peace between man and his fellow.” For part of the peace offering was burnt on the altar, part was given to the owner, and part was eaten by the priests, and was also shared by their wives, sons, daughters, and servants. Hence, it was called a shlamim offering, for shalom means peace.

Every Jew achieves this through bringing “perfection” into his divine service, meaning, by fully utilizing every moment of his time and every space he occupies, towards the ultimate perfection, God – meaning in the service of God.

The way one expresses this in practice is by “loving your fellow as yourself”: The true peace between one person and another and between man and wife, is a love “as yourself,” to the truest peace, a unity.

This also brings “peace in the heavenly realm and in the earthly.” The Alter Rebbe explains that every Jew’s individual peace resonates to the highest heavens, and all the

way down permeating his divine soul and his animal soul, his body and soul, the materiality of the world and its spirituality, bringing them all to a state of peace.

And "peace is great" for it induces the true and complete redemption which will result in the fulfillment of God's pledge "I will grant peace in the Land" and "I will lead you upright," which comes as a result of our actualizing God's request:

"If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them."

May it be speedily in our days.

S I C H A

3

Learning Never Ends

Genuine Law Enforcement

Along with the focus on peace, the Alter Rebbe repeatedly mentions that his release was revealed and even facilitated by the non-Jews. The lesson for us is to promote a true peace among the nations, by promoting the Sheva Mitzvos B'nei Noach.

Instead of governments building jails and hiring police and judges to impose law and order, they should invest in proper education, thus preventing all of those issues peacefully.

School administrations also have an obligation to organize extracurricular activities that will extend the school's positive influence beyond classroom hours.

Sicha 3

12. Darkness Turned to Light

There's something else that the Alter Rebbe mentions in his letter – following the previous topics, and therefore definitely related to them.

It is, that his liberation “was witnessed by all the nations and their leaders,” and before that, concerning the miracle, he writes, “God has dealt with us greatly and wondrously,” emphasizing that it was “throughout the land.” That is, he was first arrested by “the nations and their leaders,” the arrest was also widely publicized across the land. Therefore, later on, when “God dealt wondrously,” it was in a form that “darkness turned to light” the nations, their leaders and even “the earth itself” liberated him; from the very darkness came a superior light, just as “wisdom is greatest when it grows out of folly.”

Everything contains a lesson for us; as the Baal Shem Tov teaches, nothing a person hears or sees is without a purpose; rather, it contains a directive on how he should serve his Maker. Most certainly, then, something mentioned in a letter written by a Nasi, which he publicized, and it is studied in later generations, surely carries a lesson for every Jew's divine service.

The emphasis in the letter, which he repeated three times, is that it was “great and wondrous,” it was “in the midst of the earth;” and it was implemented by “the nations and their leaders.”

13. The Sheva Mitzvos

This is obviously linked to the ruling in Torah, that part of a Jew's mission in this world – for “I was created to serve my Creator” – Maimonides rules in his Laws of Kings that a Jew must do everything in his power to influence all non-Jewish people, and nations within his reach, to live according to God's will, to follow the Seven Noahide Laws and all the laws that come from them, which also makes this world a civilized place. And Maimonides emphasizes specifically, that they must fulfill these laws because God commanded them, not because they are logical rules, in which case, the individual would be considered neither wise nor righteous, as Maimonides writes.

The command given at Sinai was that we must influence all people and nations of the

world to live according to the Seven Noahide Laws.

Additionally, it is evident that these laws impact the peace and tranquility of the Jew himself. For a Jew to be able to fulfill all of the mitzvot properly, he requires physical and spiritual tranquility. It is of fundamental assistance when the nations among whom he lives – indeed, the world at large, conduct their lives in the path established by God by the principles upon which the world stands, “a civilized world” according to the Seven Noahide Laws and all their bylaws.

Today, the date of the Alter Rebbe’s liberation, is an opportune time to advance this cause, every individual in his own way, at least by way of speech, to influence the non-Jews around him, indeed, the entire world, bringing them closer to the fulfillment of, and basing their actions upon, the Seven Noahide Laws. First and foremost – this creates peace and prevents anarchy. This is a principal responsibility of every government.

The Seven Noahide Laws are seven general commandments that branch out into commandments, each with many detailed laws. Together they set forth a full system which is based upon a grounded justice and righteousness, because they are based upon God’s just and upright Torah, which is a guide for all mankind. It has since been transmitted in the Written Law, and also in the Oral Law, in the ruling of Maimonides, that every Jew must do his utmost to further this.

This auspicious day, linked to the Alter Rebbe’s letter, is also a fitting time to discuss and promote this.

14. An Ounce of Prevention

In order for a peaceful society to exist, there must be a fear of government, but it must reach beyond fear alone. Rather, it must permeate the citizens and motivate them to act charitably. According to several halachic authorities, charity is one of the Seven Noahide Laws. Even Maimonides writes that if a non-Jew desires to undertake an additional Mitzvah, he is duly rewarded, and the example he gives is tzedakah – charity. In any case, the obligation to establish a judicial system is one of the seven laws. In regards to our discussion: Ultimately, a system of law and order based on morality requires fear of the government, as well – for without that, “each man would swallow his fellow alive.”

But just as in matters of physical health, there are two possible approaches: One is that when a person takes ill, God forbid, we seek out a cure.

But there is a better approach to maintain good health – the preventative approach. When a person is taught to live as a healthy person, by living a healthy lifestyle. In our case, this means creating a healthy society by living a civilized life. And then the government needn’t to actually instill fear – we can suffice by educating children properly

in the first place, and once the child is placed on the right path early on, it becomes his nature to act justly throughout his life.

If a fraction of the money spent on law enforcement were invested into moral education – for students to be taught not merely information, but, most importantly, to educate them to be human beings rather than selfish savages, we'd be so much more successful, and so much aggravation could be prevented! It has already been proven: Those regions and communities which have focused their resources on transmitting a proper education, where they teach students to be upright human beings, they were successful, and it has even reduced government spending.

15. Influencing Behavior at Home

However, those communities, as well, are still missing an essential point:

We've discussed the general issue numerous times, but there is another vital point here which relates to the topic of "peace."

Every individual is aware of the reason that their own peace and tranquility can be elusive:

When one conducts their own life with conflicting behaviors. On Shabbos and Holidays, he conducts himself properly, free of pressures and disturbances. Nothing is "forcing" him, – in his mind – to encroach, steal, or act dishonestly, because on Shabbos, "all his work is complete." With the approach of weekdays, it appears to him, that his livelihood is dependent on harming the livelihood of another, and so on and so forth.

So there are diverse opinions within himself, a state of internal strife, each form of conduct conflicting with the other. Then a special effort is necessary, to transform it – "he redeemed my soul in peace."

So too, with the education of our children:

The emphasis of education must be, first and foremost, on the proper way to relate to others and on the proper way to relate to God, belief in God – because only then does the education have a solid grounding and a lasting effect.

But there is another issue which is often overlooked:

Students are within the walls of the school, or other educational institutions – whether Jewish or non-Jewish, each according to its own schedule – only for a limited part of the day. The child is there for several hours a day, but then he finds himself in a different environment, either in street or in his home, left without the supervision and guidance that the school provides. Now even in the best schools, it has not yet been a point of focus that a school's total obligation is – no difference whether Jewish or non-Jewish –

to ensure that those hours when the student is outside its walls, and not officially under school supervision, do not conflict with the values that were instilled in him during school hours.

Now, no doubt, the teachers and counselors will respond that they dedicate their after-school time to prepare their lessons for the next day. But this does not excuse the administration. A school worthy of its name – “school” in Hebrew is “Beis HaSefer – House of the Book” – must teach the child a living embodiment of his learning, of moral principles.

Practically speaking:

Even during the hours when the student is not at school, the administration must find creative ways to ensure that they will be provided with proper guidance and be surrounded by influences of justice and integrity.

And then it eliminates the conflict within the student between the values instilled in them by the educational institution, versus the negative influences in his home or on the street or whatever environment the child might find themselves.

The solution to this conflict is, in the words of King David:

“God redeemed my soul in peace from battles against me.” The battle can be averted altogether – as the Mittlerer Rebbe expounds the verse – when it is avoided peacefully.

When the school organizes itself such that it keeps its students constantly in mind – outside of school hours, as well, only then it has truly earned its name – “House of the Book”: when it leads its students in the upright, straight path.

16. After School Programing

In the past, many programs were organized, in which children were brought together outside of school hours for a variety of extracurricular activities. The child will be especially receptive when there’s a tangible program connected with this. It should be part of the school program for the school to record each student’s accomplishments beyond school hours, and to reward them.

As to the argument: It is wrong to teach children to do good deeds for the sake of reward... Maimonides explains that this is indeed the proper way to educate children; at first the child may have ulterior motives, but eventually it becomes his second nature. It should be recorded in writing, and the child would present it, and a competition made of it.

Everything is related to the Torah portion, as it is assigned to the days of the week.

Our sages state regarding Reuben the firstborn of Jacob, in connection with the story in

today's Torah portion:

"Had Reuben known that God would record in Torah his efforts to rescue Joseph, his efforts would have been on an entirely higher level."

The same message applies here.

We have mentioned many times, that even those who fundraise for education, – whether for Jewish or for non-Jewish schools – have entirely forgotten the main goal; rather than waiting until the boy or girl has become a teenager, and has already absorbed an undesirable education, and then seek some way to keep him occupied, because otherwise he will destroy his environment, instead, when searching for funds, they can be obtained for the goal of impacting children when they are yet young and attending school, but where they spend only limited hours every day, and afterwards they are left to fend for themselves.

The funds can be channeled to develop ways – and there are certainly many creative ways, for God created this world to be a civilized place – to occupy the children after school hours with positive and constructive activities. Then, when the child grows up there will be no need to find for him a vacant prison cell in which to incarcerate him because he has become a danger to society. Even the efforts to occupy the youth by finding him a job, lest he become a destructive force, would also become unnecessary.

So this is the new point we are adding:

Every person should join and invest effort to restore these programs to their former state.

17. Always Concerned with the Students

What is the source for this in Torah?

The Talmud relates that Rabbah, son of Shilas, was a Torah teacher.

One day he was seen at home, not at the school.

When he was asked, "What are you doing here? He replied: "My thoughts are upon my students."

He had been away from home for many years. Yet even when he returned home for a short time, he was still preoccupied with his students. Obviously his thoughts were not just with them to no constructive outcome – if so, what excuse would it be, to say, "I am thinking about them"?! Clearly he acted on his concern for his students – albeit from afar; he continued to influence the students such that even when he was absent – or when they were outside of the school – they continued to conduct themselves as though Rabbah were right there with them.

The meaning of his name relates to this theme as well:

The meaning of Rabbah is self-evident – he was a teacher, but what is the meaning of “Bar Shilas”?

It is similar to the meaning of “Ben Chorin,” He was a “free man” himself – not the “son of a free man.”

Rabbah, as well, was an individual, a teacher, he was “bar,” he totally personified the verse “shivisi Hashem l’negdi samid,” “I have God before me, always,” of which “Shilas” is an abbreviation.

Our sages explain that he had the image of God constantly before him, so that, with regards to God’s work “God was set before him,” no matter the circumstance, “his mind was with his students,” he was continuously and constantly involved.

18. The Administration

And if this is expected of a Jew and demanded of an educator – God only demands of us according to our abilities – so one can be assured that he has the strength to fulfill it. And if the teachers or counselors themselves do not have the time or strength for this, it is abundantly clear that this primary duty – to be concerned for the students at all times – rests on the administration of every yeshiva, every school, and so forth; they must be concerned with where the children spend their time when they are not within the school walls, and to what kinds of influences they are exposed.

And this concern must be translated into concrete solutions:

To ensure that those hours are an extension of the education received during the school program. This is the way to raise an upright generation, instilled with upright values.

19. Non-Jewish Educators too

And this must be implemented by non-Jewish educators, as well.

As righteous gentiles, they too earn reward in the world to come. And in this way, the entire world will also assist to “perfect the world under the sovereignty of God.”

And the prophecy will be fulfilled:

“He will transform the nations to a pure language, and they will serve Him together, with single purpose.”

The preparation for this state is through illuminating the darkness, by furthering the fulfillment of the Seven Noahide Laws, whoever has the influence to do so, whether directly or indirectly.

May the wisdom and knowledge indeed spread forth throughout the world, and may we speedily merit the fulfillment of the pledge "He will transform the nations to a pure language, and they will serve Him together, with single purpose" – God will be revealed and recognized throughout the world, "God is one and His name is one."

May it be speedily in our times, in reality, joyfully and with happy hearts.

S I C H A

4

Called to Duty

Hashem's Little Soldiers

Tzivos Hashem, was founded to gather Jewish children together outside of school, to be impressed with the message that they are soldiers in Hashem's Army. Every Jewish child should have a letter in a collective Torah scroll.

Sicha 4

20. *A Soldier*

One of the objectives of the Tzivos Hashem children's club is to gather Jewish children under Bar and Bat Mitzvah

– in addition to the Kosher education they are receiving in a proper Jewish school –

to explain to them that they are soldiers in “Tzivos Hashem,” as Rashi writes in his commentary – which he wrote for a five year-old to understand – that members of “Tzivos Hashem” are worthy of being counted from one month old.

And although, within the Jewish nation itself, “Tzivos Hashem” refers to the Tribe of Levi, nevertheless, in context of the world at large, all Jews, young and old, are called “Tzivos Hashem,” and from the time God took the Jews out of Egypt, the Torah of Truth conferred upon them the title and status of “Tzivos Hashem,” all Jews – men, women and children.

Now, the emphasis here is that before they reach Bar and Bat Mitzvah they must already be educated with this idea. While the Talmud states that mature education of a child starts at age 18 and goes until age 22, when he exerts his independence, however, the most formative learning takes place before Bar and Bat Mitzvah.

So already at that age, we are obligated to have “my mind upon them” – in addition to the hours they spend in school, the children should be gathered together, and they should be explained that while one day they will reach Bar and Bat Mitzvah, already now they are soldiers in Tzivos Hashem.

And what is a soldier?

My father-in-law, the Rebbe, once said that if a soldier received proper discipline in training, then it will be evident not only on the battlefield and not only when he's on the military base, and not only when he walks down the street, but even when he eats and drinks, and even when he sleeps. A soldier's sleep is different!

But he's just sleeping?!

Nevertheless, his movements during sleep and the way he sleeps – if he's a soldier and he's received proper military training – are different than a civilian.

How much more so in God's army.

Immediately at the moment of birth, every Jewish child receives a Jewish soul – “a part of God Above.” The Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya: “This soul is literally a part of God Above, for someone who blows, blows from his innermost being, and the verse states,

‘God blew a living soul into Man.’” At the very moment of birth every child, boy or girl, already has this “part of God” within them.

21. *Harmony*

As mentioned above, the child is in school for some hours, and then, their state is, as the Jews were described at Sinai “as a pupil fleeing from school,” due to the outside influences which conflict with the education he or she receives in school.

So when we teach the children that at every hour of the day and night they are God’s soldiers – not only when they study God’s Torah and fulfill His commandments, but that even in their personal time they must know that it is their mission to light up the darkness of the world, to bring the light of Torah and Mitzvos to their home, their neighborhood and their entire city

– this creates a harmony between the hours that the young boy or girl spends in school and the hours they spend outside of it.

When it comes to a soldier, it is as Maimonides writes about a Torah scholar: “In the way he eats and drinks and walks” – in everything he does – “it is recognizable to all that he is a wise man.” The same is true of a soldier in Tzivos Hashem.

22. *Children’s Torah Scroll*

Now is an appropriate time to mention and emphasize the connection between all Jewish children, and their connection to God’s Torah and commandments, by each child acquiring a letter in the collective Torah scroll.

The first Torah was recently completed in the Old City of Jerusalem, and it was celebrated at the Western Wall, and a second Torah is already underway to unite all children, for every Jewish boy and girl to have their own letter in the Torah.

It is an eternal Torah and it is a living Torah which infuses vitality into the life of every Jew – so that he reaches his true potential – from the very first moment of life; for from the moment a baby enters the world the baby’s life is protected with the full weight of Jewish law, and the collective Torah scroll will form a true bond, for it is a bond created through the Torah of Truth, and an eternal bond, created through the Eternal Torah.

23. *“From the Mouths of Babes”*

May this endeavor continue until “from the mouths of babes... you will establish strength” “*strength* refers to the Torah,” until all babies and infants, all those under Bar or Bat Mitzvah are united with this “strength,” and it becomes a foundation in their

lives, which they retain as they mature.

And this will “silence the enemy and avenger,” that is, the darkness of exile, our true enemy, for we are “sons exiled from their Father’s table.”

And – according to a second opinion – it means that the darkness will not only be silences, it will be *transformed*. The bad elements will not be banished, rather they will be transformed for good, just as the Evil Inclination is harnessed for the positive.

And so, too, the forces of the present exile will be redirected, even now, to light up the darkness with the true light – that of Torah and its Mitzvos.

Beginning with these “babies and infants” who will lead the way, “with our sons and our daughters” and all of “God’s legions,” to greet our Righteous Moshiach in the true and ultimate Redemption through the righteous Moshiach.

They will go peacefully – for during daytime as well as the evenings they act as faithful members of the God’s army – to greet God, the Commander-in-Chief: “Return us, illuminate Your face that we may be saved” with the true and complete redemption.

May it be speedily in our days.

L’chaim.

S I C H A

5

*Write for
yourselves
this Song...*

**The Communal Torah
Scroll**

*Hadran
on Minyan
Hamitzvos*

in honor of the Mivtzah
of Ois B'sefer Torah

דברים לא יט

וְעַתָּה כָּתְבוּ לָכֶם אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת וְלַמָּדָה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁימָה בְּפִיהֶם לְמַעַן
תִּהְיֶה לִּי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְעֵד בְּכַנִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

רמב"ם הלכות תפילין ומזוזה וספר תורה ז

הלכה א

מצות עשה על כל איש ואיש מישראל לכתוב ספר תורה לעצמו שנאמר ועתה
כתבו לכם את השירה כלומר כתבו לכם תורה שיש בה שירה זו לפי שאין
כותבין את התורה פרשיות פרשיות ואע"פ שהניחו לו אבותיו ספר תורה מצוה
לכתוב משלו ואם כתבו בידו הרי הוא כאילו קבלה מהר סיני ואם אינו יודע
לכתוב אחרים כותבין לו וכל המגיה ספר תורה ואפילו אות אחת הרי הוא
כאילו כתבו כולו.

1. The last Mivtza in Torah is that every individual should write his own Sefer Torah.

Why didn't any Gedolei Yisroel emphasize this Mitzvah?

2. A possible answer: (1)

The Shulchan Aruch writes that nowadays, the Mivtza is to write Chumashim, Mishnayos etc.

שולחן ערוך יורה דעה ער

סעיף א

מצות עשה על כל איש מישראל לכתוב לו ספר תורה. ואפילו הניחו לו אבותיו
ספר תורה מצוה לכתוב משלו. ואינו רשאי למכרו אפילו יש לו הרבה ספרי
תורה. ואפילו אין לו מה יאכל רק על ידי הדחק (הגהות מיימוני פ"ו) ואפילו
למכור ישן כדי לקנות חדש אסור. אבל ללמוד תורה או לישא אשה מותר
למכור אם אין לו דבר אחר למכור.

סעיף ב

האידינא מצוה לכתוב חומשי תורה ומשנה וגמרא ופירושיהן. ולא ימכרם אם

לא ללמוד תורה ולישא אשה.

3. This answer is insufficient, because: (1)
 - A. The Taz explains that this does not replace the Mitzvah to write a Sefer Torah; it simply adds new component to it.
 - A. The Shach writes that indeed, nowadays there is no Mivtza to write a Sefer Torah; rather to write (or buy) seforim.
4. Perhaps nowadays we hold like the Shach? (2)

Even if we would hold like the shach, we don't find Gedolei Yisroel being careful about buying or writing seforim....
5. The original question is strengthened:

Even those Gedolim that did write Sifrei Torah, did so later in life. But since this Mivtza is related to learning Torah, the ideal time to write it would be before Bar Mivtza, so that immediately when one becomes obligated in Mitzvos, he should already know how to act. (2)
6. A proof to the above from a halacha regarding a Ger: (3)

A convert must become acquainted with Judaism before he convert, so that, upon converting, he will immediately know how to conduct himself.
7. A possible answer as to why they did not write it prior to their Bar Mitzva: (1)

Regarding the Mitzvah of Bris Milah, the halacha states that the obligation stands throughout a person's lifetime, and the punishment for its unfulfillment - kares - applies only at the point of his death. Perhaps here as well, the obligation is applicable throughout a Jew's lifetime, and there is therefore no rush to accomplish it before the Bar Mitzvah.
8. This answer is insufficient because: (1)

Here the mivtza is in order to acquire knowledge. Every moment that the person is lacking in his knowledge affects his entire life; therefore the Sefer Torah must be written right away.
9. Possible answer to the original question: (2)

Perhaps the obligation to write a Sefer Torah is accomplished through checking over a letter in the torah.

 - A. The Ramah (in the name of the Bnei Yonah) says that this applies only if checking in connection with a mistake.

יורה דעה, סימן ע"ר, ס"א

שכר לו סופר לכתוב לו ספר תורה או שקנאו והוא היה מוטעה והגיהו -- הרי זה כאילו כתבו (ב"י בשם נ"י). אבל לקחו כך ולא הגיה בו דבר הוי כחוטף מצוה מן השוק (טור בשם ריב"ל פרק הקומץ) ואינו יוצא בזה.

A. The Tur says that that even if he wasn't not fixing a mistake

יורה דעה, סימן ער, ס"א

מצות עשה על כל אדם מישראל שיכתוב לו ספר תורה. ומאד צריך לחזור אחריה, דאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי הלוקח ספר תורה מן השוק כחוטף מצוה מן השוק, כתבו או שהגיה בו אפילו אות אחת כאילו קיבלה מהר סיני.

So maybe say, that the mitvta is accomplished through checking over a letter, as the Tur states?

10. This answer is rejected, for: (1)

We are not aware of anyone specifically checking a letter in order to fulfill the Mitzvah..

11. Klutz Kashia (unrelated to the sequence of the hadran): (2)

Moshe passed on this Mivtza of writing the sefer torah in Adar, right before his passing on the Seventh of Adar. Over the next thirty days, the Yidden were occupied with mourning for Moshe, and on the Tenth of Nissan they crossed into Eretz Yisrael. How was it possible, in such a short time period of time, for every yid to write his own personal torah?

12. Answer to this klutz kasha: (2)

13. By Matan Torah, the Yidden were commanded to study Torah from writing.

Therefore, already then, every Jew owned a personal Torah, which would grow with each Mitzvah taught. So when Moshe gave over the Mivtza to write a Torah, all they had to do was add a few lines.

14. The answer to the first question: (5)

15. In addition to personal Sifrei Torah, there are Sifrei Torah which belong to communities and groups. These are under the jurisdiction of the Beis Din. In regards to our Mitzvah, Beis Din rules that this Sefer Torah belongs to every single person individually.

16. We nevertheless still need clarification: (1)

How does one actively “write a Sefer Torah”?

17. This can be clarified based on a Law in Chosen Mishpat: (4)

In the case of a dispute over a boundary: if one litigant claims a certain area, but we find a contract in which he lists the boundary according to his opponents claim, he loses his credibility; the contract is testimony against him.

Similarly, when one receives an Aliyah, he testifies that the Sefer Torah is Kosher, and thus he is not transgressing G-d’s name. With this statement, he is considered to have written the Torah.

18. A similar example for the power of Beis Din: (3)

In cities where there was just one set of Arbaah Minim, the Beis Din - on the first day of Yom Tov, when one is obligated to own the set - would apply its ownership to each member of the congregation, at the exact moment when he would recite the blessing over them.

Sicha 5

24. *Something Original*

It is customary on Yud Tes Kislev to make a Siyum on a part of Torah. Being that on this day we also divide the entire Talmud, a Siyum is always made on a tractate of Talmud.

Now, this year, Yud Tes Kislev falls out on the same day it did the first time, when the Alter Rebbe was released from prison – on a Tuesday. Furthermore, this year, with no second month of Adar, Lag B'omer, the day connected with the hidden dimension of Torah – the Yahrzeit of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai – is also on a Tuesday. And Purim too – as one redemption relates to another – is also on a Tuesday.

This being the case, everyone wants to hear something new and different, and if not, they complain that they've already heard this in the past...

Therefore, we will also "conclude" the Mitzvos themselves.

Concluding a tractate is the Siyum of a part of Torah; but Mitzvos are also a part of Torah, as our sages say, "Torah study is great, for it leads to action," action is the ultimate goal which we achieve through Torah study, "action" meaning – Mitzvos.

Now, the Mitzvos of the Torah are in a specific order, and the order of Torah is in itself a part of Torah and Jewish law, and in fact, many concepts, even practical rulings, are derived based on the order in the verses.

The same is true of the Mitzvos of the Torah – there is a first Mitzvah and a last Mitzvah.

25. *Why don't we write Torahs?*

The last Mitzvah, according to most opinions, is the commandment: "Write for yourselves this Torah."

This relates to our earlier discussion about writing a Torah scroll for children, for all Torah scrolls are related to this commandment, the very last command of the Torah: "Now, write for yourselves this Torah" – "to study it," with the goal of fulfilling that which was studied.

There are some who consider a later verse to be the last Mitzvah: "When I call out in the name of the Lord, give glory to our God" – which refers to the blessings on the Torah. However, that commandment, too, is an *aspect* of Torah study, which first requires a Torah scroll, and most importantly, this verse is considered the last Mitzvah only by a

minority of the codifiers. The vast majority hold that the last Mitzvah of the Torah is to write a Torah scroll.

We have spoken about a great question that this raises: There is a clear ruling in the Code of Jewish Law, and earlier, in Maimonides' works, and most codifiers in fact state, that there is a Biblical obligation for every single Jew – or, according to some, for every Jewish man – to write a Torah scroll, as the verse states: "Write this for yourselves."

But in practice, we do not see people fulfilling this command!?

True, the Code of Jewish Law concludes that nowadays this obligation is fulfilled through printing the books of the Torah – Chumash, Mishna and Gemara – which are used to study and fulfill the directives of the Torah.

However, many opinions assert that this is a separate requirement. The Taz, for instance, writes that the Mitzvah to write a Torah scroll is not superseded; rather, nowadays there is an additional obligation to print books, since today we mainly study from printed books. However, he says, the original obligation still stands.

Even according to the Shach, who holds that the obligation today is solely to print books of Chumash, Mishna, etc., we still do not find that upon a child's becoming Bar Mitzvah he is definitively instructed to write, or buy, a Chumash, Mishna or Talmud...

Further compounding the question: There were many Jewish sages who were diligent in fulfilling every minute detail of Jewish law, yet they did not write a Torah scroll at their first opportunity, nor did they participate in writing one, even to fill in one letter! -?-

Likewise in regard to purchasing Torah books, or writing them, since someone who simply purchases a Torah book does not necessarily fulfill this obligation completely...

26. We should do so before Bar Mitzva

Even more puzzling: Some Torah sages made a grand celebration and parade when they concluded the writing of a Torah, with all kinds of music and joyous celebrations.

But when did they do this?

Decades after their Bar Mitzvah.

The commandment, "Write for yourselves," is clearly related by the verse to the fulfillment of Mitzvos: one should write a scroll "to study it" – in order to fulfill the commandments properly. And the obligation to fulfill the mitzvos begins at the age of Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

More so, in order that at the age of thirteen or twelve, they should already know how to behave, they must have the text from which to study the laws, so it stands to reason that

the scroll must be completed by that age.

True, before thirteen he is not yet obligated to perform Mitzvos – however, the rule regarding a convert is that before conversion he must study the Torah laws, even those related only to Jews – for there is no other choice: immediately upon converting, he is already obligated in all the Mitzvos.

This is highlighted in a primary source of the Laws of Conversion – the story of Naomi and Ruth.

The Midrash relates that Naomi studied with Ruth the laws of the four basic commandments, their differences, and many details that are not relevant to the Seven Noahide Laws. Yet this occurred even before she converted. In fact, this was still when Naomi was still trying to convince Ruth not to convert – assuming that she would convince her to leave, just as she had convinced Ruth's sister, Orpah, and nevertheless, she taught her those Torah laws – for there is no other option: a convert must be taught Jewish law before becoming a Jew.

Likewise, Maimonides rules that a child is obligated to study Torah "as soon as he is aware," rather than from when "he becomes Bar Mitzvah" – as the Tzemach Tzedek explains, Maimonides holds that the obligation to study Torah is even before Bar Mitzvah.

This is a revolutionary ruling, but there is no other option; when the child becomes Bar Mitzvah he must know how to fulfill Mitzvos – awe of God, belief in God, the unity of God... all six constant commandments explained by the Sefer HaChinuch, which every person is obligated to fulfill at all times, from the very moment he turns thirteen.

I know myself: My father was diligent even with the minutest aspect of Jewish law. Yet, I never heard from him after my Bar-Mitzvah, even years later, that I should participate in writing a Torah scroll, or even to fill in one letter, etc.

Similarly, in the stories of our Rebbes, and of Jewish leaders in general, in which their lives are described, we do not find that they instructed their own sons – the majority hold that the obligation is only on the men – to find a way to fulfill the Mitzvah of writing a Torah when they turned 13.

27. Reviewing a Torah

Some tried to explain this by comparing it to the Mitzvah of circumcision: The father is commanded to circumcise his son at eight days old; later, when the child turns thirteen, it becomes his own obligation.

There are two approaches:

1) That it is really the baby's obligation, but since he is only a baby, the father executes

the command on his behalf.

2) At first it is the father's obligation, but when the child turns thirteen the obligation transfers to him – he must see to it that he is circumcised if he wasn't until then.

Nevertheless, Maimonides rules that *kares* only applies if he dies uncircumcised; the obligation extends throughout his entire life, but *kares* only applies when he is no longer able to fulfill the Mitzvah.

This, however, has no relevance to our discussion, because the purpose of writing a Torah scroll is clearly explained: “in order to learn it” – so that he can fulfill Mitzvos, which are constant – every day, every moment.

One theoretical answer given, is that it suffices to examine one letter of a Torah scroll, even if there is no defect, but we have often discussed the Ramah's statement, that the obligation is fulfilled only if one *corrects* a defective letter.

[There is a separate Mitzvah: “Do not keep a wrong in your midst” – many authorities interpret this command as a Mitzvah to examine a Torah scroll; and even if he finds no defect, still he ensures that no “wrong” will be found “in his midst” – contrary to other authorities who say this only applies to a defective Torah.]

In any case, the Bnei Yonah writes that the Mitzvah of writing a Torah may be fulfilled by correcting one letter – but only if it was at first defective.

Others, including the Tur, do not specify “a defective letter” – so even if one examines a correct letter, he would fulfill the obligation.

Nevertheless, we did not see the great Jewish sages, who were diligent in every detail of Jewish law, educate their sons upon Bar Mitzvah to check a letter in a Torah scroll.

28. *Torahs in the Desert?*

Besides this, there is a simple question:

When Moses said, “Now write for yourselves this Torah,” it was the Jews' 40th year in the desert, in the month of Adar, just before Moses passed away on the 7th of Adar.

Now, Moses said the Book of Devarim on the first of Adar, and several days passed until the events of Parshas Vayeilech, on the 7th of Adar, and it was about then that the command to write a Torah scroll was given.

Here was a new commandment! So what should have happened?

Every single one of the six hundred thousand Jewish men should have run to write a Torah.

Yet we find not even a hint of this. In fact, it was not even possible for them to fulfill it – after Moses passed away there were the days of mourning; then they were busy preparing to cross the Jordan River... It was physically impossible for each person to have written a Torah between the seventh or sixth of Adar, and the next day, or even until their crossing the Jordan on the 10th of Nissan.

In addition, they needed kosher parchment, ink, a scribe to write it, and all the requisite preparations... They were commanded to do the impossible!

This question, however, does not even begin.

The concept of writing a Torah existed before then as well, and the rule: "The written Torah may not be recited by heart" was already given at Sinai, as understood from the verse in Exodus.

Therefore, when Moses related a commandment or verse of Torah, and he declared it part of the Written Torah – not an interpretation of Torah's words, but a part of the Written Torah – there was the immediate obligation to write it down, since they no longer were permitted to recite it by heart.

Now, they would always review the Torah they heard from Moses until they became proficient – "put it in their mouths." So they immediately needed to transcribe the words, so they could study from the text. As a result, all of the Written Torah, up to the verse "and now write for yourselves," had already been transcribed, and they needed only to add the final verses from that point on.

So it was indeed possible for each person to complete their Torah scroll, since they only needed to add to the scrolls they had already written following God's command to "Write for yourselves these words" – because they may not be studied by heart.

Nevertheless, the main question still remains: We see the Jewish custom throughout the generations – we cannot know, perhaps it was once different; but if there was a sudden or gradual change, we would find a record that at some specific time they stopped or started or otherwise changed the fulfillment of this commandment.

Furthermore:

The terminology used in Code of Jewish Law where it discusses the Mitzvah for every Jew to write a Torah scroll, and in the commentaries, as well as in Maimonides and in the commentaries on his words, all imply that there were no sudden changes.

29. Communal/Private Torahs

A possible answer

– there is a basic rule that a question must bear out from all angles, otherwise it's not

a proper question. But to answer – or, as the Mishna states, “to uphold our Sages’ words” – even a questionable theory is enough – since it supports a Jewish custom and the practice of Jewish sages, any theory is worthwhile. –

Here, we can say that it’s a sound theory, for we find a similar concept elsewhere.

– When suggesting a theory, how do we determine its validity, that it is truly Law, and that we may act upon it? When it exists and is validated for another Mitzvah, as well; then, the rules in the validated case can be applied to this other situation. –

We find regarding Torah scrolls, that in all generations, besides for the personal Torah scroll, there was the communal Torah scroll. This fact is implied in Mishna, Talmud, and Halachic sources, and evident in actual practice. In fact, the very first Torah scrolls were given by Moses to each of the twelve tribes, and they were certainly communal Torahs.

Then, in addition, there was also the personal obligation – the commandment on every Jewish man to write a Torah – the concept of the personal Torah scroll.

Now, the Rabbinical Court is the arbiter over a public Torah, and they may do with the scroll as they see fit. So if the Court declares that a communal Torah belongs to each and every individual in the tribe, it in fact becomes the personal property of each and every person.

It isn’t a “public Torah” which every individual is “allowed” to use; rather the Rabbinical Court has the power to make it the “personal property” of each and every individual. And not just “owned in partnership” – for many authorities hold that partnership in a Torah scroll does not fulfill the personal obligation to write a Torah scroll.

And there are no limitations to the conditions that can be set by the Rabbinic Court. If it is a Jewish court of law according to Torah – even of just three ordained Torah scholars who render rulings based on Jewish law – they can set conditions on public property under their jurisdiction in order to strengthen Torah and Mitzvos.

Thus, the Court can establish that each and every individual is considered to own the entire scroll.

This sheds light on another matter as well:

A Torah scroll’s purpose is “to learn in it.”

Those is why the Jewish Court declares that every individual may be called to the Torah, read from it, and recite the blessings before and after – as an individual – over the verses of that portion. And since the Torah is one unified, indivisible scroll, his blessings over one portion give him possession of the entire scroll.

But doesn’t the Torah also belong to those called up before and after him – to all seven

called to the Torah, as well as those called up a week or two before, and those called on the Monday or Thursday before?

This is no contradiction:

When the Jewish Court sets a condition they establish it such that when a scribe is commissioned to write a communal Torah scroll, it is written with the intention that any individual person who will study in it will have full, personal possession of it at that time.

30. *Bar Mitzvah Aliyah*

However, a question still remains:

How does this fulfill the requirement to "Write for yourselves?"

The commentaries discuss regarding this Mitzvah that one who purchases a Torah scroll does not fulfill the commandment according to many opinions, because even though he owns a Torah, he has not "written" one. He can even study it, but he still has not written a Torah.

Likewise, when one is called up to the Torah:

He fulfills the "studying" of it, but not the "writing" of it. -?-

We can explain it through an analogy from the laws of property borders.

A field has specific borders.

In the case of a disagreement over the borders of a field; where one's field ends and the other field begins, there are several ways to ascertain the law.

One method:

If one of them claims ownership because his fence encompasses the disputed area, but we find in the deed of a field that he documented the borders according to his neighbor's claim, it is considered proof to his neighbor's claim, for he documented it himself.

Likewise:

A Jewish custom is a part of Torah, especially in relation to Bar Mitzvah. And the custom is, that when a boy turns thirteen he is called to the Torah.

By reciting the blessings before and after the Torah reading, he is, in effect, testifying that the Torah scroll is Kosher. And this is even greater than examining the Torah, for when examining it, he is only checking the Torah.

We see, that there is no worry about the prohibition of a blessing in vain – which according to some opinions is a Biblical prohibition, "Do not utter the name of the Lord in vain." This would be especially regarding the blessings recited on the Torah, which

according to some opinions is also a Biblical obligation.

Yet, on his Bar Mitzvah day – or immediately thereafter – he goes up to the Torah and recites the blessings before and after, thereby affirming the “borders” of the Torah scroll, that it is a Kosher Torah scroll.

And this affirmation is not merely in thought or by purchasing a Torah; he affirms it in action – with the words of his mouth – through the two blessings on the Torah.

This resolves all the questions above – and based on this, through his Bar Mitzvah Aliyah, he performs a Biblical commandment.

31. The Communal Lulav

As mentioned, this is a revolutionary idea.

However, God provided us with a true parallel:

There is a Biblical commandment, “You shall take for yourselves on the first day of Sukkos” – the Four Species.

It was the accepted Jewish practice everywhere that in addition to individuals’ own Lulav and Esrog, there is a set that belongs to the community. And in times of poverty in exile, in most Jewish towns – as a result of the financial and material situations – the people relied on the communal Lulav and Esrog.

But on the first day of Sukkos, the verse obligates you to take your own set of Four Species – it may not belong to the community; according to most opinions, it may not even be owned in partnership; on the first day, it cannot even be borrowed... Unless he receives it as an outright gift, he does not fulfill his obligation.

Therefore the obvious question: How then does everyone share one set?

And again, this was the custom in all Jewish communities; even many great Sages were not able to afford their own Lulav and Esrog, so they made the blessing on the set of the congregation.

Furthermore: There were Sages who did have their own sets, but because the members of their community did not have, they would offer their set to the community on the first day, so everyone could recite the blessing.

The answer:

Jewish law explains that when one gives his set to another to recite the blessing, this itself is proof that he is doing so in a manner that permits the other to recite the blessing – that he is giving it as a gift.

True, he gives it on condition that his friend returns it, but that's a separate issue... The fact is that when his friend recites the blessing, it belongs entirely to him.

So we see that every single year – with regard to a Mitzvah whose method of observance has been widely accepted – people recite the blessings over a communal set of the Four Species.

How can they do it?

Because when he recites the blessings, the community has given the Lulav entirely to him – by way of the Shamash or the Gabai, whose authority is derived from the community elders, the Jewish Court, that he should have full ownership of it for this period of time.

Then a second person takes it. And when he recites the blessing, he also knows – because someone is waiting next to him – that it will soon belong to another person in the same way, and that just before him, it belonged to someone else.

How does it become his?

Through the condition made by the Jewish Court.

In this way he recites the blessing, and fulfills the Biblical obligation, "Take for yourselves on the first day" the Four Species.

Thus, all the questions above are resolved.

32. Communal Torah Scrolls

Now is also an appropriate time to mention once again – just as we spoke earlier about the Torah scroll which unites all Jewish boys and girls under Bar and Bat Mitzvah – so too, in order to express Jewish unity, how all Jews stand united through Torah's "pleasant ways and peaceful paths," each Jew should own a letter in the Torah scroll.

This does not mean that one owns one letter in a communal Torah scroll or in a Torah scroll belonging to the entire Jewish people. Rather, through this one letter in the Torah – similar to checking one letter in the Torah – the entire Torah scroll is also considered his personal Torah.

The Jewish Court establishes that at one moment it all belongs to you, while a moment earlier, and a moment later, it belongs fully to someone else – and it belongs to each of them in both respects: As a personal Torah scroll, fulfilling the command, "Now write for yourselves this song," as well as the separate Mitzvah of participating in a communal Torah scroll, unifying all Jews in one Torah scroll; not just his own personal Torah, but a Torah that unifies all Jews.

May God grant that this effort of peace – “for all of Torah’s paths are peace” – should result in action: every Jew should acquire a letter in one of the communal Torah scrolls.

Just as when Moses was first instructed, “And now write for yourselves...” he gave each tribe its own Torah scroll, in addition to the 13th Torah scroll which was kept in the Tabernacle.

The same is true now as well: There are different customs regarding the shapes of the letters, as well as words written with extra or missing letters, etc, and as a result, each community has its own Torah scroll... However, they all originate from the same Torah scroll written by Moses, and from it all other Torah scrolls in the world are corroborated.

And true unity, true peace, is achieved through the Torah of Peace, “He shall grant you peace,” and God blesses every Jew, and He instructs the Kohanim to impart this blessing of peace “with love” – to the point that the entire Mishna concludes with the greatness of peace, and the first tractate of Talmud concludes with God’s blessing of peace.

May this usher in God’s promise “I will set peace upon the Land,” with the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach, speedily in our days.

S I C H A

6

Architects of Peace

A Lesson in Torah
Scholarship

Hadran on Maseches Brachos

in honor of the Chalukas Hashas

ירושלמי סיום מסכת ברכות :

תני בשם רבי מאיר אין לך אחד מישראל שאינו עושה מאה מצות בכל יום. קורא את שמע ומברך לפניה ולאחריה ואוכל את פתו ומברך לפניה ולאחריה ומתפלל שלשה פעמים של שמונה עשרה וחוזר ועושה שאר מצות ומברך עליהן.

וכן היה רבי מאיר אומר אין לך אדם בישראל שאין המצות מקיפות אותו. תפילין בראשו ותפילין בזרועו ומזוזה בפתחו מילה בשרו ארבע ציציות בטליתו מקיפין אותו. הוא שדוד אמר (תהלים, קיט) שבע ביום הללתיך על משפטי צדקך. וכן הוא אומר חונה מלאך ה' סביב ליראיו ויחלצם. נכנס למרחץ ראה את עצמו ערום אמר אוי לי שאני ערום מן המצות כיון שהביט במילה שלו התחיל לקלס להקב"ה. (תהלים, יב) למנצח על השמינית מזמור לדוד

אמר רבי אלעזר בשם רבי חנינא תלמידי חכמים מרבים שלום בעולם. מה טעם (ישעיה, נד) וכל בניך למודי ה' ורב שלום בניך :

בבלי סיום מסכת ברכות :

אמר רבי חייא בר אשי אמר רב תלמידי חכמים אין להם מנוחה לא בעולם הזה ולא בעולם הבא שנאמר ילכו מחיל אל חיל יראה אל אלהים בציון :

אמר רבי אלעזר אמר רבי חנינא תלמידי חכמים מרבים שלום בעולם שנאמר (ישעיהו נד, יג) וכל בניך למודי ה' ורב שלום בניך

אל תקרי בניך אלא בוניך (תהלים קיט, קסה) שלום רב לאוהבי תורתך ואין למו מכשול (תהלים קכב, ז) יהי שלום בחילך שלום בארמנותיך (תהלים קכב, ח) למען אחי ורעי אדברה נא שלום בך (תהלים קכב, ט) למען בית ה' אלהינו אבקשה טוב לך (תהלים כט, יא) ה' עוז לעמו יתן ה' יברך את עמו בשלום :

1. At the end of Gemara Brachos, there are apparent differences between the Talmud Bavli and Talmud Yerushalmi which seem to be based on different approaches of learning. (3)

They are:

The Yerushalmi's conclusion is "Talmidei Chachomim bring peace to the world, as the possuk states

"וכל בניך למודי ה' ורב שלום בניך".

With this, the tractate is concluded.

The Bavli brings the same statement as the Yerushalmi "Talmidei Chachomim bring peace to the world, as the possuk states

"וכל בניך למודי ה' ורב שלום בניך".

However, the Bavli adds,

אל תקרי בניך אלא בוניך

don't call them sons, rather builders, and then the Gemara finishes off with numerous pessukim regarding peace.

2. There is another difference between them, regarding what precedes the above mentioned conclusions.(2)
 The Yerushalmi stresses the importance of Mivtzos,
 The Bavli stresses how Talmidei Chachomim have no rest, as they "go from strength to strength".
3. In order to understand these differences, let us first preface another argument between the Bavli and Yerushalmi: (7)

ירושלמי ברכות משנה ה הלכה א :

מתניתין: חסידים הראשונים היו שוהין שעה אחת ומתפללין כדי שיכונו את לבם.

גמרא: חסידים הראשונים היו שוהין שעה אחת ומתפללין שעה ושוהין שעה אחת לאחר תפילתן אימתי עוסקין בתורה אימתי עוסקין במלאכתן אמר רבי יצחק בי רבי אלעזר על ידי שהיו חסידים היתה ברכה ניתנת בתורתן וברכה נתנה במלאכתן.

בבלי ברכות לב, ב :

תנו רבנן חסידים הראשונים היו שוהין שעה אחת ומתפללין שעה אחת וחוזרין ושוהין שעה אחת וכי מאחר ששוהין תשע שעות ביום בתפלה תורתן היאך משתמרת ומלאכתן היאך נעשית אלא מתוך שחסידים הם תורתם משתמרת ומלאכתן מתברכת:

The Mishna says that the early chassidim would prepare themselves for tefilla for an hour, the tefilla would then take an hour and the aftermath would also be an hour. This equaled three hours for every tefilla, nine hours in total throughout the day.

The question is raised, if such a lengthy time period is spent on tefillah, what will happen with the Torah? On this there are two answers:

Bavli: Their Torah learning will remain intact.

Yerushalmi: The Torah will be blessed.

[Regarding the above, there is a story about the Rogatchover Gaon. He was asked to participate in a certain endeavour, and he responded that he would love to, but the Halacha is like the Bavli - that while doing other Mitzvos, your study remains intact, but does not flourish; and he wanted his study to flourish.]

4. To begin the answer: (5)

There are many levels in Torah scholarship:

- A. "Perek echod shacharis" - one who learns just a little,
- A. One who studies Torah substantially.

There are also various topics in Torah Study:

- A. Issur v'heter
- A. Dinei mamonos
- A. Aggados

The ultimate level of Torah Study is "Toraso Umnaso" - when Torah is his full time occupation. This also has numerous levels:

- A. In today's day and age - one is still obligated in Tefillah and other Mitzvos;
- A. In the Gemara, like Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai - who was pottur from all Mitzvos.

5. The Talmud Yerushalmi was concluded one hundred years before the Talmud Bavli. Therefore, concepts which are discussed only generally in the Talmud Yerushalmi, are treated with more detail in Talmud Bavli. (2)

And in our case:

Talmud Yerushalmi discusses all Torah scholars, encompassing all levels and styles of fulfilling the mitzvah of studying Torah.

Talmud Bavli, being more specific, is describing the scholar who learns Torah an entire day - toraso umnaso, Torah is his occupation.

6. Based on this concept, we can explain the differences brought above: (4)

To preface:

All Torah scholars can be called builders, as mentioned in the Gemara in Menachos.

Now, in regards to the first difference:

Talmud Bavli adds, that his title - אל תקרי - should be "builders". This is because it is discussing those whom toraso umnaso - since they study Torah a whole day, they are referred to as such. Hence, their title is "builders".

Talmud Yerushalmi does not add that they should be called “builders.” For it is discussing all Torah scholars, even those who do so only part time; while they also participate in the building of the world, their occupational title (“what do you do a whole day”) is not a “builder”.

7. Regarding the second difference - the concluding verses about peace which are found only in the Bavli: (8)

To preface:

The Shach al Hatorah quotes an earlier Gemara which describes the flights that the angels take when they are sent on mission. Michael takes one flight, Gavriel takes two, Eliyahu Hanavi takes four, and the Malach Hamaves - the angel of death, takes eight flights. The Shach explains that the eight mentions of peace, in the verses at the end of the Bavli, are to nullify the eight flights of the angel of death.

Why does Torah have such a power to effect in the world?

Torah is in two levels:

The Yerushalmi describes a Torah study which is done as a Mitzvah - one of the 248 Mitzvos of the Torah. A Jew naturally needs to fulfill the mitzvos, and each Mitzvah corresponds with one limb on his body. Torah therefore, is compared to one of the limbs. But this is all within nature:

The Bavli describes Torah on a higher level - Toraso Umnaso - and this way of learning transcends nature. In this context, Torah is compared to the blood of a person, which is related and affects all of the limbs equally. In this way, Torah is superior to nature, and such study can affect what takes place in the world. Therefore, the Bavli brings the verses at the conclusion of the Masechta, which have the power to stop the angel of death - to defy nature.

8. This also relates to the differences brought in the beginning of the Masechta, regarding the learning of the early Chassidim: (1)

The Yerushalmi speaks of Torah learning as a Mitzvah, and Mitzvos can help and supplement each other. Therefore, by doing another mitzvah, your learning can grow as well.

The Bavli discusses Torah on a higher level, where Mitzvos do not have effect. Therefore, someone who learns Torah full time, - toraso umnaso - does not participate in other Mitzvos. For then, his Torah will not flourish on the high level that it should.

9. This also explains the third difference in the end of the Masechta, in the statement preceded the last line. (5)

The Yerushalmi speaks of learning Torah as a Mitzvah, and therefore quotes Rabbi Meir who speaks of the greatness of Mitzvos.

The Bavli speaks of learning Torah full time, which we said, defies nature, and therefore prefaces with a statement that Torah scholars have no rest - something which is above nature.

10. This also relates to a general difference between the Bavli and Yerushalmi:
(3)

The Yerushalmi is smooth. Every Halacha is clear.

The Bavli is complicating. To reach clarity, one must first go through questions and discussion and after an arduous process, he will reach the answer.

We find an example of the learning of the Bavli from the story of Rashbi that through the pain of being in a cave for thirteen years his Torah level reached the highest realms.

Sicha 6.

33. *Underlying Differences*

Although earlier, we conducted a *siyum* on the listing of the *mitzvot*, regarding the *mitzvah* to write a Torah scroll, it is however, customary on this date to apportion the Talmud for study, so we'll mark this custom as well and, at least briefly, share a *siyum* on one of the tractates of Talmud.

We noted earlier that the Alter Rebbe connects his liberation to the verse "He redeemed my soul in peace," also repeatedly emphasizing peace in the letter describing his release, so our *Siyum*, as well, will relate to a tractate which, likewise, concludes with repeated mentions of "peace," the Tractate of Berachot.

Over the years, I've delivered numerous Siyums on this tractate – and books which publish Siyums, by Jewish customs, they often begin with a *siyum* on Berachot; so one might ask whether anything original remains to be said?

– I once mentioned that asking this question is not a Jewish approach: Pharaoh asked this question, but Moshe demonstrated otherwise –

but in order to do something new, we will discuss the differences between the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, as there are several differences in how the tractate concludes, between the way it appears in Babylonian Talmud versus the Jerusalem Talmud.

In Torah, every difference calls for analysis and study, and when we notice several differences in the same topic, the same tractate, as it appears in the Babylonian Talmud versus the Jerusalem Talmud, the differences are obviously connected in some way.

A Halachic parallel:

If one discovers a pile of five contracts, and we don't know to whom they should be returned, we look at the names in the contract: if they all relate to the same lender, clearly, the lender lost them. If they all relate to the same borrower, we return it to the borrower.

On our subject:

When we discover a common thread underlying the differences between the Talmuds, it is appropriate to assume that this underlying thread expresses a larger difference in the approach between the two Talmuds.

34. *Banayich, Bonayich*

Now, the Jerusalem Talmud was completed before the Babylonian Talmud; the Jerusalem Talmud was compiled by Rabbi Yochanan, while the Babylonian Talmud was

edited about a century later, by Ravina and Rav Ashi. The first tractate to be completed, therefore, was Tractate Berachot in the Jerusalem Talmud.

It concludes:

“Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Chanina:

“Torah scholars increase peace in the world, as stated in the verse, ‘All your children are students of God’s Torah, and great is the peace of *banayich* – your children.’”

The Babylonian version cites the same teaching, but adds:

“Do not read *banayich*, but *bonayich* – your builders.”

Then it quotes a number of verses, which we recite in our daily prayers:

“Those who love your Torah have abundant peace...” through “God will give strength to His people...bless them with peace.”

This entire ending does not appear in the Jerusalem Talmud.

In addition to this difference, there is another difference in the teaching that *precedes* the statement of Rabbi Elazar.

The Jerusalem version teaches:

“Rabbi Meir said, ‘Every Jew fulfills one hundred *mitzvot* every day,’” and proceeds to list the 100 blessings recited every day. It then demonstrates how every Jew is surrounded by *mitzvot*. He has Tefillin on his arm and head, Tzitzis, circumcision; hence, King David praised God “seven times a day.” “But when David undressed, he felt bereft of *mitzvot*, until he recalled the *mitzvah* of Circumcision. Then, duly relieved, he composed the psalm ‘On the eighth, a song of David’” – eighth referring to circumcision on an infant’s eighth day.

The Jerusalem Talmud then concludes by quoting Rabbi Elazar.

The Babylonian Talmud introduces the Rabbi Elazar’s teaching differently: “Torah scholars have no rest in this world nor in the next, as it is written, ‘They go from strength to strength,’” and then proceeds to quote the teaching of Rabbi Elazar.

These passages are entirely different, although they both precede the same conclusion to the same tractate.

35. *The Early Chassidim*

Now, it is important to note that there is a difference in approach between the two Talmuds, which is expressed in the story that I once related about the Gaon of Rogatchov.

Our tractate, Berachot, begins with the duty to recite Shema, and then proceeds to dis-

cuss the morning prayers.

The Mishnah there records:

“The early *chasidim* used to pause first for an hour,” in order to pray with devout concentration.

The Talmud elaborates:

They would pause for an hour beforehand, then pray for an hour, and pause for an hour afterwards, so the three daily prayers took nine hours.

So both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds ask when they earned a living and when they studied Torah:

“When was their work done? When did they study Torah?”

An answer appears in both the Babylonian and the Jerusalem Talmuds, but with a difference.

They both say that “As they were pious, their work was fruitful.”

As to their Torah study, the Jerusalem Talmud says: “As they were pious, their work was fruitful and their Torah study was fruitful.”

The Babylonian Talmud states: “Since they were pious, their work was fruitful and their study remained intact.”

I once heard from the Gaon of Rogatchov

– when my father-in-law left Russia and arrived in Riga, he convened a conference of public figures and Torah leaders to seek ways to continue his work for Russian Jewry from Riga, with the help, or participation, of other Torah leaders, and an invitation was also extended to the Gaon of Rogatchov, who resided in Dvinsk which was not far from Riga.

He attended – he had always been on the warmest, friendliest terms with Lubavitch, with the Rebbe Rashab, and later on, with my father-in-law.

He actually took pride in a blessing which he received from the Rebbe of Kopust, a son of the Tzemach Tzedek. He was distressed that... there’s an entire story with this:

They were discussing a topic in *nigleh* – the Rebbe Rashab, my father-in-law, and the Gaon of Rogatchov. The Rebbe Rashab then expounded the same subject in Torah’s mystical dimension, Chassidus and Kabbalah. Hearing it, The Gaon of Rogatchov sighed.

– Although he also studied the esoteric parts of Torah, as apparent from his writings on Maimonides, where, regarding to the hair of the *peyos*, he cites a Kabbalistic source,

nevertheless, his main focus, as everyone knows, was specifically Talmudic, Torah's revealed portion. And while in some of his commentary on the Torah he discusses topics related to Kabbalah and Chasidism, nonetheless, that was not his primary focus. –

When the Rebbe Rashab delivered his explanation of the topic in Chasidic teaching, the Gaon of Rogatchov sighed and said:

“What can I do? I was given a blessing for success in Torah's revealed portions”

– when he had asked the Rebbe of Kopust for a blessing of success in Torah, he blessed him for success in *nigleh*.

In regards to our discussion:

At that conference, a committee of Torah leaders was selected, to devise methods to ease the distress of the Jews captive behind the Iron Curtain.

The Gaon expressed his unconditional support of the project, but said that he himself would not be able to join the committee, explaining that it was based on a difference between the two Talmuds, when, in such cases, the law follows the Babylonian Talmud.

He brought the above-mentioned discussion about early *chasidim*:

The Jerusalem Talmud rules that not only their work prospers, but so does their Torah study. Therefore, if he would involve himself in acts of kindness, if he'd join in the committee's work – especially inasmuch as communal work is a great *mitzvah* – according to the Jerusalem Talmud, his studies would lack nothing. They would in fact be *fruitful*.

But the Babylonian Talmud guarantees only that it will remain *intact*: they will not fall prey to forgetfulness, and they will *retain* their wisdom. Though their material work prospers, Torah study will flourish only through active toil. And since he wanted his study to be fruitful and flourish, he could not invest his time in “the work of *chasidim*,” for then his Torah study would merely remain intact, but it would not be fruitful.

Now, according to that teaching of the Gaon of Rogatchov, duly quoted in his name, the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud are in conflict.

Now, it would seem, that the difference noted by the Rogatchover and the differences at the end of Tractate Berachot, are two separate disparities, each calling for their own explanation.

However, there is a well-known principle, to seek one common rationale that throws light on a number of diverse laws or concepts.

This is a delightful approach to Torah study and, in fact, it validates the idea being proposed, for a rationale is likely to be valid, when it is consistent not only in one or two places, but in many varied contexts.

36. *Levels in Torah Study*

Returning to our topic: “Torah scholars who increase peace in the world” are spoken of in plural form, and not only quantitatively but also qualitatively, for there are many kinds of Torah scholars, many kinds of Torah knowledge, and many kinds of Torah study.

The Laws of Torah Study define what is expected of every individual: one person may suffice with one chapter each morning and evening, whereas for another, it means studying diligently, and for some, even all day long.

“Torah scholars” in the plural is thus not only a quantitative term, but mainly a qualitative one.

Now, inasmuch as there are differences in quality, there must also be differences in the practical results of their studies, for “Torah study leads to action.” Thus, a more advanced student can analyze the laws more deeply than a mediocre student, and their conclusions can therefore vary.

There are also various levels in the observance of the *mitzvah* in the Torah: the *mitzvah* to study Torah.

Ideally, Torah should be studied in a manner that leads to a clear understanding of the relevant laws.

This can occur in many different ways: For example, the Talmud states: “One who wishes to sharpen his mind, should study monetary laws,” “under Shimon ben Nanos.”

Likewise: “The law follows Rav in ritual matters and Shmuel in monetary matters.”

Or, “The ruling follows the view of So-and-So” as the commentators explain the reasoning, being that this scholar focused primarily on this particular subject, “Rav focused on ritual matters and Shmuel on monetary ones,” and so on.

This is true even of Rabbi Akiva. He transmitted the entire Oral Law, yet we find that he was told:

“Akiva, why are you dealing with aggadic expositions? Get back to the laws of ritual impurity!” For that was his primary focus, even though he was an authority on the entire Oral Law.

The ultimate level of Torah study is when it is one’s “full-time occupation.”

That term, as well, encompasses many levels.

The Alter Rebbe discusses how, even in our times, one can achieve this status, while the Talmud applies it only to Rabbi Shimon and his colleagues, who reached its ultimate level.

And there is a practical difference between the levels in the laws of Shema and prayers and blessings: Scholars at the ultimate level may skip them, but in our day, they "interrupt their studies anyway" – so they are obligated to interrupt in order to pray as well.

As the Jerusalem Talmud discusses regarding Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai; although he studied Torah constantly, we are certain that he fulfilled the *mitzvot* of Sukkah and Lulav, and even dealt with them personally, but evidently, he did *not* perform other *mitzvot*.

[The Talmud says "he *made* a Sukkah," implying that he didn't only sit in the sukkah and leave its construction to others, rather he busied himself personally with the *mitzvah* of Sukkot the creation of a Sukkah.]

Another example is "Great are the *works* of Hiyya," who, not only *taught* children the Written Torah and taught the Six Orders of Mishna to six other children, but he did all of the preparation himself: He personally trapped deer, prepared parchment, and wrote out the Five Books of Moses, and taught the Mishna, and instructed the children to then teach one-another.

Hence, great indeed are the *works* of Hiyya!

37. The Title "Builder"

In several cases it is noted that the Babylonian Talmud was compiled later than the Jerusalem Talmud. Hence, many subjects in the Jerusalem Talmud are treated only in general terms, and over the discussions in the course of the subsequent century they were refined and elucidated. Thus, the Babylonian Talmud is more detailed than the Jerusalem Talmud.

Now, what is common to all Torah scholars, who "increase peace in the world," is not that the Torah is their full time occupation, but that they are each fulfilling the *mitzvah* to study Torah, which is one of the 248 Positive commandments.

Now we can explain the differences between the respective Talmuds:

The Jerusalem Talmud speaks in general terms, about the common denominator of all Torah scholars.

The Babylonian Talmud, which appears later, builds upon the knowledge of the Jerusalem Talmud, so it focuses on a particular type of Torah scholar:

One whose Torah study is his full time occupation.

What is the elementary difference between this scholar and the regular scholar?

When one studies full time, that is his occupation; therefore, his title, he is described,

in reference to the Torah.

One who heals people is called a physician; a person who is occupied with good deeds is called a “master of good deeds.” And one occupied with Torah – although he is already included in “*all* your children shall be Torah learners” – as a Jew, he is automatically called “student of God,” nevertheless, when a person studies full time, Torah is actually appended to his title.

What is the difference between a regular scholar, a “student of God,” and the scholar for whom Torah is a full time occupation?

All Torah scholars are called “builders,” as the Talmud states regarding issues of ritual impurity, that a stain on the garment of a simpleton is a minor issue; but a stain on the garment of a “builder” is much more severe, and the Talmud asks “who are builders?” “They are the Torah scholars.” So every Torah scholar is considered “*bonayich* – your builders,” but yet, that is not his official title in life.

The Jerusalem Talmud, speaking of Torah scholars in general terms, states:

“Torah scholars increase peace in the world, as it is written, ‘All your children – *banayich* shall be learners of God’s Torah, and great will be the peace of your children – *banayich*.’”

Since that word is repeated, it must add additional meaning; namely, it includes Torah scholars.

However, they are not called *bonayich* – builders but *banayich* – children, because it is not their full time occupation.

The Babylonian Talmud, which builds upon the Jerusalem Talmud, extends the meaning of “Torah scholars” beyond its meaning in the Jerusalem Talmud.

So Rabbi Elazar repeats his teaching.

– we needn’t assume that the two Talmuds conflict with one-another, as there is a classic Torah principle to try to find ways to assume no conflict between the two, and the simplest solution here is to assume he stated his teaching twice.

The first version, recorded in the Jerusalem Talmud, refers to all Torah scholars, in general. They are referred to – since Torah study is not their full time occupation – by their regular occupation. Like a physician, a master of good deeds, a scribe, etc.

– Torah is not his occupation.

Regarding the scholar who is fully occupied with Torah study, however, the Babylonian Talmud teaches: “Do not call him *banayich*, but *bonayich* – your builders.”

“*Call him*,” his title is, “a builder.”

Therefore, specifically regarding the full-time scholar, the Talmud emphasizes his title.

38. *The Quality of the Peace*

Obviously *every* Torah scholar increases peace – for the verse states twice, *banayich* – children, which implies that *all* children increase peace, even though they are not described as “builders.”

However, the additional word teaches us that there are those who are simply “your children,” and those who are “your *builders*.” In other words, increasing peace is related to “students of God’s Torah” – those who study Torah.

Accordingly, one who studies more, not just quantitatively, but also qualitatively, Torah is his occupation, the peace that he ushers in is obviously of higher quality.

The Babylonian Talmud therefore cites many verses concerning the abundant peace and tranquility generated by those scholars, the full-time scholars, the “builders” described in the Babylonian Talmud.

39. *Eight Flights*

The Tzemach Tzedek, citing a Kabbalistic commentary, the Shach, explains that these numerous verses were chosen, because “peace” appears in them eight times – when one includes the word “tranquility.”

– Evidently, as well, “great will be the peace,” is counted as two mentions of “peace,” and consequently, the verses cited at the end of the tractate mention “peace” and “tranquility” eight times.

The Shach expounds on its meaning, linking it to the beginning of the tractate:

“The Angel Michael in one” – when he is dispatched on a mission, he does so with a single flight.

The Angel Gabriel, who personifies the attribute of strict and restrictive justice – Michael represents the higher level of kindness – Gabriel requires two flights.

[Or as Rashi explains, because he represents justice, he tarries, lengthening his trip in order to allow time for repentance.]

The Talmud continues, “The Prophet Elijah takes four flights.”

As he was originally a man of flesh and blood, and his actual body ascended to Heaven, he is comprised of all four Basic Elements

– Maimonides discusses these Elements at length, citing statements in the Zohar, which

discuss the Elements. Parenthetically, some claim, incorrectly, that the Elements do not exist, but this claim was refuted elsewhere. –

As Elijah is still a soul and body – his body also ascended to heaven, each of his Elements requires its own flight: four flights in all.

Finally, the Talmud says, “the Angel of Death takes eight flights.” For he is sent on punitive missions, so he is repeatedly delayed, in the hope that the individual will repent.

Additionally:

This angel brings the body to the opposite of life, which also affects the life of the soul, for just as the body consists of four physical Elements, the soul – invested in the body, becoming one entity with it – also consists of four spiritual Elements.

– This is stated in the Zohar, and in the first chapter of Tanya: A person’s four basic traits stem from the Four Elements. –

That angel takes eight flights, because his task is to terminate a total of eight Elements.

How does one foil his mission of eight flights?

“The antidote is Torah.”

So Torah must state the word “peace” eight times consecutively, in one passage, hence the Talmud’s eight mentions of peace. This is the explanation of the Shach’s words.

40. Torah, and the Mitzvah of Torah

To relate this to our earlier discussion: When Torah study is an exclusive occupation, he acquires mastery – as the Jerusalem Talmud says – with the power of Torah over worldly reality. Indeed, he can thwart, through Torah’s eight dimensions of peace and tranquility, the eight flights of the Angel of Death, defying nature.

However, this is not Torah as one of the 248 Positive *mitzvot*. Rather, it is Torah as an all-consuming preoccupation which overrides all other *mitzvot*, and all other pursuits, even “heavenly desires.”

His study isn’t valuable because it also leads to other *mitzvot* – which would imply that it is simply a greater *mitzvah*; rather, it is in a category of its own.

Torah is also called “heavenly desires”; for what could be loftier than Torah study? It is extolled as God’s “hidden treasure...”

In truth however, there is a level of Torah which is even more exalted than “heavenly desires:”

When it is referred to as God’s “hidden treasure,” “beyond the view of every living

being;" God's "plaything" so to speak – these depict Torah on a plane elevated beyond all *mitzvot*, even beyond the *mitzvah* of Torah study, as one of the 248 positive *mitzvot*.

In a classical metaphor, Torah is sometimes compared to one of a person's physical organs, as one of the *mitzvot* that correspond to the 248 organs. At other times, Torah study is likened to the blood that infuses vitality in all the 248 organs, including the organ that corresponds to Torah in its capacity as an individual *mitzvah*. And blood is identical in all the organs and serves a unique and general function [which is why Jewish law treats blood differently from all the other organs], and this is the level of full-time occupation, for his study is outside the regular range of *mitzvot*.

41. One Mitzvah Affects Another

Now each *mitzvah*, like each organ, can benefit another.

When he observes a *mitzvah* with special care, like "the early *chasidim*," he prospers materially, "I will give your rains in their proper time" and his work is not merely left intact, but is fruitful.

In addition, it blesses his Torah study, in its capacity as a *mitzvah*, that it too, should be fruitful, as the Torah promises.

By contrast, with full-time occupation in Torah, which transcends regular *mitzvot*, one must invest real toil in order to rise above the natural order, and only through toil will his study be fruitful.

In order to *retain* one's studies, nothing is required of the Torah; the student's forgetfulness simply needs to be overcome, and that can occur by fulfilling *mitzvot*; however, it will merely be retained, and will not flourish.

42. Torah Transcending Nature

To revert to the contrast between the two Talmuds:

When the Jerusalem Talmud teaches that "Torah scholars increase peace in the world," it speaks of Torah as one of the 248 *mitzvot*.

Hence, the prelude to that teaching speaks specifically about *mitzvot*, quoting Rabbi Meir marveling about *mitzvah* observance,

"every Jew fulfills 100 *mitzvot* every day" including the blessing recited over Torah study, which itself is a *mitzvah*, and continuing with "Tefillin on his arm and head" – Tefillin is equated to the entire Torah – because the Talmud is speaking about *mitzvot*.

Hence, when it then cites Rabbi Elazar, the Torah scholars of whom he speaks also

study Torah as a *mitzvah*.

The Babylonian Talmud cannot bring the same introduction, for it speaks of different Torah scholars; they study Torah not as a *mitzvah*, but as Torah scholars of a full time occupation.

The Babylonian Talmud therefore needs a prelude about transcending nature.

For a Jew, by nature, studies Torah and observes *mitzvot*. He realizes that “I was created only to serve my Maker,” and serving God is an integral part of his being; that is his intrinsic nature.

Therefore, the Talmud says that since the various creatures do not veer from their respective natures, God provides them with their sustenance; if a Jew conducts himself improperly, it damages the channel of his natural sustenance, for he changed his own nature.

What is his nature? He has 248 organs; to observe the 248 Positive *mitzvot*; and one of those is Torah study.

But for a Torah scholar to have “no rest” is contrary to human nature.

Every Jew, including a Torah scholar, should seek tranquility. In fact, a certain Talmudic sage, at a loss for a sufficient answer to a question, explained that at the time he was in the Diaspora, and “we have no rest among the nations.” While the answer was simply an excuse, it conveys a true point.

However, in order that Torah should become a person’s all-consuming occupation, he must be a scholar of superior stature, and such a person is not satisfied that his scholarship remain intact; he must “go from strength to strength,” his Torah studies must be fruitful; for such a scholar, this is what constitutes growth, and other endeavors don’t appeal to him.

Now, another teaching states “*Tzaddikim* have no rest in this world nor in the next.”

The title *Tzaddik* is earned specifically by observing *mitzvot*.

They, too, “go from strength to strength,” and make their work fruitful, and a Jew’s true work is to build for God “a dwelling place among the lower worlds.”

But to make one’s Torah study fruitful, one needs Torah study constantly, every day, at all times, at every moment.

This is how Maimonides concludes his Laws of Repentance – although this statement would seem appropriate in the laws of Torah Study – he writes “one should not study Torah for the sake of reward, but ‘out of love, he shall toil constantly’” – an all-consuming occupation, “for the sake of knowing one’s Creator.”

For this reason, the Babylonian Talmud introduces full-time Torah study not by praising *mitzvot*, but by praising Torah study: "Torah scholars go from strength to strength," from the synagogue to the House of Study.

For prayer in the synagogue is a preparation for Torah study, after which he can proceed to study Torah in the proper frame of mind, and full time Torah study must be preceded by prayer; in the Talmud, this is called "first reciting a blessing over the Torah," which generally refers to prayer, which facilitates full time Torah study.

Indeed, even Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who studied Torah constantly, also prayed from time to time. Being that the superior quality of his prayers allowed its effect to linger for a longer period of time, and he was not bound by the *mitzvah* to pray daily, to ask God to provide him with his needs, for because Rabbi Shimon studied Torah constantly, *mitzvot* did not apply to him.

Now the differences are resolved.

43. He Sat Me in the Dark

This is also linked to another difference between the two Talmuds:

The Jerusalem Talmud places less stress on toiling in Torah study, than the Babylonian Talmud.

Regarding the Babylonian Talmud, it is written that "He sat me in the dark," for, in order to arrive at a Halachic conclusion, there is an arduous process of questions and uncertainties – one feels lost, "left in the dark," but as a result of the struggle, its rulings are superior, and override those of the Jerusalem Talmud.

This is the case, although the Sages teach that "there is no Torah study like that of the Land of Israel."

One of the reasons for this:

Although the oppression in Israel was severe, it was not nearly as oppressive as the exile in Babylonia and in the exiles that followed it, in the Diaspora. And precisely due to that oppression, Torah study flourished in Babylonia, to the point that its Halachic rulings override those of the Jerusalem Talmud.

So, too, in the life of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai:

His Halachic depth reached its peak after he had undergone an exile within an exile, when he was exiled in the cave.

He even told Rabbi Pinchas ben Ya'ir: "It is good that you have seen me in this state." For previously, his level of Torah knowledge was such that he posed scholarly problems

and Rabbi Pinchas would solve them. After his exile, *he* was challenged with twice as many problems, and he gave profound and accurate solutions, because Torah had been his full time occupation.

True, in the cave he had no other choice, because it was impossible to observe *mitzvot* there...

[The Alter Rebbe discusses the spiritual meaning of this situation in Likkutei Torah.]

But when did Torah study become his fulltime occupation by choice?

After he left his physical exile, he achieved the status of “full-time Torah study,” in a normal, free, state.

44. The Lesson

His actions that followed relate to us a moral lesson:

The first thing that Rabbi Shimon did when he exited the cave for the second time, when he became truly free – He didn’t teach Torah to his fellow Jews; he asked where there might be Jews undergoing physical hardship.

He found where the Kohanim had to make a burdensome detour – this was a public need, at least for Kohanim –

Above all, he did not send a messenger, or a disciple, not even his only son, rather he personally went out and purified the place in question, in order to enable his fellow Jews, the Kohanim, to move about freely.

Here we have a lesson on how to love a fellow Jew.

This is similar to prayer preceding study: Prayer is in place of the Temple sacrifices, which were offered by the Kohanim. But in fact, *all* Jews belong to “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” and approach the *mitzvot* with priestly holiness.

45. Student of God

We have spoken about how “Torah scholars increase peace in the world.”

May we see this ideal translated into practical reality, for this is an absolute necessity and it becomes more urgent from day to day; to promote peace in the world.

Every single Jew can, and must, advance this cause, through increasing in Torah study which increases the peace, as a “Student of God.” No matter how great a scholar he was until now, he can continue to grow, and thereby increase the “peace in the world.”

Then, “God will give strength to His people and bless His people with peace” – a true

peace that respects the integrity of the Land of Israel.

A true peace that respects the integrity of the Torah, when, in the Future Era described by Maimonides, Jews will seek only “to know their Creator” by studying Torah’s inner dimension.

Along with the integrity of the Jewish people, when “our young and our old, our sons and our daughters,” will *all* be “learners of God’s Torah.”

Including women, who earn merit by encouraging their menfolk to study, and women are also obligated to recite the blessing over Torah study, for they too, are obligated to study Torah, in addition to observing their *mitzvot*, as explained in the Code of Jewish Law, and as the Alter Rebbe rules in the Laws of Torah Study.

And ultimately, men, women and children, the entire nation, gathered together in unity, will return together.

May it be speedily in our days, through our Righteous Mashiach, in the true and complete Redemption.

S I C H A

7

***Full time
occupation***

Chalukas hashas

Chalukas Hashas

Sicha 7

Certainly the main point won't be forgotten

– the apportioning of the Talmud.

Distribute the registration cards and everyone should participate in the study of the Talmud to be completed by Yud Tes Kislev of next year.

And anyone who will complete the tractate ahead of time, should simply take more than one tractate, so that he will always have more and more to study, to the point that "Torah-study becomes his full-time occupation."

S I C H A

8

Road to peace

Preserving Eretz Yisroel's Integrity

It is customary on Chanukah to organize special gatherings for children to strengthen their connection to their heritage, and deepen their bond with parents and teachers. They should also be encouraged to join a communal Sefer Torah.

Regarding the situation in the Land of Israel: We must declare that Eretz Yisrael belongs to the nation of Israel and we must not be influenced by the non-Jews inside of ourselves. This is the clear Halacha; in contrast to the claim of several individuals, who maintain – based on false testimony – that relinquishing land isn't dangerous. The facts are: No peace was achieved by the Camp David Accords. The only thing achieved is more pressure on Israel.

Sicha 8

47. Chanukah Parties

Pursuant to the above, and especially as we stand just a few days before Chanukah,

we spoke earlier about the boys and girls of Tzivos Hashem, Jewish children before the age of Bar and Bat Mitzvah, that they should periodically be gathered together and inspired in all matters of Judaism, in the study of Torah and fulfillment of mitzvot, including "Love your fellow as yourself" – for the boys to encourage boys, and the girls other girls, that they, too, should join Tzivos Hashem.

These days of Chanukah are a most appropriate time, as per the Jewish custom, when it is a custom to organize special events, special events, Jewish events, joyous events for small children, and it is also the custom to make a Chanukah party.

It is well-known and published that the Rebbes of Chabad would make a gathering for their children on one of the nights of Chanukah.

This concept includes Chanukah Gelt, and playing Dreidel, and Chanukah plays where they dress up as the Maccabees... Each Jewish community according to its custom, but the common thread between all these customs is to strengthen and to further demonstrate every single child's relationship with Judaism.

And this also augments their bond with their parents and teachers; for this is one of the ways to correct inter-generational conflicts: "The parents' hearts will be brought back through the children, and the children's hearts through the parents."

48. The More the Better

In practical terms: In these days leading up to Chanukah, and better yet – wherever possible – during Chanukah itself, to gather the children together and tell them the story of Chanukah, how God "delivered the mighty in the hands of the weak" because "they were engaged in the study of Your Torah;" that they belong to "A kingdom of priests and a holy nation;" about Yochanan the High Priest, and about Matisyahu and his sons, and the rest of the Chanukah story as recorded in Midrash, in each community according to its style.

And the more the better – at least one gathering should be organized, but the more the

better, and with as large an assemblage as possible.

It should also be emphasized that each boy should influence his friends, and each girl her friends, that those who are not yet enlisted in Tzivos Hashem or who did not yet acquire a letter in the special Torah Scroll for Children, should do so, joyfully and happily.

This will strengthen “God’s Legions” of children as well as “God’s Legions” of the Jewish people as a whole.

49. Mehadrin Min Hamehadrin

It is also the appropriate place and time to emphasize once more, that we must intensify all the Ten Mitzvah Campaigns, beginning with the campaigns of Ahavat Yisrael and Jewish Education.

These two are all-encompassing, and are further expressed in the other eight:

The campaigns for Torah, Tefillin, Mezuzah and Charity, the Jewish Book Campaign, the Shabbos and Jewish Festival Candle-lighting Campaign, the Kosher Campaign, and the Campaign for Family Purity.

They all share a special link with Chanukah, for they all kindle “The flame of Mitzvah and the light of Torah.”

And one cannot be content with merely initiating it – indeed the beginning is crucial, but it must proceed with an increase every single day, so that the week of Chanukah – seven days straight – brings a daily increase in holiness.

The increase begins on day two, when we add a flame, continuing to add for seven days, until the eighth day. And adding a candle each day is part of “enhancing the Mitzvah,” as discussed at length on several occasions.

Therefore, the Chanukah Campaign should be planned in an orderly manner so that during Chanukah, every Jew, in every Jewish home, will kindle the Chanukah lights.

The Ramah rules that, unlike in Talmudic times, the current, universal practice is to fulfill the Mitzvah in its “most enhanced form”: every individual kindles an additional light each night.

And so too, in the “flame of Mitzvah and light of Torah,” the lesson we learn for Torah and Mitzvos in general is that every single day each individual must add and grow.

This is more relevant today than in the past:

Today, our observance of Chanukah is greater than in Talmudic times:

At that time, there was one of two options that occurred: Either each individual kindled

a flame, or the household together would add a flame each night, whereas today we do both, as per the ruling of the Ramah.

– There is a witty dictum regarding his name, which conveys an authentic point: “The Jewish people left Egypt with Ramah – an upraised arm” alluding to the Ramah, Rabbi Moshe Isserlish, for his rulings have been widely accepted, and most recently, even amongst Sephardic Jews, most notably in regards to his stringencies in Jewish Law, and enhancement of Jewish practice.

50. Communal Torah Scrolls

Also befitting the period preceding Chanukah, considering its connection to the “flame of Mitzvah” which is related to “the light of Torah”:

It would be appropriate to unify the entire Jewish nation through each individual’s registration in one of the communal Torah scrolls, for through his own personal letter, one unites with hundreds of thousands of letters in the Torah, and those hundreds of thousands of letters are, by extension, united with the other Torah scrolls for “there is one Torah for us all.”

And they all connect with the original Torah inscribed by Moshe Rabbeinu at the behest of God “and now, write for yourselves this song” and “teach it to them” in a manner which motivates deeds.

In practical terms:

To intensify the Chanukah Campaign, and to attempt, in the days preceding Chanukah and during the days of Chanukah, that every Jew be inscribed in one of the general Torah scrolls.

51. Eternal Inheritance

A special focus should be geared towards those who have the merit to serve in the Israel Defense Forces.

Their role should be to protect the Jewish people, not, God forbid, to evict Jews from Jewish land, no matter the location, no matter the preposterous reasoning presented, for those lands given by God to the Jewish nation are an eternal inheritance in our times, as well, especially as they were acquired, and are retained, through open miracles.

For every Jew alive today, after the terrible events of the previous generation – may they never occur again – is “an ember, salvaged from the fire” of exile. He was rescued in

order to create a dwelling place for God in the world at large, and certainly in the Land which “the eyes of God are always upon, from the beginning of the year to the end,” as its full borders were delineated by God Himself.

And while from a few small territories we remain exiled, and they are not yet in Jewish hands, it is, as our Rebbes taught, “Not of our own will did we go into exile,” rather, it is because of our sins that we were exiled.

God has already returned large portions of the land in our own times, into Jewish possession, as the eternal inheritance of the eternal people, through the eternal covenant contained in the eternal Torah, made by God Eternal.

As for the return of the remainder of the land, for reasons known to Him, God awaits for the Jewish people to complete their “return” to Him, at which point He will return these portions as well.

Then, there will no need for use of force or war; that will be entirely unnecessary. The land will transition in a peaceful way, as long as the peace will be in accordance with Torah – whose “ways are sweet, and all its paths are peace.”

52. “Diplomacy”

This is the only way to a true peace – when is based on the Torah of Truth, which was given by the God of Truth, and not a peace based on a falsehood, which, to be polite, is called “diplomacy.”

“Diplomacy” was best defined by one of the chief diplomats: Saying the opposite of what you know to be true, for otherwise, you don’t need to be a diplomat; a regular person can also state matters as they are.

We have seen this in the past:

Wherever they’ve followed a path of fallacy

– the opposite of the Torah of Truth, which states that land given by God in a miraculous way, to this generation, notwithstanding its level of Jewish observance, and gave it through open miracles; there remains no doubt that nobody may touch it.

And nobody can touch it, because it belongs, as an eternal heirloom, to the eternal nation – to every single Jew in every corner of the globe, and to every single Jew of all generations that have passed, and to our children and grandchildren.

If we want them to have peace, we must know that they are the owners of these territories in Israel, which, God forbid, some want to give away, which are currently, by miracle, in Jewish hands.

They tell every Jew that you have no right to touch our heirloom – the inheritance of your children and grandchildren.

And if you want to deceive yourself that you are more clever than the Torah of Truth, more clever than the God of Truth, and that you are more clever that the demand of your children and grandchildren until the end of time – you must know that these lands are not yours to control.

You own that which is in your control, but you have no jurisdiction over lands that belong to the Jewish nation until the end of time; no jurisdiction over that which belongs to your children and grandchildren, who declare – whether openly or not – that they refuse to give away any part of the land currently in Jewish hands.

53. Ignoring the Non-Jew within us

Undoubtedly, with steadfastness, we will achieve this end.

We have seen this in reality:

The matters for which we stood firm, and were not swayed by gentiles – because we were not swayed by the “gentile-ness” which has yet to be banished from our hearts, from our own personal “Land of Israel” – when we ignored this all and followed the just and moral path, stating that the Land belongs to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the twelve tribes, and to the seventy souls who descended into Egypt, and to the six hundred thousand who entered Israel with Joshua...

No one has the ability to relinquish even a half an inch, even one dot, for it is not his.

Doing so is a declaration of war against the Eternal God – to take a part of the Land “which the eyes of God are upon,” and give it to a non-Jew, heaven forefend. This is a confrontation not only with God’s Torah, it is a confrontation with the true Owner of the Holy Land, God himself, “God the Lord of Hosts.”

By God’s will, there are several territories that he does not yet want to restore to Jewish hands. The only reason for this is succinctly stated by every Jew each festival, when we recite, in a festive spirit, unworried and unhindered, clearly and publicly:

“Because of our sins we have been exiled from our Land.”

And when the cause will dissolve, so too will the effect, in the words of Maimonides: “As soon as they return, they will immediately be redeemed,” and at that time we will also recover the portions which, since the destruction of the Temple, remain under non-Jewish control.

We will restore them through pleasant and peaceful means, and even until then, there will be peace in Israel, peace between Israel and the nations, for, with this conduct, the

nations will not feel that they are being fooled, that they are being told the opposite of the Torah.

In fact, when we speak this way, they suspect that it is only talk, and that we immediately attempt to undermine that which we just said.

These lies have accomplished nothing, for “falsity has no foundation” and immediately dissolve.

54. Bribery

May it be God’s will, that they be nullified in good ways, when every Jew will be aroused to return to God, and will resolutely follow the dictates of Halacha, not God-forbid, as some individuals attempt to distort Torah, and have the temerity to claim that Halacha rules to their liking, in direct contrast to Torah law, which rules that testimony and investigations must be honest, rather than relying on testimony of those who were bribed.

They didn’t have the patience to mount an investigation of the true condition of Israel’s security, and whether this specific territory will endanger the residents.

They rely on a child – an adult in years, but a child in intelligence, especially after he accepted bribes, “which blinds even the wise.” How much more so, someone unwise to begin with.

Bribery also “perverts the words of the righteous,” and the bribe that the witnesses received is well-known.

And on this basis, Heaven forbid, they wish to enact a law with ramifications of life and death, and of the security of three million Jews residing in the Holy Land, which “The eyes of God are upon, from the beginning of the year until the end.”

Heaven forefend, they wish to use the name of Torah to battle a clear ruling in God’s Torah that one may not relinquish even an inch, for it will “open the land before them” Heaven forefend.

They allege that Torah permits one to steal newspapers, that Torah allows one to speak nonsense, with no source in Torah, simply because it so occurred to them, and to thereby negate a clear ruling of Jewish law.

This is a travesty of unprecedented proportion!

No doubt it will not succeed!

Even if, God forbid, it succeeds for a short moment, “due to our sins,” we will immediately recognize the error, which has absolutely no basis – there is no basis in the Torah of Truth to relinquish a portion which impacts the security of the entire Land of Israel.

The Talmud, the Bet Yosef and the commentators were learned men, who determined Jewish laws, and they investigated the situation on their own, or through reliable witnesses, to ascertain the true facts.

Whereas here, it was clearly stated that this person was bribed, that the next received a different sort of bribe, the third – one of them alone stated that he is unreliable, and that his words should not be printed, “because he is not normal” – these were their words, and it was meant quite literally: it is known who said it, concerning whom it was said, and to whom it was said.

Nevertheless, when his opinion was recently solicited, they listened to him, while fully aware that they are endangering three million Jews. They didn't bother to ask an expert in security about the state of the army, and the state of security today, in the month of Kislev 5742.

Have the courage to state, that “Being an issue of life and death, I admit, at least from here onward, the true law is that the Land of Israel belongs to the nation of Israel, and the only distinction is that this applies only to the areas in our possession; concerning the other portions: ‘Do not provoke the nations.’”

Their style of operation is well known:

Just as they previously bought off newspapers and resorted to violence, they now resort to misrepresenting the Torah and Jewish law, all on the basis of the said testimony.

55. Sooner or Later

May it be God's will, that on this auspicious day when “My soul was redeemed peacefully”

– “the nations and ministers” know the truth, already long ago, and don't want to provoke the Jewish people; the only ones who seek disturb Judaism are “Your destroyers will come from amongst you,” the false witnesses who were bribed.

Their names are well known, as are their parents' names, and where they are.

Yet to this day, they are called to affirm, and they are relied upon for public policy, that Torah permits a policy which endangers three million Jews.

However, surely “the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.”

May God endow them with a spirit of repentance, a spirit of purity, and wash from amongst us “the false witnesses, the bribers, the slanderers,” all the four specific categories that will be vanquished from amongst the Jewish people – Not the sinners themselves, but rather their sins, because they too will return.

May it be as soon as possible.

As mentioned before, Maimonides states: “Torah promised that every Jew will return;” sooner or later, every Jew will ultimately return; they were simply given the free will to do it a moment earlier, and they will surely do so in pleasant and peaceful ways, resulting in an immediate redemption from their personal exile which in turn hastens the end of the general exile.

May the true and ultimate redemption arrive, when “He will put an end to the darkness.”

56. Fluttering Leaf

Everyone knows that we’re still in exile; so when it comes to the territories that God has not yet returned, we shouldn’t provoke the nations and take them by force. But for the portions that God has already redeemed and transferred to Jewish control, God is the only authority.

He gave it as an Eternal Inheritance to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to their descendants for all time.

Proclaiming this principle is the only way to attain a lasting, true peace, while still in exile.

And the nations of the world are watching and waiting: “When will Jews begin to say what they’re really thinking?” The nations understand how a Jew ought to think about the Land of Israel.

But when the Jew starts talking diplomatic jargon instead, begging: “Perhaps, you’ll take another piece of land, and another piece?” – thinking that in this way you’ll find favor in their eyes, and you’ll go down in history as a just and upright person...

The non-Jew doesn’t believe you anyway.

The non-Jew suspects that you’re telling him one thing, and saying something else behind closed doors, or in your heart – because you’re not talking like a Jew.

Yes, you may be speaking Hebrew... But the content of your words express fear of “the sound of a fluttering leaf.”

One of the signs of the Footsteps of Moshiach is “You will flee the sound of a fluttering leaf... but no one is pursuing you.”

The only “pursuer” is the “gentile-ness” within your heart which frightens you into imagining that they are pressuring you to do all kinds of things which they aren’t.

All they want is to be left in peace.

They have enough troubles of their own...

This has been the case until now; in particular, the infamous mistakes which have jeopardized the safety of the entire Jewish nation until today – the signing of the accords at Camp David.

57. *Camp David*

I don't want to say "Camp David" in Hebrew, for it is the polar opposite of "David, King of Israel is alive." It is also the opposite of "camp," for Torah uses the word "camp" for the Priests, or the Levites, or the Jewish people; a Jew cannot be "camped there," because it is falsity.

Over the course of time since then, we have observed the suffering brought upon us by signing that paper. Everything was given away, and nothing was received in return, and the only thing that was achieved is more and more pressure.

They gave away the strongest security, the oil.

In no one's imagination did they expect that an individual would have the audacity to relinquish the most vital measure of security of an entire nation of three million, and to "abandon" the oil fields – within hours, it was in the full control of the other side.

Nor has the "treaty" prevented war...

Everybody wants peace.

The question, however, is whether this path leads to peace or to war.

Any person who understands human nature knows that when one litigant becomes weak, the other is strengthened.

If Israel wants to have a place on the international stage, and if one wants the nations to respect Israel, then it must be strong by their standards, as they understand it. When the oil wells in Sinai were given away, we demonstrated the utmost weakness: We took our most vital security resource and gave it to the other side.

This only proved to them who they are dealing with, that they could demand more and more, and that's exactly what they did.

And they decided among themselves: "Why go to war, when we can achieve all our objectives without war?" The agreement itself didn't bring peace any closer, nor did it prevent the possibility of war at all.

It did not add peace, because no one runs to make peace with someone who has no power. Especially when they have cousins, other nations, exhorting them to conduct war with "the weak nation." And the weaker the weak one is, the more the other side is

prepared to wage war on them.

58. *America's Interest*

Certainly, signing a peace treaty is a positive thing; that is not the issue I'm discussing.

When someone wants to convince others of something untrue, they misconstrue the reality:

It was simply not the case, as some said at the time, that if we refuse to relinquish the oil wells they will refuse to sign, and the state of war will continue, and if we do hand over the oil they will sign the treaty and not wage war...

At the time, the signing of a peace accord was a necessity for the US, for its own interests. Even had we relinquished nothing, and we simply committed not to push ahead, as it was with the Egyptian Third Army in the war...

– As discussed many times, Israel conquered and later returned portions of Egypt that were not vital to Israel's security, or a very minimal security value –

In other words, the quiet that we've had in the meantime – I won't call it "peace," but the absence of war – has nothing to do with our surrender of the oil wells. It's because a treaty was signed, and the parties didn't leave Camp David in anger.

But had Israel kept the oil, America would have forced Egypt to sign the treaty nevertheless, and to stop waging war, because that was the interest of the United States itself, and not just an "interest," it was essential to them.

The same is true of all the other concessions made thereafter – they haven't brought peace any closer, rather every concession has weakened the conceding side.

And the entire world knows, that when one side is weaker, they're taken even less seriously, more is demanded of them, and they're threatened: "If you don't concede more, the result will be war!" God forbid, whereas, when one stands firm and does not surrender...

The other parties are in greater need of quiet than Israel!

But this is only true if you demonstrate tangible strength – not by giving away oil, God forbid; not by giving away territories.

They're preparing now, Heaven forefend, after some time passes, to surrender another piece of land and another piece of land...

And each of these territories is classified by Jewish law as vital to protecting security and lives.

59. *Peace Upon the Land*

May it be God's will that even before Chanukah, as we prepare for Chanukah...

Chanukah was the time when "those who studied Torah" were not swayed by "the mighty" nor by "the many," as detailed in the Chanukah prayers.

Especially today, when there are superpowers standing with us – but when one member of the administration attempts to squeeze a concession out of Israel we promptly become apprehensive and concede, including assets that are vital to the security of Israel and its inhabitants.

To underscore once more:

Relinquishing the oil at Camp David did not stem the prospect of war.

This would have been achieved, in even stronger and longer-lasting manner, had we not given away the oil. We would have signed a peace treaty offering other things, which don't endanger the security of Jews and, by extension, the security of Judaism.

As stated, the United States needed a treaty to be signed.

By handing away the oil, and by continuing on that route, that same approach, giving away airfields from where they can maneuver and fly. And as now being discussed, to give away territories directly linked to Israel's security.

This talk itself weakens us, because it shows we are living under a shadow of fear, a weakness of heart, from "the sound of a fluttering leaf."

The other side needs peace more than Israel does.

By giving away and conceding, the conceding side is weakened and it brings even closer the threat of war, Heaven forefend.

May God grant that speaking about this be enough, and in reality, "God will set peace upon the Land" beginning from this auspicious day, Rosh Hashanah of Chassidus, the nineteenth of Kislev.

Through reconnecting with the soul of Torah, and fulfilling God's commandments, for "action is the main thing," may we witness, even in exile, the fulfillment of the verse:

"Follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them, and I will provide your rains in their time...and I will set peace upon the Land," for "God will take us upright," we will stand with a proud posture.

God only asks: "Follow My decrees and observe My commandments" – adhere to the true ruling of the Torah of Truth.

And in this way, the physical exile in the Diaspora will come to an end, as well as the

spiritual exile within Israel itself, which is expressed by fear of non-Jews, and by one's own non-Jewish thinking... Jews will stand proud in all matters of Torah and Mitzvos.

In the words of Rashi:

“To be engrossed in Torah study,” resulting in careful observance of Mitzvos – the true Jewish pride prophesied in the verse.

Then we will proceed proudly, “with an upraised hand,” bringing the last moments of exile to an end, to greet our righteous Moshiach with the true and complete Redemption.

One of the ways to hasten this is through each Jew being included in one of the general Torah scrolls especially members of the Israel Defense Forces, and more so, those who protect Israel literally, keeping it secure, which is related to the true security: Judaism, Torah and its Mitzvos – Each of them should have a letter in the Torah scroll.

And together with all Jews, and all the Torah scrolls, with “Our young and our old, our sons and our daughters,” we will go together to greet our righteous Moshiach, speedily in our days.

May we all celebrate Chanukah in our Holy Land, “the Land which God's eyes are upon from the beginning of the year until its end” to see the Chanukah lamps “which will never be extinguished,” in addition to the kindling of lights in the third Holy Temple built by our righteous Moshiach.

May it be speedily in our days.

S I C H A

9

In Word and in Deed

The ten Mivtzoim

The Ten Mivtzoim should be especially bolstered
and intensified.

Sicha 9

61. *The Campaigns*

To summarize:

We must renew all our efforts to spread Judaism and Torah in general, and particularly the Wellsprings of Chassidism, to the entire world – a mission connected with Yud-Tes Kislev.

Relevant to right now:

Since Wednesday already begins the lead into Shabbos, the Shabbos candle campaign is especially relevant.

Shabbos candles are also connected to the Shabbos meal – which is even more significant than the weekday meals – but all relate to the Kosher campaign, for a Jew's every meal must be Kosher; but the Shabbos meal is especially holy, for it is a Biblical commandment to honor the Shabbos with food and drink, and especially with Kiddush over wine.

This also relates to the Mitzvah of Family Purity.

– All three Mitzvos have a special connection to Shabbos.

All of these campaigns are based upon love for every Jew, educating oneself, as well as every other Jew he can reach – with an enduring message which will ensure that even after the student leaves the educator he will continue in an environment of Torah and Judaism, so that it will not contradict his Torah perspective – which was impressed on him through heartfelt words, through words of Judaism, Torah and Mitzvos.

In general, Tefillin represents all Mitzvos, for “all of Torah is compared to Tefillin.”

Also the campaigns for Mezuzah, Charity, and the Jewish Book Campaign – alongside the campaigns relating to Jewish women and girls, as well as the special campaign in preparation for Chanukah.

In addition to all these, and connected with the campaigns for love of every Jew, Torah, and Jewish unity – just as “the Jews rested at Sinai as one man with one heart” – every Jew should have a letter in a Torah scroll – from the smallest child to the greatest scholar, all united in communal Torah scrolls.

And the sooner the better – not just an “hour” sooner, or a “moment” sooner, for even a “moment” is defined as a length of time, such as the time it takes to say two or three syllables... But there is an even shorter measure of time – one movement, one instant.

Even sooner than all this – particularly for the soldiers who are protecting Jews with

their very bodies, to the point of self-sacrifice; each of them should be given the strongest defensive weapon – the connection with the Giver of the Torah, through a letter in the Torah which God gave him, amongst all Jews.

62. *L'chaim*

May all of these campaigns together, even just the resolution to join in them – just as was the case for Daniel in the lions' den, when he received immediate reward for making a good resolution – so too, in our case, even just the resolution to do Teshuva should bring about the immediate reward – even before fulfilling the resolution – the true and complete Redemption, through our righteous Moshiach.

And together we will all go to the Holy Land, “the Land which God's eyes are always upon, from the beginning of the year until the end” – each and every Jew, together with their portion in Torah and with the complete Torah, to the complete Land, and “God will broaden your boundaries” – speedily in our days.

L'chaim.

Those who need to recite an After-blessing will surely do so.

