

שבת בשבתו



Parshat Vayetzei

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Parsha Vayishlach

Rabbi Zvi Romm

Rabbi of Bialystoker Synagogue, New York, NY

The commentators offer various reasons for the mitzvah of Gid HaNasheh – the prohibition of eating the sciatic nerve – which is mentioned in this week's Parsha. Why should the injury of Yaakov Avinu be so significant that it needs to be marked by a prohibition applying to all future generations?

The Da'at Zekeinim MiBa'alei HaTosafot shares an insight about this mitzvah which speaks to a powerful way we can connect to some modern-day Jewish heroes:

The Torah tells us that Yaakov remained alone, separated from his family, when he battled with the angel. Yaakov's older sons, who were already teenagers at this time, should never have left their elderly father alone, say the Ba'alei HaTosafot. They should have stayed and protected their father; had they done so, perhaps Yaakov would not have been injured. The prohibition of eating the Gid HaNasheh serves as an eternal reminder to never abandon those who are vulnerable and leave them alone.



Loneliness is not only dangerous physically; it can be destructive spiritually. Noting that the angel is associated by Chazal with the yetzer hara, Rabbi Chaim Shmulewitz points out that our Parsha teaches that when one is left alone, without the support of like-minded friends, he is particularly susceptible to the yetzer hara. For that reason, when Chazal offer advice to counteract the yetzer hara, they recommend "dragging him into the Beit HaMidrash (study hall)." Learning Torah alone is insufficient to counter the yetzer hara; one needs to be part of a "Beit Midrash," a community of like-minded individuals who can support one religiously.

The mitzvah of Gid HaNasheh gives us a mandate to ensure that no one is ever left alone or abandoned. While this mandate extends to many people in our communities, I believe we have a special obligation to young men and women who can truly be considered modern-day Jewish heroes: the Chayalim Bodedim or "lone soldiers," soldiers who volunteer for service in the Israeli Defense Forces and have no family living in Israel.

Our Lower East Side community has several young men who are currently serving in the IDF while their families are in the States. I am sure that is true of many, if not most, of our communities. What can we do, both in our individual neighborhoods as well as in the community at large, to convey to these brave and altruistic individuals that they are not alone? How can we show them that we deeply value their act of voluntarily putting themselves in harm's way in order to protect the Jewish people and the State of Israel?

The mitzvah of Gid HaNasheh is not one we think about much today. The portion of the animal containing the sciatic nerve is removed long before the meat appears in our Kosher supermarkets. I believe, though, that a modern-day application of the mitzvah of Gid HaNasheh is for us to think seriously and creatively about how we can support our Chayalim Bodedim. The Gid HaNasheh reminds us eternally that no Jew can be left alone.

Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

On Tuesday, December 13th the RZA-Mizrachi was honored to host Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter for our inaugural event launching our new Teaneck Chapter. Rabbi Schacter's presentation was entitled: "The Contemporary Significance of the State of Israel: Reshit Zemichat Geulatenu?"

The event was held at Congregation Rinat Israel and had more than 150 people in attendance.

We thank Rabbi Schacter for his exceptional and thought-provoking lecture, and look forward to partnering with the Teaneck community on future events!





Introducing the New RZA-Aryeh Fellowship!

The RZA-Aryeh Fellowship is a new initiative of the RZA-Mizrachi to strengthen the mission of Religious Zionism. Fifty college and graduate school students from around the country have been invited to spend their winter-break in Israel where they will be studying Torah and attending intensive seminars devoted to Religious Zionism education. Upon their return the Aryeh Fellows will focus on their year-long Manhigut (leadership) projects designed to bring the message of Religious Zionism back to communities across America. We are excited to profile a different “Aryeh Fellow” each week.

Meet Shoshana Klafter



Shoshana Klafter is a native of Cincinnati, Ohio; following high school she learned in Michlelet Mivaseret Yerushalayim (MMY). Presently, Shoshana is studying Biology in Yeshiva University's Stern College for Women.

Although she is on the pre-med track, she has a passion for Jewish education, particularly Religious Zionist education, and has become extensively involved in Bnei Akiva over the last three years, spending every summer at Bnei Akiva's Camp Stone as Beit Midrash Staff, a counselor, and most recently as a Rosh Eidah. She has also been involved in Bnei Akiva of New York/New Jersey and currently works for them as a Rosh Snif

in Long Beach, New York. Shoshana is excited for this opportunity to go back to Israel, and hopes to share her passion for Israel and Religious Zionism through the RZA Aryeh Fellowship program.

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Dear RZA-Mizrachi Friends,

We very much look forward to having you take part in our Mizrachi World Movement's "This Year in Jerusalem" Mega-Mission over Yom Yerushalayim. Our aim is to bring thousands of people (including rabbinic and community leaders) from hundreds of communities from across the global Jewish community to learn, experience and celebrate together at this momentous time in Jewish history.

Please see below a personal invitation from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, one of the global leaders of the mission, inviting you to join him on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

More details about the program can be found at the following link - www.mizrachi.org/YY50 - including the draft schedule, highlights, pricing options and booking procedure.

Please note the following:

1. There are 10 hotel options, with a price range depending on hotel choice. Each hotel package includes breakfast, lunch and dinner (excluding Wed evening). The hotel packages also include the entire 4 day program at discounted rates.
2. There is also an option for people who are not staying in hotels - if they have their own accommodation - to join for the 4 day program, at a cost of \$630 per person. It does not include hotel, breakfast and dinner, but does include transport from central meeting points to and from all the venues, lunch each day, and participation in the full program.
3. For those shuls/communities/groups who wish to bring missions and want to extend their trip either before or after our 4 day mission, that can also be arranged by contacting us at YY50@mizrachi.org, and we - together with our partners - will put together a tailor-made package for your group.

Looking forward to celebrating together – in Jerusalem – on this historic occasion.

With excitement and anticipation,

Rabbi Gideon Shloush
Mizrachi – Religious Zionists of America

Rav Doron Perez
Mizrachi World Movement

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POINT OF VIEW

Harassment by the Son of Chamor

By Rabbi Yisrael Rozen, Dean of the Zomet Institute

“And Dinah went out... to see the daughters of the land. Shechem the son of Chamor, the prince of the land, saw her... and he defiled her.” [Bereishit 34:1-2].

Harassment, and More Harassment

For a long time now, large segments of the news broadcasts have been devoted to dramas involving sexual harassment, including voyeurism, investigations, plea bargains, and resignations. I am not active in the social networks, and I am therefore not involved in the raging “harassment” festivals in this realm. I suppose we can say that the earth seems to be full of corruption (“*chamass*”) and rape (“*anass*”).

We can thank G-d that He has given the women in our generation the strength and the courage to complain and to protect themselves against actions which were often hidden from view in the past. In some circles, harassment, exploitation, and coercion were – and perhaps still are – part of the culture of authority and control, with a system of providing pleasure, willingly or by force, in return for a reciprocal pleasure.

We can thank G-d that He has given women’s organizations in our generation the strength and the status to bring this subject to the forefront, to encourage those who have been harmed to openly appear before the accused one, and (sometimes) to appear in the press behind a screen, in an effort to remove this disgrace, “a time when one man controls another in order to do him harm” [Kohellet 8:9].

We can thank G-d for giving the judges the wisdom to punish the sinners without regard to their status or their roles in society, ignoring the high personal price paid by the guilty ones. In fact, the higher is the status of the accused, the more difficult is his fall from grace, and it may even be that the judges purposely ignore this factor (see the case of the former President, Moshe Katzav).

(As an aside: I can just see in my mind's eye both men and women among my readers who will be surprised to see me defend the justice system of our land. Well, **I clearly differentiate between criminal and civil courts and the impure interference of the courts, all too often, in matters involving nationality and issues related to moral values, the outlook, or religion.**)

Danger: The Weapon of False Accusations

The accumulation of cases that have appeared recently in the press and their results, and the great power exercised by every “hangman” in Facebook or every owner of a Twitter account who sits comfortably at home – all of these elements have provided women with a powerful weapon which I fear will be developed further and which will continue to grow. **Many stories are told of extortionist hitchhikers** who demand to be brought to the door of their home, adding many kilometers to the ride, by threatening: “Otherwise, I will complain about harassment. And even if I am proven wrong, you will be called to an investigation, your picture will be published, your reputation will be ruined, and your boss will cut your salary. And if I am lucky, you will also end up paying me compensation.” If the “lady” is smart enough, it is sufficient for her to put a hand on the driver’s leg or on the arm of her boss in order to create the “smoke” that can be used to “prove” that there is indeed a fire. A scene like this can take place, with great impact, in every office, store, bank branch, or clinic. An ambitious woman can publish a text message or a WhatsApp cry for help, and she has trapped her prey – and there it is, a documented hint of “arm-twisting by authority.”

Does the law allow for **harsh punishment of a woman who has made a false accusation** or who blew a minor incident all out of proportion? Without such an element of balance, taking a high price to correspond to the status of an “offending male” – there will in the end not be any real justice.

Proportionality and the Guillotine

I am not a defense lawyer for the offenders, but based on the principle of “**proportionality**” which is very important to the legal system (and which has support from the halacha) I feel that it is important to categorize these “man-woman” crimes into various levels and not to leave matters as they are, with just two broad offenses, “harassment” and “rape.” How should we define “verbal harassment” when there are at least ten different levels in this category? Is a kiss on the top of the head without the acceptance by the woman a case of “rape?” I can just see the raised eyebrows of my readers, both men and women, in response to this question. “Does Rabbi Rozen want to defend the men who harass the women?” Absolutely not! I merely want to remind everybody that **the open market of the media loves nothing better than a guillotine!**

** * * * *

Here are a number of quotes from the Midrash, without any intention of implying something specific, about the subject of Dinah, who was raped:

“And Dinah, daughter of Leah... to see the daughters of the land.’ – It is noted that she is Leah’s daughter because she went out. Leah too went out, as is written, ‘And Leah went out to meet him’ [Bereishit 30:16]. This corresponds to the common folk saying, ‘Like mother, like daughter.’” [Rashi, based on Bereishit Rabba 80].

“To see the daughters of the land’ – She went out to show her beauty.” [Midrash Lekach Tov]. “To see and to be seen.” [Tanchuma, Vayishlach, 10].

“This can be compared to one who had ‘a pound of flesh.’ As soon as the bird of prey discovered it, the bird swooped down and took it.” [Bereishit Rabba 80].

As Shabbat Approaches

I have been Made Small by all the Kindness

By Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg, Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

A raging controversy had been taking place for more than a hundred years among Jews who have faith in the word of G-d. Should we play an active role to try to bring in the era of the Mashiach, or should we wait patiently for a miracle from heaven? Rebbe Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson, the sixth Rebbe of Chabad, wrote a long letter where he discussed his objections to the Zionist movement. "The idea of the Zionists to gather the people and to have them all join together will never happen. All of the power and heroism, together with their guile and large efforts, will not work. They will not help and will not succeed against the will of G-d. The many ideas and proposals will be changed like clothing, and the decision of G-d is what will remain. Only He will gather us and draw us together from the four corners of the globe." [Igrot Hakodesh, pages 222,229].

Others contradicted his claims – certainly G-d will gather us, but we have no way of knowing just how He will do it. He might "put up a king whose decrees are worse than those of Haman the Aggagi, and they will repent." [Sanhedrin 97b]. Or He might call on Koresh or Lord Balfour, as we are told by the prophets: "This is what G-d says to his servant Koresh – I will go before you... For the sake of My servant Yaacov and My Chosen One, Yisrael. I will call for you by your name, I call out to you but you refuse to know Me... **I am G-d, who does all of this.**" [Yeshayahu 45:1,4,7].

The Holy One, Blessed be He, promised, "I will take you out of the nations, and I will gather you from all the lands, and I will bring you to your land" [Yechezkel 36:24]. However, nowhere does it say how this will be done. Our sages have given us a sign so that we can recognize when the hand of G-d has begun to act: "When you see the mountains of Yisrael giving fruit, there can be no clearer end of the exile than this, as is written, 'And you, mountains of Yisrael, will grow branches which will carry fruit for My nation Yisrael, for their time is near' [Yechezkel 36:8]." [Sanhedrin 98a]. And the Maharsha explains, "This is a miraculous event, it is a clear sign of the revealed end of the exile."

Rav Kook writes: "**In the end both miracles and nature are acts of G-d...** Nature is an act of G-d together with G-d, since whatever a man does is also done by G-d. It makes no difference whether the act takes place through natural forces or is accomplished through the nimble character of man, his intelligence and his will. When man makes use of these traits it is really merely an act by G-d. You have created our acts too." [Ein Ayah Berachot, volume 1, 143].

And the RAN writes: "'You shall remember that your G-d is the one who gives you the strength to gather wealth' [Devarim 8:18] – It is not written that G-d makes the wealth. There is some truth in a declaration that a person is the one who creates the wealth, but only on one condition – that he must remember who gave him the strength to act." [Tenth sermon of the RAN].

The Holy One, Blessed be He, expects us to help Him by our actions. A miracle will happen only when mankind is not capable of acting and helping, and in that case man must be passive. And this happens when man is in a lowly state. "A person should prefer having an influence, which is part of a life of activity, and this is the higher level of Divine will... And that is why Yaacov said, 'I have been made small by all the kindness' [Bereishit 32:11]." Receiving kindness puts a person at a lower level. However, Yaacov achieved greatness later, by virtue of a life of action. 'For you fought with G-d and with people, and you prevailed' [32:29]."

ZIONIST CHASSIDISM

War and a Kiss

By Rabbi Rafi Ostroff, Head of the Religious Council of Gush Etzion

As far as the Rebbe of Husiatyn was concerned, this week's Torah portion of Vayishlach involves the struggle between Yisrael and the other nations, and especially the struggles during the exile. This follows the approach of the Ramban, who treated Vayishlach as the Torah portion of exile.

The Rebbe puts special emphasis on the viewpoint of the Ramban, that this portion is symbolic of our relationship with the nations that surrounded us throughout the generations, as is often said: "The events of the forefathers are a sign for the descendants." Therefore, Yisrael in exile, and also now before the full redemption has taken place, can learn something from the struggle between Yaacov and Eisav, as a symbol of the constant struggle throughout the generations.

There are times when the best way to cope with the other nations is through war, and other times when the best path is with a kiss.

Yaacov declares to Eisav: "I lived with Lavan, and I delayed returning until now" [Bereishit 32:5]. Rashi offers two explanations: (1) I am still a "ger," a stranger, and thus the blessings of our father Yitzchak to me did not take place. (2) I continued to observe the 613 mitzvot, and I did not learn from the actions of Lavan. Clearly, this is not an issue that is on Eisav's mind, why should Yaacov bring it up? In fact, it seems contrary to the first explanation, where Yaacov tried to belittle himself.

Excessive Visibility

It is true that according to the first explanation given above Yaacov wanted to decrease Eisav's hatred by showing that he was a stranger and weak – and that he certainly did not feel that he had the right to take possession of the land. And this brought the Rebbe to criticize the behavior of many Jews in Europe before World War Two:

Many of the wealthy people of our nation created jealousy among the other nations with their boasting and their luxurious style of living, thus giving a weapon to those who wanted to incite the Christian majority against the Jews... The Jewish newspapers did not behave as strangers but rather as the leaders of the country. They interfered in matters of state in the places where they lived in a way that aroused hatred.

The Rebbe criticized the feeling of ownership over their countries that characterized many Jews in Western Europe and especially in Germany. He demanded that the Jews of the exile should decrease their image and their power as compared to other nations, because there was no reason to cause an extra measure of hatred against the Jews. This is also a way to cope in the exile with hatred against the Jews. And, the Rebbe asked, does this differ at all from the behavior of the Jews in the United States, who lead in the fields of politics, the press, and academia? Should they not be afraid of excess visibility which can awaken hatred among the nation where they live?

Waging War with a Kiss

In the Talmud there is a dispute whether Eisav appeared to Yaacov as an idol worshipper or as a Torah scholar (Chulin 91). There are times when the Gentiles come towards Yisrael with a show of strength, like Eisav who came towards Yaacov with four hundred men. But when these men were struck by angels and abandoned him one by one, the only way that was left for Eisav was to fight Yisrael in the second way: the kiss. That is, he had to show a welcoming face to Yaacov, causing the Jews to abandon the 613 mitzvot.

Eisav's tactics in this type of war are different. One method is the sword, like the time of Titus, the Crusades, the Inquisition, and so on. And now this is taking place in Italy, Germany, and Rumania. But there are times when they come with a kiss – by getting closer and creating conditions which will lead to assimilation and absorption... In this case the other nation hides behind a facade of a learned Torah scholar, who tries to kill the Jewish soul through his method of analysis... Bible criticism, with its harmful intentions, was born in Germany. The goal was to desecrate the holiness, to lower the Tanach to a level of secular literature, and thus to harm the soul of Yisrael, since in reality the Torah is the soul of the nation.

Here the Rebbe of Husiatyn is reiterating a principle that appears in other places in his writing: The war between Yisrael and its enemies is in essence spiritual. It is not by chance that the same nation gave birth both to the impure method of Bible Criticism and the cruel attempt to physically destroy the Jewish nation. Both actions stem from the same roots and are geared toward the same goal. It is amazing to read these essays, which were written in the darkness of the Nazi government in the world and to see how our enemies change

from one tactic to another while the essence is always the same: to weaken both the spiritual and physical status of Yisrael in the world.

To Awaken the Mercy of Heaven

We may also suggest another goal for the statement, "I lived with Lavan." Perhaps Yaacov wanted to soften the judgement of the nation of Yisrael. That is, in addition to the practical preparations that we must do when we are getting ready to struggle against the other nations, we must also ask for the help of G-d, which we need so much in these struggles. And the way to do this is to fully observe the 613 mitzvot.

Note: A summary of the life of Rebbe Yaacov of Husiatyn and his community appeared in issue 1646 for the Torah portion of Noach.

THE ROOTS OF FAITH – Basic Tenets of Jewish Philosophy

Let the Temple be Rebuilt

By Rabbi Oury Cherki, Machon Meir, Rabbi of Beit Yehuda Congregation, Jerusalem

There has been much discussion about the way the Temple will be rebuilt - let it come quickly, in our time. At first glance the approaches appear to be diametrically opposed to each other, with no possible way to reconcile them. However, let us see if this is really true. We start by listing various approaches to this question.

(1) The Rambam writes that the building of the Temple is one of the 248 positive mitzvot which human beings are obligated to perform: "There is a positive mitzva to build a house for G-d, a place where it will be possible to bring sacrifices, and where the people will come to celebrate three times a year. As is written, 'Let them make a Temple for Me' [Shemot 25:8]." While it is true that the Rambam wrote that the Mashiach will build the Temple (Hilchot Melachim 11:1), he did not write that one of the conditions for building the Temple is the arrival of the Mashiach. However, it does seem clear that a royal decision is a necessary prerequisite for the construction (Hilchot Melachim 1:1).

(2) An opposite view is credited to Rashi and the rabbis of the Tosafot, quoting Midrash Tanchuma, which states that the Temple will arrive from heaven, since it has already been "built and improved" above.

(3) One interpretation is that "from heaven" means that after the Temple is built by human beings the Shechina – the Divine Presence – from the heavens will fill it. This is similar to what happened in the Tabernacle and during the dedication of the First Temple.

(4) Finally, a fourth opinion is that after the Temple descends from heaven its construction will be completed by human activity, in line with the phrase, "Let us be happy with its installation."

It indeed seems that these different approaches definitely contradict each other. However, they can be reconciled in the end through the approach of the Ramchal in his book, "Mishkanei Elyon." He writes that the Temple will descend from heaven, and it will then be built by mankind. He explains this concept by a novel explanation of the concept of "heaven." It is clear to everybody that this is not a reference to outer space or the reaches of the upper atmosphere, but rather to a spiritual world, similar in some way to the world of ideals described by Plato.

According to this approach, the descent from heaven is understood as a spiritual phenomenon consisting of a framework of ideals viewed through "*Ruach Hakodesh*" – the Holy Spirit - which can be transformed into practical building plans by mankind. Thus, both those who say that the Temple will descend from heaven and those who say it will be built by man are equally right. This explanation seems to correspond in some ways to the opinions which insist that prophecy must be renewed as a condition for rebuilding the Temple.

One might ask that the writings of the Rambam do not indicate that the fulfillment of the mitzva of building the Temple will be delayed until the return of prophecy. We will reply that indeed

this is the halacha, but in practical terms it is not reasonable to expect that there will be a broad national consensus without a prior transformation of social values. This will show the government and the institutions of the country the need for renewal of the sacrifices and how to cope with the expected reaction of the other nations to such a move. The necessary transformation could come about as a result of the return of the culture of prophecy within our nation. Thus, Divine guidance might lead to cultural and spiritual development in parallel with the increased intensity of the process of redemption, within the nation of Yisrael and through them in the whole world.

HOL NATURE AND THE TORAH PORTION

The Goat

By *Dr. Moshe Raanan, Herzog College and the Jerusalem College for Women*

“Two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams.” [Bereishit 32:15].

The fact that the goats appear in this verse before the sheep might indicate the way the animals were lined up in the gift which Yaacov sent to Eisav. We can learn about this order from a conversation which appears in the Talmud:

“Rabbi Zeira met Rabbi Yehuda at the entrance to his father-in-law’s house. He saw that the rabbi was in a good mood and that he was ready to reveal any of the secrets of the world. He said: Why do the goats go first, followed by the sheep? He replied, it is the same as when the world was created – darkness first, followed by light. The goats, which are usually black, go before the sheep, which are usually white.” [Shabbat 77b].

Which Ones are in the Lead?

From Rabbi Yehuda’s explanation we see that when a mixed herd of goats and sheep is on the move the goats tend to take the lead. Rashi says the same thing: “The goats go first – they lead the rest of the herd.” The black goats symbolize darkness, which is the first part of a day according to the Jewish calendar, as in the story of creation, coming before daylight. Rashi notes, “In general, goats are black and ewes are white.”

The sheep have a relatively solid and heavy build as compared to the goats, and they are therefore slower. It may also be that the well-developed fat tail of the sheep slows them down. We should also note that the goat is considered to be more nimble and a better climber than the sheep, traits which it inherited from its ancestor, the wild goat. It is no wonder that the goat is mentioned several times in the Talmud as having excellent ability as a climber and as an animal which has a potential to cause serious damage.

Ever since I learned this passage in the Talmud, whenever I encounter a mixed herd I look in what sequence they are moving, and I indeed find that in general Rabbi Yehuda was right. The goats lead the rest of the herd. I have strong memories of one time when I joined a group on a climb to the top of the Sartava Mountain (which is assumed to be one of the peaks where fires were lit as a signal to faraway places that the new month had begun).

When we descended, we had to contend with a very strong and unusual wind which caused several of the people to lose their balance. But I forgot all the troubles of the climb near the end of our descent, when we encountered a herd with black goats in the lead. I took this as a sign that with G-d’s help we would soon see some light, after the “black goats.”

Exposed or Revealed

Another point that Rabbi Zeira and Rabbi Yehuda discussed concerns the differences between the furs on the two animals. The question was:

“Why are the sex organs of the ewes covered by their tails, while those of the goats are exposed? He replied: Since we cover ourselves with the wool of the sheep they are rewarded by being covered up. The goats, whose hair we do not use as a cover, remain exposed.”

The fur of the sheep is wool, and it can be woven into good cloth. This is different from the fur of the goat, which is almost never used to make clothing but only for sacks or rough cloth for various other uses. Bedouins make their tents from a mixture of camel wool and goat hair.

Comparing Wool and Hair

It is interesting to analyze the physical properties there are that give hair and wool their different traits. Wool consists of fibers which are produced from the hair of domesticated animals, mainly sheep. Most of the fibers of the domesticated sheep have two main characteristics in which they are different than regular hair or fur. (1) They are covered with scales (called cuticle cells) that are organized in such a way that they help the animal get rid of seeds and pods of plants which take hold of the animals when they come close. (2) The fibers have twists with a density that changes with the specific strain of the sheep. In merino wool there are dozens of twists per centimeter, while in coarse wool there might be only one or two twists per centimeter.

These two characteristics have a strong effect on the uses of the wool. The cuticles and the twists make it possible to spin the fibers into thread or to press them together in the felt industry in such a way that they hold together. As opposed to wool, regular hair has no or very few cuticles and no twists, and it is therefore very hard to spin it into thread.

The efficiency of spinning is also enhanced by the flexibility of wool as opposed to hair. It is possible to differentiate visibly between sheep's wool and goat hair by a cursory look in the field. The hairs in the fur of the goats are smooth and separate from each other, while on the sheep twisted hair is visible which is collected into groups that have the appearance of waves or curls. In addition to making it easy to spin threads from the wool, the cuticles and the twists increase the volume of the wool by capturing large pockets of air. This enhances the insulation provided by wool as compared to hair.

For more information in Hebrew and for pictures, and to regularly receive articles about plants and animals linked to the Daf Yomi, write e-mail to: raananmoshe1@gmail.com

STRAIGHT TALK

Between Two Worlds

By Rabbi Yoni Lavie, Manager, "Chaverim Makshivim" Website

Static and Ben-El Tavori, Moreh Nevuchim, Big Brother, Ya'aleh V'yavoh, Justin Bieber, Gentile milk, Gav Ha'Umah, Chanan Ben Ari, the Game of Thrones, the weekly Torah portion, the Be'er Sheva Hapoel Soccer Team, Second Hakafot, Bar Rafaeli, Tefilat Haderech, Linoel Messi, Torah and Labor, Ayal Golan, Rav Kook...

Is there any link between all of these concepts? Can they all be connected with a single thread?

The surprising answer to the above question is: Yes.

All of these concepts can exist simultaneously in the head of the same national-Zionist youth.

You ask in wonder (and rightly so!): How can this be? They come from very different worlds, not only far apart but even contradictory to each other!

All good and true, but the fact is that religious youths live in **both of these worlds at the same time**. On one hand, they are in a world of holiness – Torah, faith, fear of heaven. And at one and the same time, they are in a world made up of material interests, a secular world of physical desires and a cheap and permissive Western culture.

How can these two worlds be joined together in one person?

The answer is that they coexist in the same way that Ben-Tzion Gopstein (a rightist political

activist) and Ahmed Tibi (an Arab MK) get along with each other. It is simply one big mess, and huge conflicts erupt in every corner like mushrooms after the rain.

What is Love?

The most prominent example of the conflict appears in the concept of "love." A young boy and girl who are educated in the religious school system are given an unequivocal message that love is a wonderful thing, powerful and even holy. When is this so? After the wedding. When you put a ring on her finger and say the magic words, "You are hereby married to me... according to the laws of Moshe and Yisrael," your souls will join together, and the link between you will be miraculously transformed into a pleasant and sweet mitzva. But what, you ask, about the meantime, the here and now? The only possibility is to maintain a heroic stand and wait patiently.

However, when the same boys and girls watch a television series or go to a movie, or when they watch an advertisement or innocently surf the internet, they are treated to a loud noise with a very different message. The "taste of life" is not Coca Cola, it is "love." And it must be here and now! No delay of even one second can be tolerated, and no limitations are allowed. It must take place with all the power of the experience, the exposure, and all the possible color!

How can these two conflicting messages be accommodated at the same time? No way! In the heads of the typical religious youths, a huge confusion is born, which leads to a chain of complications, setbacks, and frustration. Usually the side which gains the upper hand is the second voice, the secular Western one, which appears to be amazingly attractive when you are 16 years old or so. Like the Pied Piper in his day, the enchanted melody pulls in many of the children, and thereby blocks their minds from accepting any messages of sanctity – such as faith, a fear of heaven, and the need for good behavior.

If the educators in yeshivot and ulpanot complain about problems in teaching the youths Talmud (the boys), modest dressing (the girls), and prayer (for all of them), the reason for all this can be stated very succinctly: Could it be otherwise? "Whoever goes to sleep with dogs will wake up with fleas," as the saying goes – and whoever doesn't go to sleep at all because his or her eyes are glued to a screen which constantly spews out content that is impure and distorted will find that his eyes close the next morning when he looks at the siddur or the Talmud. And then the heart continues to be frozen and to block proper content.

Close the Dam

The vast majority of the religious community strictly observe the laws of kashrut and absolutely refuse to put anything that is not kosher into their mouths. But with respect to contents of the media, movies, and music, the dam is wide open, and the soul becomes a drainage pit for every unsavory culture that flows through the world. Sweet youths with a burning heart, huge talent, and great potential get lost along the way when a ugly cultural flow drags them along. Their loving parents on one hand make huge monthly payments to the best and most prestigious educational institutions, while on the other hand they make available unlimited access to contents that are the diametric opposite of what they want.

Developing an Alternative

The time has come for a public reckoning about our contradictory actions as a community. First of all, we must all understand that simple point that we cannot hold a rope at both ends. One who goes into the water cannot remain dry, and one who eats fatty foods all day long cannot expect this to have no effect on his or her weight. Our usual attitude of viewing the world of entertainment as neutral ("pareveh"), neither helpful nor harmful, light entertainment with which to pass the time after a hard day of work, is just wrong. Huge sums of money are invested in order to hire the best talents and to make use of the best visual resources with the goal of feeding us messages and world outlooks which are often quite far from the values in which we believe.

Second, the same methods we use to regulate all of the realms of our consumption – food, clothing, and furniture – when we choose with great precision exactly what to bring into our homes and our bodies and what to leave behind – must also be put into effect with respect to the cultural realm. Data show that in most of the religious homes no filtering mechanism is applied to the internet line. Most of the religious youths and their parents have in their

possession of a smartphone that does not have any "app" to filter the contents. In the living room there is a wide screen giving access to hundreds of tv channels, and on the table is a tall mound of colored magazines, with "the country's newspaper" at the top. Does the privilege to pay strict attention to what enters our souls belong only to the Chareidi sector?

The third mission that we must accept is to find budgets for resources and energy to **create an alternative**. We need movies, television, music, literature, stage performances, and a press that are fundamentally different from what exists today. We must bring into the world a high-quality leisure-time culture that will be an expression of a higher level of content and life than whatever is available today. In recent years we have seen some initial attempts to do this, but there is a long road ahead of us.

We are in need of nothing less than a **revolution** which will lead to a far-reaching effect on Israeli society. Are we willing and able to respond to this challenge?

For reactions, added material, and to join an e-mail list: milatova.org.il



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