



Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

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Parshat Noach: Strength of Our Community

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Herschel Reichman

The Nesivos Sholom discusses the spiritual *teva* (ark) of *ahavat Yisrael* (loving every Jew) where a Jew can take refuge from the spiritual challenges of the modern world. At har Sinai when the Jewish people stood ready to accept the Torah, it says, "*Vayichan sham yisrael.*" Rashi explains that they were *k'ish echad b'lev echad*, as one man with one heart. Being one with another Jew means rejoicing with him as if it was your joy, feeling

his pain as if it was your pain, worrying with him as if it was your worry, and doing all you can to help him. This is what the Torah means when it says, "*V'ahavata l'reicha komocha.*" The Rambam says one must love another Jew *komocha mamash*-as if he was you.

It's almost impossible to withstand all the negative influences and evil stimuli of the outside world alone. The *tevah* of *ahavat Yisrael*, the enclosed unit of Jews joined

together, enables us to rise above the waters that spiritually threaten to engulf us. What was the *teva* of Noach? It was Noach and all the people in the ark helping each other pull through the terrible year of destruction. This is the power of the Jewish people. Unity is the foundation of Jewish continuity. If we survive spiritually we will survive physically. It is *achdut* and *ahavat Yisrael* that will ultimately bring us to the final redemption.

How Choices Define Life

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

When Hashem created Adam he gathered the dust of the world and imbued Adam with a living soul. Rashi says Hashem kneaded the two like baker forms dough. Just as the water and flour cannot be separated out again, so too the soul and the body of man can never be completely severed. The body and its desire for vivid pleasure, and the soul and its desire for depth and connective reality, are always in balance. There's 50/50 free choice.

People search for aesthetic pleasure. They pursue art, nature, music, beautiful objects and experiences which although not as vivid as coarse physical pleasure, are more meaningful and deep. In Western society this is the end goal. People think if they attain whatever beauty they strive for, they'll be happy forever. However aesthetics is limited by one factor. You can have it but you don't become it. And so when you stop having it, you're left with yourself which can lead to depression. Everyone knows this intellectually, fewer know this emotionally. But when you do, the primary search moves on to relationships. What you really love about another person isn't their body but their soul. Everyone's soul is an aspect of Hashem. Spiritual bonding is a manifestation of loving Hashem. True reward, becoming who you want to be, is making the choice for the soul to prevail over the body.

People change not only individually but collectively. The first wide reaching

tion took place as a consequence of Adam's sin. A person who chooses wrong teaches himself not to see Hashem. Sin causes the animal side to get stronger, one's sensitivity to be altered and one's spiritual side to weaken. Just as a foundation impacts the entire building, Adam's deed had an everlasting influence on future generations. The world changed as it was. If Adam would've chosen right he would've reached immediate perfection and become master over himself forever.

Thought, speech, and action give us insight into what a person is. But there's a self under that, one's true essence which is hidden. You could be doing all the right things but it may not penetrate your core. Who you really are reveals itself at the point of 50/50 choice. If it's all superficial then your soul may not be strong enough to withstand temptation. Adam's choice was about what his essence would be. If he would've chosen good, his soul would've overtaken his material self. Most of us don't ever penetrate to our core selves. We know what we think. We know there's a vital force within us that keep us alive. But we don't know the soul that yearns to take the body upwards. We don't know the part of us that seeks to transform the exploitive, egotistical, side of ourselves. When the body is elevated through the soul, it can experience some of the soul's wholeness. If Adam would've chosen well, his soul would've purified his body through many levels until it would have become an open vessel with the same kind of light the soul had. But because he sinned everything changed.

The part of him that was lacking became even more telling and the whole world was diminished. If Adam would've inclined towards the good he would immediately rectified his flaws and reached ultimate perfection.

Adam created imbalance for himself where it would now be more difficult to attain wholeness. In order to change he had to change himself and in order to change the world, he had to undo the damage. Then he could begin living and growing. Challenges which were originally external are now internalized. We struggle with the question, "Who am I?" We're so addictive to blaming people and situations that we tend to think of the *yetzer hara* as something on the outside. We have to stop and begin working on the inside. We have to undo the damage before we can figure out who we want to be in the 50/50 moments. Emotions follow imagery which is not always honest. Therefore the mind must lead.

After Adam's sin, Hashem introduced death. The body must die and disintegrate and then there will be renewal when the soul returns in a purified state. We will reach perfection with the revival of the dead. This is what meant in the Gemara where it says that the world will exist for 6,000 years and then it will be destroyed. There will be rebirth and reward for struggle. There will be release from confusion and ultimately final rectification.



The Halachik Obligation of Kriat HaTorah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Michael Taubes

After the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea, the Torah tells how the Jews entered the desert and went for three days without water. The Gemara understands this homiletically that they were three days without Torah as it says, "Ein mayim eleh Torah." Just as thirst is quenched by water, so too Torah quenches the soul. As water spouts forth from a spring, so too Torah spouts forth from the mouths of our great leaders. Water naturally seeks out its lowest point. It will always flow downward. So too Torah is found only in those who have a humble spirit. The Gemara concludes from the episode in the desert, that a Jew should never go more than three days without Torah. And we see that Moshe and the prophets did in fact institute the public reading of the Torah every three days, Monday, Thursday, and Shabbat.

The Gemara asks, why is the reading of the Torah referred to as a *takana* (ruling) established by Ezra rather than a *takana* of the prophets? The Gemara answers that the original practice was to call up one person and read three verses. Then it changed to three people, each reading one verse. Finally Ezra increased it to three people each reading three verses with the total not being less than 10 verses. Therefore it is called on his name.

Rov Yosef Engel in Tziyunim l'Torah questions the nature and purpose of kriat haTorah. Is there a requirement to read it or to listen to it? Can one fulfill one's obligation through listening to someone read it just as the *mitzvah* of *megilah* or *kiddush* or must everyone hear it like the blowing of the *shofar*? There are dissenting opinions. The

Rambam holds that the *mitzvah* is to hear it. However Rav Engel points out that perhaps the *mitzvah* is to read it as one can read words of Torah without verbalizing it and still fulfill the obligation of learning Torah.

The Gemara tells of a shul in Alexandria which was so big that those sitting at the far end couldn't hear the cantor. The cantor would stand on a raised platform and signal the people to answer Amen by raising a flag. Tosfot questions, is this not an Amen Yesomah to answer Amen to a blessing that wasn't heard? Tosfot answers that an Amen Yesomah only applies to a bracha that you need to hear in order to discharge your obligation. The flags were used by *kriat haTorah* and not during prayer. Rav Engel notes that this proves that *kriat Hatorah* has a *din* of *shemia* not *kriah*. The Rosh concurs.

The Rashbam brings a proof from a Gemara in Bava Basra which discusses a case of a community that had a stolen sefer Torah. The Gemara says that the judges of that town were disqualified from judging the thieves as they were *nogeia b'davar* (biased). The Rashbam explains that since everyone hears the Torah they all had a stake in the case. This again proves that *kriat haTorah* has a *din* of *shemia* and not *kriah*. The Gemara in Taanis notes that in the times of the *beit hamikdash*, the *anshei maamad* would read the Torah at Mincha without a text. The Gemara asks, isn't reciting verses orally from the written Torah forbidden? The Gemara answers that we can ask the same about *kriat shema*. Tosfot explains that reciting from the text only applies when you want to fulfill the obligation for others. But

shema is an individual obligation and perhaps we can say the same for *kriat haTorah*.

The Meiri raises a question on the Gemara that rules that a child can receive an *aliyah* to the Torah. How can a child fulfill the obligation for others if he is not obligated? He answers that for *kriat haTorah* the purpose is only to make the people hear and not to be *motzi* them. However he does mention opinions that hold differently. One boy may receive an *aliyah* but not all seven *aliyot* can be children, with the implication being that the obligation may be more than just *shemia*. The Igros Moshe too notes that *kriat haTorah* is not like reading the *megilah* where the people fulfill their obligation through the person who reads. The *mitzvah* is *shemia* not *kriah*. Therefore a child may receive an *aliyah*. However, it's not usually done.

The Shulchan Aruch rules that preferably one shouldn't fulfill the *mitzvah* of *shofar* with a stolen *shofar* but post facto it is ok. This is because the *mitzvah* is to hear the sound of the *shofar* which wasn't stolen. However the law for *shofar* is different than for *megilah*. The Shulchan Aruch rules that one can be *yotze* with a stolen *megilah* but the Rama says one shouldn't make a blessing on it. The *mitzvah* of *shofar* is to listen so one can discharge one's obligation regardless of its origin. The *mitzvah* of *megilah* is to read. Therefore if the *megilah* is stolen one cannot make a *bracha*. It is inconclusive whether a *bracha* can be made on a stolen *sefer Torah* at *kriat haTorah*. The answer would depend on whether *kriat haTorah* has a *din* of *shemia* or *kriah* and there are dissenting views.