

What is so essential about the Shima, that we must recite it twice daily?

The Shima

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Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices

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Reward for the Mitzvos

RABBI BERNARD FOX

Reader: Rabbi Fox, Deut, 8-18: "When You build a house you should make a fence for your roof." You wrote in the article that "No material reward is received for doing commandments." How about the Shema where we are promised if we follow the mitzvot we will receive rain in its proper time and wheat and wine, etc. Isn't this all part of reward and punishment? I'm sure you know the Shema better than I do. Can you please respond?

Rabbi Fox: Maimonides deals with precisely this question in chapter 9 of Hilchot Teshuva. He expresses the question almost exactly as you have. He explains that although these promises are made by the Torah, they are not intended to represent the reward for observing mitzvot or the punishment for disregarding the Torah. Instead, Hashem promises us that if we devote ourselves to the observance of the commandments, then all of the material impediments and distractions that could get in the way of observance will be removed. Conversely, if we disregard the commandments, then we will be deprived of the material blessings that we misused. I hope this is helpful.

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the SHIMA & ITS BLESSINGS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

I thank my friend Yaakove for learning with me this summer. Our daily studies produced many interesting insights in the Shima and its blessings.

We are commanded to recite the Shima and its blessings twice daily. Thus, they must contain concepts indispensable to our daily thoughts, and by that token, our very existence.

Unfortunately, many commands, when repeatedly performed, carry the danger of becoming rote activities. This loss is compounded if we rush through our prayers, rendering them into a burden, which the Talmud teaches is not a sincere supplication to G-d. If we would stop for a moment and recognize the opportunity afforded us by these prayers, we would take

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Maimonides' 13 PRINCIPLES

THE BASIC FOUNDATIONS WHICH ALL JEWS MUST KNOW AS TRUE. WE URGE YOU TO READ THEM:
www.mesora.org/13principles.html

God's Existence: Belief or Proof?

www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html

God's Land Without God?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html

Weekly Parsha

Ki Tavo

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"And you should say before Hashem your G-d, I have removed the sacred from the house. And also I have given from it to the Layve and the convert, to the orphan and to the widow, as required by your commandments that you have commanded me. I have not

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(Reward continued from page 1)

Letters

Weekly Parsha

Reader: Thank you for your response. However don't we have a concept of reward and punishment in this world which is the physical? Is this just the Rambam's position or do we have other Rabbis who hold this way. Even in last weeks Parsha we have Kan Tzipor (driving away the mother bird before taking her eggs) with the reward of a long life. We obviously have it also by honoring thy father and mother. A long life to me in this world sounds to me like the physical. We also have a rule of "Mitoch shelo lishma bo lishma" (although one does not start Torah observance for its own sake, he eventually gets there.) It is a lower level, but isn't this statement referring to reward of the physical? Please explain.

Rabbi Fox: It is difficult to assert that no one maintains that there is reward in this world. Even an extensive search of the literature would not preclude the possibility that some authority maintains otherwise. Rambam dealt with the issue extensively and comprehensively. So, he is a useful source for clarifying these issues.

The Talmud does state in Kiddushin 39b and other places that there is no reward for mitzvot in this world.

You are correct in noting that there are passages in the Torah that seem to contradict this thesis. You mention two passages that make the identical promise - long life and a good life. Our Sages interpreted the promise of a long life as a reference to the world to come. However, the promise of a good life is understood as a promise in regard to this world. In addition, the first mishne in Tractate Pe'ah tells us that there mitzvot in which a person "eats the fruits" of these mitzvot in this world and "the principle reward" is preserved for the world to come. This implies that there is a reward in this world.

Rambam discusses this apparent contradiction in his commentary on the mishne in Pe'ah. How can the mishne assert that there is a reward in this world in contradiction to the assertions in the Talmud that there is no reward for mitzvot in this world?

Rambam responds that all mitzvot can be divided into two categories - those between man and his Creator and those between man and his fellow man. Based on this distinction, he responds that although Hashem does not reward us in this world, we do accrue a benefit in this world through observing mitzvot between man and his fellow man. We build a just and compassionate society. We benefit by improving the society that we live in.

Rambam would probably argue that this answer is reflected in the wording of the mishne. Fruit is a product. The observance of the mitzvah has a product. We benefit in this world from the society we have helped to build. The

principal or fundamental reward refers to the reward in the world to come.

You may wonder how Rambam accounts for the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird. This does not seem to be a mitzvah between man and his fellow man. However, in the Guide for the Perplexed, he explains that this mitzvah encourages compassion. So, he can easily apply his reasoning to this mitzvah. By developing compassion within human beings, all of humanity is benefited in this world. But this is not a reward providentially provided by Hashem.

I hope this is helpful.

Reader: Thank you very much. You are terrific! I did look over the Rambam in Teshuva Chapter 7,1. It was a real eye opener. I will also go over the sources you listed.

Thanks again.

- Howard Salamon

3 Stone Sets Inscribed with the Torah

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

What purpose was achieved by writing the Torah in 70 languages, and inscribed on three sets of 12 stones (36 stones total)? According to Talmud Sota, 35b, which opposes Rashi on the Chumash, one set was erected in Moav, one in Gilgal, and the third set in the Jordan itself. What is to be learned from these three sets of stones and their placement? I believe a significant idea is borne out of this one-time enactment.

G-d promised Abraham He would give the Land to his descendants. Question: Are Abraham's "descendants" defined biologically? Is the "biological" definition all that G-d's meant by, "I would give the land to your (Abraham's) seed?" Meaning, if the Jews would abandon the Torah, would G-d still give Israel to them since they descended from Abraham?

To demonstrate that 1) G-d fulfilled his promise, and that, 2) these were in fact

Abraham's true descendants, i.e., those who follow Abraham's teachings, it was necessary that the recipients of G-d's promise to Abraham demonstrate that they do in fact follow the same ideology as Abraham. Being a descendant was no guarantee of receiving Israel. Sharing genes is insufficient. Abraham's children and grandchildren are defined as those who hold fast to Abraham's teachings. Their writing of the Torah on these stones prior to their entrance to Israel displayed their entitlement.

But why have such testimonial stones erected at three separate locations: One set in Moav (Trans-Jordan), one set in Israel in Gilgal, and one set in the Jordan river?

These three sets, I believe, prove that G-d was solely responsible for bringing the Jews into Israel. By erecting 'road signs' on both sides of the Jordan river, shows from where the Jews journeyed, and where they arrived. Placing one more set in the Jordan river itself, we discover how the Jews entered the land, i.e., through a miraculous event of the splitting of the Jordan. It would be impossible for anyone to erect and cement such huge stones while immersed in the river. The stones therefore delineate the starting point, the end point, and the path. Such a path of entrance is only possible via a miracle, and therefore enacted by only G-d Himself. G-d thereby eliminates all possible explanations of the Jews entering the land, bereft of His divine intervention. G-d fulfilled His promise. I believe this to be the reasoning behind the miraculous conquest of Jericho as well. An indisputable proof of G-d's essential involvement and fulfillment of His age-old oath to Abraham. Deuteronomy 27:3 reads, "And write on them (the stones) all the words of this Torah when you cross over, in order that you come to the land which Hashem your G-d gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as G-d - the G-d of your fathers - spoke to you." The verse testifies that the writing on these stones is connected with G-d's promise.

The fact that the Torah is written in 70 languages upon these stones is to teach that the Torah is ultimately for all mankind. As we say in Alenu each day, "...and all children of flesh will call Your name".

These three sets of stones teach future generations of the miracles of the entrance into Israel - G-d entered the Jews into the land in accordance with His oath. For that ancient generation, it was a demonstration that they truly followed Abraham's teachings, and his ideology, taught to him by G-d. As G-d stated in Genesis, "Will I keep hidden from Abraham what I shall do (to Sodom)?" "And I know him, in order that he will command his son and his household after him, and they will keep G-d's path." ■

Declaration of Tithes

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

What purpose is there for the Torah command to verbally declare our fulfillment of our third year tithes?

It is strange that of all the mitzvos, only two, mentioned in KiTavo, first fruits and third year tithes - are commanded to make declarations, and the latter, that we fulfilled the law exactly. Why does the Torah command us to make such statements? Is not the fulfillment the goal? And why is declaration required in this specific manner of apportioning our produce to others?

Rashi says that by making such declarations, we are telling G-d that "we have done what You commanded us, now You do what is upon You to do". (Referring to Bechukosai, where G-d promised to deliver rain in due season as a result of our adherence to His laws).

A Rabbi taught that any topic taught in Navi and Ksuvim (Prophets and Writings), cannot be entirely new, but must find its root in the Five Books of Moses, the Chumash. The Chumash contains all concepts of Judaism, even those seemingly new in the Prophets and Writings. If this is so, I wondered where in the Chumash we find the concept taught in Malachi, where we are requested to test G-d by giving our tenth of our produce, as we see stated openly in Malachi.

It seems clear that this area in KiTavo is where Malachi is based, and Rashi

points this out. The Torah is teaching us that the declaration made subsequent to man's performance of tithing his produce, is done so as to invoke a response from G-d. Only a verbalization can qualify a subsequent bounty of produce as a "response" from G-d. This is also why the verses in both areas dealing with first fruits and third year tithes, state that man must make his declaration "lifnay Hashem", "before G-d". Meaning, we declare to G-d our exact fulfillment of His word, thereby awaiting a Heavenly response in the form of plenty. Therefore, a verbal declaration is made to render our bounty a response from G-d, and not mere happenstance.

One may ask why the Torah saw this as so important, that man deserves a response. We must recognize that the monetary concerns of man outweigh all others, as the Talmud teaches, "the money of man stands him upon his feet". Man's security stems from his estimation of his success, and his worries from the converse. The Torah sees fit that man is secured in his wealth, specifically when he is bidden by the Torah to part with up 20% of all profits during his life. This is a sizable portion of his earnings, and man justifiably worries when he must part with such a quantity. G-d recognizes this and would not require man to do that, which opposes his psychological

needs. G-d therefore tells us that we may test G-d to see if "He will open the storehouses of heaven, and empty a blessing for us which is more than enough", as stated in Chapter 3 of Malachi. But this concession for man to actually test G-d is made in this area only, as man would otherwise not part with such portion without a Divine guarantee. As sustenance is our prime instinct, against which, we cannot oppose, G-d requests us to give - in order to become richer. This is the guarantee, which we must realize is within G-d's capacity, and that it is G-d's will.

We should all take a strong lesson from the words of Malachi. We should not feel that our success is due to our long hours of toil, when the Rabbis taught, "one should minimize his labor, and maximize his learning". (Ethics) Also, "all is in the hand of heaven, except the fear of heaven". This teaches us that our sustenance is dependent upon G-d, not ourselves. If we follow His laws, give our tithes and charity, He has many messengers to make us wealthy. We should not view giving charity as a diminution of our wealth, but rather, as a 100% secure insurance policy for our success. G-d created the entire world, the millions of stars far larger than our sun, the perfect laws governing them. Enriching man a small feat by comparison. ■

Taken from "Getting It Straight" Practical Ideas for a Life of Clarity

Evaluation

DOUG TAYLOR & RABBI MORTON MOSKOWITZ

I felt awful.

And the worst part was, I didn't really have a good reason.

Oh, I knew the cause. A business deal I'd worked on for months had fallen through. A big one. I'd hatched the idea, bottle-fed it, and watched it grow with promise. Then, just as I was on the verge of putting it all together, the other side backed out. It had nothing to do with me; their financial condition had turned south.

On top of losing the deal, I felt like a hypocrite. Several months ago I had counseled my friend Bart, a sales rep, when he had cried on my shoulder after losing a big one. I told him to recognize that some things are outside of our control. But somehow, my own advice didn't make me feel any better.

In desperation, I called my friend, the King of Rational Thought. As usual, his response caught me totally by surprise.

"Do you compete in business?"

"Uh, well, yeah, of course. Everyone does," I replied.

"Do you feel better about yourself when you're winning the competition or losing it?" he asked.

"Well, when I'm winning, of course," I said. "Losing isn't much fun."

"And how do you view yourself when you're winning?"

I thought about it. "I guess I see myself as a winner; someone who's succeeding; someone who's making it."

"What about when you're losing?"

"You mean, like now?"

"Like now."

I thought some more. "I guess I feel like a loser; a failure."

"Take notes," he said. "You've just said that you feel like a winner when you're winning and a loser when you're losing. So how are

you evaluating yourself?

I shook my head, phone and all. "Sorry. You'll have to help me out. I don't get it."

"You're evaluating yourself based on others," he said. "If you bid on some work and you don't get it, you feel like a loser. Conversely, if you get the work, you feel like a winner. So you're evaluating yourself based on the prospect's decision. True?"

"Ohh-kay," I said slowly. "But so what?"

"So your system is flawed," he replied. "Aren't you the same person whether your proposal is accepted or not?"

"Well, yeah."

"Yet you evaluate yourself differently."

I held the phone to my ear for a full minute without moving, digesting it. He had a point. I still didn't feel better, but I had to admit, he had a point.

"So what's the answer?" I asked finally.

"What do you think?" he tossed back.

"I think I need a different approach," I said. "Maybe a different method of evaluation."

"Could be," said the King of Rational Thought. "Or better yet, why not give up self-evaluation altogether?"

I stared at the phone. "Huh?"

"Why not give up self-evaluation altogether?" he repeated. "The only important thing is your actions. You're mixing - as most of us do - you with your actions. Your actions are the only things you can do something about in all of this. So look at them instead. Forget evaluating yourself. Just look at what you did. You've already said that you did everything you could to get the deal. So, it fell through. That's life. The reason you keep feeling bad is that you keep evaluating yourself - not your actions, but yourself - in light of the result.

"Just imagine," he continued, "what your life would be like if you stopped evaluating



yourself. You'd be rid of blame, probably lots of useless guilt, and a bunch of other emotions that don't benefit you. The only important question is, did you do the right thing? If so, great. If you made a mistake, then analyze how and why, and learn how to do it right the next time. If you'll do that, you'll start to feel better.

"And," he added, "you'll enjoy life a lot more."

I tried the King's advice and, a week later, I called Bart.

"Hey Bart," I said enthusiastically. "I've got some more great advice for you. You know how you were really bummed out about that big sale you lost a few months ago? Well, let me ask you a question. Do you feel better when you're winning sales, or losing them?" ■

(Ki Tavo continued from page 1)

violated your commandments and I have not forgotten.” (Devarim 26:13)

At the end of a three-year cycle, a declaration is required regarding the giving of tithes. In this declaration, the person confirms that the sacred portion of the crops have been removed from the home and properly distributed. The tithe due to the Levite has been given to him. The tithe required for the support of the poor has been distributed.

This declaration is referred to as Veydoi Maasrot. This can be translated as “confession over the tithes.” The commentaries ask an obvious question. Why is this declaration described as a confession? A confession, in halacha, is made in order to repent from a sin. This person is declaring that the laws have been properly performed. There would seem to be no need for a confession.

There are a number of answers offered to this question. Many involve providing an alternative translation for Veydoi Maasrot that does not include the element of confession. Sforno, however, offers a very simple explanation that preserves the straightforward translation.

Originally, the institution of the priesthood was awarded to the firstborn. Every tribe was to be represented in this honored group. At Sinai, the nation sinned through association with the Egel HaZahav – the Golden Calf. The only group that opposed involvement with this idol was the tribe of Leyve. As a result, the Almighty removed the priesthood from the nation’s firstborn and awarded it to Shevet Leyve – the tribe of Leyve. This meant that the other tribes would not be represented within the priesthood by their firstborn.

Sforno explains that we are required to acknowledge our involvement in the sin of the Egel. This is done through the tithes. Through these tithes we support Shevet Leyve that was chosen for the priesthood. This indicates that we accept our responsibility for the sin of the Egel and the consequences. Veydoi Maasrot is an affirmation of fulfilling our obligations of tithing. This, therefore, has an element of confession. We are confessing the sin of the Egel.[1]

“Do not deviate from the things that I have commanded you today to the right or left – in order to follow other gods.” (Devarim 28:14)

Moshe admonishes Bnai Yisrael to be faithful to the Torah. The people should not deviate from the commandments of the Almighty. They should not worship other gods.

This pasuk contains a subtle difficulty. Moshe begins by warning Bnai Yisrael against deviating from the commandments. He tells the people they should not stray from the path of the Torah to the right or left. This expression seems to refer to even minor deviations. The Torah is represented as a straight path. Even a slight divergence from this path – to the right or left – is to be avoided.

Moshe then admonishes the nation against worshipping other gods. In the context of the passage, this admonishment seems to be an example of the deviation Moshe had just described. This worship represents straying from the path of the Torah. However, this is not a valid example! Moshe began by stating that the people must guard themselves against minor deviations. He then provides an example of such a deviation. But the example is not a minor divergence from the path of Torah. Idolatry represents a complete rejection of the fundamentals of the Torah! Why does Moshe cite idolatry as an example of a slight deviation?

Sforno offers an amazing interpretation of our passage that resolves our question. He begins by interpreting the opening statement in the pasuk. In order to understand his interpretation a brief introduction is required. The Torah is a law revealed by the Almighty. It is not a set of traditions. We do not observe the Torah because it was our ancestors’ way of life. We are not faithful to the Torah because it is our cultural identity. We must observe the Torah because it is Hashem’s revealed truth. This distinction has practical implications. We sometimes find that tradition is not completely consistent with the law. With the passage of time, inaccuracies or errors can creep into a community’s pattern of observance. These inaccuracies become established as traditions, within the community. In such instances a clear divergence develops between conventional practice and the actual requirements of halacha.

According to Sforno, the opening portion of the passage refers to these divergences from the path of the Torah. Tradition must be consistent with the law. A tradition that is inconsistent with halacha is a divergence from the path of the Torah. Moshe refers to erroneous traditions as deviations to the right or left.

Sforno now reconciles the closing portion of the passage with the opening portion. Moshe admonishes the people not to follow other gods. These “other gods” are not idols or heathen deities. These “other gods” are ancestors or respected leaders who inadvertently established erroneous customs or traditions. We do not follow these traditions out of respect to these leaders. Instead, we must remain faithful to the Torah. We are not loyal to our ancestors. We are true to the Torah.[2]

This explanation resolves the difficulty in the pasuk. The entire passage deals with minor deviations from the path of halacha. Moshe begins by admonishing



the people against these divergences. He then explains that these deviations can be caused by an irresponsible attitude toward traditional observances or conventions. This attitude is motivated by an inappropriately, uncritical relationship toward our ancestors. We must guard ourselves against this attitude and concentrate on fulfilling the will of the Almighty.

“And foreigners will build your walls, and their kings will minister to you. For although in My anger I struck you, in My favor I have had mercy upon you.” (Yishayahu 60:10, Haftarah for Parshat Ki Tavo)

In the haftarah for our parasha, the Navi discusses the redemption of Bnai Yisrael. He reveals that nations that may have previously persecuted Bnai Yisrael will acknowledge this redemption. The walls of Yerushalayim will be rebuilt. These nations will participate in this project.

This pasuk seems inconsistent with Torah law. Maimonides explains that it is prohibited to accept donations from non-Jews for the building of Yerushalayim’s walls. Yerushalayim must be completely identified with Bnai Yisrael. Accepting contributions from other nations for the building and maintenance of the city’s walls compromises this identity.[3] If these contributions are not accepted, it follows that direct participation is also prohibited. Yet, our passage states that foreign nations will directly participate in the rebuilding of Yerushalayim’s walls! How can we reconcile this passage with the halacha?

It is notable that Maimonides seems to contradict himself on the issue of non-Jewish participation in the building of Yerushalayim. As we have shown above, Maimonides maintains that non-Jewish participation is prohibited. However, in another instance,

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Weekly Parsha

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Maimonides takes the opposite position.

Maimonides, explains that every war must be preceded by an offer of peace. This even applies to the war waged to conquer the land of Israel. Prior to waging war with the nations that occupied the land of Israel, we were required to offer a peaceful settlement. The Torah specifies some of the elements of this settlement. One of the elements is that the nations must accept political suzerainty of Bnai Yisrael. The nation must pay tribute. This tribute includes monetary payment and providing labor for national projects. Maimonides explains that among these projects is maintenance of the walls.[4] He is apparently referring to the walls of Yerushalayim! How can we reconcile this law with the prohibitions against non-Jewish participation in the building of Yerushalayim's walls?

Rav Meshulam David Soloveitchik offers an excellent solution to our problem. He observes that the prohibition against non-Jewish participation in the building of the walls of Yerushalayim has a purpose. The city must be completely identified with Bnai Yisrael. Non-Jewish participation compromises this identity. Through participating in the building of the walls other nations would become participants in the city's building or maintenance. Their identity would become related to the city.

Rav Soloveitchik explains that this consideration does not restrict every form of non-Jewish participation in the city's building and maintenance. Specifically, it allows for participation rendered as tribute to Bnai Yisrael. In such a circumstance, the nation does not contribute as an independent nation. The nation participates as an act of recognition of Bnai Yisrael's suzerainty. No foreign identity becomes attached to the city. The city retains its exclusive association with Bnai Yisrael.[5]

Based upon this distinction, our problem is solved. Maimonides does not contradict himself. He explains that as a general rule foreign participation in the building and maintenance of Yerushalayim's walls is prohibited. However, he explains that participation offered as tribute does not violate this prohibition. This is because participation is only prohibited when it compromises the city's identity. Participation provided as tribute does compromise this identity. The Navi's prophecy is also consistent with the law. Apparently, the Navi is prophesizing that former enemies will be vanquished. As vanquished nations, these foreign peoples will offer tribute to Bnai Yisrael. Part of this tribute will be their participation in the rebuilding of the city they had destroyed. This tribute does not compromise the identity of the city. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sfomo, Commentary on Sefer Devarim 26:13.

[2] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sfomo, Commentary on Sefer Devarim 28:14.

[3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Matanot Aniyyin 8:8.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Melachim 6:31.

[5] Rav Shimon Yosef Miller, Shai LaTorah (Jerusalem 5755), volume 3, pp.

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Books

Tanya's Heresy

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The following quote was sent to me by a friend, and is taken from the Tanya:

"The second, uniquely Jewish soul is truly part of G-d above."

"A part of G-d above" is a quotation from Scripture (Job, 31:2). The Alter Rebbe adds the word "truly" to stress the literal meaning of these words. For, as is known, some verses employ hyperbolic language. For example, the verse describing "great and fortified cities reaching into the heavens" is clearly meant to be taken figuratively, not literally. In order that we should not interpret the phrase "a part of G-d above" in a similar manner, the Alter Rebbe adds the word "truly", thus emphasizing that the Jewish soul is quite literally a part of G-d above." (Lessons In Tanya," published by "Kehot" (mainstream Lubavitcher Press) with a "Preface" by the Rebbe.)

Maimonides and all the Rabbis affirm that we can know nothing about G-d. Furthermore, G-d has no parts, and is not similar to anything, as the prophet stated so clearly:

"And (G-d is) not like one man that may be divided into many individual parts... and also, '...the Chachamim (wise men) denied G-d as being composite or subject to division', and, 'the prophet said (Isaiah, 40:25), 'To what shall your equate Me that I should be similar, says G-d?' (Principle III)"

We define this quote from Tanya as absolute heresy. This is a most grave sin, as all of our Torah performances are useless if we have any incorrect

notion about G-d. This quote denies the words of the prophet, and completely corrupts the words of Job, 31:1,2:

"A treaty have I made with my eye; for what shall I gaze at a virgin? And what portion shall I have with G-d above, and an inheritance of G-d on high?"

Here, Job declares he is upright, never gazing lustfully. Job explains that in doing so, one forfeits his "portion with G-d". This is reasonable, and in accordance with G-d's system of Reward and Punishment. But Tanya distorts the word "portion", not as the end of the verse clarifies as "inheritance", but wrongly, ascribing "parts" to G-d. This verse in Job simply means that Job admits he will forfeit his "portion" (inheritance) with G-d. Through sin, Job says he will lose this world and the next. Job is not describing G-d, that He has parts, G-d forbid. Job is describing his inheritance.

Rabbi Bachya says in Duties of the Heart, (Gate of Unity, Chap. 3):

"Whoever neglects to study [this subject] (unity of G-d) conducts himself disgracefully, and is counted among those who fall short in both knowledge and practice."

This yesode (principle) of G-d's unity is of such paramount importance to the authentic, Jewish concept of G-d, the "Shema Yisrael" must be read twice daily where we affirm, "G-d is One". The Torah and the Rabbis share one voice; G-d has no parts. We must be vigilant against any thought, which denies Judaism's fundamentals. ■

ונפש השנית בישראל היא חלק אלהים ממעל ממש

The second, uniquely Jewish, soul is truly "a part of G-d above,"

"A part of G-d above" is a quotation from Scripture (Iyov 31:2). The Alter Rebbe adds the word "truly" to stress the literal meaning of these words. For, as is known,¹ some verses employ hyperbolic language. For example, the verse² describing "great and fortified cities reaching into the heavens" is clearly meant to be taken figuratively, not literally. In order that we should not interpret the phrase "a part of G-d above" in a similar manner, the Alter Rebbe adds the word "truly", thus emphasizing that the Jewish soul is quite literally a part of G-d above.

2004 Republican National Convention

RUDY GIULIANI

"Welcome to the capital of the World.

New York was the first capital of our great nation. It was here in 1789 in lower Manhattan that George Washington took the oath of office as the first President of the United States.

It was here in 2001 in lower Manhattan that President George W. Bush stood amid the fallen towers of the World Trade Center and said to the barbaric terrorists who attacked us, "They will hear from us."

They have heard from us!

They heard from us in Afghanistan and we removed the Taliban.

They heard from us in Iraq and we ended Saddam Hussein's reign of terror.

They heard from us in Libya and without firing a shot Qadhafi abandoned weapons of mass destruction.

They are hearing from us in nations that are now more reluctant to sponsor terrorists.

So long as George Bush is President, is there any doubt they will continue to hear from us until we defeat global terrorism.

We owe that much and more to those loved ones and heroes we lost on September 11th.

The families of some of those we lost on September 11th are here with us. To them, and all those families affected by September 11th, we recognize the sacrifices your loved ones and you have made. You are in our prayers and we are in your debt.

This is the first Republican Convention ever held in New York City.

It makes a statement that New York City and America are open for business and stronger than ever.

We're not going to let the threat of terrorism stop us from leading our lives.

From the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, to President George W. Bush our party's great contribution is to expand freedom in our own land and all over the world.

And our party is at its best when it makes certain that we have a powerful national defense in a still very dangerous world.

I don't believe we're right about everything and Democrats are wrong about everything.

Neither party has a monopoly on virtue.

But I do believe that there are times in our history when our ideas are more necessary and important for what we are facing.

There are times when leadership is the most important.

On September 11, this city and our nation faced the worst attack in our history.

On that day, we had to confront reality. For me, standing below the north tower and looking up and seeing the flames of hell and then realizing that I was actually seeing a man a human being jumping from the 101st or 102nd floor drove home to me that we were facing something beyond anything we had ever faced before.

We had to concentrate all of our energy, faith and hope to get through those first hours and days.

And I will always remember that moment as we escaped the building we were trapped in at 75 Barclay Street and realized that things outside might be even worse than they were inside the building.

We did the best we could to communicate a message of calm and hope, as we stood on the pavement seeing a massive cloud rushing through the cavernous streets of lower Manhattan.

Our people were so brave in their response.

At the time, we believed we would be attacked many more times that day and in the days that followed. Spontaneously, I grabbed the arm of then Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik and said to Bernie, "Thank God George Bush is our President."

And I say it again tonight, "Thank God George Bush is our President."

On September 11, George W. Bush had been President less than eight months. This new President, Vice President, and new administration were faced with the worst crisis in our history.

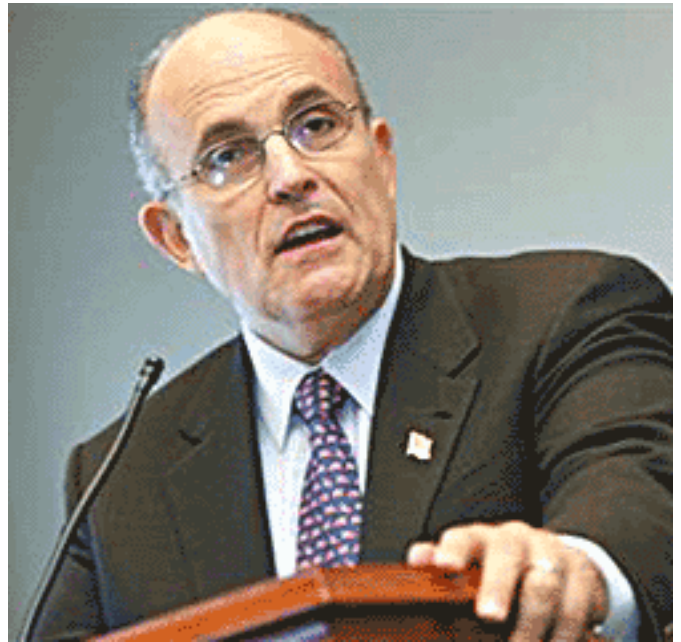
President Bush's response in keeping us unified and in turning the ship of state around from being solely on defense against terrorism to being on offense as well and for his holding us together.

For that and then his determined effort to defeat global terrorism, no matter what happens in this election, President George W. Bush already has earned a place in our history as a great American President.

But let's not wait for history to present the correct view of our President. Let us write our own history.

We need George Bush now more than ever.

The horror, the shock and the devastation of those



attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and over the skies of Pennsylvania lifted a cloud from our eyes.

We stood face to face with those people and forces who hijacked not just airplanes but a religion and turned it into a creed of terrorism dedicated to eradicating us and our way of life.

Terrorism did not start on September 11, 2001. It had been festering for many years.

And the world had created a response to it that allowed it to succeed. The attack on the Israeli team at the Munich Olympics was in 1972. And the pattern had already begun.

The three surviving terrorists were arrested and within two months released by the German government.

Action like this became the rule, not the exception.

Terrorists came to learn they could attack and often not face consequences.

In 1985, terrorists attacked the Achille Lauro and murdered an American citizen who was in a wheelchair, Leon Klinghoffer.

They marked him for murder solely because he was Jewish.

Some of those terrorist were released and some of the remaining terrorists allowed to escape by the Italian government because of fear of reprisals.

So terrorists learned they could intimidate the world community and too often the response, particularly in Europe, was "accommodation, appeasement and compromise."

And worse, the terrorists also learned that their cause would be taken more seriously, almost in direct proportion to the barbarity of the attack.

Terrorist acts became a ticket to the international bargaining table.

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How else to explain Yasser Arafat winning the Nobel Peace Prize when he was supporting a terrorist plague in the Middle East that undermined any chance of peace?

Before September 11, we were living with an unrealistic view of the world much like our observing Europe appease Hitler or trying to accommodate ourselves to peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union through mutually assured destruction.

President Bush decided that we could no longer be just on defense against global terrorism but we must also be on offense.

On September 20, 2001, President Bush stood before a joint session of Congress, a still grieving and shocked nation and a confused world and he did change the direction of our ship of state.

He dedicated America under his leadership to destroying global terrorism.

The President announced the Bush Doctrine when he said: "Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there.

It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.

"Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists."

And since September 11th President Bush has remained rock solid.

It doesn't matter how he is demonized.

It doesn't matter what the media does to ridicule him or misinterpret him or defeat him.

They ridiculed Winston Churchill. They belittled Ronald Reagan.

But like President Bush, they were optimists; leaders must be optimists. Their vision was beyond the present and set on a future of real peace and true freedom.

Some call it stubbornness. I call it principled leadership.

President Bush has the courage of his convictions.

In choosing a President, we really don't choose a Republican or Democrat, a conservative or liberal.

We choose a leader.

And in times of danger, as we are now in, Americans should put leadership at the core of their decision.

There are many qualities that make a great leader but having strong beliefs, being able to stick with them through popular and unpopular times, is the most important characteristic of a great leader.

Winston Churchill saw the dangers of Hitler while his opponents characterized him as a war-mongering gadfly.

Ronald Reagan saw and described the Soviet Union as "the evil empire" while world opinion accepted it as inevitable and belittled Ronald Reagan's intelligence.

President Bush sees world terrorism for the evil

that it is.

John Kerry has no such clear, precise and consistent vision.

This is not a personal criticism of John Kerry.

I respect him for his service to our nation.

But it is important to see the contrast in approach between the two men;

President Bush, a leader who is willing to stick with difficult decisions even as public opinion shifts, and John Kerry, whose record in elected office suggests a man who changes his position often even on important issues.

When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, John Kerry voted against the Persian Gulf War. Later he said he actually supported the war.

Then in 2002, as he was calculating his run for President, he voted for the war in Iraq.

And then just 9 months later, he voted against an \$87 billion supplemental budget to fund the war and support our troops.

He even, at one point, declared himself an anti-war candidate. Now, he says he's pro-war. At this rate, with 64 days left, he still has time to change his position at least three or four more times.

My point about John Kerry being inconsistent is best described in his own words when he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion before I voted against it."

Maybe this explains John Edwards' need for two Americas - one where John Kerry can vote for something and another where he can vote against the same thing.

Yes, people in public office at times do change their minds, I've done that, or they realize they are wrong or circumstances change.

But John Kerry has made it the rule to change his position, rather than the exception. In October, 2003, he told an Arab-American Institute in Detroit that a security barrier separating Israel from the Palestinian Territories was a "barrier to peace."

A few months later, he took exactly the opposite position. In an interview with the Jerusalem Post he said, "Israel's security fence is a legitimate act of self defense."

The contrasts are dramatic. They involve very different views of how to deal with terrorism.

President Bush will make certain that we are combatting terrorism at the source, beyond our shores, so we can reduce the risk of having to confront it in the streets of New York.

John Kerry's record of inconsistent positions on combatting terrorism gives us no confidence he'll pursue such a determined course.

President Bush will not allow countries that appear to have ignored the lessons of history and failed for over thirty years to stand up to terrorists, to dissuade us from what is necessary for our defense.

He will not let them set our agenda. Under

President Bush, America will lead rather than follow.

John Kerry's claim that certain foreign leaders who opposed our removal of Saddam Hussein prefer him, raises the risk that he would accommodate his position to their viewpoint.

It would hardly be the first time he changed his position on matters of war and peace.

I remember the days following September 11th when we were no longer Democrats or Republicans, but Americans determined to do all we could to help the victims, to rebuild our city and nation and to disable our enemies.

I remember President Bush coming here on September 14, 2001 and lifting the morale of our rescue workers by talking with them and embracing them and staying with them much longer than originally planned.

In fact, if you promise to keep it just between us so I don't get in trouble it was my opinion that the Secret Service was concerned about the President remaining so long in that area.

With buildings still unstable, with fires raging below ground of 2000 degrees or more, there was good reason for concern.

Well the President remained there and talked to everyone, the firefighters, the police officers, the healthcare workers, the clergy, but the people who spent the most time with him were our construction workers.

Now New York construction workers are very special people. I'm sure this is true all over but I know the ones here the best. They were real heroes along with many others that day, volunteering immediately. And they're big, real big. Their arms are bigger than my legs and their opinions are even bigger than their arms.

Now each one of them would engage the President and I imagine like his cabinet give him advice.

They were advising him in their own words on exactly what he should do with the terrorists. Of course I can't

repeat their exact language.

But one of them really went into great detail and upon conclusion of his remarks President Bush said in a rather loud voice, "I agree."

At this point the guy just beamed and all his buddies turned toward him in amazement.

The guy just lost it.

So he reached over, embraced the President and began hugging him enthusiastically.

A Secret Service agent standing next to me looked at the President and the guy and instead of extracting the President from this bear hug, he turned toward me and put his finger in my face and said, "If this guy hurts the President, Giuliani you're finished."

Meekly, and this is the moral of the story, I

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responded, "but it would be out of love."

I also remember the heart wrenching visit President Bush made to the families of our firefighters and police officers at the Javits Center.

I remember receiving all the help, assistance and support from the President and even more than we asked.

For that I will be eternally grateful to President Bush.

And I remember the support being bi-partisan and actually standing hand in hand Republicans and Democrats, here in New York and all over the nation.

During a Boston Red Sox game there was a sign held up saying Boston loves New York.

I saw a Chicago police officer sent here by Mayor Daley directing traffic in Manhattan.

I'm not sure where he sent the cars, they are probably still riding around the Bronx, but it was very reassuring to know how much support we had.

And as we look beyond this election and elections do accentuate differences let's make sure we rekindle that spirit that we are one America united to end the threat of global terrorism.

Certainly President Bush will keep us focused on that goal. When President Bush announced his commitment to ending global terrorism, he understood - I understood, we all understood - it was critical to remove the pillars of support for the global terrorist movement.

In any plan to destroy global terrorism, removing Saddam Hussein needed to be accomplished.

Frankly, I believed then and I believe now that Saddam Hussein, who supported global terrorism, slaughtered hundreds of thousands of his own people, permitted horrific atrocities against women, and used weapons of mass destruction, was himself a weapon of mass destruction.

But the reasons for removing Saddam Hussein were based on issues even broader than just the presence of weapons of mass destruction.

To liberate people, give them a chance for accountable, decent government and rid the world of a pillar of support for global terrorism is something for which all those involved from President Bush to the brave men and women of our armed forces should be proud.

President Bush has also focused on the correct long-term answer for the violence and hatred emerging from the Middle East. The hatred and anger in the Middle East arises from the lack of accountable governments.

Rather than trying to grant more freedom, create more income, improve education and basic health care, these governments deflect their own failures by pointing to America and Israel and other external scapegoats.

But blaming these scapegoats does not improve the life of a single person in the Arab world. It does not relieve the plight of even one woman in Iran.

It does not give a decent living to a single soul in Syria. It certainly does not stop the slaughter of African Christians in the Sudan.

The changes necessary in the Middle East involve encouraging accountable, lawful governments that can be role models.

This has also been an important part of the Bush Doctrine and the President's vision for the future.

Have faith in the power of freedom.

People who live in freedom always prevail over people who live in oppression. That's the story of the Old Testament. That's the story of World War II and the Cold War.

That's the story of the firefighters and police officers and rescue workers who courageously saved thousands of lives on September 11, 2001.

President Bush is the leader we need for the next four years because he sees beyond today and tomorrow. He has a vision of a peaceful Middle East and, therefore, a safer world. We will see an end to global terrorism. I can see it. I believe it. I know it will happen.

It may seem a long way off. It may even seem idealistic.

But it may not be as far away and idealistic as it seems.

Look how quickly the Berlin Wall was torn down, the Iron Curtain ripped open and the Soviet Union disintegrated because of the power of the pent-up demand for freedom.

When it catches hold there is nothing more powerful than freedom. Give it some hope, and it will overwhelm dictators, and even defeat terrorists. That is what we have done and must continue to do in Iraq.

That is what the Republican Party does best when we are at our best, we extend freedom.

It's our mission. And it's the long-term answer to ending global terrorism. Governments that are free and accountable.

We have won many battles at home and abroad but as President Bush told us on September 20, 2001 it will take a long-term determined effort to prevail.

The war on terrorism will not be won in a single battle. There will be no dramatic surrender. There will be no crumbling of a massive wall.

But we will know it. We'll know it as accountable governments continue to develop in countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq.

We'll know it as terrorist attacks throughout the world decrease and then end.

And then, God willing, we'll all be able on a future anniversary of September 11th to say to our fallen brothers and sisters. To our heroes of the worst attack in our history and to our heroes who have sacrificed their lives in the war on terror.

We will say to them we have done all that we could with our lives that were spared to make your sacrifices build a world of real peace and true freedom.

We will make certain in the words of President Bush that they have heard from us.

That they have heard from us a message of peace through free, accountable, lawful and decent governments giving people hope for a future for themselves and their children.

God bless each one we have lost, here and abroad, and their families.

God bless all those defending our freedom.

God bless America." □



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our time, and even look forward to their recital.

In general, we look to prayer as an opportunity to formulate our requests before G-d, with the true conviction that He responds. By thinking into our lives, we can construct a plan with the goal of our perfection as outlined in the Torah, presenting this plan to G-d in our requests, even adding our own words. G-d will most assuredly assist us in such a plan, as is derived from His providence over the patriarchs and matriarchs.

Prayer offers man this great opportunity where the Creator of the universe responds to our needs. When G-d responds positively, we learn that our requests are in line with His Torah. And conversely, when our requests go unanswered, we learn that our requests do not form part of G-d's plan, or perhaps, not yet. We are thereby forced to reflect on our wants and needs (our values) studying them carefully, and detecting our deviation from G-d. In this case, G-d's silence is a great blessing. For we learn through such silence that we are corrupt in one area or more. We are then driven to realign ourselves with G-d's Torah system – that which is for our ultimate good. The Hebrew word for prayer is "Tefilah", which means to "judge", as in judging our values. Thereby, prayer perfects our values.

From this opportunity, to request our needs and then judge our values according to the response, we are directed to the second and more primary focus of our daily blessings and prayers: G-d's knowledge.

Aside from moral and ethical perfection, man partakes of the world of intelligence. Knowledge of G-d's truths is not only the driving force behind the aforementioned perfections, but a world unto itself. Although man lives in societies, his knowledge of the good, and of all truths, need not be exercised in action, for man to appreciate the Source of this knowledge. This in no way means that we are absolved from Torah obligations. Such an idea denies G-d's commands. Maimonides taught that the commands are to preoccupy ourselves when we are not engaged in the highest pursuit: Torah study.

The Shima and its blessings are not requests, but formulations of central Torah concepts. It is true, these very ideas teach us most important truths, and guide us in both spheres: concepts and moral behavior. But as the Shima contains no requests, they act to inculcate truths. It is these truths discussed in Talmud Brachos (11a – 12b) that I would like to highlight.



THE SHIMA YISRAEL

The Shima Yisrael must be recited twice daily, as it is written:

"Listen Israel, G-d is our G-d, G-d is one. And you shall love your G-d, with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your possessions. And it will be that these words which I command you today shall be upon your hearts, and you shall teach them to your sons, and you shall speak them when you sit in your house, and when you go on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your arm, and they shall be Tefillin between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and your gates." (Deut. 6:4-9)

We learn that the Shima is actually a reference to the entire corpus of Torah, as this command to recite "these words" refers to that which is "commanded", i.e., the commandments. If so, how does the imperative to recite "them" when we lie down and rise, refer to the Shima? The answer must be this: the Torah's commands to recite "them", means that the Shima recital fulfills the obligation to discuss the commands. We learn that the Shima contains central Torah themes.

The Talmud states that originally, the Ten Commandments formed part of the morning prayers. But according to Rashi, due to the slandering of the idolatrous nations, rumoring that all that exists are the Ten Commands, the Rabbis on at least four occasions denied many communities the right to include these Ten. They feared the Jews would fall prey to the distorted counsel of those nations, assuming no more than the Ten Commands were uttered b G-d.

Rabbi Simone and Rabbi Levi disputed the reason for reading the Shima. Is it recited because it contains the reference of lying down and rising, or because it contains references to the Ten Commandments? What is their disagreement?

Internal vs External Worlds

The Talmud teaches, one should relieve himself at night, as he does during the day. The book of Joshua also teaches, "This book of the Torah shall not be removed from your mouth, and you shall engage it day and night, in order that you shall guard to do as all that is written in it, for then your way will be successful, and then will you understand." (Joshua, 1:8) The Shima as well says we must recite it when lying down and rising. What concept do all of these cases point to?

Regarding man relieving himself, we learn that man has an inclination to be less modest at night, thus, relieving himself in a less modest fashion. Joshua's command also addresses the night, as does the Shima. In all of these cases, we learn that man tends to act at nighttime, in a different manner than he does during the day. Nighttime carries with it darkness, something which effects man's mood. He feels less stress as the workday is over: it's relaxation time. He also feels more isolated, not in a negative sense, but in a sense of being "alone". Thus, we are warned by the Talmud that modesty has nothing to do with who is watching, but with one's perfection. One must not be less modest at night, for this means his modesty is not true modesty – he is in fact only fearful of onlookers – not of adhering to Torah modesty. One who is truly modest is this way at all times, as it is an expression of his inner values. As far as relaxing goes, Joshua teaches that one should not satisfy the desire to remove himself from his Torah obligations at night, due to an emotion of relaxation. This does not mean man does not require relaxing, but that night should not be man's excuse not to learn. In fact, Maimonides teaches that one who wishes to earn the "Crown of Torah" (become truly wise) will not forfeit any of his evenings in sleep. The Talmud also teaches that any house in which the sound of Torah is not heard at night, it will be destroyed. Joshua said, "...for then your way will be

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successful, and then will you understand.” This means that if someone looks to a certain time frame as “recreation time”, it reflects his true value not to engage in Torah study. If one earnestly toils in his study, he will find it quite enjoyable. He will not look for other pleasures. His free time will be spent in study. Only then will he become wise, as all of his energies are absorbed by study. One can truly come to a stage where he anticipates learning as an adventure: he excitedly awaits what new ideas he will discover today!

We may answer one side, that the Shima is recited due to its mention of lying down and rising. It reminds us of our much-needed perfection, to align our emotions with the Torah prescription not to seek fantasy and pleasures, when those emotions are aroused in the evenings. Therefore, this side of the argument suggests that the Shima is recited for the purpose of correcting man’s “internal world.”

How may we explain the Rabbi who says that the Shima is recited because it refers to the Ten Commandments? I believe his view is that we must reiterate and be mindful of the Torah system - as a whole. According to Saadia Gaon, the Ten Commandments are the head categories for the remaining 603 commands. As such, the Shima, which refers to the Ten, in fact, makes us mindful each day of the entire body of Torah. This Rabbi understands the Shima as addressing man’s need to be cognizant of the entire Torah system on a daily basis. Man must recognize the “external world” of wisdom. According to this Rabbi, the Shima is not so much to correct his emotional weaknesses and digressions, as it is to remind him of a complete Torah system. Accordingly, it is insufficient that man performs only those commands required each day, even if he learns all day, while not acknowledging the greater, complete Torah system. So the argument may be defined as whether Shima addresses our “internal world”, perfecting our values, or the “external world” reminding us of a complete system of wisdom.

But I wonder, according to this latter view, why must we be Torah-cognizant to such a degree? What do we lack by not recognizing the system of Torah as a whole, each day? It would appear that by viewing the daily commands as isolated from the rest of the Torah, and certainly, by not acknowledging Judaism’s tenets daily, such individual performances will be compromised. But in what manner?

Maimonides outlines certain fundamentals in his 13 Principles, which perhaps shed some light on this question.

Principle VIII. That the Torah is from Heaven

“...And on this our sages of blessed memory said, "he who believes that the Torah is from heaven, except this verse, that G-d did not say it, but rather Moshe himself did [he is a denier of all the Torah].”

Principle IX. The Completeness of the Torah

“And this is that the Torah is from G-d and is not lacking. That to it you cannot add or take away from - not from the Written Torah or from the Oral Torah. As it says "Do not add to it and do not take away from it.”

Perhaps we learn from here, that to obtain a true appreciation of each command, we must be cognizant of its place in the complete, Torah system. To lack conviction in a part of the Torah being divine, one denies the entire Torah. Exactitude is demanded in this area. Similarly, if one does not realize that individual laws form part of a greater whole, he too errs, although his error is nowhere as grave.

What is the loss if we do not realize that specific laws form part of the whole? One commonly found corruption are those individuals who are vigilant in a few commands, forfeiting the perfection that can only come through fulfillment of the whole Torah system. These individuals may go so far as to assume a singular command is some kind of panacea – a command

or a non-commanded practice takes on a life of its own. An example would be Tehillim groups, who believe that by their recital, some good comes to others. The group recites Tehillim diligently, however, the Torah demands a different approach: those in need must reflect, repent, pray to G-d, and give charity. Isolating singular activities, and certainly new practices not commanded by the Torah, carries with it such a danger: one forfeits the philosophy of Torah, only afforded by accepting and being mindful of all the commands, and only that which is commanded. And even if one were to perform something actually commanded, with the thought that it affords some good of its own, this in no way improves the situation. Commands are indispensable, but not an end unto themselves. The Torah prescription is to follow G-d, not commands, and follow His entire word, not creating new activities, or favor one command over the other. For this reason, the Torah does not disclose the rewards of the commands. We must be vigilant in each one, as this is truly the way to follow G-d, and not our emotions.

This flaw is generated out of man’s nature to attach himself to particulars, for this is how the emotions operate. We notice in general that people get excited about “specific things”, like cars, homes, clothing, etc. Emotions latch onto individual objects. Surprisingly, this emotional flaw also extends to the commands, and must be corrected. The Talmud states that when a command comes to your hand, you may not pass it up, even for the sake of an even greater command. There is one condition that would allow one to pass up a lesser command: when another person is available to perform the lesser command. In this case, one may wait for the greater command. How do we reckon this with our view? The answer is that in the latter case, one does not discount the entire Torah system. He admits to all of the commands. However, when one dismisses other commands, he has erred.

This idea, that we must be mindful of the entire system of Torah, is the very concern expressed by the Rabbis who prohibited the Ten Commandments from being continued in the morning service. The idolaters wished to impose their view that Torah is simply the Ten Commandments, and nothing more. Conversely, the Shima’s recital counters this problem, by calling to mind the entire system of Torah. Perhaps for this very reason, we are informed of the idolater’s mischief in this same section of the Talmud: it contributes to the primary focus of the Shima.

It is interesting that unlike the Shima, which is a Torah law, the blessings of the Shima are based on the words of King David, “Seven by day I have praised You for Your righteous statutes.” (Psalms, 119:164) The Talmud teaches that this verse obligates us to recite these seven blessings over the Shima. King David teaches that it is insufficient to simply “respond”, and merely fulfill the commands. King David formulates an additional obligation that we praise G-d for giving us the Torah’s statutes. Man must feel a great sense of appreciation for G-d, as He bestowed upon us such a kindness, in designing and granting mankind a means for appreciating His existence, where we may learn wonderful truths that perfect us. It is befitting that praising G-d for the system received by man, is based on a man’s (King David) appreciation. The very philosophy of this command is embodied in its source.

King David teaches that one fulfills “praising G-d for His righteous statutes” by reciting blessings over the Shima. We thereby learn that the Shima satisfies the role of “His righteous statutes”. The Shima, then, is a concentrated formulation of the Torah’s primary statutes and philosophies.

In addition to commands, the Shima includes the fundamentals of G-d’s existence, His unity, the Exodus, and Reward and Punishment, seen in the promises of agricultural prosperity and drought - for our Torah adherence and idolatrous offenses, respectively. So vital are these ideas, we are also commanded in the Shima to post its words on our doorposts as Mezuzas, and to wear them as Tefillin. Tzitzis are also included as its own paragraph in the Shima, as it states therein, “and you will see them (Tzitzis) and you shall remember all the commands of G-d, and you shall do them, and you

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shall not go astray after your hearts and after your eyes..." Tzitzis too points to the entire body of Torah.

The Rabbis teach, he who wears Tzitzis, dons Tefillin and posts Mezuzas, will not sin. Why is this? It is due to what these three items address: man's securities. Tzitzis reminds one that his garb improves him in no way, despite society's glorified fashions. One's body cannot shield him from G-d's punishments, as Tefillin remind him, as they are worn on the body. And Mezuzas belittles our greatest

feeling of security: the home. In all three areas, body, clothing, and home, man is reminded not to project his baseless feelings of security, but to be mindful of G-d's ultimate security stated in the Shima and contained in the Mezuzah and Tefillin.

But how do these items prevent sin? Sin is generated from egotistical emotions. The person feels he is far more correct than G-d's commands, and therefore feels secure enough to violate them. What attacks such a disease is man's recognition of G-d's security. Man is now faced with the realization that G-d ultimately defines his fate. With this knowledge, man will not sin.

Tangentially, why may the form of Tzitzis – strings – be the appropriate method of "remembering"? Perhaps their hair-like design, which moves when we walk, catches our attention. Something rigid does not stand out, and we pass it by. But for something to alert us, it must be distinguished, and the Tzitzis' motion is distinguished from our rigid body. A woman's hair is also the one feature, which catches a man's eye due to its motion. Therefore, this is the precise feature that women are commanded to conceal, demonstrating that gaining attention from others after marriage is not appropriate, or modest behavior.

THE SHIMA'S BLESSINGS

For what exactly do we praise G-d with these seven blessings?

Creation

The first blessing praises G-d for His creation. We describe His constant guidance over the luminaries, and describe both day and night, in both our morning and evening Shima blessings. The Talmud states this is done so no one would erroneously assume that G-d controls only one half of the day, as was assumed by idolatrous peoples who had both, sun and moon gods. Praising G-d in both parts of the day, for both aspects of the day, prevents this error. Also, in both evening and morning prayers, we refer to G-d as "King". This teaches us that even prior to man's creation, G-d's role is the One King. "King" is thereby defined as Creator, and this role does not rely on man's proclamation of His greatness. Man was created after the luminaries and stars, and in our blessings of the luminaries we refer to G-d as King, teaching that G-d's Kingship is independent of G-d's

reign over mankind. Without man, G-d is still King. This makes sense. For a human king has conditional kingship: if his subjects abandon him, he loses his role. Not so with regard to G-d. His Kingship is unconditional, based on His role as Creator. He who grants man's very existence is the ultimate King. But he whose kingship is limited to ruling others, and did not create his subjects, is a far lesser king by comparison.

"Creator" is the most defining role of G-d. It is for this reason that we commence with this praise.

But G-d did not only create the physical world, He also created that which is not physical, which includes angels. These angels are intelligences that praise G-d, as stated in our blessings. To omit part of G-d's creation in our praises would be a grave error. When praising G-d, the praise must be as complete as humanly possible. Now if this was so, why don't we simply refer to angels, and nothing more? But we do find much more discussed, such as the angels' praising G-d. Why is this included? We may also ask why there is no reference to the angels in our evening blessings.

I would suggest that angels praising G-d teaches an important lesson: even the greatest of all creations, and those which partake of the greatest realization (intelligence) of G-d, are completely involved in one thing: realizing G-d's greatness, and praising Him. In contrast to us mortals, we should be humbled that if those greater intelligences recognize G-d, so too must we.

Another important feature of this first blessing is that these angels are occupied with a specific praise: G-d is unknowable. The angels recite "Holy, Holy, Holy, G-d of hosts, the entire universe is filled with His honor", and "Blessed is G-d from His place". "Holy" is better translated as "distinct" as in "distinct from what the angels know". In other words, the angels witness creation ("the entire universe is filled with His honor") and praise G-d, simultaneously admitting that they are completely ignorant of what G-d is. Other angels then say, "G-d is blessed from His place", declaring His unknowable nature.

Also stated in this praise is, "they all accept the yoke of Heaven (G-d's greatness) from each other". What does this mean? I believe it teaches that although not commanded in Torah, of their own accord, the angels are completely preoccupied in praising G-d. This embellishes the concept we stated, that the greatest created intelligences see G-d as their sole focus. Recognizing and praising G-d is the ultimate purpose of all creation. Perhaps, the fact that our blessing records the angels blessing G-d on two occasions, teaches that this is not a one-time activity, but the entire existence of all angels is unanimously and eternally involved in, and awed by, G-d's creation.

How may we answer our last question, why there is no reference to the angels in our evening blessings? If we are careful with our analysis, we will find the answer. What is the distinction between creation, stated in the morning Shima blessing, versus the evening? The morning blessing alone refers to creation, as that which G-d "made", or "formed". In contrast, the evening does not mention these words. Instead, it describes G-d as "changing" the times (of day), "arranging" the stars, and that He "brings" day and night. The distinction is clear: the morning blessing discusses G-d's creation of "objects", while the evening blessing describes the "behavior", or rather, the "laws" of creation. We thereby learn that G-d created two creations: 1) existences, and 2) properties. Therefore, when describing the existences, angels are included, as they form part of the creation. However, as we know nothing of "how" angels exist, or what they are, we cannot include them in the evening blessing, as this blessing describes what man may know about creations' "behavior." Compare Genesis chapter I to Genesis chapter II, and you will discover this very same distinction.

(continued on next page)



Love: G-d for Man / Man for G-d

The next blessing refers to man - another aspect of creation. In this blessing, we do not simply refer to man as a creation, but to his purpose: Torah study and love of G-d. G-d desired our good, displayed through His love, by His favoring of the patriarchs, and His gift of the Torah system to Israel. We ask G-d to imbue us with a love of Torah, and to teach us. And in the evening we again make mention of our previously stated idea, that Torah study must be embraced in all parts of the day: nighttime and daytime. This is properly mentioned in the nighttime blessing, for as we said, it is the night, which carries the danger of man's emotions overcoming him.

This blessing of G-d's love for us by giving us the Torah, and our love for Him and Torah, immediately precedes the Shima's recital, as the Shima refers to the Torah's tenets. This blessing is an introduction to Shima.

Redemption: Past Conviction & Future Trust

The next blessing comes after the Shima, and is referred to as "Geula", or redemption. We describe G-d's Exodus, the destruction of Egypt and their firstborns, the parting of the Red Sea, and the triumph at its shores where the Jews unanimously proclaimed G-d's great, unmatched salvation. G-d is our one and only Savior. In the evening version, we add our request that he saves us regularly and the future. We thereby demonstrate our conviction in G-d's past salvation, and trust in His future redemption. (Rashi and Tosfos, Brachos 12a) This is based on another verse, "To speak of His kindness in the mornings, and His trust at night." (Psalms, 92:3) The Hashkivenu blessing continues this theme.

The Talmud states that anyone who does not mention these two versions of the Geula, does not fulfill his requirement of the Shima blessings. Why is this statement reserved for the Geula blessings alone? Perhaps, it is "conviction in G-d" that demonstrates man's perfection, where man lives in accord with Torah truths. This is the ultimate goal for man, and without express conviction, man falls short of his perfection, and does not fulfill his Shima blessings.

Summary

We conclude, that these blessings are initially generated out of King David's intense appreciation for the Torah, as is embodied in the Shima. It is this receipt of Torah and our appreciation that demands our additional praises. G-d created man with the ability to arrive at true knowledge through Torah. This demands our praise. These praises center on praising G-d in the best possible way: creation is the ultimate expression of G-d's greatness, including luminaries, angels and mankind. We enunciate the great gift of Torah and G-d's love for us, and our love for G-d as our purpose. We then culminate in describing our praise for His Egyptian salvation, and our complete trust in His continued providence over Israel.

Not only is Torah what we praise G-d for, but it is only through Torah, that we merit His salvation, and let it be soon, when the Torah will be fulfilled completely. ■

