

"The wicked, even while alive are called dead.
And the righteous, even in their death are called alive."
The Olam will eternally benefit from Rabbi Chait's
unique presence, personality, and from his Torah.

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Weekly Parsha

Ki Tavo

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"And now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the ground which you, Hashem, have given to me." Then, you shall lay it before Hashem, your God, and prostrate yourself before Hashem, your God." (Devarim 26:10)

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Remembering Rabbi Aryeh Leb Chait

"A Leader of Leaders"

A TALMID

This past Monday, I attended the levaya (funeral) for Rabbi Aryeh Leb Chait. I knew Rabbi Aryeh Leb personally. Over the years, I would meet him by chance walking the boardwalk in Atlantic Beach, NY. He always greeted me, and I am sure all others, with a sincere, deep smile, reflecting his warmth towards all others. He would always be walking with his wife, who mirrors his pleasant nature. And as always, he had a Torah question on the tip of his tongue, ready to share. I never had the answer! He would then tell me the answer, his eyes wide with excitement, and anticipation of how he knew I would respond. He revealed the answer with even more joy than he did the question, as he knew he was imparting a jewel with which I would soon leave all the more rich. That act of sharing a beautiful idea in Torah gave him that smile. He knew this was the greatest gift he could give another person: so he did so, and did so often.

This would happen time and again over the years. Even after his bypass operation, I met him again by chance in town. He was weaker, but smiled no less. And of course, he had another Torah question ready. Torah preoccupied his mind, his heart, and all of his words. As we talked, I told him what was doing in my life, the ups and the downs. He had a knack for minimizing all the downs into nothing, so well...that I left feeling as he planned, so optimistic, like any mountain could be scaled. In other words, he sensed in others

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(Ki Tavo cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

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Many of us are familiar with the folk story of the ignorant shepherd boy that entered the synagogue eager to pray to Hashem but he does not know any of the prayers. The boy wishes to reach out to Hashem but he lacks the skills and knowledge to pray in the conventional manner. The kind rabbi is moved by the earnestness of the young shepherd and advises him that despite his ignorance, he can effectively pray to Hashem. He need merely recite the alef bet – the Hebrew alphabet. Hashem will form the proper words. In another version of the folk story, the rabbi tells the boy to whistle and Hashem will convert his whistles into beautiful prayers.

I am not sure of the intent or meaning of this well-known story. However, it is often interpreted to mean that we need not be overly concerned with the details and nuances of the laws regarding tefillah – prayer. Much more important than our concern with the multitude of details, is our sincerity. If we are sincere, our prayers are appropriate. Excessive attention to detail – to the extent that this attention distracts us from expressing our feelings – is counter-productive. Focus on the minutia of halacha may even undermine the effectiveness of our prayer and the meaningfulness of the tefillah experience.

Sefer HaChinuch makes an interesting comment on this week's parasha that should cause us to reconsider this popular folk story. At least his comment should give us pause and reason to reassess the popular interpretation of this tale.

One of the mitzvot discussed in our parasha is the mikre bikkurim – the recitation accompanying the bringing of the first fruit. In order to discuss the mitzvah of mikre bikkurim, we must first review the mitzvah of bikkurim – the first fruit. This mitzvah only applies in the Land of Israel. We are required to bring the first fruit of each year's crop – the bikkurim – to the Bait HaMikdash. The bikkurim are then given to the kohanim. The mitzvah of bikkurim does not apply to all crops. We are only required to give bikkurim from the seven species that are associated with fertility -- the Land of Israel.

When the farmer brings the fruits, he is required to fulfill the mitzvah of mikre bikkurim. He recites a specific portion of the Torah that is included in this week's parasha. In this recitation he describes the tribulations experienced by our forefather Yaakov. He recounts his descent to Egypt. He describes the suffering and persecution our ancestors experienced in Egypt. Then, he

briefly recounts our redemption by Hashem from bondage. He acknowledges that Hashem has given us the Land of Israel and that this produce is the product of that land. In short, the farmer describes the fruit he is presenting as a manifestation of Hashem's redemption of Bnai Yisrael and an expression of His providential relationship with the Jewish people.

One of the interesting laws concerning mikre bikkurim is that not every farmer who presents bikkurim is required or qualified to recite mikre bikkurim. For example, mikre bikkurim is only performed by males. [1] Why is the mitzvah limited to males? This limitation is based upon the above passage. The farmer states that the bikkurim are the product of the land that Hashem has given to me – to the farmer. The Torah provides instructions for the distribution of the Land of Israel among its inhabitants. When the Land of Israel



was captured it was divided among the male members of the nation. In subsequent generations, the land was subdivided among the male heirs of these original land-holders. Land may be sold and purchased among these owners or even to others who are not among these owners. However, with each Jubilee year – Yovel – the land is redistributed to the male heirs of the original land-holders. In short, only the male descendants of the original land-holders can attain a permanent ownership right that is transmitted to their heirs.

How does this law regarding ownership impact the mitzvah of mikre bikkurim? The passage above is taken from the text recited by the farmer. The farmer refers to the fruit as the product of the land that Hashem has given to me. This statement assumes that the farmer is a person qualified to receive the land in a permanent manner. As explained above, only the male descendants of the original land-holders can attain permanent possession.[2]

Sefer HaChinuch makes an interesting comment regarding this law. He explains that this law provides evidence of the importance of the manner and precision with which we formulate our prayers.[3] How is this law indicative of the importance of precision in our prayers?

As we have explained, only males may recite mikre bikkurim. This law is derived from the above passage. But let us more carefully consider how this law is derived from this passage. Many laws are derived from allusions and hints provided by the text of the Chumash. A nuance in the manner in which the Torah expresses itself – the

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choice of wording, a seemingly superfluous phrase, word, or even letter – can be the source of a law. A superficial consideration of the derivation of the limitation of mikre bikkurim to males would indicate that this law is derived from such a nuance in our passage.

However, Sefer HaChinuch apparently maintains that the law is not derived from a nuance or superfluity in the passage. Instead, mikre bikkurim can only be recited by a male, because the content of the recitation must be accurate. The person reciting mikre bikkurim refers to the fruit as the product of the land given to him by Hashem. If he is not a male, the statement is not true and accurate.

We can now understand Sefer HaChinuch's comment. Mikre bikkurim – and all prayers – must be accurate and precise. In the case of mikre bikkurim, this requirement can only be realized when the recitation is given by a farmer who is male. Sefer HaChinuch admonishes us to require of ourselves the same precision in every prayer we recite. We must choose our text carefully and read or recite it precisely. Without this precision a fundamental element of prayer is sacrificed.

What is this fundamental element that is only achieved through precision? In order to appreciate Sefer HaChinuch's response, another law regarding mikre bikkurim must be considered.

“And you shall call out and say before Hashem, your God, 'An Aramean [sought to] destroy my forefather, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there with a small number of people, and there, he became a great, mighty, and numerous nation.'” (Devarim 26:5)

One of the requirements of mikre bikkurim is that the passages must be recited in the Bait HaMikdash. This requirement is derived from the above passage. The pasuk tells us that the passages must be recited before Hashem. Our Sages interpret this phrase to require that the recitation of the passages take place in the Bait HaMikdash.[4]

Minchat Chinuch notes that this interpretation of the phrase “before Hashem” does not seem completely reasonable. The Torah requires that we give a number of tithes from our crops. These tithes are not identical from year to year. However, they do have a fixed three-year cycle. At the end of each three-year cycle, one is required to declare that the tithes have been given properly. The Torah tells us that this declaration must be made “before Hashem.” Indeed, it is preferable to make the declaration in the Bait HaMikdash. However, if one did not make the declaration in the Bait HaMikdash, it is nonetheless valid.[5]



Minchat Chinuch argues that it would seem reasonable that the phrase “before Hashem” used in reference to mikre bikkurim should be interpreted in the same manner. It should indicate the preference for performance of the mitzvah in the Bait HaMikdash. But it should not suggest that recitation in the Bait HaMikdash is an absolute requirement.

Let us consider this question more carefully. The term “before Hashem” is used with some frequency by the Torah and our Sages. For example, when we recite the Amidah prayer, we are required to regard ourselves as standing before Hashem. When we confess our sins, we are required to regard ourselves as standing “before Hashem.” In neither of these instances are we required to make a pilgrimage to the Bait HaMikdash. Clearly, in these instances the phrase “before Hashem” represents a state of mind. Why in the instance of mikre bikkurim is the phrase interpreted more literally?

It seems that the term “before Hashem” can have two meanings. It can refer to a mental state – the person regards himself as standing before Hashem. The phrase can also represent a geographical or positional requirement – presence in the Bait HaMikdash. The Bait HaMikdash is a location in which Hashem's influence is uniquely represented and expressed. In instances in which the requirement is positional, it is fulfilled through standing in the Bait HaMikdash.

The proper interpretation of the phrase “before Hashem” is determined by the context. In the case of mikre bikkurim, the recitation must accompany the offering of the bikkurim. The bikkurim must be presented in the Bait HaMikdash. Therefore, the phrase “before Hashem” is to be understood to include an absolute positional element. The

recitation must take place in the Bait HaMikdash. In contrast, there is not particular relationship between the declaration regarding the tithes and the Bait HaMikdash. Therefore, the phrase is not interpreted to imply an absolute positional requirement.

However, this answer suggests a new question. If the declaration concerning the tithes is unrelated to the Bait HaMikdash, why is preferable for it to be recited at this location?

Apparently, the phrase “before Hashem” sometimes implies an absolute positional element – as in the instance of mikre bikkurim. In other instances, the phrase refers to a state of mind. In the instance of the declaration regarding the tithes, the requirement can be fulfilled anywhere. This indicates that “before Hashem” is essentially a mental state. However, the unique element of this declaration is that we are admonished to reinforce the state of mind through a positional expression. The Torah provides a minimum requirement and a preferred expression. At a minimum we must place ourselves in the mental state of standing before Hashem. However, we are instructed that the preferred means of fulfilling the requirement is to reinforce this mental state through standing in the Bait HaMikdash. In other words, in making the declaration regarding the tithes we are admonished to reinforce our state of mind through action – standing in the Bait HaMikdash.

Let us now return to our original question: Why is precision an essential element of prayer? Sefer HaChinuch explains that when we pray we stand before Hashem. We address our thoughts and words to Him. We are expected to reinforce our sense of standing before Hashem through action. If we are to fully appreciate and recognize the significance of addressing Hashem, we must choose our words with extreme care and attention. This precision and attention to detail reflects and expresses an experience of awe. It communicates a cognizance of the significance – the gravity – of the experience. Through stating our prayers with precision and care we reinforce the sense of standing before Hashem. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Bikkurim 4:2.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Bikkurim 4:2.

[3] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 606.

[4] Rav Yosef Babad, Minchat Chinuch, Mitzvah 606, note 1.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Ma'aser Sheyne 11:6.

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Rabbi Aryeh Leb Chait

a need, and he desired to replace that need with gladness. He made others happy. He wanted the best for others, on all fronts. One proof of his success is the man I met leaving the Shiva house yesterday. He was a 10th grade student of Rabbi Aryeh Leb some 40-50 years ago. This man traveled far yesterday, having retained the Torah he received from Rabbi Aryeh Leb 40 years ago, and his deep appreciation for his Rebbe.

Knowing what a unique and penetrating Torah pillar Rabbi Chait was, a man who loved mankind, and how his actions and Torah indelibly inspired and permanently impacted so many thousands of lives, I decided to transcribe the beautiful and moving eulogies I heard from his sons, the Torah leaders they are. His life "is" truly a Kiddush Hashem, and his acts should be repeated often. He was truly a servant of God, as he directed others to an appreciation and love for the Creator. I feel by repeating the eulogies in writing, I will offer comfort to his family with the knowledge that so many more thousands of people who never knew of Rabbi Aryeh Leb, will now know him, and never forget him. May God comfort all of his family among the rest of the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.



Rabbi Israel Chait

How can one eulogize a father, when one owes so much to him, and when he was not just a father, but my Rebbe as well?

The Torah teaches that the wife of Joseph's Egyptian master Potiphar, tried to seduce Joseph the Tzaddik. Joseph was about to stumble with her, but something occurred to him that prevented him from that sin. That something was the image of his father. When his mind saw that image of his father Jacob, Joseph associated certain ideas to that image. That image caused him to refrain from stumbling in that great stumbling block, with the wife of Potiphar.

Apparently, the father, besides teaching a son Torah, must also create a certain image to prevent his son from becoming a sinner. It is strange that there is no mitzvah like this. But perhaps this is so, since it is not something that can be mandated. It comes from observing the father: his way of life and his Derech Ha-Chaim, and that's what creates that image. And

if that type of life is not there, it cannot be produced.

My father created an image of a father, an unusual image. It had multifarious aspects to it. I am not going to be able to bring out all that I really should, and all that my father deserves...but hopefully I can mention a few things.

The first thing is my father's great and unusual Mesiras Nefesh (personal sacrifice) for Torah. That was one tremendous aspect of his personality. He told me that he came to Chofetz Chaim Yeshiva in his late teens, without any background, and not with much hope of being accepted to the Yeshiva. But he came with eighty dollars he had saved from working in a factory. He said, "I will stay in this Yeshiva until my last dollar is spent...if they don't accept me until this eighty dollars runs out...at least I will have purchased eighty dollars worth of Torah." Fortunately, he was accepted, by Rav Dovid zt"l. And he continued with his unusual Mesiras Nefesh. Because he started learning late, he had to learn after he became married, for otherwise he never would have conquered the Derech HaTorah, the method of Torah study. In those days no one sat and learned after marriage. It was frowned upon and ridiculed. Many people tried to dissuade him. But he had the courage of a lion and the tenacity; he suffered the criticism of many, and learned after he was married...for eleven years.

The happiness I used to see on his face when he returned home from the Bais Medrash (Torah study hall) at nighttime exemplified a joy in his Mesiras Nefesh. It wasn't a Mesiras Nefesh that came with bitterness, but a Mesiras Nefesh in spite of the dire straits and financial difficulties...he was till B'Simcha, with much gladness.

The most important aspect of his great his influence for me, was in the learning itself. And in this he was inspired by one individual, one Gadol HaDor (giant of the generation)...this was Rav Dovid Leibowitz, zt"l. He would constantly mention "Rebbe", and tell stories and ideas from Rebbe, in a way that was so eloquent. Because of his skills and the talents he had...one could almost feel that his Rebbe was in the room. He was committed to Rav Dovid zt"l, to his Derech Ha-Chaim, to his Derech Ha-Mussar, and to his Derech Ha-Limud (his life's path, moral instruction, and manner of Torah study).

But what attracted him was Rav Dovid's creativity and originality. That creativity and originality is what attracted him, and inspired him, and that was one of the elements that made him such a great influence. But it wasn't only creativity in Derech Ha-Limud itself; and it wasn't only creativity in the Derech Ha-Chaim. And by creativity I mean being able to think of something in a way that no one else would think about it. And this was always what he would repeat to us: the Chochma (wisdom) of mussar, the Chochma of Torah, the Chochma of a Tosfos. He was inspired by the Chochma. The light of the Torah moved him...that's what inspired him. But there is another aspect to this path, to this Derech...because the creativity and originality wasn't limited to the learning itself. But it was creativity and originality in a "way of life". And it was one that was unbending and unyielding. What he perceived in his Rebbe zt"l, is that one should never bend the truth one iota in order to comply with popular opinion. That is something that he carried with him, and which he taught all of us. And he lived that way.

I would say that two things stand out in my mind that I learned from my father. One is to have tremendous respect for Chachamim (the wise men) especially the Chachmay Yisrael of course. And to never to look superficially at what they say. And the second thing is never to bend the truth, but always try to do the 'Emess' – the truth – in spite of the fact that people stand in opposition, or that you are ridiculed. Because that was the way he lived his life, and that was a tremendous image he gave us...that he instilled in us.

But he was a Marbitz Torah (spreader of Torah) for many years, and influenced hundreds of students; and hundreds and thousands of families. And he had a certain unique character and personality that allowed him to do it. I came across a Rashi that characterizes his traits. The Rashi is in Avos, and in Avos, Chazal compare the traits of Avraham Avinu, in contradistinction to Bilam the rasha, the wicked. One of the traits of Avraham Avinu is a lowness of the soul. This doesn't mean one is depressed. But rather, that Avraham lowered himself between all members of mankind. He mixed with them, and he was not haughty of spirit. In other words, the ability to speak to the lowest person: the plainest and simplest person, and make that person feel he was not experiencing the slightest feeling of superiority over this individual. This is a unique trait and a unique character, and he had that character...he was able to do that. Whether it

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Rabbi Aryeh Leb Chait

was an everyday Jew, or a gentile...he was able to speak with that person on his level and make him feel a certain warmth and response. And he had the ability to reach people that way. And that is why he was able to reach so many Talmidim, Torah students.

One of the last statements of Chazal (the Sages) that my father discussed with me was the event of Rav Chiya when he visited Rebbe, when Rebbe was about to die. And Rav Chiya asked Rebbe, "Why are you crying? After all, you lived a life of Torah; of perfection...this world is [but] a waiting room. So why do you cry?" And Rebbe (Judah the Prince) answered, "On account of Torah and Mitzvos I am crying." My father mentioned this Chazal and we were discussing it. And the question is, why should Rebbe Judah the Prince cry about Torah and mitzvos? After all, he will continue to learn Torah in the next world, in Olam Haba. And that's the highest level of Torah. Rambam teaches that all the righteous looked forward to Olam Haba where they can reach the highest level of wisdom. Why then should he cry about Torah? And mitzvos are a means to perfection, to Shlaymus Ha-Adam. And Rebbe Judah reached his perfection. So why was he crying about Mitzvos?

But I think he was saying something else...

In this world, in this existence...there is a beauty of the combination of Torah and Mitzvos that the human soul experiences. The combination of Mitzvah with Chochma and Torah offers the human soul a special aesthetic sense and appreciation for that combination. That combination...one can experience only in this world. So that is a loss that one, in Olam Haba, cannot have.

And my father had that ability to take Torah and Mitzvos, and make them enjoyable. He made them into something a person can appreciate. And that is why I feel he was so successful and so influential with his students.

I must say, everything I have, of course, stems from him: his training, his outlook, his Chochma and his understanding, and his emphasis. But, I learned more from him perhaps during the last two years of his life, when I saw his unbelievable and amazing Kochos Ha-Nefesh, his strength of his soul. The Yisurin (afflictions) he suffered, and that we, the whole family unfortunately suffered with him...he accepted them unbelievably. And he never gave up hope. The doctors were amazed. He showed us a strength of soul that are above and beyond. I can only



hope I can reach some partial level of the strength that he had.

He also showed something that I personally didn't sense and didn't feel. Because I think that a son always feels an obligation to a father. And therefore, the son always feels the father appreciates him because of his accomplishments. But I noticed in the last years, that he expressed a certain genuine love for his children that wasn't based on what they accomplished or what they performed...but just a genuine love. And that was a very deep-meaning feeling.

My father left families of Torah, students, and many hundreds of thousands of people who learn Torah today, and appreciate Torah...because of him.

There is not enough that I can say. I can just say that his merits should stand by us, our family, and all of Klal Israel.

"Tehay nishmaso tzarurah b'Tzur Ha-Chaim". May his soul be bound up with the Rock of Life. ■



Rabbi Moshe Chait

Much of what I wanted to say was said by my older brother. However, I would like to speak of a few other things about my father.

My father was a Rav, he was a Rebbe, he was a shochet, and he was a Mohel. It's not easy for someone to specialize in all these different areas. Once, when I was a boy growing up in Providence, Rhode Island, the shochet (butcher) was sick that day. The only one who knew how to perform shechita, was my father. He took me with him, and told me, "Come, come Moshe...I am going to show you how I shecht chickens." I remember that. I was so proud of him, because he was the only Rabbi that was able to do that. He took me down, and shechted many chickens...we were there for quite a few hours. When we were going home, I said to him, "It's so good, that no one was able to do this; you were the only one that could do this." He said to me, "Moshe, I learned it years ago." He made no big deal about it, "Now they needed someone, so I was able to do it."

My father had a unique Derech in learning as my brother mentioned; he had very good Rebbe, Rav Dovid Leibowitz zt"l. And when my father used to learn with my brothers and I, no matter which yeshiva we went to, or which Rebbe we had...we always enjoyed coming home and learning with him. He had a special way of making learning not only interesting, but enjoyable as well. Children sometimes don't have patience to learn...and he always knew how much he could push a child, so he would not feel bad, "So we will learn again tomorrow," he would say.

I remember when my older brother Yisrael would come home during Yeshiva break when he was learning in Lakewood...my father used to learn with him until 3:00 AM. It was so enjoyable. My father made learning interesting for us; he made it enjoyable. When he would teach us Rashi, he didn't just teach us on the surface; but he taught us how to go beneath the surface. He taught us how to understand the Rashi...he showed us the greatness of Rashi; how Rashi explained the Gemara.

I remember, when my brother and I came home from Yeshiva in Boston, we had been learning Babba Kamma. Shabbos would come, and we would sit down with my father, and he would say, "Now I am going to show you how I

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Rabbi Aryeh Leb Chait

would learn this Gemara and how I would learn this Rashi". It was amazing how he explained it to us; how he learned, and with such depth. That Sunday he drove us back to the Yeshiva, and he approached the Rosh Ha-Yeshiva. My father told over to him, an explanation of Rashi on a Gemara. The Rosh Ha-Yeshiva held his hands together, and he was just amazed...he never heard something like that. This is one of my father's greatnesses: he knew how to learn, and he knew how to be Marbitz (spread) Torah.

There was a story once told to me about my father. My father once took my older brother Yisrael to Lakewood, he about sixteen years old, and he brought him there to admit him to Rav Aharon Kotler's shiur zt"l. I am repeating this from a person who was there: he witnessed it and told this account to me. Rav Aharon started talking Torah with my father. Rav Aharon didn't know who he was right away. After my father left the room, Rav Aharon said to someone, "Who was that person that was talking with me?" The person said that's Rav Aryeh Leb Chait. Rav Aharon Kotler said, "I like the way he learns". He really enjoyed talking to my father in learning. I found that to be a very big compliment.

Besides, as my brother said that my father was always teaching us Torah and teaching us how to learn, whenever I came into the home, I always saw my father learning. Even in his later years when he wasn't well, when I came to his apartment, there was a sefer in one room, another sefer in another room...he was always learning. What really amazed me though, was about six years ago when he went for a six-way bypass, where an average person would be trembling, I visited him at about 3:00 AM and he was learning. This was about 20 minutes before the surgery. I said, "How are you doing?" He said, "Moshe, it's a bypass...so what?" He went back to learning. That's the type of person he was: he had strong trust in God, he loved to learn, and didn't let anything get in his way.

He was Zocheh to raise three sons who dedicated their lives to Torah. And I always thought about it: a child does what he sees his father doing. If a child comes home and sees his father watching a baseball game, or a football game, so of course the child will want to do it too. But if the father is learning Torah, the child will want to imitate the father, and this is what we always saw in him. The most important thing to him was to learn and Marbitz Torah. As my brother said, he taught many years at RJJ, and 25 years in Yeshiva University. They gave



him the toughest boys, the 12th grade, and what he did with these boys was amazing. In a certain way, he would learn with them and show them how learning was enjoyable. And he had different ways and methods to get these Talmidim interested. Even today, he has many letters from his Talmidim, that who knows what would have become of them. But because of my father, they went on to learn in big yeshivas in Israel, writing him letters of thanks. When my father was well, he used to take them out every year with my mother to restaurants, and treat them. Even today, when we meet someone in the neighborhood, they would say, "Your father was Leon Chait? He was my Rebbe in Y.U. The best Rebbe I ever had."

That's how he was, he knew how to reach these boys who weren't interested in learning. And the most important thing was to make learning enjoyable to them. That itself is a very large matter, to be able to do that.

He also showed us something else...he showed us how to respect Gedolim, great Rabbis. We lived in Forest Hills in the 1960s,

and an old European Rav came to town named Rav Chaim Bentzion Notolovitch. The man was a Gaon Olam. Not everyone knew who he was, but my father did. My parents would invite him to our home on Shabbos and Yomim Tovim. My father told me that if a great person comes to town, and he is not treated as such, it is stated, that something terrible can occur. But the main reason he had this Rabbi over at our home, is that my father wanted to show us how a person should live. He wished to show us the importance of respecting Gedolim. And when my father and Rav Notolovitch learned together, the Rav enjoyed it very much. My father had such respect for him, as did my mother. He was at our home practically every Shabbos.

It is very hard for my brothers and I today, for my sisters, and for my mother. For many years I gave a Gemara shiur in my house. And we finished quite a few Mesechtas. My father used to come to the Siyum, the completion celebration. But after he wasn't feeling well, he could not make it. When he came, I would see the great joy he had, and he would speak. He had such Nachas. It will be very hard for me, since he won't be there when we make future Siyumim. I am going to miss him.

I can go on talking about my father; he was an amazing person. He had many talents that made him who he was. The Gemara in Baba Metzia says "Bless are you in your coming, and blessed are you in your leaving". This means that your departure from this world should be as our entering this world: as our entrance was without sin, so should be our departure. That was my father; always learning, always doing mitzvahs.

It was not easy for my mother to watch him suffer all these years, as she stood by his side. It was very difficult. Every time we called 911, we didn't know what was going to happen. She stood by his side. She did whatever he needed. She would sit in the hospital at times for 10-12 hours a day. The security guards would come over to me and say, "I don't know how your mother does it".

I also want to mention my sister Rivki: I never saw such Kivud Av v' Ame as I saw in my sister. The way she attended to them was unbelievable. The hospital staff told me, "If I was making rounds at 1:00 AM, your sister was there; if at 3:00 AM...your sister was there." Her life revolved around them. It was due to her that they were able to come out and recover a lot of times. What Rivki did was not easy; and she did it with much love and much caring. ■

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Rabbi Aryeh Leb Chait



Rabbi Chaim Ozer Chait

As you heard, my father was one who had immense amount of energy; and he directed his energy and Kochos, his strength, to what he felt was important. And myself, being the third son, his energies did not run out. He committed himself to learning with me as he did with my older brothers. His love for his Rebbe, Rav Dovid, he expressed and showed to me. Vividly, I remember many stories, but briefly, one or two stick out in my mind. When I first learned a Tosfos, I was very excited. I had come back from Yeshiva, and I sat down to learn with him. And he said, "OK, so what was Tosfos' 'haveh mena', what was his initial thought?" And I said, "What do you mean?" He said to me, "The question and answer seem so simple...don't you think Tosfos thought of that when he asked his question? Would Tosfos ask such a simple question? No, he must have had something else in mind when he asked his question." Or if Tosfos had a question on Rashi, my father would say, "Didn't Rashi think of that question? So it must be that Rashi had a whole different approach to the Gemara."

Again, as my brothers mentioned, he showed me and directed me to search for the truth, and the understanding and the depth of the Gemara and Rishonim. But he also appreciated Torah in a very pure way. If one were to put on a "shtick" as they say (a false pretense that he knew a section of Gemara but really didn't know what he was talking about)...my father would say, "Eh...stam a frumock....If he learned through the sugya, he would see he doesn't know what he is talking about."

That uniqueness about him, [he felt] a Ben Torah should be a sharp person. Just because one is learning Torah doesn't mean he should dress poorly: "Your tie and suit should match...you're a Ben Torah! You should be sharp, you should be worldly, you should know what's going on, and how to present yourself."

And his Kochos, his strength, one would see throughout his life. In Providence he stood up against the Conservative movement, which cost him his job. And until the end, he had that inner strength, and took upon himself to do what was right. Our Chazal bring to light, that the last days of our lives are extremely important: "Whoever does Viduy (confession) has a portion in Olam Haba". And Viduy is not an easy thing for a person who is dying. I would just like to give a special Yasher Koach to my nephew Elie who



took upon himself the challenge to say to my father at the end of his life, "Pappa Chait, do you want to do Viduy?" And my father said, "Yes". And he was so weak, and it was hard for him to talk. But every word of Viduy came out of his mouth, and those were probably the last complete sentences he said in this world. "Whoever does Viduy (confession) has a portion in Olam Haba".

Ramban points out in the concept of Olam Haba, explaining a mitzvah that is a little difficult to understand. A person is not permitted to pull out his hair or scratch himself [make cuts] as an expression of mourning. Many Mefarshim (commentators) wonder what really is the prohibition; what can be so terrible? Of course there are a variety of answers that are given, but the Ramban is not satisfied with most of them, and gives an interesting insight. The problem with this prohibition is [that it is] contrary to the basic fundamental of Yahadus, of Judaism. Because we know that when a person dies, he has not terminated his life: his neshama, his soul lives on. He is zocheh (meritorious) to Olam Haba. Therefore, Chazal were against the concept of mourning more than necessary. This seems to say the person is gone; he is finished. But this is not true. The Ramban says that crying, "bechi", is permitted. Why? Because this is a natural instinct. When two close friends depart, frequently, they cry. They miss each other. And when a parent will see a child off, he will cry: be it a short visit [away from home], or

a long journey. This is because he misses the character of that child. And therefore, crying is permitted. Crying is an expression of what we cherish. We cherish what the person stood for. We appreciate what the person represented. And that, we miss.

So today, we are mourning for my father, we are expressing tears of Bechi. That's why I cherish all that my brothers have mentioned about him, his attributes. I cherish his sincerity; I cherish his appreciation of Torah and of a logical svara. ■

This ends the eulogies transcribed. The eulogies continued, but sadly, time restricts transcribing all who spoke. Rabbi Pesach Krohn spoke next, of his Rebbe, Rabbi Aryeh Leb Chait, "his father" as he called him... as having the ability to make all feel special and uniquely priceless. He shed many tears as he delivered his thoughtful eulogy, and talked about how close his family was with the Chait's. Rabbi Chait's grandson Elie addressed his grandfather as "the leader of leaders", as all of Rabbi Aryeh Leb's sons are great community leaders and Talmidei Chachamim. Elie mentioned how wonderfully his grandfather fulfilled the mitzvah to teach one's grandson. He also praised his grandfather as having the ability to do anything he desired, but that he chose Torah...that was the greatest thing in the world to his grandfather. Elie discussed how his grandmother would point out great people, and that they became what they were, only because of Rabbi Aryeh Leb. Elie mentioned that he meets people in the States and in Israel that tell him, "Your grandfather made me what I am today. He saved my life". Jay Bruckner, a grandson, spoke next and offered his memories of the niftar, speaking of Rav Aryeh Leb's great and unique character.

And Rabbi Aryeh Leb's brother Rav Yochanan spoke last, from the appreciation of a younger brother for his older, protective brother. He offered instances where Rabbi Aryeh Leb took up the cause of his younger brother: he made his brother Yochanan feel as though there was someone always there for him. Rav Yochanan shed meaningful tears as he expressed his feeling of obligation to recount his older brother's devotion and concern.

May hundreds's of thousands more individuals learn the true Derech Ha-Chaim from Rabbi Aryeh Leb Chait's example, and from his words, which will continually be transmitted by all who knew him: words that help all arrive at a deep Ahavas Hashem, love of God. ■



Rational Spending

YAAKOV TRACHTMAN

The Gemara (Beitzah 16a) says that between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur a person's sustenance is decided for the whole year, except for expenses related to Shabbos, Yom Tov and your children's Torah education.

Rashi learns that this Gemara is teaching appropriate spending habits. He explains that your income is predetermined to sustain yourself. Therefore, if you overspend, you will not receive more in order to pay for your needs.

A person might think that since God is kind to his creatures there is no problem with overspending, since God will take care of him. The Gemara is dispelling this notion. It is telling us that the vehicle that God uses to satisfy our needs is His providing us with the means to satisfy our own needs...when we guide ourselves using wisdom. The Gemara does not mean that a person is guaranteed a certain specific quantity of income on Rosh Hashanah, which he will receive no matter what. Rashi never says that you won't receive less, but that you won't receive more. It means that whatever income a person is worthy of, he will receive. However he cannot assume that it will come continuously throughout his life. It may be God's will that he will receive a large amount of money at one point in order to support himself for months. Therefore he should not spend money just because he has it.

The Gemara then discusses the philosophical mistake such a person is making. It mentions the source for this idea. The verse in Tehilim (81:4-5) says that a person's "Chok" is decided on Rosh

Hashanah. It interprets "Chok" as meaning sustenance. There are 2 sources for this interpretation.

One source is the Bereishis (47:22) where it describes how the Egyptian Priests would eat from their allotted portion (Chukam) given to them by Pharaoh. According to this the reason God sustains man by giving him more than he needs at one point, while demanding that it not be spent at once. It is to make man realize that God is the source of wealth, and the mere fact that I have money does not give me the right to spend it indiscriminately. Just like the Priests of Egypt: we must recognize that our money is an allotted portion from God, and not the result of our own greatness.

The second source is Mishlei (30:8) "Don't make me poor nor rich, but feed me my allotted bread ("Lechem Chuki")." Man has certain needs (both physical and psychological), which must be satisfied. To accommodate those needs God provides a certain income. A person should view his finances as a means towards perfection. If he is poor he will be practically prevented from pursuing perfection. However, he should not desire riches since once his needs are satisfied there is no purpose to greater wealth. In order to teach this lesson, God provides for man in a way that forces his use of his wisdom. He is forced to recognize that money should be spent intelligently. That after the basic spending, money has no purpose and should be saved for future needs.

Money spent for Shabbos and Yom Tov are

outside of this system. There the money is being spent on perfection. Spending for Shabbos and Yom Tov is to constantly keep creation (Shabbos) and divine providence (Yom Tov) at heart. When a person spends money on these things, it is because it is an appropriate expense. Rashi emphasizes this by saying that you will "receive enough to cover these expenses either before or after". In other words you are spending since it is perfection, not because money is "burning a hole in your pocket. (Also to remind us that we don't know the particulars of how divine providence works, Rashi tells us that the particulars of where it comes from are unimportant). Spending is especially important for these Mitzvos since it keeps a person constantly involved in the ideas of Shabbos and Yom Tov. Even during the week he is forced to think about those days since there is constant preparation. To the extent that a person is involved in these ideas will be the extent to which he merits special divine assistance.

Of course this guarantee is only for a person who is spending it with the intent of Shabbos and Yom Tov. If however a person decides to show off by having extravagant Shabbos meal when guests come that isn't being spent on Shabbos; but rather on the self.

Children's education is also an unlimited expense. Any expenses are not for the self but rather to guarantee that the Torah's transmission should not be lost. A person whose interest is in the Mesorah, merits divine assistance, in accordance to the extent of his involvement.

Again, if a person pays for his children's schooling in order to get an ego boost then he won't be compensated, since he is not spending money on his child's education, but on his own ego.

In summary I want to point out a modern application of these ideas. These mistakes are rampant in American society. People spend all of their money without saving for the future (in many cases even spending more than they have). Their philosophy is that money should be spent because it is there. They deny that income is a gift from God, which must be used responsibly...preferring to take credit for it and assuming that purchasing everything you desire is an "unalienable right". Furthermore, their society is completely materialistic: viewing wealth as end in and of itself instead of a means. Since we live in this society we must be especially vigilant to remember these ideas. ■

Yaakov Trachtman authors the blog
<http://www.maimonides.info>

Letters



Letters

from our

READERS



yours. But when you show him why his recklessness will place him in prison, hurt people, etc. he will abandon his view, and more readily accept your view....and that's what this is all about: getting others to accept truth. ■

The Depth of the Rabbis

Two points regarding the words of Chazal; 1) we all must realize they did not address simple matters, and, 2) the sages wrote in "riddles". (Proverbs, 1:5) Avraham ben ha-Rambam also states this in his intro to Ain Yaakov. Study his words.

And these two points are related. For Chazal wrote important matters in riddles, like Shadim for example. Why do they say that Shadim appear only in 4 places; desserts, mountain tops, caves, and at night? Why is Chazal's advice regarding Shadim...simply that one should not "offer the greetings"? These are generous clues for unraveling this phenomenon, cloaked in riddles. See my thoughts here: <http://www.mesora.org/shadim.html>

If we appreciate that our perception of Einstein's relativity theories are beyond us, we must similarly view Chazal in this light, and not offer simplistic explanations for their words, certainly when we lack the hours, days and weeks required to unlock their wisdom. I have personally and thankfully seen insights into Chazal, only because I spent many hours pondering their words, coming back to difficulties, and examining their words with meticulous care. Then, all their words that seem as unrelated and confusing statements...came together like a perfect puzzle, revealing a beautiful message.

If Chazal speak, they have much to tell us. If you think you have grasped their words after a single reading, or on the literal level, you have not. Chazal say this themselves. Therefore, follow their directions, and study them deeply; be bothered by their "apparent" inconsistencies, and remain bothered until you clear up every one of their points. Otherwise, you have missed their entire message.

Shlomo ha-Melech said Chazal spoke in riddles, as did he throughout Proverbs.

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim ■



Perfection: Torah vs. Science

Reader: Hello, I have a question. I know that the goal of our lives is perfection of the soul, and that the study of Torah is the best way to achieve this goal. But in what way is the study of Torah better than studying various branches of science, like physics, biology, quantum mechanics and various others that similar to Torah, sharpen and develop our intellect?

Thank you, A reader

Mesora: Very good question. In his Mishneh Torah, Maimonides actually states that to reach love of God, one should study creation. In his Sefer Ha-Mitzvos, he says the path must also include Torah. I have yet to arrive at an explanation for this discrepancy. However, your question seeks the reason why Torah study surpasses natural sciences insofar as perfecting man. That is a different issue than how we reach the love of God. Love of God is the goal, while human perfection is a process, and you asked about which "way" (method) best facilitates the goal.

The Torah is written in a distinct style, unlike the free research of an untrained mind, or the factual approach of science books. Following this Divinely orchestrated style of Torah verses and chapters, God leads our minds to primary and peripheral knowledge; He trains us how to think by the structure of His verses. Many skills like induction, deduction and an array of other thinking processes are fine-tuned through Torah. He focuses us on human perfection through the examples of His patriarch and matriarchs. Each verse when studied, reveals deeper knowledge from the initial "inconsistencies"; subtle nuances grow into "apparent" contradictions that yield vaults of wisdom when resolved. This knowledge is not obtained when studying nature; this training of the mind is not achieved in science books, which only Torah's structure and its precisely woven tapestry offers. And this appreciation is only realized through the study of Torah under a trained scholar. ■

Method

Gabi: Do you think its better to first break down a bad idea and then give the good idea, or just give the good idea and hope they would see the truth as more sound than their flawed ideas? Just wondering what your thoughts are on this.

Mesora: You must break down their idea first, so their minds are completely clear to accept the idea you will present. But if you do not break down their fallacy, and simply tell them your view, they may not accept your position - even if proven - since they have an emotional tie to their previous notion.

If someone was driving recklessly, and you just told him how to drive properly, he may not accept you, since now he simply has "another" option, but doesn't see his option as worse than

Letters

Predetermined Wealth?

Daybo: There is a common belief in Judaism that everything is predetermined from rosh hashana (wealth, deaths, injuries...) "God stamps his book of judgement on rosh hashana." Where did this belief originate from? Doesn't this go against free will?

Mesora: Daybo, The source is Talmud Betza, 16a, the very first words. What God decrees is only our monetary sustenance, but not our free will.

Beth: Rabbi, it seems to me that - no matter how much or how little we choose to work - our monetary income has been predetermined. Is this a correct understanding of what you wrote? If not, please explain again? Thank you.

Mesora: Correct.

Micah: If this is so, why shouldn't we all quit our jobs and study Torah full time?

Mesora: One may not rely on miracles: we must work. The Torah always says this, and never says otherwise. So the one who chooses not to work since "all has been decided" ...may find out that what has been decided for HIM, is nothing! Micah, a more primary reason to work is not derived from rules of providence, but rather, from God's will (design) that man work.

Micah: So if someone inherited millions you would advise working in order to fulfill God's will instead of spending all of his time studying Torah?

Mesora: See Duties of the Heart on the 2 purposes of work:

1) to remove one from sin (free time leads to emotional impulse)

2) to allow one to express his true value system, as he treats others in his monetary and ethical/moral pursuits, he can finally be judged by his underlying value system.

But your conclusion that a millionaire should continue working does not follow from my previous points. Work is to provide for one's needs, and once obtained, it is no longer a value...aside from "Duties" above.

Micah: The Chovos Halevavos also says that one who is perfected does not have these 2 reasons applied to him.



Mesora: Agreed. But to clarify, if I understand your original question, it is this: if each man's income is predetermined as the Talmud states in Beitzah, he will make that income, regardless of his actions. The question is that if one does not work, how can any income come about? But your question is based on an "assumed" income. However, we do NOT know what God has determined for us. So if one decides to stay at home all year and not work, under the assumption that God has determined let's say \$50,000 for that year, he is wrong. If he does not work, God knew this, and He does not alter natural law, that money should now fall through his ceiling.

It is this false assumption that money will in fact come our way, that produces the question of how we can make money if we sit at home...since all is predetermined.

What we must do is work with natural law: only if I work will I earn. But how much we earn is determined by God, and we don't know what it is. It is futile to guess that "God allotted \$X.00 for me this year...so I will stop working altogether", or midway through the year.

Micah: Rabbi, we know that God judges a person "Ba-asher hu sham", that is, at his/her level of perfection or corruption...at the time. And in our case, this refers to Rosh Hashannah. Therefore, after Rosh Hashanah when my fate has been decreed, it makes no difference if I work or not...my monetary income has been decided.

Mesora: Although a decree has been made, Talmud Rosh Hashanah 17b-18a discusses whether God will alter a decree, or distribute what has been decreed differently. The Talmud states that God will allot much rain for the nation if they are righteous at New Years. If they subsequently sin, the Talmud states that although the decree cannot be abolished, God will make the rain fall in unneeded areas and times, as a punishment. So although X amount of rain was decided, and won't be changed, God will alter its "distribution", not its "allotment", so as to address the new sinful level of the nation. Conversely, if the Jews were sinful at New Years and minimal rain was allotted, but the Jews repented, the decree again will not be abolished, but, God distributes that rain in a manner that best benefits the Jews, unlike His plan at the year's commencement when the Jews were sinful.

Then the Talmud asks why God won't simply abolish the former decree, in light of the altered state of the nation. Why can't God change a decree? The Talmud answers that in this case, it is unnecessary. Implying that a decree "can" be changed, but wasn't warranted in this case. The Talmud continues on 18a where it appears that there is a dispute whether God will alter the decree for individuals, as He does for the nation. Study the area, since there are many opinions. I am simply informing you that there are views on both sides of the opinion regarding God's rescinding of decrees, and how this is applied to both the individual, and to the nation. ■

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**American to save Israeli Solider:
How you can partake in this Mitzvah**



This summer a 19 year-old Israeli Solider will get a new lease on life due to a selfless gift from Yosef Chiger, of Harrisburg Pennsylvania. Ayelet Katz, of Moshav Be'er Tuvia had been stationed in Tel Nof Air Force Base, where she worked as an assistant to the head of human resources, until she was forced to leave the IDF because of kidney failure and begin fulltime dialysis. Often Israelis in need of kidney transplants wait for years because of the shortage of organs; however with the help of the Halachic Organ Donor Society (HODS) Ayelet will be fortunate to receive an altruistic donation that will allow her to resume a healthy life in a matter of months. Chiger, married and the father of a five-year old daughter, will be traveling to Israel to donate his kidney and thereby giving Ayelet the ability to resume a full and healthy life. It was especially significant to Chiger that she is an Israeli and a solider, and that the transplant means that she will have a long productive life ahead of her.

The transplant is being facilitated by the Halachic Organ Donor Society, which facilitates altruistic kidney donations and educates Jews about organ donation and halacha.

HODS is raising \$15,000 to bring Chiger and his family to Israel. Contributions can sent to the HOD Society at 49 West 45th Street, 10th Floor, New York, NY or via their website at www.hods.org.