



**Daf
Hashavua**

7 September 2019

Shabbat ends

7 Elul 5779

London 8.22pm
Jerusalem 7.33pm

Volume 31
No. 53

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In loving memory of Malka bat Peretz



“Who is the man who has built a new house and has not inaugurated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will inaugurate it” (Devarim 20:5).

Sidrah Summary: Shoftim

1st Aliya (Kohen) – Devarim 16:18-17:13

Judges and officers must be appointed in all cities (Rashi). Judges must endeavour to avoid showing favour to any litigant. One may not erect (even) a single stone for worship, even to worship God. It is forbidden to bring a blemished animal as an offering. Idol worship is subject to capital punishment. If a halachic question or dispute cannot be resolved by local courts, the case should be taken to the Kohanim in the Temple.

2nd Aliya (Levi) – 17:14-20

When the nation comes into the Land, they have the right to request a king. That king has to be appointed by God (through a prophet) and must be Jewish. The king must not return the people to Egypt in order for him to acquire horses (where many were available and a symbol of prestige). He must also avoid having multiple wives and amassing too much wealth. He is obligated to have his own Sefer Torah, from which he must read daily.

3rd Aliya (Shlishi) – 18:1:5

The tribe of Levi does not get a portion in the Land, unlike the other tribes. However, the Kohanim are to be given parts of certain Temple offerings to eat. They are also to receive the first tithe of the produce of fruits grown in the Land (*terumah gedolah*), as well as the first shearing of the flock (*reishit ha'gez*).

4th Aliya (Revi'i) – 18:6-13

The Kohanim are to be split into different groups, who will rotate performing duties in the Temple. The right to eat designated parts of regular offerings is reserved for whichever group of Kohanim is serving in the Temple that week (see Rashi). After coming into the Land, the nation must avoid the ways of the Canaanite nations, especially their various forms of witchcraft, divinations and sorcery.

5th Aliya (Chamishi) – 18:14-19:13

Moshe tells the people that they will have prophets who will guide them and convey God's messages. A prophet's legitimacy will be tested by whether his prophecies materialise or not. Moshe gives instructions regarding the establishment of three cities of refuge (in addition to the three on the east bank of the Jordan River – see Devarim 4:41-43). These cities are to

provide refuge for a person who has killed accidentally and is fleeing from the relatives of the deceased. Instructions are given about what constitutes 'accidental' and how the community must endeavour to protect the accidental killer from those who are pursuing him. In Messianic times, another three cities will be added (Rashi).

6th Aliya (Shishi) – 19:14-20:9

One must not tamper with someone else's land boundary. Court cases are determined by the testimony of a minimum of two witnesses. The laws of conspiring witnesses (*edim zomemim*) are detailed, in which a second set of witnesses accuses the first set of having been unqualified to give their testimony, since they could not have been at the scene of the incident, due to their being elsewhere (Rashi). When the nation goes out to war, they must not fear the enemy, however mighty they may seem. Before battle commences, a Kohen is to encourage the people, reminding them that God is protecting them. Certain people are sent home from the battlefield before war commences (see p.3 article).

Question: *What is the Hebrew term used for tampering with someone's boundary? (19:14) Answer on pg.6.*

7th Aliya (Shevi'i) – 20:10-21:9

Before the nation goes to war, it must offer its enemy the opportunity to make peace. However, in the initial conquest of the Land from the Canaanite nations, their cities and inhabitants must be destroyed (Rashi). If a corpse is found between two cities and it is unclear who is responsible for the death, the elders of the city nearest to the location of the corpse must take a heifer and behead it in a valley, after which the Kohanim shall ask God for atonement on behalf of the elders (Rashi).

Point to Consider: *Why were the elders of the nearest city considered responsible for the death? (see Rashi to 21:7)*

Haftarah

Taken from the book of Yeshaya, this is the third of the seven 'haftarot of consolation' read after Tisha B'Av. Yeshaya tells the people that they may have suffered punishment, but they can 'awaken' themselves and emerge from their captivity. God is constantly ready to redeem the nation if they turn to Him.



United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

Produced by US Living & Learning together with the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue

Editor: Rabbi Chaim Gross **Editor-in-Chief:** Rabbi Baruch Davis

Editorial and Production Team: Rabbi Daniel Sturgess, Rabbi Michael Laitner, Joanna Rose

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Inauguration and Dedication

by Rabbi Daniel Roselaar, Alei Tzion United Synagogue



In advance of entering the Promised Land, it was clear to the Israelites that battles with their neighbours would be an inevitable part of their existence. The censuses of the people that were carried out whilst they travelled

through the wilderness regarded every male over the age of 20 as being eligible for military service. Yet this week's sidrah states that there were certain groups of people who were exempt from military service, though in most instances they still had to contribute to the war-effort with some form of national service. Amongst those people was someone who had "built a new home but not yet inaugurated it" (Devarim 20:5).

According to Rashi (1040-1105), there is nothing remarkable about the use of the word "inaugurated". It is simply the verb that describes the first use of a new home. Yet according to other commentators, describing the first use of a house as an inauguration is a very significant use of language. The Torah could have made reference to a person who has not yet *lived* in their new house, or has not yet *moved* into their new home; it could even have referred to a person who has not yet spilled something on the carpet!

Instead the Torah uses the Hebrew word *chanacho* (חנכו) with the root letters *chet-nun-kaf* (ח-נ-כ), which is related to the word *chanukah*, which means dedication. This indicates that a house or a home must be more than just a place for people to live. Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch (1808-1888) writes that the use of this word indicates that a home must be elevated from its purely functional purpose and be dedicated to a higher moral and spiritual plane. Indeed, it is noteworthy that in all the other instances that this verb is used in the

Tanach (Hebrew Bible), it is in the context of the dedication and inauguration of the Temple or the altar.

Typically, people want their homes to be pleasant environments that will be comfortable and easy to live in. They invest money and effort to ensure that the facilities, utilities and furnishings are the best that they can afford. The external appearance is often just as important to them as the inner essence of the home. The sages of the Talmud recognised this phenomenon and said that a nice home with tasteful furnishings is amongst the things that enhance a person's emotional wellbeing (Berachot 57b).

Yet it is equally important, if not more so, to ensure that the homes that we build are dedicated to something more than just material comfort and convenience. A home which has been dedicated, in the sense of the word *chanacho* as it appears in this week's sidrah, is one where Torah learning, mitzvah observance and kindness to others, combined with an aspiration for spiritual growth, are all high on the agenda.



Jewish Contemporary Ethics Part 41: Medical Ethics 3 – Saving Others II: Organ Donation

by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman, New West End Synagogue



Live organ donation, for example when a healthy person donates one of their kidneys to save someone else, is considered an act of phenomenal *chesed* – loving-kindness. Yet the ethical issues regarding the donation of vital organs, such as the heart and lungs, harvested after the death of the donor, depend on the definitions of death in medical practice and Jewish law.

In previous generations, death was exclusively determined by an irreversible cessation in cardiopulmonary activity (i.e. the activities of the heart and lungs). Yet the phenomenal advancement of medical science has not only given clinicians new resuscitative techniques and the ability to artificially ventilate patients, it has also produced a range of tools to evaluate and quantify physiological measurements, such as the electrical activity and blood flow in the brain. As such, patients can be kept alive artificially even though doctors know that they have experienced an irreversible cessation of critical brain functions, known as brain death or brainstem death.

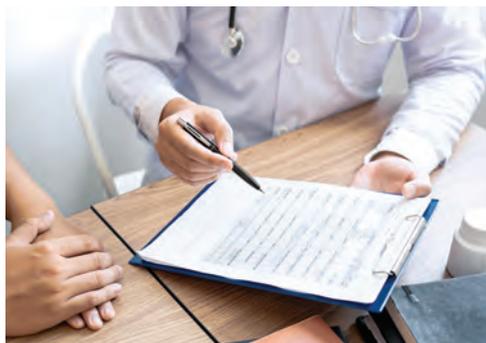
Rabbi Professor J. David Bleich (of Yeshiva University, NY) notes that “death is the term employed for the physiological state in which any further attempt to provide medical or physical assistance of any kind is an exercise in futility” (*Time of Death in Jewish Law*, p. 87). The sages of the Talmud discuss saving the victim of a collapsed building on Shabbat (Yoma 85a). Many later authorities, such as Rabbi Shmuel Wosner (1913-2015) refer to this discussion as the source that breathing and cardiac activity are the necessary signs of life.

Elsewhere, the Mishnah discusses the concept of decapitation as a sign of certain death, even though the remaining body may convulse and show signs of continuing life (Ohalot 1:6). Rabbi Dr. Moshe Tendler (also of Yeshiva University)

cites halachic rulings of his late father-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1985), in which he links the concept of decapitation to brainstem death, implying that brainstem death can be considered a halachic definition of death. Others, such as Rabbi Bleich, disagree, pointing out that in other areas of halacha, the cessation of function in an organ is not halachically equivalent to that organ being physically separated from the body (*Contemporary Halakhic Problems IV*, pp. 322-333).

This has far-reaching implications, for while vital organs can be successfully harvested after brainstem death, if the patient’s heart has stopped, the organs quickly deteriorate, making them unfit for transplantation. God allows us to violate any commandment to save another person’s life, except for the three primary sins of idol worship, immorality and murder (Talmud Sanhedrin 74a). If brainstem death does not constitute a halachic definition of death, harvesting those organs would be akin to murder in Jewish law, and therefore forbidden even to save the life of another patient.

Given the shortage of potential organ donors and the many worthy recipients waiting endlessly for life saving treatment, these difficult ethical and halachic issues provoke intense emotion. Let us hope and pray that the remarkable medical advances we have witnessed bring about a technological solution to our global organ transplant crisis.



The History of Jewish Philosophy: Part 4 – Rabbi Yehuda Halevi and the Khazarian Debate

by Rabbi Chaim Burman, US Rabbinic Fellow



Although Rabbi Yehuda Halevi (c. 1075-1141) spent much of his life in Spain and travelled widely, there is one theme which pervades his poetry and philosophical work: an intense yearning for the Land of Israel. These

sentiments were immortalised in one particularly striking poem, where he states: “My heart is in the East whilst I am far in the West”. Like the Rambam (Maimonides 1135-1204), Rabbi Halevi was a physician of international acclaim. Yet in his later years, at the peak of his fame and wealth, he decided that he could wait no longer and attempted to journey to Israel. After numerous failed attempts, he finally reached Akko (Acre). He died only two months later, in July 1141.

Rabbi Halevi’s most significant work is the *Sefer Ha-Kuzari* (Book of the Khazarian). This book is a reconstruction of a debate that apparently occurred in the 8th century kingdom of the Khazars of the Volga Basin (present-day Russia). The account complements the historic evidence that King Bulan of the Finno-Ugrian Khazar people converted to Judaism, along with many of his courtiers and, according to some, the general population too. Judaism remained the state religion of this Slavic people for centuries until they were invaded by the Tartars in 1237. Archaeologists and scholars have collected evidence of the people’s conversion to Judaism, such as a select number of contemporary travel accounts and correspondences found in the Cairo *geniza* (a collection of over 300,000 manuscript fragments that were found in the storeroom of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat, Egypt), coinage with Hebrew writing and fragments of Talmudic laws found in Khazarian legislation.

Rabbi Halevi reconstructed the debate to act as the mouthpiece for his influential philosophy of Judaism. It all starts when the king has a recurring dream, in which an angel comes to

him and rebukes him: “Your intentions are good, but your actions are not!” The king is troubled by this because he wants to do the right thing, but is apparently falling short. He summons a variety of wise men to advise him on what the correct course of action might be.

The king invites a philosopher, a Christian and an Islamic scholar to present the case for the veracity of their religions. The king quickly concludes that these faith-claims are insufficient. Finally, and reluctantly, he calls in a Jewish sage, convinced that he will have little helpful advice.

The Jewish sage chooses an entirely different route. He begins by telling the king about the roots of the Jewish people with Avraham. Frustrated, the king now knows that his suspicions were correct – the Jew has little to bring to the table. The Jewish sage, however, proceeds to explain that the Jewish faith is not based upon philosophical speculation but the experience of our ancestors. We have an unbroken chain of transmission that links us to God’s national revelation at Sinai and the outstanding forefathers that preceded that. That is how we know about Torah.



(continued on page 6)

The History of Jewish Philosophy: Part 4 (continued from page 5)

The king is intrigued by this approach, which catches him off-guard. The rest of the book is a dialogue between the two men and covers a vast array of issues. There are discussions about practical Judaism, prophesy, *kabbalah* and the Land of Israel, alongside topics of natural philosophy, cosmology and astronomy. Rabbi Halevi utilises this forum to explore some of the essential issues of Judaism.

It is no coincidence that Rabbi Halevi chose to write his philosophy as a debate between the major religions of his time. By doing so, he was able to present the justification for Judaism in the wider context of other world belief systems. Throughout the work, he deals with the thought of the Karaites, a small Jewish sect that emerged in the 9th century and denied the validity of the Oral Torah. Centuries later, in his *Kuzari Sheni* (Second Book of the Khazars), Rabbi David Nieto

(1854-1728), rabbi of the Spanish-Portuguese community in London, revisited many of these themes.

A recurring theme in Rabbi Halevi's *Kuzari's* writings is his ambivalence towards philosophical speculation. The Jewish sage teaches the king that mankind's ability to discern Divine truths with human (and therefore, limited) reason is inherently flawed. How can human beings, who have only ever experienced the physical, hope to comprehend the Divine, without some kind of assistance? Indeed, argues the sage, one reason that God revealed himself at Sinai was in order that we should experience Him in a real and immanent way. Whatever God reveals to us, we can know with certainty. For Rabbi Halevi, philosophy and rational extrapolation are useful tools for working out how to live, but only once basic and foundational axioms are in place.

An Introduction to South American Jewry Part 4: Jewish Resettlement in England, 1655 – Parallel Events

by Dayan Elimelech Vanzetta, Rabbinical and Halachic Administrator for US Burial, Lecturer for US in the City



In the previous article, we noted that when the Dutch invaded Brazil in 1635, they granted religious freedom to the Jews. A parallel phenomenon soon happened in England, from where Jews had been expelled in 1290.

In the 1650s, Menasseh ben Israel, a rabbi and leader of the Dutch Jewish community, approached Oliver Cromwell with the proposition that Jews should at long last be readmitted.

Cromwell agreed to the request. Although he could not compel a council called for the purpose in December 1655 to formally consent to readmission, he made it clear that the ban on Jews would no longer be enforced.

In the years 1655–56, the controversy over the readmission of Jews was fought in a pamphlet war. The Puritan, William Prynne, was vehemently opposed to permitting Jews to return. On the other hand, leading Quaker, Margaret Fell, was passionately in favour of readmission, as was John Wemyss, a minister in the Church of Scotland. In the end, Jews were readmitted; by 1690, about 400 Jews had settled in England.



Menasseh ben Israel

Answer: *hasagat gevul*

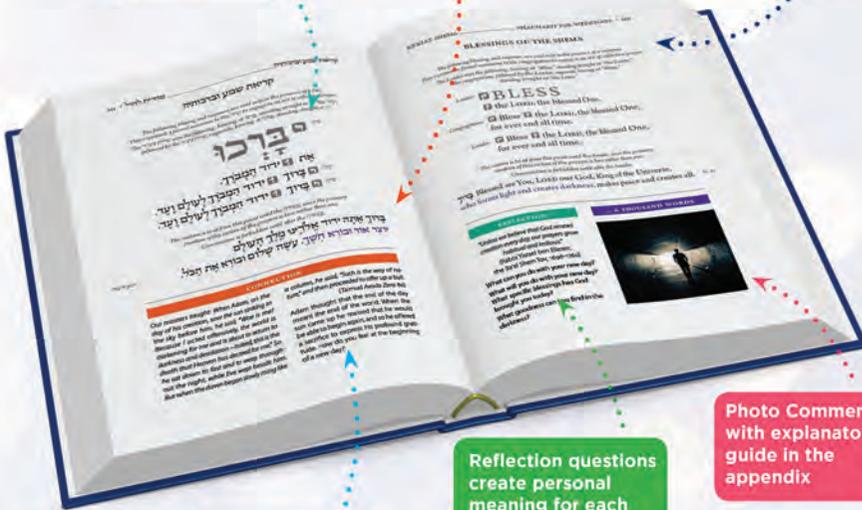
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PREPARATION? WE'RE ALL READY, SCHOOL'S STARTED.

OH! THAT KIND OF PREPARATION. LIKE THINKING ABOUT THE YEAR BEHIND US AND HOW WE CAN MAKE THE COMING YEAR EVEN BETTER. AND DON'T WE BLOW THE **SHOFAR**?

SHO-FAR, SHO GOOD! WE BLOW THE **SHOFAR** EVERY WEEKDAY MORNING OF **ELUL** AS A WAKE-UP CALL THAT GOD IS APPROACHING. REMEMBER **ROSH HASHANA** LAST YEAR WHEN WE BLEW A SUPERHERO **TEKIA GEDOLA!** IT WAS NEARLY AN HOUR!! BEAT THAT THIS YEAR... GOD HAS INVITED US TO BE PART OF SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL - **ROSH HASHANAH AND YOM KIPPUR.** **ELUL** IS OUR OPPORTUNITY TO PREPARE FOR THE EVENTS SO THAT WE CAN SHOW UP AT OUR BEST!

EVER TRIED TO RUN UP A DOWN ESCALATOR? IF YOU STOP FOR A SECOND, YOU GO STRAIGHT DOWN. YOU'VE GOT TO KEEP AT IT, JUST TO STAY IN THE SAME PLACE AND ZOOM TO ACTUALLY GET UP.

THE HEBREW WORD **ELUL** אלוּל IS AN ACRONYM FOR 'I AM FOR MY BELOVED, AND MY BELOVED IS FOR ME.' DON'T STRESS OUT FROM THE EFFORT, GOD LOVES US AND IS WAITING FOR US TO COME CLOSE!

LIFE IS A BIT LIKE THAT ESCALATOR. WE ALWAYS AIM FOR UP, BUT WHEN WE STOP WORKING, INSTEAD OF STAYING STILL, WE FALL DOWN! **ELUL** IS A TIME TO KEEP PUSHING UP THE ESCALATOR, RIGHT TO THE TOP!

WE'RE INVITED - LET'S GO!

Page Editor: Rabbi Nicky Goldmeier - Writers: Shira Chalk - Cartoonist: Paul Solomons



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