



HEMDAT YAMIM

Parashat Hashavua

Vayechi, 18 Tevet 5784

Harav Shaul Israeli zt"l
Founder and President

The Eternal Significance of Mutual Responsibility

Harav Yosef Carmel

We explained last time that Yehuda's acceptance of responsibility for his mistakes and for his brother made him deserving of the blessing comparing him to a lion and fit for leadership for him and his descendants. Like Yehuda, David also needed to repent for his mistakes and correct his lacking in mutual responsibility (*arvut*) in order to deserve to be the eternal King of Israel (see Rosh Hashana 25a).

David had a problem with **erev** (evening, sharing a root with **arev**, a guarantor). The story of his sin with Batsheva mentions *erev* twice, once, when he saw Batsheva on her rooftop, and again when David hosted Uriya (Batsheva's husband) until nighttime, when Uriya refused to sleep at home (see Shmuel II, 11:1-2,13). David was forgiven only when he fully admitted guilt, at which time the *navi* told him that Hashem **he'evir** (removed, using same root) his sin.

The Malbim usually looks for merit in David's actions. However, in this section, he is critical of David for lacking in *arvut* in the following way. David's troops were in an extended war with Ammon, and David, the great warrior, stayed in his palace this time rather than joining them, as a Jewish king should do. The Malbim invokes the words of Moshe Rabbeinu to the two and a half tribes: "Will your brothers go to war, and you will stay here?" (Bamidbar 32:6). This complaint echoes throughout history to this day.

In halachic contexts, *arvut* works in two directions. On the one hand, even if only part of the nation sins, the whole nation can be punished. We learn from the *pasuk* "A man will stumble over his brother," which the *gemara* explains as people being punished for the sins of others, that each person is a guarantor for the other (Sanhedrin 27b).

On the other hand, one Jew can perform a *mitzva* to help another Jew fulfill it. Although one needs to be obligated in a *mitzva* to do if for someone else, even if one already fulfilled his *mitzva*, we say that he is considered obligated in the *mitzva* if his friend, for whom he is responsible, has not yet fulfilled it. This too is based on *arvut* (see Ran to Rosh Hashana 29a). We learn great lessons from the *halachot* on "both sides of the coin."

Rabbeinu Bachyei (Shemot 30:34) went a step further. *Chazal* (Kritot 6b) say that whenever Jews bind together, they must include sinners. He explains that the righteous must include sinners and try to inspire them and enable them to repent and sanctify Hashem's Name. If they do not, *arvut* holds them responsible. That is the reason that all the four species taken on Sukkot, symbolizing people of various levels of spirituality and observance, are held together.

The Tiferet Shlomo expounds that Yehuda represents monarchy, and this position is all about *arvut*. For this reason, Yaakov instituted the prayer of **Arvit**. When we talk about a *kol arev* (pleasant voice), this means that the sound of our prayers will go up to the extent that we pray with *arvut*, with concern about others, not just ourselves.

These ideas give a sweet taste to the wonderful value of unity between Jews, of all types, and the responsibility of the leadership to lead in this matter. Let us internalize this matter and thereby be students of Yaakov and David.

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Ask the Rabbi

by Rav Daniel Mann

A Kohen Becoming Right-Handed

Question: I am a left-handed *kohen*. In anticipation of the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash*, realizing that a left-handed *kohen* cannot do *avoda* (service), I want to train myself to be right-handed. Is there anything I need to know?

Answer: Yours is a beautiful approach to our glorious national future and your *kehuna*, but I feel a need to flash a “yellow light” regarding your efforts to become right-handed (or ambidextrous).

A left-handed person may not do *avoda* (Bechorot 45b). The Rambam (Bi'at Hamikdash 8:11) categorizes him as a *ba'al mum* (blemished), by *kohen* standards. Rashi (Bechorot 45b) considers him lacking a “right hand,” which is needed for *avoda* (see Chazon Ish, Bechorot 26:13). We accept the opinion among *Tannaim* (Bechorot 45a) that an ambidextrous person is fit for *avoda* (Rambam *ibid.*). There is discussion of doing things to remove disqualifications (*ibid.*), and your idea might logically work. However, Eliyahu Hanavi or the like will make the decisions on if and how (e.g., which hand functions) training would help. I will not venture a guess on such a matter.

So “why not try?” My hesitation concerns your *tefillin* status. Presumably, you put your *tefillin shel yad* on your right arm (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 27:6), although some arguable lefties place *tefillin* on the left arm because they do many things with the left hand but some with the left. This depends on a *machloket* throughout millennia (see Menachot 37a; Shulchan Aruch *ibid.*; Be'ur Halacha *ad loc.*) on whether we follow strength, the ability to write, or some combination (see Living the Halachic Process, II:G-12).

Does learning how to use the other hand change the *halacha*? The Mordechai (Tefillin 969) brings a *machloket* about the arm upon which a righty who made his left hand dominant puts *tefillin*. The more accepted opinion is that he can switch his status (Mishna Berura 27:22). However, if he only changed to writing left-handed but continues to use his right hand for most activities, the Magen Avraham (27:10) rules that he remains a halachic righty because of two doubts – a. which function is more important?; b. does training change the *halacha*?

You are asking about a lefty who trains himself to be a righty. Rav Feinstein (Igrot Moshe, OC III:2) did not distinguish between the direction of the right-left switch and based on the Magen Avraham, posited that if a born lefty switched only his writing, he would retain his old status due to double doubt. Ha'elef Lecha Shlomo (I:11) says that the doubt about changing is countered by the fact that the standard person (including the ambidextrous) is considered a righty, and he would place *tefillin* on his left arm. Rav Frank (Har Tzvi, OC I:26) agreed in principle with Ha'elef Lecha Shlomo but was unhappy with a boy putting himself into even a single doubt (if writing or strength is more important). He also argued that to qualify even as ambidextrous, one must write with his right as well as with his left, which is difficult to learn. Therefore, he instructed a twelve-year-old who was training to write with his right hand to restore his left-handed dominance to remove doubt.

This background demonstrates that you will enter some doubt about your status after making the change. In fact, depending on what changes you make (writing's critical importance is probably unique to *tefillin* (see Menachot 37a), not *avoda*), your status could be unclear. Furthermore, **during** the transition process, there will certainly be times when you won't know which side of “the line” you are on. (There are rabbis who, in some cases, instruct to put on *tefillin* on both arms (at different times)). I would not **recommend** getting into such dilemmas without sufficient justification.

Whether we will build the *Beit Hamikdash* or it will descend intact from Above, people will need time to learn the intricacies of *avoda*. At that time, many may do a course on becoming a righty. We recommend funneling your beautiful dedication to **improving** right-hand usage, while remaining more proficient with your left hand temporarily.

“Behind the Scenes” Zoom shiur

Eretz Hemdah is offering the readership to join in [Rabbi Mann's weekly Zoom sessions](#), analyzing with him the sources and thought process behind past and future responses. Email us at info@eretzhemdah.org to sign up (free) or for more information on joining the group.

Do not hesitate to ask any question about Jewish life, Jewish tradition or Jewish law.

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Igrot HaRe'aya - Letters of Rav Kook

Excitement about Receiving a Sefer of Kabbala – #181

Date and Place: 29 Tevet 5669 (1909), Yafo

Recipient: Rav Shlomo Elyashov (Rav Kook used his name's Yiddish spelling; it is also pronounced Elyashiv). He was from and in Lithuania. Rav Elyashov, one of the greatest kabbalists of his era, wrote several *sefarim*, including Leshem Shvo V'achlama (he was often called "The Leshem"). Rav Kook and the Leshem enjoyed a long relationship. When Rav Kook was the rabbi in Biosk, Rav Elyashov taught him Kabbala. As we see here, the two continued a relationship at a distance. In 1922, Rav Elyashov moved to *Eretz Yisrael* with Rav Kook's help. Through his daughter, the Leshem was the grandfather of Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, the great Talmudist and leader, who, along with his parents, moved to *Eretz Yisrael* with the Leshem and adopted his last name.


Body: [The basic content of this letter is simple (thanks for receiving the author's sefer) and the flowery language (which I lowered and sometimes turned from third person to second person, for reading ease) and double meanings of some phrases makes this difficult to translate. The opportunity to focus on the interaction of the two great Kabbalists and friends is worth the effort.]

The house was filled with light, when the holy sefer (Hakdamot U'shearim), with the grandeur of the crown of his Torah's brilliance, came to my hands. I will not use the strength needed to withhold from the honor of the sanctity of my master, who is so dear to my soul, the emotion of my internal joy, from the light that was good (see Bereishit 1:4). I thank Hashem, Who shall show us His light and salvation, on the one hand by means of a clear sign of the End of Days (Sanhedrin 98a) – the settlement of the Desired Land. On the other hand, may He show us the proliferation of the internal light of the holy Torah (deep Kabbalistic ideas). The latter is more beloved.

At this time, as your holy book is still in my hand, I devoured several pages, even before the pages were bound, out of my great love of its sanctity. It was as sweet as honey in my mouth, may it and its taste be blessed. So too, may Hashem, Who adds on from the source of life to give people long life and years of goodness, good health, and wonderful light, add on these blessings to my dear and honored master, a good and long life. May you bring to fruition all that the spirit of Hashem that is within you shall strive for, and let these matters be elevated one rung after another, as they enter Hashem's sanctum and His portion, as the Chatam Sofer writes in his responsum (Yoreh Deah 233). If this is so for the straightforward ideas of the Torah, all the more so that this is true of holy Torah secrets.

My soul has such a strong desire to see the secrets of the holy manuscripts of his holy brilliance. If it would be possible to arrange for me that a scribe will copy your wonderful pamphlets, I would be joyously willing to pay all expenses, just so that I could receive the light beams earlier (before they are published), which would refresh my heart in this great Land.

My exhausting activities from bearing the burden of the Nation of Hashem who are in the process of returning [to the Land], may the Exalted one bless them, are great. Therefore, I am compelled to be brief in the place that my heart tells me to write at length. [Just the process of writing to you] allows me to gaze at the beauty of the glow of the honor and sanctity of your Torah in my imagination, as I concentrate on having my words reach opposite the light of the holy candelabrum of pure gold, referring to you, my honored master. Indeed, I have become intertwined with you with a divine bond, through the depths of the heart.



Tzofnat Yeshayahu - Rabbi Yosef Carmel

The Prophet Yeshayahu performed in one of the most stormy and dramatic periods of the Israeli nation's life, a period of anticipation for the Messiah that was broken by a terrible earthquake, and also caused a spiritual and political upheaval. The light at the end of the tunnel shone again only in the days of Chizkiyah.

"Tzofnat Yeshayahu – from Uziya to Ahaz" introduces us to three kings who stood at this crossroad in our nation's history: Uziya, a king who sought God but was stricken with leprosy because of his sin; Yotam, the most righteous king in the history of our people; And Ahaz, the king who knew God but did not believe in His providence.

In his commentary on the prophecies of Yeshayahu, Rabbi Yosef Carmel, Head of the Eretz Hemdah-Gazit rabbinical court and a disciple of Rabbi Shaul Israeli zt"l, clings to the words of Hazal, our sages, and to the commentaries of the Rishonim, the great Jewish scholars of the middle ages, and offers a fascinating way to study Tanach. This reading attempts to explain the Divine Plan in this difficult period and to clarify fundamental issues in faith. Tzofnat Yeshayahu reveals to the reader the meaning of the prophecies in the context of the prophet's generation and their relevance to our generation.

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P'ninat Mishpat

Various Issues Regarding a Printing Press – part I

(based on ruling 83038 of the Eretz Hemdah-Gazit Rabbinical Courts)

Case: The defendant (=def) made an arrangement to use the plaintiff's (=pl) printing operation, renting most of the space and machines. Def was responsible for expenses including municipal tax and *va'ad bayit* (upkeep along with the building's other businesses). Pl used his section for his printing press related work. In 2013, pl sold def a used printing press for 80,000 NIS. Recently, def left the premises and sold his business. Pl has different claims against def, [which we will present in installments]. Pl claims 16,400 NIS that def did not pay from the sale of the printing press. Def claims to be exempt because he can deduct the fact that he paid full municipal tax and *va'ad bayit* even though he rented only two thirds of the property.

Ruling: Since both sides agree on the outstanding payment on the printing press, but they disagree about the claims for deduction, def must substantiate the latter.

Written agreement – The sides presented *beit din* with four signed agreements from over the years. In three of them, the agreement's introduction defines the "*muskar*" (rental property) as pl's full hall. The third agreement, signed only by pl, mentions first that def is renting two thirds of the hall and then defines that area as the *muskar*. In all the contracts, it then says that def is responsible for the *muskar*'s various charges.

According to the majority opinion, since the first agreement clearly defines the whole hall as the *muskar*, we are to understand that def is responsible for the payments in full. Although the third contract's reading sounds like the *muskar* refers only to def's two thirds, it is not explicit enough to contradict the assumption that renewed agreements continue the original one. In addition, only pl signed the third agreement, which is an indication that it was not supposed to change the conditions. The minority opinion disagreed with this logic because when there is a change in the language (where it is easier to keep the same language), we can assume there was a purposeful change, and the fact that only pl signed does not mean that his signature is not an agreement to something to his detriment. However, this *dayan* agrees with the others that def has to pay the municipal tax because the relevant ordinance posits that the main person who uses the property (in this case, def) is responsible for paying municipal tax. Therefore, def had to pay the whole tax, and def does not deserve relief on payment.

The majority also learns that def agreed to pay all the side payments from the fact that he did not demand compensation for the alleged extra third until after the business connections ended and pl demanded def to pay the balance on the printing press. Additionally even when def made the claim, he only did so in regard to enough of the years for him to erase his own obligation. The minority opinion argues that there were also obligations that def had to pl that pl did not make claims on for many years, and that this can be explained by their close relationship at the time.

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