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ESTABLISHED BY RABBI HYMAN Z"L & ANN ARBESFELD

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Feature!

Our Responsibility For Our Fellow Jews



Dedicated by Elana & Josh Kahane in memory of Moish Kranzler



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Please treat it with appropriate respect.

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Dear Friends,

As we approach *zman matan Torateinu*, the theme of Jewish unity looms large over any discussion of the chag. The importance of *achdut* can be found among all of the Jewish holidays. We open our Pesach Seder with a call for anyone in need to join us, and we include all four types of sons in our discussions, regardless of their spiritual levels. On Rosh Hashana, we join together to proclaim Hakadosh Baruch Hu as our King, which is meaningless without true unity — *ein melech b'lo am*, a King can only be crowned by His nation. Continuing on, we open our holy Yom Kippur tefillot with a call to allow all to pray with us, even the sinners who may not be welcome the rest of the year. And on Sukkot, the Torah in Vayikra 23:42 describes the entire Jewish people sitting in Sukkot, from which the Gemara in *Sukkah* 27b derives that the whole nation can sit together in one sukkah. Finally, on Shemini Atzeret we are described as one nation among the nations of the world, unique and alone, when we dance in a circle around the Torah, showing how we are all equally close and connected to Hashem and His teaching.

Yet Shavuot is perhaps most associated with the importance of Jewish unity. We all know Rashi's famous comment in Shemot 19:2 on the phrase "*vayichan sham Yisrael neged hahar*" which is in singular form, denoting that the Jewish people were like one person with one heart. However, when one looks at that pasuk, the words preceding that part are "*Vayisu merifdim, vayavo'u midbar Sinai vayachanu bamidbar*" — all are phrases in the plural, even up to the encampment at the mountain. How are we meant to reconcile the beginning of the pasuk with Rashi's explanation of the end?

Perhaps this is the difference between unity and conformity. The greatness of the Jewish people at Har Sinai was not that they all thought and acted in unison but rather that despite their different attitudes and approaches, they still came together as one. Our Father in Heaven doesn't want us to all be clones, but rather to work together as one within the framework of our various personalities and values. We come together not because it suits our individual interests but because we have a sense of responsibility for every other Jew, despite our differences.

This is reflected in the contrast between the Egyptians as described by the banks of the Yam Suf as they were pursuing the Jewish people. The Torah records in Shemot 14:10 that the Mitzrim were chasing after the Jewish people, and Rashi famously comments "*b'lev echad, k'ish echad*, with one heart, like one person." Why does Rashi change the order of unity that he also uses for the Jewish people at Har Sinai but in reverse order, like one person with one heart? The Avnei Nezer explains that the Egyptians weren't inherently united; rather they came together with common cause, *b'lev echad*, and therefore they joined like one person. The Jewish people, however, are fundamentally different in their unity. It is not based on shared interests, or agreements on principles. Rather, it starts with *k'ish echad*, a fundamental unity that is not based on anything external. Having a shared purpose only follows after, *b'lev echad*.

The readership of Benjamin & Rose Berger Torah To-Go spans a diverse audience, with varying backgrounds, interests, and approaches to learning. In our commitment to serve this broad community, we strive to feature authors and topics that resonate with our diverse audience. For this Shavuot issue in particular, we have expanded our contributor base to include distinguished Torah personalities from Israel and the UK, alongside the rebbeim and faculty of Yeshiva University. We have also incorporated the Nasiach Bechukecha section, which invites readers directly into the YU Beis Medrash, encouraging everyone to engage with primary sources and develop their own meaningful insights. This diversity of voices and learning styles reflects our conviction that true Jewish unity celebrates our differences while binding us together through our shared commitment to Torah.

As always, we hope these divrei Torah and insights uplift your chag and help you gain a better understanding of the purpose and goals of the day. May we all experience our own personal Kabbalat HaTorah in the context of the national Kabbalat HaTorah of the entire Jewish people together at the foot of the mountain.



Remembering Moish Kranzler z”l

I first met Moish Kranzler when I was 16-years-old, sitting across the table from him in my admissions interview for Yeshiva College. I remember watching his eyes slowly scan my academic transcript, one that was filled with grades that slid far down the backside of the bell curve. The seconds of quiet seemed like hours, and with each passing moment, I slid lower and lower into my chair. But then Moish looked up. He closed my file folder, placing it gently on the desk in front of him. He smiled at me and with a warmth and sweetness that caught me completely by surprise, he said, “So, Josh, I’ve heard that you’re a special kid. Tell me something that I might not see here on this paper.” In a matter of a single moment, Moish turned my sense of shame into pride and my feeling of defeat into dignity. For ten minutes, we spoke, we laughed, and we played Jewish geography (a game at which he was the undisputed GOAT). And when our short time together that day ended, he stood up, thanked me for visiting with him, told me he looked forward to seeing me on campus, and then said, “I know that you are going to make all of us at YU very proud.” With those few simple words, Moish forever changed my life.

Over the next 20 years, I learned that my Moish Kranzler experience was not at all unique, for in fact, Moish had dedicated his life to seeing the uniqueness in each and every person. He opened the doors of Yeshiva University to thousands of young people from across the globe. And with his warmth, sincerity, encouragement, and kindness, he impacted the trajectory of our lives in ways that we can

never accurately or fully explain.

In my adult life, I had the distinct privilege of working closely with Moish on many communal and educational initiatives. Through these projects, I observed first-hand, his passion and insight, his wisdom and determination. Moish believed in the strength of unity, the power of kindness, and the beauty of community. He was a reliable partner, a valued confidante, and a dedicated friend.

Since Moish’s passing, I have been wondering who to call when someone needs help. I often find myself struggling to identify the right person to reach out to when a cause or issue needs attention. And while there will never be another Moish Kranzler, I have found comfort in the knowledge that the thousands upon thousands of Jewish lives who were springboarded by the “lift” Moish offered now stand as living legacies of his life and stewards of the causes he most valued. Moish’s memory will forever be etched in our collective hearts and a good portion of our successes will be an aliyah for his neshama.

May Hashem grant each of us the strength to carry on Moish’s legacy, and perhaps most importantly, to live the lives that will always make Moish proud.

To Faigy, Aliza and Shloimie, Yoni and Devon, Elisheva, and David, we extend our most heartfelt condolences-
הַמָּקוֹם יִנְחָם אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ שְׂאֵר אֲבְלֵי צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם

With profound respect,

Josh Kahane

Memphis, TN

Hearing Voices at Sinai: Living in the Plural

Receiving the Torah was a moment of divine revelation and human connection. When we stood at Sinai, we did so “*k’ish echad b’lev echad*”—as one person with one heart (Rashi on Shemot 19:2, citing *Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael*). That unity was not incidental—it was essential. Torah could not be given to individuals in isolation. It required a people bound to one another in responsibility and shared destiny.

The Gemara tells us that each person serves as a guarantor for the other: “*Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh*”—all of Israel is responsible for one another (*Shevuot* 39a). This idea, *arvut*, is not merely a moral nicety. It is the condition upon which revelation was possible. Divine truth cannot be housed in fragmented selves; it must live within a collective committed to compassion, accountability, and mutual care.

In a world that prizes autonomy and individual achievement, *arvut* asks

something countercultural of us. It demands that we see ourselves not only as individuals with private lives, but as part of a covenantal community where the well-being of the other is bound up with our own. It invites us to live in the plural—to hear not only our own voice at Sinai, but the echo of our neighbor’s.

Shavuot challenges us to see responsibility as expansive, not burdensome. To care is not to be weighed down—it is to be lifted by the knowledge that we do not stand alone. Just as the people of Israel carried each other through the wilderness, so too are we meant to carry each other through doubt, struggle, and joy.

In a time when the Jewish people face profound challenges and painful fractures, the call to *arvut* has never been more urgent. We stand together, not just at Sinai, but in every moment that demands courage, faith, and love. Revelation is not behind us—it




**Rabbi Dr. Ari
Berman**

*President and Rosh Yeshiva,
Yeshiva University and RIETS*

happens again every time we choose to show up for one another.

This Shavuot, as we celebrate the gift of Torah, let us also recommit to the gift of each other. Let us read our story not just as a record of laws and lessons, but as a guide to building lives of shared purpose.

A portrait of Rabbi Hershel Schachter, an elderly man with a white beard and a black kippah, smiling. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a striped tie. The background is a blurred indoor setting with warm lighting.

I am a link in the
chain, entrusted
with passing down
our Mesorah to
the future leaders.

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Rabbi Hershel Schachter
Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

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Arvus for Eretz Yisrael and Medinas Yisrael

For days, I've mentally replayed one of my favorite religious experiences: the scene of crowds walking to the Kotel for netz davening on Shavuot morning after a night immersed in Torah learning. Every street bustles with people from near and far around Jerusalem, emerging from alleyways and hidden corners—all heading to one destination: the spiritual heart of the Old City.

That's also how I envisioned Har Hertzl on Yom HaZikaron.

V'kach haya, that's how it was, on our aliyah to Har Herzl this morning.

Masses arrived from every corner of the country. Travelers stepped off crowded trains and buses while police guided the tide of pedestrians. There were people of every background and appearance—some with long, tangled peiyot, others in pressed button-downs; some covered in tattoos. And everything in between.

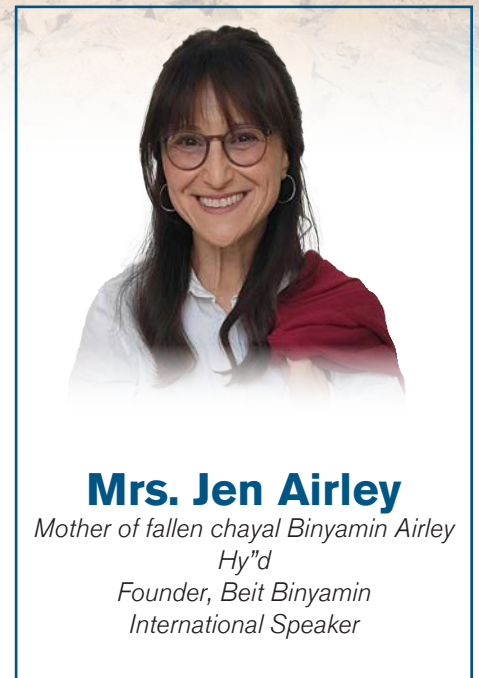
Volunteers from Yad Sarah stood in rows, wheelchairs at the ready, prepared to assist anyone with whatever they needed. Bouquets of flowers were handed out. Cold bottles of water offered generously, again and again.

But there was no joy. No excitement.

This wasn't a festival. It was the opposite.

It was Yom HaZikaron—the national gathering to remember our fallen soldiers: who they were, what they lived for, and what they died for. *Eretz Yisrael nikneit b'yisurim mamash*, the land of Israel is acquired through actual suffering.

I am writing this article on Yom HaZikaron 5785, standing at קבר בנימין, the grave of our son Binyamin חי"ד—surrounded by thousands doing the same. It looks like there are more that have gathered here today than physically stood at Har Sinai. Masses gathered united in connection, shared



Mrs. Jen Airley

*Mother of fallen chayal Binyamin Airley
Hy"d*

*Founder, Beit Binyamin
International Speaker*

loss, and *kisufim* (longing).

If there is any place in the world to reflect on the essence of Shavuot, it is here—on Har Herzl.

This mountain screams "*na'aseh v'nishma*"—first we will act, then we will understand. This is a place where responsibility isn't theoretical. It is lived.

Har Herzl teaches us the meaning of *arvut*. Here, there is no boundary

Training future rabbis goes beyond the beis midrash—it's about sharing inspiration and forming lasting relationships.

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Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz
Abraham Arbesfeld Torah Dean
RIETS

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between self and nation. No limit to what one will give—even life itself—for another Jew.

Each soldier buried here lived and died as a guarantor—an *arev*—for their brothers and sisters. They embodied the deepest expression of *arvut*: mutual responsibility, self-sacrifice, and unwavering love for Am Yisrael.

None of the soldiers buried here went to fight because they love war.

They fight because they love Am Yisrael.

It's a sacred responsibility.

Binyamin not only defended his people physically, but like all of Am Yisrael, he understood his spiritual responsibility for another. While fighting in Gaza, Binyamin wrote the following in his notebook:

אחרי מלחמה, אחרי התאוששות וחוזרים לשיגרה, על כל יהודי להיות כתולעת משי-כלומה, לשבת ללמוד תורה ולהבין במתיקות שבדבר, לטבול במקווה, להתבודד וללמוד גמרא.

When all this is finished—after recovery, after returning to routine—we must be like the silkworm. That is, to sit and learn Torah, to enjoy its sweetness, to immerse in the mikvah, to find solitude, to learn Gemara.

Binyamin grasped something profound: After I finish my job of protecting and taking care of my responsibilities for Am Yisrael during war on the battlefield, then I can return to the idyllic life. This, too, is our job for Am Yisrael.

We recall heroes from this war: Elisha Lowenstern, Yosef Geladia, Yakir Hexter, Moshe Schwartz, Eli-Mo Zimbalist, Rav Avi Goldberg and thousands more דמם יקום ה' who learned Torah both in yeshiva and on the battlefield. That is also *arev*: sweetness and bond born not only of duty but of love.

There is so much to learn from these giants.

And now, as I stand waiting for the siren to wail—ushering in a דִּקְתָּ דִּמְמָה, a two-minute moment of stillness honoring 25,420 soldiers—the crowd softly sings songs of ge'ulah, tefillah, kedushah, and longing. It's as if Binyamin himself curated the playlist: *anavim*, the Baal Shem Tov's niggun, *v'hi she'amda, titen acharit*. This kumzitz has been going on for over an hour. (Everyone arrives early for the massive crowds—and then waits, standing, nearly two hours before the siren.)

That's when I realized: at Har Sinai, when the world stood still and the heavens trembled, we did not receive the Torah as individuals.

We stood together.

That's why Rashi interprets “וַיֵּחַן שָׁם” —“*And Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain*”—in the singular: “כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד.” —“*As one person with one heart.*” Only in unity could the Torah descend to this world.

Shavuot is not just about studying Torah. It's about living Torah—together. It's about recommitting not only to personal growth but to our national soul.

At Har Sinai, we received more than mitzvot—we entered a covenant: a binding, eternal agreement between God and klal Yisrael, and among every Jew. That is the foundation of *arvut*.

The Midrash Tanchuma (Yitro 9) teaches: “*v'na'asu agudah achat*”—only when the people stood as one was the Torah given. Without unity, it remains suspended in potential, waiting for a people worthy of it.

Chazal (*Shevuot* 39a) declare: “*kol Yisrael arevin zeh bazeh*”—each Jew is a guarantor for one another. We often see

arvut as spiritual—bearing another's sin—but it is also physical, emotional, and national.

Yes, protecting and defending. But also caring and tending to another's regular needs. Feeling another's pain. Being that listening ear. Lifting each other up.

Shavuot marks not only the anniversary of receiving Torah but of becoming a nation of “*arevin zeh bazeh*”—bound in mutual responsibility. A process that began with galut and geulat Mitzrayim, climaxed with Matan Torah at Mount Sinai, and thereby continued with the instruction and building of the Mishkan for the Shechina to rest upon it.

At Sinai, what made us worthy was not intellect or piety but our collective vow: “*na'aseh v'nishma*”—we will do, and we will listen. Not “I will do,” but “we will do.” We act for one another, carry one another, and stand as guarantors—*arevim*—for each other.

Here on Har Herzl, that covenantal truth is carved into the earth. These soldiers fulfilled *na'aseh*: they acted, they sacrificed, and they upheld a Torah of unity and *arvut*. Their sacrifice compels us to do the same.

It's getting closer to the siren. A half hour to go. The niggunim now are Shabbat songs. Thousands singing *Lecha Dodi, Kah Echsof, Mizmor L'David*.

Shabbat. Another communal responsibility. The Zohar says:

שבת היא מתנה לישראל... ומתנה זו לא יחידים היא אלא לרבים.

Shabbat is a gift to Israel... and this gift is not for individuals, but for the collective.

The Zohar's framing emphasizes that Shabbat is a shared spiritual gift—not just a personal retreat. Our full experience of Shabbat depends on others joining us: Guests, meals, learning, Torah reading, and minyan.

I help students
identify their
strengths and
purpose through
the values, vision
and teachings of
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'88 Stern College for Women
Vice Provost
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All are built into the system of Shabbos Kodesh.

Soon the siren will wail. My heart pounds; my hands tremble.

On a personal note, this was the initial reason we built Beit Binyamin, a retreat center we opened in Tzfat one year ago. Months after our Binyamin was killed, we wanted to open a learning center for non-religious soldiers—young men who, in the heat of battle, had been inspired to put on tzitzit and tefillin and chant verses of Tehillim as a rallying cry, yet lacked even a basic understanding of Halacha to give that spiritual awakening lasting meaning. My husband, Rob, and I felt an obligation of sharing *ta'amu ureu ki tov Hashem*, try and see that Hashem is good, with those who didn't "know" Hashem months earlier. Fast forward a year and a half since the original idea, Beit Binyamin has hosted hundreds (likely well over a thousand) of those directly affected by war—pampering them, supporting them, helping their healing process physically and soulfully—all with niggunim, Torah, Tzfat air, holiness and love.

It's not enough to feel compassion. It's not enough to wish each other well from a distance. We are called to act—to stand up, step in, and carry each other when needed.

Because that is what Hashem wants from His people.

That is how we live the Torah in this world.

A few months ago, I spoke to a particular group of Magen David Adom employees and volunteers who stand here through every funeral, at all hours, in heat, cold, or rain. They have attended hundreds of funerals on Har Hertzl since October 7th, sometimes multiple consecutively. They have borne witness to unending pain and grief. Within MDA, this group is called אנשי ההר, People of the Mountain, clearly referring to this mount.

I blessed them that in the merit of their dedication to Am Yisrael, their *chesed shel emet*, and their selfless kindness, they should also be the ones to escort the families in song from Har Herzl to Har HaBayit, and ultimately to be

reunited with their loved ones at the time of תחיית המתים.

Like the Hakhel gathering (Devarim 31:12), thousands of men, women and children gathered here together on the mountain, *"I'ma'an yishme'u ul'ma'an yilmedu"*—"to hear and to learn," recalling and learning from the greatness of those who exemplified in *arvut*.

May we all be zoche that this siren will be replaced with the shofar blast of Redemption.

If not now, then soon—*b'chol yom achakeh lo*.

This article is dedicated to the quick and full recovery of שומחה שושנה בת אלישבע יענטא

As a MDA medic, doula, community chess queen, wife, mother and grandmother of many, she lives the life of caring and tending to the needs of the Am, well before any personal needs. שומחה שושנה

Gerrymandering Our Boundaries On Communal Responsibility and Cultural Translation

On September 30th, 2024, just a few days before Rosh Hashana, Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, Abraham Arbesfeld Torah Dean of RIETS, delivered a Sichas Mussar titled “Turning Twitter into *Mishnah Berurah*.” For someone like me—someone far too conversant in the underbelly of social media—his words hit hard. Rabbi Lebowitz explained why he deleted his personal Twitter account (now X), and how he repurposed that time to give a daily *Mishnah Berurah* shiur. “It has been life changing,” he reflected. “Instead of going to sleep with some inane meme or aggravating piece of lashon hara, I go to sleep with a three-point summary of halacha in my mind.”

As someone who has gone to sleep with plenty of memes—many inane, some worse—and more than his fair share of lashon hara scrolling, Rabbi Lebowitz’s words gave me pause. And rightly so. I may be uniquely qualified to speak to the sheer ugliness and addictive waste of time that social media can be.

It’s a sad expertise, but an expertise nonetheless. So I listened to Rabbi Lebowitz’s shiur twice. Not defensively, but openly. And I asked myself: so, nu, why do you still post?

Rabbi Lebowitz’s decision is not only understandable—it is deeply admirable. His choice to trade distraction for devotion is a model that speaks for itself. But I’ve come to believe that there’s more than one way to be responsible. And so, what follows is not a rebuttal or response, but a complementary reflection.

At the heart of the question is this: who do we feel responsible for? Because that’s the real crux of it. I worry that in the Diaspora, we’re gerrymandering the lines of Jewish responsibility. And I mean that quite literally.

Gerrymandering—the deliberate redrawing of political boundaries to favor one group and exclude others—has become an unfortunate metaphor for the way some Jewish communities define “community” itself. We draw lines—ideological,



**Rabbi Dovid
Bashevkin**

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educational, social—and then quietly label everything outside of them as not our problem. Our school, our shul, our neighborhood, our hashkafah. We don’t say it aloud, but we all know the map.

Especially in the Diaspora, the lines have become increasingly narrow. I used to think the blame for Jewish disaffiliation lay mostly outside our walls—societal trends, secularism, assimilation. But now I think a large share lies within. The most insular corners of observant Judaism often fail to cultivate a vision for all of the Jewish

People. And if not from within the beis midrash, then where?

And so, I've stayed on social media—not in defiance of Rabbi Lebowitz's message, but in deep appreciation of its truth, while recognizing that there may also be another path.

Because for all its toxicity, social media also offers the chance for cultural translation. For reaching past the borders of your own community and transmitting something deeper, something sacred, in a language someone else can understand.

On a recent 18Forty series, we explored “Jewish Outreach”—and we deliberately avoided the term “kiruv.” Why?

Because this isn't about outreach as programmatic recruitment. It's about cultural translation. It's about language, resonance, and empathy.

Frieda Vizel, a former Satmar Hasid and brilliant cultural observer, introduced me to this term: cultural translation. It's what she does in her work trying to foster a deeper understanding, appreciation and respect for Hasidic life to broader audiences, and it's what I think Torah itself demands of us. Not merely translating words, but translating experience; expressing the inner world of Jewish values into a register someone

outside your community—or even outside the faith—can feel, if not fully grasp.

Douglas Hofstadter, in his book *Le Ton Beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language*, explores this very idea through the seemingly simple task of translating a single French poem. But the book isn't really about poetry. It's about whether you can capture the essence of an experience in another language, another cultural framework. His answer, in essence, is mystical: the translator must find a way to let the inessential (the words you use) carry the essential (the idea you're transmitting). A kind of alchemy.

And this mystical alchemy is at the heart of the Jewish mission itself. When the Torah (Gen. 12:3) says of Avraham, *venivrechu vecha kol mishpechos ha'adamah*—that all the families of the earth will be blessed through you—it's not about universal conversion. It's about universal resonance. That through our story, others might discover their own. That's cultural translation. That's *arvus*.

On Shavuot night of 1804, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov shared a Torah insight regarding the nature of translation, later published in *Likutey Moharan* #19. Translation, explains Rebbe Nachman, isn't just a communication tool—it's a metaphysical transformation. As my dearest friend and teacher Reb Joey Rosenfeld once wrote, for Rav Nachman, “the light of translation is the possibility of the essence undergoing a process of change so significant that it can now be found in the inessential, yet through some impossible power, it retains its essential nature.”

We need this now more than ever.

ולכך אמרה תורה את כספך לא תתן לו בנשך

אני ה' אלקיכם אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים לתת לכם את ארץ כנען להיות לכם לאלקים, ומה ענין זה לכאן שאמר לתת לכם את ארץ כנען להיות לכם לאלקים. אבל הפי' הנראה כי כאשר נכנסו ישראל לארץ היו ישראל עם אחד לגמרי, וראיה לזה שהרי כל זמן שישראל לא עברו הירדן ולא באו לארץ לא נענשו על הנסתרות עד שעברו ונעשו ערבים זה בעד זה, הרי שלא נעשו ישראל ערבים זה בעד זה, כי נקרא ערב שהוא מעורב עם השני, ולא נעשו ישראל מחוברים להיות עם אחד לגמרי עד שבאו לארץ והיו ביחד בארץ והיה להם מקום אחד הוא ארץ ישראל, וע"י ארץ ישראל הם עם אחד לגמרי, ולכך כתיב ג"כ להיות לכם לאלקים, כי יש להם אל אחד, ולפיכך את כספך לא תתן בנשך ובמרבית לא תתן אכלך.

Therefore, the Torah states: “Your money you shall not give with interest; I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God.” What is the connection between this and the statement “to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God”? The explanation is that when Israel entered the land, they became one unified people. Evidence for this is that before Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the land, they were not punished for hidden sins, and when they crossed over they became mutually responsible for one another. This shows that Israel did not become mutually responsible (*arevim*) until they were united as one people. The term “mutual responsibility” (*arev*) implies being intertwined with one another. Israel did not become fully connected as one unified people until they entered the land, were together in the land, and had one unified place—the Land of Israel. Through the Land of Israel, they became completely one people. Therefore, it is also written “to be your God,” as they have one God. Consequently, “your money you shall not give with interest, and your food you shall not give with usury.”

The Maharal, in the sixth chapter of



Scan the QR code
above to listen to Rabbi
Bashevkin's interview with
Frieda Vizel



Kohanim turn Twitter into *Mishnah Berurah*. Converts know how to translate *Mishnah Berurah* into Twitter.

Netiv Tzedakah, offers a striking insight: the halachic concept of *arvus*—mutual responsibility—only truly came into force when the Jewish people entered the Land of Israel. Exile is an individual story, but Israel is a shared story. Diaspora Jews might pray together, learn together, even hurt together—but only in Israel are we legally, spiritually, and metaphysically one people. In exile, we build communities; in Israel, we build a nation. *Arvus* isn't just a halachic formality—it's a spiritual chemistry that can only be catalyzed by shared soil. Rav Avraham Borenstein of Sochatchov (1838–1910) in his responsa *Avnei Nezer* (O.C. 314) explains that it's only in the Land of Israel that the Jewish people become a singular body. Rav Soloveitchik echoed this in his *Yahrzeit shiurim*: a people, a covenant, a fate—formed not in abstraction, but in the land of Israel.



Scan the QR code
above to listen to Rabbi
Lebowitz's sicha on Turning
Twitter into Mishna Berurah

In the Diaspora, that temptation is much stronger.

And so we return to Torah transmission. Who are our transmitters?

Two demographics sit at the heart of Torah development: Kohanim and converts. Matan Torah is told in the parsha of Yisro—a convert. The definitive translation of the Torah into Aramaic is by Onkelos—a convert. The bedrock of the Oral Torah is Rebbe Akiva—descended from converts.

And yet Torah is also protected by Kohanim—holy, bounded, and insulated. The first name in the chain of mesorah in Pirkei Avos is Shimon HaTzaddik, a Kohen Gadol. In Malachi 2:7 it states, “כִּי שִׁפְתָי כֹהֵן יִשְׁמְרוּ-דָּעַת” —“For the mouth of the Kohen guard knowledge, and people seek Torah from his mouth.” The Kohen, elevated through lineage and ritual purity, embodies the sanctity and stability of Jewish tradition. He is entrusted with preserving the unbroken transmission of the Torah—not by innovation, but by fidelity. Kohanim represent the gravitational pull of Torah inward—toward the holy, the inherited, the insulated.

But preservation is only half the story. Without Kohanim, Torah might lose its purity. Without geirim—converts and cultural translators—it might lose its reach.

Kohanim are guardians. Converts are

translators. Kohanim turn Twitter into *Mishnah Berurah*. Converts know how to translate *Mishnah Berurah* into Twitter.

And we need both. We need those who preserve—and those who expand. Those who sanctify—and those who sweeten.

We often translate *arvus*—*Kol Yisrael areivim zeh bazeh*—as mutual responsibility. But perhaps there's another layer hidden in the word *areiv*. In Birchas HaTorah, we pray *v'haarev na*, that Torah should become sweet in our mouths. The same root—עָרַב. What if *arvus* isn't just about responsibility, but about making Torah sweet for one another? To be *areiv* to someone else is not just to answer for them in court, but to make their experience of Judaism more resonant, more palatable, more alive. We are not only accountable for each other—we are flavor-bearers for one another's faith. To be responsible for another Jew is to help them taste the beauty, to carry Torah in a tone they can recognize as their own. We are not merely transmitters of truth—we are translators of sweetness.

That's why I'm still here. That's why I still post. Not to replace the beis midrash, God forbid, but to accompany it. To extend its reach. To help build bridges between those inside and those just outside the door.

So maybe, on some days, I'll fall asleep with *Mishnah Berurah* on my mind. And on others, with a meme. But if I'm lucky, one day someone will scroll through a post and see, in those pixels, a window into a world that was once foreign—and now suddenly feels like home.

Easy, Breezy Shavuot: Celebrating with Tnuva

EFFORTLESS DAIRY DELIGHTS FOR SHAVUOT



Crunchy Israeli Salad with Quark

Serves: 6

Fleishigs Issue #59

A creamy base is all the rage and don't skimp on the herbs — it makes this dish pop!

- 3 Persian cucumbers, diced
- 2 firm tomatoes, diced
- 3 radishes, diced
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- ½ cup mixed chopped herbs (parsley, dill and/or cilantro)
- Juice of 1 lemon
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 (8-ounce) container **Tnuva** quark
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste



1. Toss cucumbers, tomatoes, radishes, scallions and herbs with lemon juice and salt.
2. Spread quark onto a serving plate or platter, then top with salad. Drizzle with olive oil and a sprinkle of pepper. Season with more salt, to taste.



Za'atar Feta Salad

Serves: 6-8

Fleishigs Issue #36

This is an Israeli take on the classic Greek salad — there's saltiness from the feta, freshness from the vegetables, tanginess from the vinaigrette and texture from the roasted chickpeas.

FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1½ teaspoons za'atar, plus more for garnish
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt

FOR THE SALAD:

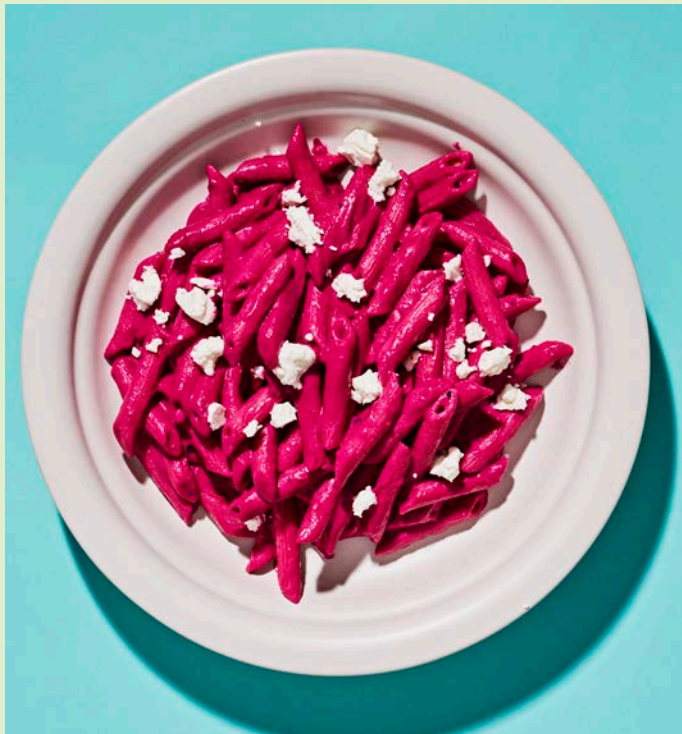
- 6 cups mixed greens
- 1½ cups sliced tomatoes
- 2 Persian cucumbers, sliced
- ½ cup olives
- 1 cup crumbled **Tnuva** feta cheese, divided
- 1½ cups Roasted Chickpeas



1. For the vinaigrette, add all ingredients to a jar, seal tightly and shake until fully emulsified.
2. Toss greens, tomatoes, cucumbers and olives in a large bowl. Add ½ cup feta and vinaigrette; lightly toss to coat. Top with remaining ½ cup feta and a sprinkle of za'atar.

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Fleishigs



Creamy Beet Pasta

Serves: 8

Fleishigs Issue #59

This dish is inspired by Fiori at the Jerusalem First Station (a touristy spot for dining, music and events), which is in walking distance to the Inbal, where we typically stay when we visit Israel.

- 1 pound uncooked pasta of choice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 10 ounces cooked beets
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whipped cream cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup goat cheese
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for serving
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Crumbled **Tnuva** goat cheese, for garnish



1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and cook pasta until al dente. Reserve 1 cup pasta cooking water, then drain the pasta and return it to the pot.
2. While the pasta cooks, heat oil in a skillet over medium-low heat. Add garlic and cook until golden brown, 1-2 minutes; set aside.
3. Add cooked beets, cream cheese, goat cheese, Parmesan, salt, pepper, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup reserved pasta cooking water and browned garlic (with the oil) to a blender; blend until smooth.
4. Toss beet sauce with cooked pasta to fully coat. If pasta has cooled, stir it over low heat, adding a splash or two of remaining reserved pasta cooking water, as needed, to thin the sauce.
5. Garnish with crumbled goat cheese, toasted walnuts and a drizzle of balsamic glaze.



Spinach Artichoke Quiche

Serves: 6-8

Fleishigs Issue #47

Spinach and artichoke go hand in hand in so many recipes, and this crowd pleasing quiche is no different! Serve warm or at room temperature.

NOTE: You can also use jarred or canned artichoke hearts for this recipe.

FOR THE TOPPING:

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **Tnuva** butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup bread crumbs
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese



FOR THE QUICHE:

- 1 frozen **Tnuva** pastry sheet
- 1 (10-ounce) package chopped frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed
- 1 (10-ounce) package frozen artichoke hearts, thawed and chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **Tnuva** feta cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 4 eggs
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sour cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper



1. For the topping, heat butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add bread crumbs and toast until lightly golden brown. Toss with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Parmesan cheese; set aside.
2. Preheat oven to 425°F. Place pastry sheet in a pie pan and crimp edges. Place pie pan on a baking sheet and prick center of pastry with a fork. Bake for 10 minutes, then set aside to cool. Lower oven temperature to 375°F.
3. Mix spinach, artichoke hearts, mozzarella, feta and Parmesan cheese. Add to the cooled pie shell.
4. In the same bowl, mix eggs, sour cream, milk, garlic powder, salt and pepper until well combined, then pour mixture into the pie shell. Top with toasted bread crumb mixture. Cook for 40-45 minutes, until golden and set. Let cool for 15 minutes before slicing.



AN ACT OF KINDNESS, GUARANTEEING MASHIACH

There is an oft quoted Gemara (*Shevuos 39a*), that says the Jewish people are guarantors for each other regarding the observance of the Torah.

וכשלו איש באחיו איש בעון אחיו מלמד שכל ישראל ערבים זה בזה.

“And they shall stumble one over the other,” a man due to the sin of his brother. This teaches that all of Israel are guarantors for one another.

This principle plays out in several ways—for example, a person who has

Why does the Gemara choose the model of a guarantor to define our responsibility for one another?

already recited Kiddush can still recite it again on behalf of a friend who is unable to do so.

The relationship between the people of Israel and the Torah—and with one another—is described in a strikingly unique way.

A guarantor, also known as an *arev*, is a third party who assumes responsibility for a debt if the original borrower fails to repay the lender. This is a startling formulation. Why does the Gemara choose the model of a guarantor to define our responsibility for one another?

R Noson Breslover (*Liktvei Halachos*, Arev 4) explains the depth of this relationship:

כי כל דבר יש לו שרש בתורה וענין ערבות שרשו מבחינת כלל קבלת התורה שכל ישראל ערבים זה בזה, כמו שאמרו רבותינו זכרונם



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לברכה, כי עקר הערבות צריכין במקום שישיש שני וקפירה וכו' ומחמת שעקר קיום התורה צריכין רק בזה העולם העשייה דיקא וזה העולם יש בו אחיות הקלפות והסטרס אחרת הרבה ... ועל כן האדם בסכנה גדולה, על כן צריך ערבות גדול שיזכה לקיים את התורה ועל כן לא נתן ה' יתברך את התורה כי אם כשיהיו כל ישראל ערבינו זה בזה.

For everything has its root in the Torah, and the concept of mutual responsibility has its root in the collective acceptance of the Torah, as our Sages of blessed

memory have said, that all of Israel are guarantors for one another. The essence of this mutual responsibility is needed particularly in situations where there is a concern of deviation, denial, or heresy. Since the primary fulfillment of the Torah is required specifically in this world of action, which is a place where the forces of impurity and the opposing forces have significant influence ... Because of this, a person is in great danger, and therefore, great mutual responsibility is needed to merit fulfilling the Torah. This is why God, blessed be He, gave the Torah only when all of Israel were guarantors for one another.

An *arev* is necessary in a transaction any time there is a potential for the debtor to possibly change or deny the terms of the loan. When Hashem gave us the Torah, it was with full awareness that this is a world that can sway us. The human condition is fraught with temptations, moments of weakness, conflicts of interest. Therefore, we knew that each one of us would need a guarantor, an *arev*. Our performance of the Torah, and the ability to continue until the endgame, to bring Mashiach, depends on our shared guarantorship.

Anytime we utilize a concept, we need to trace it back to its first reference in the Torah to understand it. Shockingly, the first time we encounter the concept of an *arev* (*eravon*) is in the story of Yehuda and his daughter-in-law, Tamar (Bereshis 38:17-26). To guarantee payment, Yehuda gives her his signet ring and staff as collateral. Though he could have denied his obligation

later, these items served as powerful reminders of his responsibility. Yehuda ultimately acknowledges his debt and fulfills it. From this act of accountability, the lineage of King David—and ultimately the Messianic line—emerges.

Yehuda then becomes an *arev* that Binyamin will descend to Mitzrayim and return. Yehuda assures his brother's safe passage. Yehuda emerges later as the guarantor who assures that Binyamin will not remain a slave in Mitzrayim (Bereshis 43:9).

A person can become an *arev* when someone else gives a loan in his presence, and the *arev* says (or somehow or another indicates), "I will guarantee the loan" (see *Aruch Hashulchan, Choshen Mishpat* 129). We learn the laws of guarantorship from Yehudah. The people of Israel accepted the Torah collectively, with each individual becoming a guarantor for the other.

Rav Nosson Ibid (4:9) further explains every time someone gives money as a loan, something dramatic happens:

ועל כן בשעת מתן מעות אז אינו צריך קנין, כי בשעת מתן מעות שאז גומל חסד המלוה עם הלווה ועל ידי הגמילות חסד ממשיכין בחינת רוחו של משיח שממנו המושכת כל החסדים בבחינת ועשה חסד למשיחו וכו', כי אז פשיטא משיח יתקיים, כי אמרתי עולם חסד יבנה וכו' שמדבר שם מענין מלכות דוד משיח. על כן בשעת מתן מעות מתקיים הערבות בלא קנין כנ"ל, אבל שלא בשעת מתן מעות צריכין קנין, כי קנין, כדי שיתקיים הדבר ולא ישתנה, הוא בחינת המושכת קדשת רוחו

של משיח שעל ידו עקר קיום האמונה

Therefore, at the time of giving money, no formal acquisition is necessary, because at the time of giving money, the lender performs an act of kindness with the borrower. Through this act of kindness, the aspect of the spirit of the Messiah is drawn, from which all kindness flows, as in the verse, "and shows kindness to His anointed." When the Messiah comes, it will be fulfilled, as it is written, "For I said, the world is built on kindness," which refers to the kingdom of David, the Messiah. Therefore, at the time of giving money, mutual responsibility is established without formal acquisition, as mentioned above. However, when it is not at the time of giving money, a formal acquisition is required, because the acquisition ensures that the matter is established and unchanging. This corresponds to drawing the sanctity of the spirit of the Messiah, through whom the essence of faith is upheld.

David Hamelech said, "The world is built through kindness" (Tehillim 89:3). Every time there is an act of guarantorship, of *arevus*, there's a little bit of King David's spirit, a little Mashiach energy, that is revealed. When a person guarantees a loan, what does he stand to gain? Nothing! It is a complete chesed. *Olam chesed yibaneh*.

Our *kabala HaTorah* means that we are mutual guarantors, committed to supporting one another. Recognizing that each of us will face challenges and moments of doubt, we commit to keeping each other accountable, just as Yehuda did. Like Yehuda, we will ensure that our brother rises from difficult circumstances. Through this merit, we will emerge from exile together, united by the spirit of chesed.



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Mutual Responsibility: Lessons from Loan Guarantees

There is a profound connection between the concept of *arevut* (guarantor) in Jewish law and the pivotal moment of Shavuot, when the Torah was given at Mount Sinai. The Talmudic sages teach us "*Kol Yisrael arevin zeh bazeh*" – all of Israel are guarantors for one another – a principle that originated at that transformative moment when our ancestors stood "as one person with one heart" to receive the divine word.

Those who studied *daf yomi* a few months ago (end of *Bava Batra*) encountered the concept of the "*arev*," or guarantor, who accepts responsibility for the loan of another, thereby becoming liable to pay in the event of default. While this legal mechanism appears in many justice systems, Jewish tradition infuses it with deeper spiritual

and communal significance. Shavuot commemorates not only receiving the Torah but also entering into a collective covenant where each individual became responsible for the spiritual and material wellbeing of every other member of the community.

The early commentaries of the medieval era all assumed that some prior premise was needed to explain the binding liability of the *arev*, and they clashed notably as to what that was, producing no fewer than six theories. To mention just some of those: Maimonides felt it was a function of the verbal commitment the guarantor expresses at the time of the loan, while others disputed that mere oral declarations were sufficient to create binding liability.¹ R. Asher (the Rosh) is understood to have a more complex



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position: the guarantor is, through his commitment, linked to the borrower; when the borrower receives the funds, it is equivalent to the guarantor receiving them also (together with the liability to pay them back).² The Rashbam, by contrast, sees the lender as the one connected to the guarantor; since he only acts based on the assurance of the *arev*, it is as if the lender acts as his agent, on his instruction.³ Accordingly, the *arev* is responsible to compensate the lender for his outlaid funds, if the borrower does not pay them back. According to the Ritva (based on a statement that appears in the Talmud),

meanwhile, the mechanism is especially interesting: the *arev* is liable to pay for the loan because he actually did receive something from the lender – the satisfaction of knowing the lender trusted him enough to lend to another on his word.⁴

What is truly remarkable about the concept of *arevut* is that the Talmud derives this binding legal principle not from a legislative section of Torah but from a profound narrative of familial commitment. In *Parashat VaYigash*, Judah pleads with the Viceroy of Egypt (unaware that he is his brother Joseph) for the release of Benjamin. With heartfelt conviction, he declares, "For your servant has pledged himself (*arav*) for the lad" (Gen. 44:32). This echoes his earlier promise to Jacob: "I will be pledged for him (*e'ervenu*)" (Gen. 43:9). The Talmud identifies this declaration as the textual foundation for the binding nature of loan guarantees.

This point takes on more depth when it is integrated with the various theories of the commentaries as to how the concept of *arev* functions. If it is somehow the case that a verbal declaration of guarantorship is binding, or that the guarantor can connect with the borrower so that the latter's benefit is identical to his own, or that conversely he can connect with the lender so that the lender's outlay is his own, all of this is possible because of the trust Judah evoked within Jacob.

Apparently, whatever the concept may mean in secular law, Jewish law does not see the guarantor as simply covering the debt. He is taking on an interpersonal identification in a complete sense, one that exists because it was modeled by a biblical figure who had been through, at that point, many episodes of intense interpersonal drama. He had seen a brother sold into slavery, as a

result of his own exhortations to other brothers who had been prepared to kill him; could he have done more? (One opinion in the Talmud suggests he had been a dreaded compromiser who must not be praised.) He had subjected a virtuous woman to a trial over actions for which he was responsible, and ultimately had to come forward to spare her unjust execution. When he spoke of accepting responsibility, what power, what life experience, informed those words?

Consider one more element: the view of the Ritva, that the *arev* is bound by the measurable value he gets from the confidence of the borrower. This too, must have been extracted from Judah's exchange. The moment his words struck a chord within Jacob, when he moved from refusal to acceptance, because of Judah's trustworthiness, a genuine bond was formed.

This can perhaps be discerned in a statement Judah makes to Joseph: "For how can I go back to my father unless the lad is with me?" (44:34). Commentaries note that this seems to be an unnecessary addition to his previous point. However, it may actually be the essence of his point: the faith my father has placed in me, and my complete commitment to that trust, is what has bonded me fully to my brother.

This notion of absolute interpersonal responsibility as a reflection of the connection an individual can feel for another, and all of the implications it can bring with it, is an ideal that Judah displays, and that makes all kinds of meaningful unity possible.

This individual act of *arevut* foreshadows the collective guarantee that would later emerge at Mount Sinai during the revelation celebrated on Shavuot.

At Sinai, the Jewish people stood together—"k'ish echad b'lev echad" (as one person with one heart)—to receive the Torah. According to the Midrash, it was at this moment that each Jew became an *arev* for every other Jew. The Talmud in *Shevuot* 39a teaches that all Jews were present at Sinai—even souls of future generations—and all entered into this mutual guarantee.

Just as Judah's verbal commitment created a binding obligation that transcended mere financial responsibility and encompassed his entire being, so too did the Sinai covenant establish a spiritual, moral, and practical responsibility among all Jews throughout time. The personal guarantee of Judah became the template for the national guarantee at Sinai.

These diverse approaches to guarantorship illuminate different aspects of both individual and collective responsibility. When Judah declared himself an *arev* for Benjamin, his commitment contained elements of all these theories: he made a verbal declaration (Rambam), he connected himself to Benjamin's fate (Rosh), he instructed Jacob to act on his assurance (Rashbam), and he received the benefit of Jacob's trust (Ritva).

At Sinai, these individual elements of *arevut* became the building blocks of a national covenant. The collective guarantorship established then—which we celebrate on Shavuot—transformed the Jewish people from a collection of individuals into a unified spiritual entity with profound mutual responsibility. This responsibility extends beyond financial matters to encompass spiritual, moral, and material wellbeing, creating a model of communal cohesion that has sustained Jewish identity across millennia.

Endnotes

1. Maimonides' view of guarantorship emerges primarily from two key sources in his legal code *Mishneh Torah*. In *Hilkhot Malveh ve-Loveh* 25:2, he establishes that a guarantor becomes obligated without requiring a formal kinyan (act of acquisition) when the commitment is made at the time of the loan. But his fuller position is revealed in *Hilkhot Mekhirah* 11:15-16, where he writes: "One who obligates himself financially to another without conditions... becomes obligated, for this is similar to how a guarantor becomes obligated." *Kesef Mishneh* explains that Maimonides viewed this as functioning through a form of acknowledgment (*odita*). *Ketzot HaChoshen* (40) observes this connection, though *Shakh* (40:7) questions this interpretation. From these sources, we see Maimonides held that the guarantor's verbal commitment itself creates the obligation, and this commitment doesn't depend on receiving anything tangible in return. This is consistent with his broader legal philosophy that certain verbal declarations can create binding obligations without formal acts of acquisition.

2. The Rosh's position on guarantorship appears in his commentary to *Kiddushin* (1:6), discussing the case of "Give a *maneh* to so-and-so and I will become betrothed to you." He writes: "When he gave the *maneh* to that person, [and then] said 'You are betrothed to me with the *maneh* I gave to so-and-so,' she is betrothed through the law of the guarantor." *Kehillat Yaakov* (*Kiddushin* 12) interprets this to mean that the Rosh viewed the guarantor as being considered to have personally received the money given to the borrower. This is further evidenced by

the *Tur* (*Even HaEzer* 29), who formulates the law using phrasing suggesting the money is considered as if received by the woman herself. *Machaneh Ephraim* (*Hilkhot Ribbit* 11) explicitly attributes this view to the *Tur*, stating that "according to the *Tur*, the law of the guarantor means it is as if the guarantor himself received the money given to the other person." This interpretation is strengthened by examining *Tosafot* (*Bava Metzia* 71a s.v. *Matza'o*), which the *Machaneh Ephraim* notes follows the same approach, applying it to cases of interest where giving money to a third party on the lender's instruction is legally equivalent to giving it to the lender himself "through the law of the guarantor."

3. Rashbam's position is found in his commentary to *Bava Batra* (173b s.v. *gamar u-meshabed*), where he explicitly states: "He commits himself wholeheartedly, and the lender acts as the agent (*shlichuta*) of the guarantor, as if [the guarantor] himself had lent [the money]." This agency-based approach creates a direct relationship between the lender and guarantor, rather than between the guarantor and borrower. *Avnei Nezer* (YD 150) elaborates on this view, explaining that according to Rashbam, the guarantor's obligation is fundamentally rooted in the principle of agency. There seems to be a complexity in understanding how this relates to the Talmud's emphasis on "that benefit" (*b'hahi hana'ah*) that creates the obligation. *Avnei Nezer* resolves this by suggesting that the benefit merely removes the potential problem of *asmakhta* (conditional commitment), while the fundamental obligation stems from the agency relationship. *Ketzot HaChoshen* (129:1) offers a slightly different interpretation, suggesting that

through the benefit received, the guarantor makes the lender his agent, and once this agency is established, *asmakhta* no longer applies. Both interpretations affirm that the Rashbam viewed the legal mechanism of guarantorship through the lens of agency, with the lender acting on behalf of the guarantor.

4. Ritva's distinctive position appears in his commentary to *Kiddushin* (7a), where he explicitly addresses how a guarantor becomes obligated despite not receiving the actual funds: "The guarantor is not obligated because no money or value has reached his hands from the lender... Rather, the guarantor obligates himself through the pleasure and benefit he receives when his word is trusted and the lender acts upon it. This benefit is considered as valuable as money." He further demonstrates this principle in his commentary on *Bava Metzia* (73b), addressing a case where someone entrusts money to another to purchase wine, and the agent fails to do so. The Ritva argues that the agent becomes liable "since [the owner] trusted him and gave him his money based on his promise... he obligates himself through that benefit he received from being trusted, from the law of the guarantor." This position differs significantly from others in that it views the psychological benefit of being trusted as having tangible legal value that creates the obligation. *Kehillat Yaakov* (*Kiddushin* 12) observes that Ritva's position aligns with Maimonides' in viewing guarantorship as a form of self-obligation, but differs in identifying the benefit received (being trusted) as the legal mechanism that enables the commitment to take effect without requiring a formal act of acquisition.



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Why am I Responsible?



A teacher strides into a classroom and poses the question, “Who is responsible?” The reactions are as varied as the students themselves. Some eagerly raise their hands, imagining an opportunity to tackle an important task. Others look away nervously, wondering if they’re about to be blamed for something gone awry. It’s fascinating how one word—responsible—can spark such a spectrum of interpretations, as its meaning shifts depending on the context.

1. If someone is **responsible for** a particular situation, they are the cause of it or can be blamed for it.

Synonym: culpable

2. If you are **responsible for** something, it is your duty to deal with it and make decisions relating to it.

Synonym: in authority

3. If you are **responsible to** a person or group, they have authority over you and

you have to report to them about what you do.

Synonym: accountable

4. If you think that you have a **responsibility to** do something, you feel that you ought to do it because it is morally right to do it.

Synonym: moral imperative

“All of Israel is responsible for one another,” is therefore, ambiguous.

Which of these dictionary definitions (Collins Dictionary) do we mean when we consider our sense of *areivus*? Are we culpable for each other’s mistakes? Do we have the authority to make decisions for each other or are we accountable to each other? Perhaps there’s a moral imperative to ensure each other’s wellbeing, both physically and spiritually?

In Hebrew, words that share a three-letter root will generally have something in common. In order to try to understand the true meaning of



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עֲרִיבוּת - *areivus*, let’s look at some other instances where we find the root ע-ר-ב and work out what how they link.

Noach sends the *oreiv*, the raven to see if the flood water had subsided, and the verse says it flew to and fro (Bereishis 8:7). Rashi picks up on the fact that the raven seemingly doesn’t actually go anywhere as Noach had instructed; rather, it just flew around the *teiva*, until the water dried up. He quotes the Gemara in *Sanhedrin* 108b which explains that the raven wouldn’t go far as he was worried about leaving his mate alone. He felt that his responsibility lay in protecting his partner, the only other raven left on earth. In *Melachim Aleph* 17:6,

the ravens are responsible for bringing Eliyahu meat and bread twice a day, as he is sent into hiding during a drought.

Yehuda leaves an *eiravon*, a *pledge*, a biblical IOU, a commitment to pay Tamar (Bereishis 38:18). Later, Yehuda uses the same word, *arav*, to commit himself as a *guarantor*, protecting the life of his brother Binyamin (44:32).

We find the plague of *arov*, a *mixture* of wild animals (Shemos 8:17) and a group of people from different nations who converted and wanted to join us as we left Egypt, are referred to as the *eirev rav*, a *mixed* multitude (Shemos 12:38).

The *weft*, the thread woven horizontally to make a fabric, transforming individual vertical strands into one piece of fabric is the *eirev* (Vayikra 13:52). Similarly, an imaginary horizontal line extends from East to West, *Ma'arav*, connecting one side of the world to the other.

The *willow* that we use on Succos for our arba minim, *arvei nachal* as commanded in Vayikra 23:40, relies on symbiosis. The stream nourishes the willow, and in turn willows grow extensive root systems that stabilize the riverbanks, by holding sediment and soil in place and improve water quality by preventing sediment from entering the stream.

We refer to *dry desert lands* as *arava*, as in Devarim 1:1. How

does a desert, a place seemingly uncondusive to life, manage to sustain so many varieties of plants and animals? Plants provide food and shelter for animals, while animals help with seed dispersal and pollination, influencing plant reproduction and growth. Again, there are symbiotic relationships between all the plants and animal life that can live in a desert, and each relies on the other for survival.

We describe God as “*rochev b’aravos*,” “riding on the *clouds*,” (Tehillim 68). Cloud forms the layer where heaven meets earth, it’s a mixture of the two, and scientifically speaking it contains all three states of matter; it’s a combination of water in the form of solid, liquid and gas. In Tehillim 104 we find “*y’e’rav alav sichi*,” “May my prayer be *pleasing* to Him,” and of course we start our day with “*ve’ha’arev na*,” “please make the words of Your Torah *pleasant* in our mouths.”

In Mishnaic terms, an *eiruv* is something that can combine discrete entities into one whole. An *eiruv chatzeiros* by uniting all who are within one boundary, or an *eiruv tavshilin* by combining days so that one cook on one day for the next, and an *eiruv techumin* to increase the size of the area you can walk to on Shabbos.

What is the connection between all these different concepts? Of course, the first time the root appears is the essence of the word, the original meaning that all others are



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derived from. In Bereishis 1:5, upon the creation of light and the separation of light and darkness, it says “*vayehi erev vayehi voker, yom echad*,” “and it was evening, and it was morning, Day One.”

Erev, evening is the time when day transitions to night and it’s a mixture of the two. Ibn Ezra explains that *erev* is so called because “*nisarvu bo hatzuros*,” “all forms are *intermingled*” with each other and one can’t differentiate between different objects.

Similarly, each time this root appears thereafter, the underlying message is one of connection to the point where the individual parts are no longer disparate. Yehuda protecting Binyamin or guaranteeing a loan, and a raven protecting its partner or feeding someone, all stem from a deep sense of connection. Consequently, they feel a responsibility to the other and act pleasantly. There is an indistinguishable mixture of people in the case of the *eirev rav* and of animals in the case of *arov*. Once we move onto inanimate objects, we have the symbiosis of all desert life supporting each other and of the willow with the brook. The cloud astonishingly combines all three states of matter. The weft that weaves the individual strands together. The *eiruv* connects different pieces of land owned by many individuals, or even different days.

So, what is the nature of *areivus* when it comes to Klal Yisrael, and what are its origins? Does it take the form of responsibility for them or to them, culpability or accountability?

In essence, *areivus* is symbiosis; each entity is dependent on each other, so to neglect or let one down, would destroy everything. The deep sense of connection we intrinsically feel towards each other, means there are no longer individual parts; we form one whole. Anything I would do for myself, I would be required to do for someone else, and I would want to. I am you, and you are me. We’re indistinguishable as separate beings, that is what the root ע-ר-ב comes to teach us.

How do we know we are one? We can feel it. How else can one explain the physical sensations of mourning that many experienced after October 7th? Nausea, heartache and that feeling in the pit of your stomach at the loss of people that you had never met. What compelled you to go on solidarity missions, to send money and packages, and even make Aliya? What made you organise rallies, and Tehillim groups? That was your *areivus* nerve being stimulated. A nerve that dates all the way back to Matan Torah. At that point Rashi famously comments, that we encamped at the mountain “*k’ish*

echad b’lev echad,” “like one person with one heart,” but he goes on to say that that was the only time that happened (Shemos 19:2). So, what happened to that one person? Perhaps life was challenging, and that took its toll on us.

Amputees or people who have had other surgeries or injuries, can sometimes experience phantom sensations in their missing limb. These sensations can be pleasurable, like a tingle or warmth, or they can be painful. The exact cause is not fully understood, but it’s believed to be related to a miscommunication in the nervous system. After an amputation, the nerves that once sent signals to the brain from the amputated limb may continue to send signals, even though the limb is no longer there.

We’re still getting signals from those missing parts of us that are scattered all over the world. When they feel pain we feel their pain, when they feel pride and happiness we celebrate with them, and when they need us, we’ll come running. Our *areivus* nerve has no idea that we’re fragmented, because the very essence of *areivus*, as we’ve seen, is that we are indistinguishable as separate entities. Perhaps that “*Ish echad*” never really left Sinai, and those *areivus* nerve sensations that we’re experiencing are its way of calling us back together.

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One Size Doesn't Fit All.

JUDAISM AS A CALL TO RESPONSIBILITY

Divrei Torah for Shavuot from the archives
of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

"Judaism is, from beginning to end, the story of a love: the love of God for a small, powerless and much afflicted people, and the love of a people – tempestuous at times to be sure – of a people for God. That is the story of Ruth; love as faithfulness, loyalty and responsibility... that is the love that was consecrated at Sinai on the first Shavuot of all"
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Greatest Gift: Essays on the Themes and Concepts of Shavuot* (Introduction to the Shavuot machzor, lxi)

In this article, we will consider interfaces between responsibility in *Megilat Rut* and Rabbi Sacks' work, expressed as short ideas which can be used for *divrei Torah* at Yom Tov meals.

Ripples of Responsibility: Are We all Responsible for One Another?

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם שֶׁפֶט הַשְּׁפָטִים וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ יוֹדֵה
אִישׁ מִבֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה לָגוֹר בְּשֹׂדֵי מוֹאָב הוּא
וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּשְׁנֵי בָנָיו.

... And a man set out from Bet Lechem
Yehuda...

Rut 1:1

A striking feature at the start of *Megilat*

Rut is the departure of Elimelech and family from the Land of Israel to the hostile territory of Moav. In particular, the phrase, "Vayelech ish," and a man set out, is a stark contrast to its positive use elsewhere to describe Amram, Moshe's father (Shemot 2:1). How are we to relate to Elimelech's decisions?

Rashi (ad loc) explained that Elimelech was a person of wealth who supported the needy of his time, such that his decision to leave and suspend his support showed miserliness. Elimelech, a leading, successful figure had relinquished responsibility and was punished for this. As *Megilat Rut* opens, the theme of our responsibilities



towards others is firmly established.

In the mid-1980s, Rabbi Sacks was invited to speak at Ilford Synagogue (today known as Cranbrook United Synagogue) in north-east London about antisemitism in the wake of financial scandals involving Jews, the challenges of achieving success and what our shared responsibilities are.

In his address, called *Ripples of Responsibility*, he questioned whether we were "immoderately proud when a Jew succeeds... I think we've gone overboard on

the ethos of success, and it's ruined a whole generation. We're too proud of material achievement, and we're correspondingly too surprised and dismayed if it turns out that our heroes have feet of clay."

He contrasted this to the traditional description of a *sheyne yid*, a beautiful Jew who was a good, loyal, compassionate, generous person whose material success was irrelevant. He suggested the Chafetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, 1838–1933) as a shining example; deliberately unsuccessful in business and probably the most-loved Jew of his generation.

Elimelech had failed to realise that the greater our success, the greater our responsibility to others. In considering the import of decisions which cast Jews in a bad light, Rabbi Sacks said, *"the concept of Chilul Hashem, desecration of God's Name, recognises the painful and challenging truth that we are judged by the world as a people, and not just as individuals. Kol Yisrael areivim zeh bazeh: we are all responsible for one another..."*

Rut, whose care for Naomi and decision to throw her lot in with *Am Yisrael*, provided a compelling antidote for the negative impact of Elimelech's actions, powerfully demonstrated how we are responsible for each other and how our behaviour relates both to us and *Am Yisrael* more broadly.

The ripple effects of her example, which we remember of Shavuot when reading *Megilat Rut*, continue to be essential elements in living a Jewish life.

From Renewal to Responsibility

וְתֹאמַר רוּת אֶל תְּפַגְעֵי בִי לְעִזְבֹּךְ לָשׁוּב
מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ כִּי אֶל אִשְׁרֵי תִלְכִּי אֵלַי וּבְאִשְׁרֵי תִלְכִּי
אֵלַי עַמִּי עִמִּי וְאֵלֶיךָ אֵלָּקִי.

But Ruth replied, "Do not entreat me to leave you, to turn back and not to go after you. Wherever you walk, I shall walk; wherever you lie down, there shall I lie. Your people is my people; your God is my God."

Rut 1:16

These powerful words were uttered as Naomi and Rut journey to the Land of Israel, attempting to renew their lives after the tragedies which struck them in Moav. Rashi (ad loc), based on the Talmud (*Yevamot* 47a), imagines the broader conversation between Naomi and Rut about whether Rut should convert to Judaism and, by extension, what it means to be a Jew.

In September 1991, when he ascended to the Chief Rabbinate, Rabbi Sacks published a manifesto for a "Decade of Renewal." Ten years later, he wrote a second manifesto, "From Renewal to Responsibility," for the next period of his Chief Rabbinate.

After thanking those who had helped him advance his vision to date, he wrote:

I also want to outline my thoughts for the next phase of my Chief Rabbinate. As you will see, I have called it Jewish Responsibility. To me, that phrase signals what is most challenging in Jewish life; not waiting for something to happen

but joining hands to make it happen. I look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you.

The whole manifesto, especially its first chapter – "Jewish Responsibility" – has echoes of *Megilat Rut*, especially Rut's words of commitment to the Jewish people and to God.

In that chapter, Rabbi Sacks discussed why God chose us, a tiny people, for the great task of being God's witnesses to the world and what that means.

He drew the reader's attention to the passage of *machazit hashekel*, the half-shekel census commanded to the Jews in the desert after they left Egypt (*Shemot* 30:12), which suggests it is dangerous to count Jews unless using the half-shekel method.


From this, Rabbi Sacks deduced that whilst nations normally count numbers to estimate their strength, Jews must not. Given we are few in number, we might, God forbid, succumb to despair should we mistakenly believe that strength lies in numbers.

Instead of telling Moshe to count, God tells him to instruct the Jews to give and then count the contributions. That is how to measure the strength of the Jewish people. Small in number, vast in contribution to both our own people and the world around us. When it comes to spiritual strength wrote Rabbi Sacks, you need not numbers but a sense of responsibility and contribution.

"The Jewish question", says Rabbi Sacks,

Instead of telling Moshe to count, God tells him to instruct the Jews to give and then count the contributions. That is how to measure the strength of the Jewish people.





“is not, what can the world give me? It is, what can I give to the world? The Jewish story is a story of responsibility.”

To illustrate that this does not necessarily have to involve grand plans, in November 2001, when speaking at the United Synagogue’s “Kehilla Conference”, Rabbi Sacks asked attendees to do just one thing – such as always ensuring that shuls are genuinely welcoming or to invite one new person for Shabbat. Simple things which can change people’s lives.

Instead of considering what they *can* do, Jews must consider what they *ought* to do, with a clear sense of responsibility to make the world a better place through living as Jews. This was what Rut did and is at the heart of what it means to be a Jew.

Jewry’s Journey to a Second Shavuot: the State of Israel

וְתֹאמְרֵנָה הַנָּשִׁים אֶל נַעֲמִי בְרוּךְ ה' אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִשְׁבִּית לָךְ גֹּאֵל הַיּוֹם וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.
... Blessed be God, who has not withheld your redeemer on this day – may the child’s name be spoken in all Israel...”

Rut 4:14

This verse introduces Oved, grandfather of King David who, amongst other accomplishments, established Jerusalem as the capital and consolidated national sovereignty for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, paving the way for the construction of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

As the State of Israel approached its 50th Yom Haatzmaut during challenging times in the mid-1990s, Rabbi Sacks considered whether a “new” form of Zionism was in the making. He penned his thoughts in the *Jewish Chronicle* on June 6, 1997, under the title of “Jewry’s Journey to a Second Shavuot”.

The “first” form of Zionism, he suggested, was based on Pesach and charted a journey from slavery to freedom. This was the Jewish people as an *am*, a group with a collective fate which left Egypt.

The “new” form was based on their contrasting Shavuot experience at Mount Sinai, when they became a nation through accepting God as their sovereign and the Torah as their constitution. Instead of unity through their shared slavery in Egypt, they were united by a shared commitment to a way of life based on the Torah. This made them into an *edah*, a community of faith.

By 1997, Rabbi Sacks suggested, there was a “Zionism of the Torah, just as there was a Zionism of land and state.” The Zionism of the Torah, based on being an *edah* was a burgeoning opportunity for the State of Israel and the Jewish people more broadly, bound together with Jewish responsibility. Increasing Torah learning, applying the Torah to life and thereby making Torah a recognisable feature of the Jewish people as we strive to build a better world is the journey ahead, to a second Shavuot. The time when we fully become the *edah* we are meant to be.

Shavuot each year offers us a reminder of this imperative. May our efforts, with God’s help, be successful in carrying out Judaism’s call to responsibility.



Mutual Responsibility and the Jew's Search for Meaning

We all know the story: the people of Israel camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, united in an extraordinary way—“*k'ish echad, b'lev echad*”—like one person, with one heart. It's almost a cliché, the idea we revisit every Shavuot, but perhaps it's time we truly *think* about it anew. Like so many things learned in kindergarten, the deeper meaning deserves another look. How do we recapture that? How can we possibly generate that same *arevut hadadit*, that mutual responsibility and solidarity, that defined Mount Sinai but often feels so absent today? As a journalist covering the Jewish world for years, blessed with the opportunity to lecture and meet communities across the globe, here are two practical recommendations:

1. **Unity Forged Around Torah:**

Why were we united at Sinai? Because we heard the Ten Commandments. Because we encountered G-d Himself. *That* is the experience that fuses us into a single soul. No other source truly binds us together in the same way. Shavuot is our annual reminder: the Jewish people's unity stems from our shared Torah values. For millennia, this was simply understood. We must return to

these foundational truths.

- 2. Positive Unity:** Shavuot offers a model for unity born of positive connection, not just shared threats. Think about most of our other holidays. Typically, there's a villain—a Haman, a Pharaoh, an Antiochus—pursuing us, and our joy comes from salvation, from being rescued. Chanukah, Purim, Pesach (even the solemn day of Tisha B'Av, though vastly different in tone), revolve around our enemies. Shavuot is different. There's no enemy in the story. We're elevating ourselves, ascending. We approach Har Sinai willingly, joyfully, declaring “*na'aseh v'nishma*”—we will do, and then we will understand. If only we could learn to embrace and declare our Jewishness driven by this internal love and identity, not merely in reaction to Sinwar or Nasrallah (who, *Baruch Hashem*, are observing the holiday elsewhere...). Simply put: our unity isn't rooted in who hates us, but in what we, together, love.

Now, let's turn to some remarkable stories of this *arevut hadadit*—this mutual responsibility—centered on Torah. I believe that sometimes, we in



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the observant world miss the mark. We hesitate to speak plainly about Torah as our unifying force, perhaps fearing we'll sound fanatical or coercive. But the ground is shifting beneath our feet. A younger generation is actively seeking its Jewish heritage, returning to Torah, and writing an entirely new chapter. Every one of us is invited to join this incredible change.

“*Man's Search for Meaning*”—Viktor Frankl's profound work showed how the Tzelem Elokim, the divine spark within, the soul's quest for meaning, empowers us to overcome unimaginable challenges. Today, it feels like a new

book is being written: “The Jew’s Search for Meaning.”

In this past year, modern-day Viktor Frankls have returned from the tunnels of Gaza. They aren’t authoring books, perhaps, but they are sharing their experiences through posts and stories. Forget academic studies; sometimes, just seeing the radiant light in their eyes, their illuminated faces, tells you everything.

I have begun collecting these contemporary accounts—stories that once might have become legends passed down through generations, but now flicker briefly on TikTok before vanishing.

- Consider Eliya Cohen: when told he was being released, he offered his spot to a fellow hostage who was physically and mentally weaker. “Let him go, I’ll stay,” he proposed. The terrorists refused (as his father, Momi, recounted). Or think of Omer Shem Tov, meticulously observing Shabbat in captivity. “He had only a flashlight,” his mother, Shelly, shared, “and he refused to turn it on during Shabbat, as a symbol, to honor the day.” And then there’s Agam Berger, whose story resonated

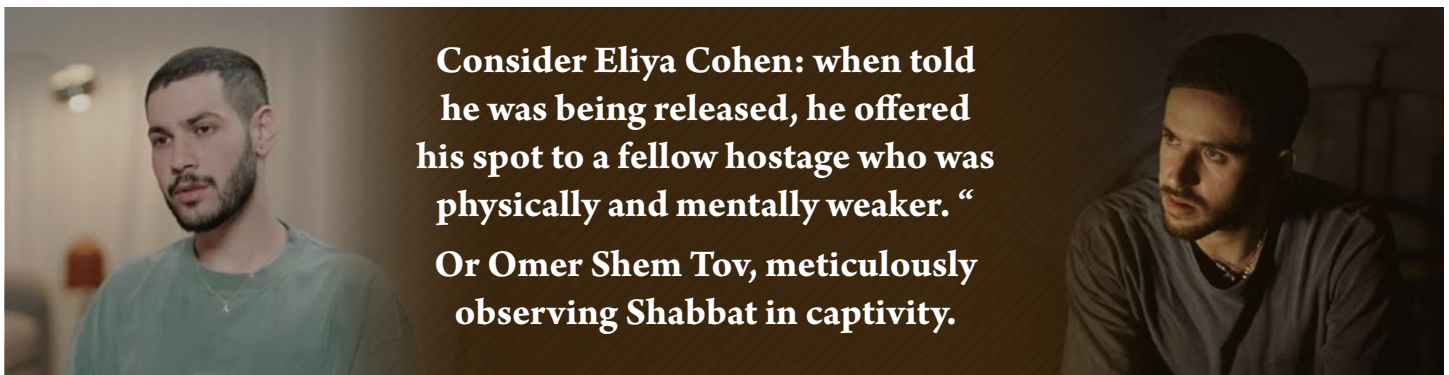
globally—*The Wall Street Journal* even featured an article by Rabbi Meir Soloveichik explaining the profound significance of her Shabbat observance in Gaza to an American audience.

- Shai Graucher became a household name during the war, tirelessly delivering gifts and aid to bereaved families, the wounded, and hostages. He’s noticed something striking lately: he offers a tablet, they ask for tefillin. He brings a smartphone, they ask for Shabbat candlesticks. Just this week, it happened with released hostage Ohad Ben Ami. Ohad requested tefillin, and then, on a Monday, asked to perform Havdalah. But Havdalah marks the end of Shabbat? Ohad explained his faith deepened in Gaza. In a viral video, he speaks with incredible force about belief, about G-d, about the Havdalah ceremonies fellow hostages held that gave him strength. He then simply asks someone to teach him the ritual right there, on a Monday, concluding with a powerful rendition of “Am Yisrael Chai.”
- And another true tale that sounds like a legend: Keith Siegel, a

kibbutznik, described trying to say a blessing over the meager food he received in captivity. Not knowing the specific brachot, he simply recited “*Borei Minei Mezonot*” (the blessing for grain products) over everything. When he finally came home, his family asked what special meal he wanted for their first Shabbat together. Keith replied, “Forget the food. First, I want a kippah and Kiddush.” His wife, Aviva, freed in an earlier exchange, shared tearfully in another widely seen video: “My captors demanded I pray with them. I told myself: I will not pray to Allah. I moved my lips, pretending, but I didn’t pray. I am so incredibly proud of myself for that.”

This list is far from complete, but the pattern is undeniable: Something profound is happening.

It extends beyond the hostages. Bereaved families are sharing incredibly moving stories of resilience and Jewish revival. “Those souls, they are working hard up there,” Israel Fenigstein, who lost his grandson Ma’oz in Gaza, told me recently. Ma’oz, from Susya, fell in the northern Strip last December. Then, out of the blue, Israel received a deeply touching



greeting from the past.

Years ago, when Ma'oz was a boy, his parents were on shlichut (community emissary work) in Montreal. Ma'oz attended the Hebrew Academy, where his classmates included Benjamin (Benji) Friedman and Eliana Rohr. They didn't stay in touch after those school years.

Upon hearing the devastating news of Ma'oz's death, a shocked Eliana posted in their alumni WhatsApp group, proposing a way to honor his memory. She started fundraising to print copies of *Mesilat Yesarim* (Path of the Just) by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (the Ramchal)—Ma'oz's favorite book—filled with timeless Jewish wisdom and ethics. The plan was to donate the books to their alma mater and other institutions, ensuring Ma'oz's legacy would live on through learning. She followed through, and the books were printed.

Benji saw the message and contacted Eliana privately. "I'm heading to Israel soon on a volunteer mission," he wrote. "Give me a copy, and I'll deliver it personally to Ma'oz's family, so they see how he's being remembered."

The rest of the story unfolded, quite literally, under the chuppah (wedding canopy) at Benji and Eliana's recent wedding in Canada. Rabbi Zelly Kleiman, officiating, shared this: "On his way to the airport, Benji stopped by Eliana's house to pick up the book.

Little did he know, that was their first date! That was the moment their souls connected. Ma'oz's soul brought you two together. He was the shadchan (matchmaker)! You were classmates for 12 years, never having a single deep conversation. And now, you've connected through this hero, bonded by your shared love for Torah learning. This isn't just Benji and Eliana's story; we are all part of something much larger."

The rabbi concluded the ceremony with prayers for the hostages, the soldiers, and all of Am Yisrael. When I called Benji days later, he confirmed every detail, eager for the story to be shared in Israel. "People need to understand," he said, "the ripple effects of what's happening here are immense." Benji and Eliana, both 26, are planning to make Aliyah after she finishes medical school soon.

And, as I write these words, news broke that Odaya, Ma'oz's widow, is now engaged. Truly, we have no idea what work these holy souls are accomplishing in the heavens...

Finally, let's look at Diaspora Jewry. Just observe your surroundings. See how the current wave of antisemitism and global hypocrisy, painful as it is, is paradoxically sparking a Jewish reawakening and strengthening. I have been privileged to visit numerous communities, not just to speak, but more importantly, to listen. On a recent lecture trip to Toronto, I heard

variations of these statements from individuals who admitted they weren't always synagogue regulars:

- "Since October 7th, we make *Kiddush* every single Shabbat."
- "After Simchat Torah, I made my first trip to Israel—ever. I'm 30. I went to volunteer near Gaza. I'm already booked to come back this summer, and I'm bringing friends."
- "Post-October 7th, I started learning Hebrew online. I also now attend a weekly Torah class at the synagogue."
- "For the first time, I'm wearing my Star of David necklace openly on campus, even with the hostile comments. I've never felt so strongly about anything."

At first glance, the connection seems puzzling. Hamas commits atrocities in southern Israel... and someone in Toronto starts learning Hebrew and making Kiddush? The answer is a resounding yes. This global shift has a name: the "October 8th Jews." Those who woke up on the day after October 7th. Whose hearts cracked open. Who suddenly grasped they were part of an epic story, a battle for identity, consciousness, and faith.

We are approaching Shavuot this year as a changed people. The Jewish nation is stirring, awakening. Each of us has a role to play in this unfolding process: invite someone for Shabbat, look around your community to see who needs help—materially or spiritually—and share the incredible spiritual treasures and resources of our tradition with those who lack them. May we merit to experience once again that profound, authentic unity of Mount Sinai—"k'ish echad, b'lev echad," one people with one heart, united around our Torah.



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Two Facets of Arvut

Collective Responsibility and Metaphysical Integration



Kol Yisrael areivin zeh la-zeh or arvut is generally understood to mean that we all bear responsibility for each other. I might suffer for the sins of another if I could have stopped him.

While this understanding is correct, it does not portray the whole picture. To appreciate this, consider how *arvut* works in a halachic context where we say that an individual who has fulfilled a mitzva has not truly fulfilled his mitzva if there is someone who still needs to fulfill the mitzva. For example, if Reuven said *kiddush* and Shimon did not, Reuven can repeat *kiddush* to exempt Shimon. This is true even though only someone obligated (a *bar chiyuva*) can exempt another person. How then can Reuven exempt Shimon if he has already recited *kiddush*? The answer is that Reuven has not truly fulfilled his mitzva of *kiddush* as long as Shimon (or anyone else) has not fulfilled their mitzva.¹ This notion only makes sense once we appreciate that we are, in fact, one unit.

Thus, the notion of *kol Yisrael areivin zeh la-zeh* goes beyond the notion that we are responsible for each other. It reflects that, on some level, we

are a single entity. Of course, we are also individuals. But we are not only individuals. Whether we feel it or not, we are part of something bigger. Therefore, when one Jew is lacking, I too am lacking.

The midrashim powerfully capture the extent to which this is so:

ונפש כי תחטא (ויקרא ה' א'), אינו אומר: נפשות כי יחטאו, אלא נפש, שכל ישראל נקראו נפש אחת, שנאמר: כל איש ישראל (שופטים כ' י"א), כולם כאיש אחד, ואם חטא אחד מהם כולם ערבים זה בזה, למה הדבר דומה, לבני אדם שהיו באים בספינה, נטל אחד מהם מקדח והתחיל קודח תחתיו, אמרו לו: שוטה, אתה קודח תחתיו והמים נכנסים וכולם אבודים.²

The verse states a soul that sins. It does not say souls that sin because the entire Israel is called a single soul, as the verse teaches everyone like one man. If one person sins everyone is bound up. This is analogous to people who were sitting in a ship. One of them took a drill and began drilling a hole under his seat. They said to him, "fool, if you drill under your own seat water will enter and we are all lost."

תני חזקיה (ירמיה נ, יז): שֶׁהַפְּזוּרָה יִשְׂרָאֵל, נִמְשְׁלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשָׁה, מִה שֶׁהָהָה לֹקֶה עַל רֹאשׁוֹ אוֹ בְּאַחַד מֵאַבְרָיו וְכָל אַבְרָיו מִרְגִּישִׁין,



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כָּךְ הוּא יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֶחָד מֵהֶן חוֹטֵא וְכָלֶן מִרְגִּישִׁין, (במדבר טז, כב): הָאִישׁ אֶחָד יַחֲטֵא, תְּנִי רִבִּי שְׂמֵעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי, מִשָּׁל לִבִּי אָדָם שֶׁהָיוּ יוֹשְׁבֵין בְּסַפִּינָה נָטַל אֶחָד מֵהֶן מִקְדָּח וְהִתְחִיל קוֹדֵחַ תַּחְתָּיו, אָמְרוּ לוֹ חֲבֵרָיו מַה אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב וְעוֹשֶׂה, אָמַר לָהֶם מַה אֶכְפֵּת לָכֶם לֹא תַחֲתִי אֲנִי קוֹדֵחַ, אָמְרוּ לוֹ שְׂהַמִּים עוֹלִין וּמִצִּיפִין עָלֵינוּ אֵת הַסַּפִּינָה. כָּךְ אָמַר אִיּוֹב (איוב יט, ד): וְאַף אֲמַנִם שְׂגִיתִי אֶתִּי תֵלִין מְשׁוּגָתִי, אָמְרוּ לוֹ חֲבֵרָיו (איוב לד, יז): כִּי יִסִּיף עַל חֲטָאתוֹ פֶּשַׁע בִּינִינוּ יִשְׁפּוֹק, אַתָּה מִסְפִּיק בִּינִינוּ אֵת עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ.³

Chizkiya taught: "Israel are scattered sheep" (Jeremiah 50:17). Israel is likened to sheep. Just as, if a sheep is struck on its head or one of its limbs all its limbs feel it, so it is with Israel; one of them sins and all of them feel it. "Shall one man sin, [and You will rage against the entire congregation?]" (Numbers 16:22).

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai taught: This is analogous to people who were sitting in a ship. One of them took a drill and began drilling a hole. His counterparts said to him: 'What are you sitting and doing?' He said to them: 'Why do you care? Am I not drilling under myself?' They said to him: 'Because the water will rise and flood the ship we are on!' So too, Job said: "If indeed I erred, with me my error rests" (Job 19:4). His counterparts said to him: "For he adds transgression to his sin, he extends [yispok] among us" (Job 34:37); you extend your iniquities among us.⁴

The Jewish people experienced the impact of *arvut* shortly after entering the land of Israel. A single Jew, Achan, sinned when he enjoyed the prohibited booty following the miraculous defeat of Yericho and the entire Jewish people suffered casualties in their next battle for Ai. Scripture highlights the degree to which the sin of an individual is attributed to the community.

וַיַּמְעִלוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַל בְּחֶרֶם וַיִּקַּח עָקֹן בֶּן
כַּרְמִי בֶן זַבְדִּי בֶן זֶרַח לְמִשֶּׁה יְהוּדָה מִן הַחֶרֶם
וַיַּחַר אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

(1) *The Israelites violated the proscription: Achan son of Carmi son of Zabdi son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of that which was proscribed, and God was incensed with the Israelites.*

חָטָא יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגַם עָבְרוּ אֶת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי
אוֹתָם וְגַם לָקְחוּ מִן הַחֶרֶם וְגַם גָּנְבוּ וְגַם כָּחֲשׁוּ
וְגַם שָׂמוּ בְכֻלֵּיהֶם.

(11) *Israel has sinned! They have broken the covenant by which I bound them. They have taken of the proscribed and put it in their vessels; they have stolen; they have broken faith!*

Yehoshua ch. 7

These verses stress not only that everyone is held responsible for the sin of one person (collective responsibility), but rather that everyone has sinned with the act of one person

(metaphysical unity). We are one being!

Are there any limitations to this unity? Interestingly, the Talmud draws one from the aforementioned pasuk with the teaching "Yisrael af al pi she-chata Yisrael hu." Usually this is translated as "a Jew, even if he sins, remains a Jew."⁵ However, Rashi (*Sanhedrin* 44a), R. Chananel (*Sanhedrin* 44a), Ralbag (*Yehoshua* 7:11), and Metzudat David (*Yehoshua* 7:11) seem to disagree, translating the phrase as follows: "Even though the people have sinned, they still are called Yisrael." In other words, even after Achan grievously sinned, the people as a whole retain the title Yisrael, and we do not say that the sin of one person corrupts the nation sufficiently for it to lose the title of Yisrael.⁶ This reading seems to be confirmed by the parable that follows it in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 44a).⁷ Even as this source limits *arvut*, it simultaneously highlights its scope.⁸

Our collectivity impacts all aspects of religious life. When we pray, we may not merely pray for ourselves, we must consider the entire Jewish people (*Berachot* 12b, *Bava Kamma* 92a, *Shabbat* 12b). Thus, when an individual wayfarer sets forth, he does not pray in singular form for his own safe passage but in plural "*she-tolichinu l-shalom*," that You guide **us** in peace. When praying for a loved one who is sick we make sure to include "*sha'ar cholei Yisrael*," the rest of the infirm among Israel, and when comforting a mourner, we do not comfort him alone, but include him "*bi-toch sha'ar aveilei Tziyon v-Yerushalayim*," along with all the other mourners for Zion and Jerusalem.

Generally, when struck by tragedy a person turns inward, lost in their own suffering, or the experience of their loved one, but Halacha demands of us the reverse. In the words of R. Joseph

B. Soloveitchik: "When disaster strikes, one must not be immersed completely in his passional destiny, thinking exclusively of himself, being concerned only with himself, and petitioning God merely for himself. The foundation of efficacious and noble prayer is human solidarity and sympathy or **the covenantal awareness of existential togetherness.**"⁹

Even prophecy, which would seem to be the most supernal experience an individual can experience, is never about the individual. When the Jews sinned in the desert God stopped communicating with his servant Moshe. Judaism rejects the notion of an elevated mystical experience which remains a private personal transcendence. Even the prophets, who achieved the highest spiritual state, did so in the context of conveying an ethical or halachic teaching for the people. Consider the most vivid encounters with the Divine known as *ma'aseh Merkava*:

*What did Isaiah hear when he beheld God sitting on the throne, high and exalted? "Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send and who will go for us...?'" What did Ezekiel hear when he completed his journey through the heavenly hierarchy to the mysterious sanctuary of God? "And He said unto me: son of man, I send thee to the children of israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me..."*¹⁰

Thus, Chazal derive from Yeshaya 52-3 in which a pious servant suffers for the sins of others that a tzadik suffers for the sins of the nation (*tzadik nitfas ba-avon ha-dor*):

עליו הכתוב אומר (ישעיהו נג:יא) מעמל נפשו
יראה ישבע וגו'. מכאן אמרו הת"ח שבדור הוא
סובל עונות הדור שבתוכו בינו לבין עצמו ואין
כל בריה יכולה להכיר בהן אלא הקב"ה לבדו

ועליו הכתוב אומר (שם) ועונותם הוא יסבול.
 ...About him (the righteous person) the verse says, "Of the travail of his soul he shall see to the full..." (Yeshayahu 53:11). From here, we see that a Torah scholar of the generation suffers the sins of that generation by himself, and no creation is able to recognize this—only Hashem knows. About him the verse says, "and their iniquities he did bear."

Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Rabbah 27:4

The tzadik's righteousness does not spare him from the fate of his brothers. On the contrary; he suffers more. He silently inexplicably suffers for them. We are all one people and we will all share one fate.

R. Soloveitchik in *Kol Dodi Dofek* powerfully articulates how our metaphysical unity demands we embrace our shared fate:

Second, the awareness of shared historical experience leads to the experience of shared suffering. A feeling of empathy is a basic fact in the consciousness of shared Jewish fate. The suffering of one segment of the nation is the lot of the entire community. The scattered and separated people mourns and is consoled together. Prayer, the cry, and the consolation were formulated, as I emphasized above, in the plural. Supplications that emerge from the depths of travail are not confined to the suffering and affliction of the groaning individual. They encompass the needs of the entire community. When there is a sick person in one's house, one prays not only for that person but for all the sick of Israel. When one enters the house of a mourner to comfort him and to wipe the tear from the bereaved's sad face, he directs his words of condolence to "all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." The slightest disturbance in the state of an individual or a sector of the people should trouble all segments of the nation throughout their dispersion. It is forbidden and it is impossible for the

*individual to isolate himself from his fellow and not participate in his suffering. If the assumption of shared historical experience is accurate, then shared suffering is its direct corollary.*¹¹

The degree to which this is true can be seen in the biblical blessings and curses which, for the most part, address the collective: If you (plural) follow in My statutes and observe My mitzvot then you (plural) will enjoy prosperity and success... But if you (plural) disdain My statutes and reject my mitzvot then you (plural) will suffer the most menacing punishments you can conceive of (paraphrase of Vayikra 26). It would seem that the individual's virtue or vice is irrelevant. In the blessings and curses of Devarim our existential togetherness is emphasized to a greater extent. This time Scripture speaks to the collective in singular form: If you (singular) follow in My voice, you (singular) will enjoy blessing beyond belief. But if you (singular) reject me, then... (paraphrase from Devarim 28). Here too God is addressing the collective but speaking to them as though they are one, because they are, in fact, one.

Of course, this is not the whole story. The Torah stridently and repeatedly rejects collective punishment.

לא יומתו אבות על בנים ובנים לא יומתו על אבות איש בחטאו יומתו:

Parents shall not for their children and children shall not die for their parents; the individual is punished for his own sins.

Devarim 24:16

ואת בני המכים לא המית ככתוב בספר תורת משה אשר צוה יקוק לאמר לא יומתו אבות על בנים ובנים לא יומתו על אבות כי אם איש בחטאו יומת.¹²

But he did not put to death the children of the assassins, in accordance with what is written in the Book of the Teaching of

Moses, where God commanded, "Parents shall not be put to death for children, nor children be put to death for parents; they shall be put to death only for their own crime."

Melachim II 14:6

הנפש החטאת היא תמות בן לא ישא בעון האב ואב לא ישא בעון הבן צדקת הצדיק עליו תהיה ורשעת הרשע עליו תהיה:

Only the person who sins shall die. A child shall not share the burden of a parent's guilt, nor shall a parent share the burden of a child's guilt; the righteousness of the righteous shall be accounted to them alone, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be accounted to them alone.

Yechezkeil 18:20

I have free will. Only I can stop myself from evil. I control no one else. Justice dictates that I not be punished for the sins of others.

What then of *tzadik nitfas ba-avon ha-dor*? Why does the *tzadik* suffer for others? "*Haya b-yado limchot v-lo micha*." He should have stopped us. He could have protested, or inspired.¹³

Based on what we have seen the following emerges: We are both individuals, responsible for ourselves, and part of something bigger. There is no such thing as collective punishment because I cannot control anyone but myself. But there is such a thing as collective suffering. When the heart is unhealthy the arm feels pain. It's not a punishment; it is a natural consequence of our integration. Thus, because we are all one metaphysical unit, to some degree, then we all share the same fate.

In *Derech Hashem* 2:3 Ramchal goes further: not only do the righteous protect the Jewish people in this world, by suffering on their behalf,¹⁴ but in the next world as well. The first mishna of the tenth chapter of *Sanhedrin* writes that every Jew has a portion in the

world to come. Ramchal wonders how this is possible; surely, there are those who are unworthy. Ramchal answers that כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה—we are like a single interconnected unit; since, as a unit, we are worthy of *olam ha-ba*, every individual attached to the unit gains entrance, regardless of his worthiness as an individual. Necessarily, however, this also demands that the worthy suffer for the sins of the unworthy. Justice dictates that if we are to be rewarded as a unit, we must suffer as a unit. Thus, *tzaddikim* suffer for the sins of their generation.

Of course, this whole concept remains perplexing. Why does the suffering of the innocent *tzaddik* help? The *Zohar*, as well as Ramchal in *Derech Hashem* 2:3:8, answers that this relates to *midat ha-din*, the attribute of justice. At first glance, this is surprising, because the concept of the innocent suffering for the guilty seems to be anything but just. However, what they appear to be suggesting is that *midat ha-din* is a metaphysical system built into the fabric of creation, much like the natural laws that govern the universe. *Midat ha-din* dictates that when sin is committed, there must be an accounting. Consider the following *Midrash Rabba*:¹⁵

זעקה אחת הזעיק יעקב לעשו, שנאמר (פ' תולדות) ויצעק צעקה גדולה ומרה ונפרע לו בשושן, שנאמר ויעק זעקה גדולה ומרה, ללמדך שאין תרונות לפני הקב"ה.
Yaakov caused Eisav to cry as it says, "and he cried a great and bitter wail," and [Yaakov] was repaid in Shushan, as it says "[and Mordechai] cried a great and bitter wail," which teaches us that God does not wantonly pardon.

This source indicates that even though Yaakov acted correctly when he caused Yitzchak to give him the blessing, since Yaakov pained Eisav there had to be an accounting. This took place generations later in Shushan. Had there been no

consequence for Eisav's anguish, it would have been considered *vatrantut*.¹⁶ Thus, Ramchal justifies *tzaddik nitfas ba-avon ha-dor* based on *arvut* and *middat ha-din*.¹⁷

Then, Ramchal discusses an even higher level in which the righteous don't just help their generation, but facilitate the redemption through their suffering. This is because redemption, or the revelation of the divine light, must be preceded by God withholding His light. Good can only be fully appreciated when contrasted with evil. A component of this divine hiddenness involves suffering. Thus, the suffering of the righteous precipitates the redemption of the entire world. Here too, eventually, the painful experience will end in reward.

Ramchal here is teaching that there are times when the rights of an individual are temporarily suspended for the collective. To illustrate, consider the following analogy. When an individual is accused of a crime, he is entitled to a fair trial. But in a war, anyone wearing the enemy uniform is shot. The broader goal of the universe occasionally demands the sacrificing of an individual's rights. Though tragic, it is just, as long as the broader mission is just. Here Ramchal explains that to allow for God's light to be revealed most fully it must be contrasted with its opposite—evil. The atonement achieved through the suffering of the righteous sometimes serves this purpose. Once again, Ramchal reiterates that there will be ultimate justice insofar as the *tzaddik* will be perfected and therefore rewarded due to his travails.

Let us consider another analogy, which might help us understand this challenging concept. The existence of nature demands that occasionally innocent suffer along with the guilty.

Of course, one might then ask why God created the system of nature. Now is not the time to answer that question. Suffice it to say that we believe that the system of nature was necessary for God to achieve His agenda in creation, even if, in a vacuum, nature is not always absolutely fair in the eyes of human beings. So too, according to Ramchal, we believe that a system whereby the righteous occasionally atone for the nation through their suffering is necessary for the purpose of creation to be achieved. Of course, this sort of suffering is much harder to understand than regarding nature. As such, the midrash cited emphasizes that this concept is beyond anybody's ability to truly understand. Also, not all thinkers accept this notion.

Thus, we have seen two models on *arvut*. In the first perspective we are a group of individuals who are responsible for each other. To the extent we can help, we must. Should we fail to live up to this responsibility we are accountable for the shortcomings of others.

In the second paradigm we are one. We suffer when other people sin not because we are responsible for their shortcomings but because we are one. Their failures are our failures.

These two understandings of *arvut* might emerge from the two formulations of the phrase we are considering. I think the easiest translation of *kol Yisrael areivin zeh la-zeh* is that we are all each other's guarantors. An *arev* or guarantor is someone who accepts to pay someone else's debt should they default. Nobody would guarantee a debt of a stranger. And so, the notion of *kol Yisrael areivin zeh la-zeh* reflects our unity and interconnectedness, without undermining our individuality.

However, the more common formulation in Chazal is *kol Yisrael areivin zeh ba-zeh*. This is better translated as we are all mixed together. *Li-arev* means to mix. *Ta'arovet* is a mixture. Collective responsibility rooted in metaphysical integration.

What emerges is that as individuals we are responsible for each other. *kol Yisrael areivin zeh la-zeh*; we are all each other's guarantors. But we are not just individuals. We are a part of something bigger *kol Yisrael areivin zeh ba-zeh*. As such, we share the same fate. When we step in to help someone else we are saving ourselves, because we are all on the same ship, and a ship sinks or stays afloat as a single unit.

Endnotes

1. ראש השנה כס': תני אהבה בריה דרבי זירא: כל הברכות כולן, אף על פי שיצא מוציא. רש"י: שהרי כל ישראל ערבין זה בזה למצות ר"ן: כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה במצוות וכיון שלא יצא חבירו כמי שלא יצא הוא דמי.
- ריב"א: אף על פי שהמצוות מוטלות על כל אחד, הרי כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה, וכולם כגוף אחד וכעבר הפורע חוב חבירו.
2. מדרש ילמדנו, הובא בקו"א לילקו"ש אות לח, וכע"ז בתדא"ר פ"א.
3. ויק"ר פ"ד.
4. The Sefaria Midrash Rabbah, 2022.
5. Indeed, numerous sources confirm this translation, citing the phrase to establish the impossibility of the individual shaking off his Jewishness. For example: *Yalkut Shimoni Yehoshua* 17 quotes the maxim to show that an apostate remains Jewish, at least with regards to marital status. Ra'avyah 1:151, as well as *Maggid Mishneh (Hilchot Yibum ve-Chalitza* 1:6), utilize the phrase for the same purpose. Similarly, Rashba and Ritva (*Yevamot* 22a) refer to "*Yisrael af al pi she-chata Yisrael hu*" to show that an apostate brother obligates levirate marriage. Ramban (*Bava Metzia* 71b) and Rosh (*Bava Metzia* 5:52) mention the phrase in explanation of Rashi's position

that the prohibition of interest applies even to transactions with apostates. *Ohr Zarua* 3:103 refers to the principle regarding the laws of inheritance. See "Brother Daniel and the Jewish Fraternity" in *Leaves of Faith* by R. Aharon Lichtenstein, Vol. 2, pp. 57-84.

6. One might have imagined that just as the integrity of the Jewish people demands collective punishment for the sin of the individual (*kol Yisrael areivin zeh la-zeh*), so too the sin of an individual can pollute the nation sufficiently to cause the forfeiture of the title *Yisrael*.

7. If this reading is correct, this source cannot serve as a proof that an individual sinner never loses his status as a Jew. Nevertheless, Rashi himself in a number of important responsa derives from this passage that a Jew cannot lose his halachic status as a Jew. In *Responsa* 171, he addresses the question of whether a marriage ceremony involving an apostate has halachic validity, thus requiring a legal divorce. Rashi emphatically states, "An apostate who willingly marries, his marriage is a valid marriage, as it is written 'Israel has sinned'—even though he has sinned, he remains a Jew."

שו"ת רש"י סימן קעא: תשובת - שאלה לרש"י ז"ל. הגני החתום משיב לשואלני: על דבר קדושי - העלמה שנתקדשה לשנים, ושניהם היו אנוסים לעבור על תורת - משה על ידי גוים, וגם העדים כיוצא בהם היו: רואה אני שהיא צריכה גט. שאף ישראל משומד לרצונו שקדש, [קדושו] קדושין, שנאמר (יהושע ז:יא; סנהדרין מ"ד רע"א; מדרש אנדה מסעי קסב). חטא ישראל, אע"פ שחטא, ישראל הוא. וכו' [האנוסים שלכם] (לכם) לשמים. והרי אילו מוכיח סופן על תחלתן שחזרו ויצאו משם כשמצאו הצלה. ואפילו ראו יהודים שהנהיגו עצמן בהפקר בעודן בין הגוים ליחד בעבירות בנות אל נכר, אין עדותן בטלה בכך. דקימא לן (סנהדרין כו; והשווה תשו' הרשב"א ח"א סי' ס"ד י"ד ע"ג) החשוד על העריות כשר לעדות אשה ומודה רב נחמן לעדות אשה שהוא פסול, וה"ל לאפוקה, אבל לעיולה מהימני. [ושלום שלמה בר' יצחק ז"ל].

8. Another source which highlights the limitations and scope of *arvut* is *Devarim* 29:28. See Rashi and other commentaries there.

9. *Lonely Man of Faith*, page 37-38 in the original *Tradition* printing.

10. Ibid. p. 39.

11. The above passage was translated by David Z. Gordon (2006) and retrieved from Sefaria

and is found in the section "The Covenants of Sinai and Egypt."

12. דברי הימים ב כה:ד : ואת בניהם לא המית כי ככתוב בתורה בספר משה אשר צוה יקוק לאמר לא ימותו אבות על בנים ובנים לא ימותו על אבות כי איש בחטאו ימותו:

13. סנהדרין כו ב; שבועות לט ב.

14. For more on this perplexing notion in see *Illuminating Jew Thought* Volume 3 (30.7 and 30.12).

15. אסתר רבה (וילנא) פרשה ח: אמר רבי חנין מ"ד קודשא בריך הוא ותרן הוא יתותרון בני מעוהי אלא מאריך רוחיה וגבי דיילה, תדע שהרי זעקה אחת הזעיק יעקב לעשו דכתיב (בראשית כ"ז) ויצעק צעקה גדולה ומרה.

16. While we believe God to be merciful and forgiving, we also believe Him to be just. As such, we never ascribe *vatranut* to God. Thus, *Bava Kamma* 50a states:

אמר ר' חנינא כל האומר הקב"ה ותרן הוא יתרו חייו שנאמר (דברים לב, ד) הצור תמים פעלו כי כל דרכיו משפט.

Rabbi Chanina says: Anyone who states that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is a *vatran*, his life will be relinquished [*yivatu*], as it is stated: "The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice" (*Devarim* 32:4).

Mercy is consistent with justice, insofar as it has bounds and limitations. For example, if a person sincerely repents, he will be forgiven, and will not be punished for his misdeed. If God would pardon without *teshuva*, if for no particular reason God let someone's transgression slip, that would constitute *vatranut*; it is a miscarriage of justice.

17. However, Ramchal is still troubled by the injustice of this notion. How could God make someone suffer if they did nothing wrong? Ramchal answers that God's trait of goodness is stronger than His trait that brings punishment (יומא עו); hence, if *tzaddikim* suffer for the sins of the community, they certainly will be rewarded for the community's achievements. A *tzaddik* must therefore accept his suffering with love; this will help his generation and elevate the *tzaddik* to an even higher spiritual plane. If he is the nation's leader, then certainly he will lead the way when the time of reward comes.



נשיח בחוקיד

DISCUSSIONS FROM OUR BEIS MEDRASH

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Parameters of Arevus: Exploring the Relevant Texts

by Rabbi Elchanan Adler, Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

לע"נ אבי מורי הרב צבי ב"ר ישראל הכהן זצ"ל נלב"ע ב' סיון תשפ"ד



The seminal event of Matan Torah is forever associated not only with the people's experiencing divine revelation, but with their achieving an extraordinary sense of unity. Rashi, quoting the *Mechilta*, describes this moment as "*k'ish echad b'lev echad*," emphasizing that this level of *achdus* was integral to *kabbalas haTorah*. The notion of Jewish unity is far more than an aspirational ideal; it is the bedrock of our commitment to mitzvos. It reflects the foundational principal of *arevus*—our relationship to our fellow Jew and our sense of collective responsibility, which reverberates for all future generations. Let us explore this concept more fully.

Background

The Gemara teaches that while the Jewish people travelled through the desert, they accepted a covenant on three different occasions:

SOTAH 37A-B

הפכו פניהם כלפי הר גריזים ופתחו בברכה כו'. תנו רבנן: ברוך בכלל ברוך בפרט, ארור בכלל ארור בפרט, ללמוד וללמד לשמור ולעשות – הרי ארבע, ארבע וארבע הרי שמונה, שמונה ושמונה הרי שש עשרה, וכן בסיני, וכן בערבות מואב, שנא': אלה דברי הברית אשר צוה ה' את משה וגו', וכתוב: ושמרתם את דברי הברית הזאת וגו', נמצא מ"ח בריתות על כל מצוה ומצוה ... ר' שמעון בן יהודה איש כפר עכו אמר משום רבי שמעון: אין לך מצוה ומצוה שכתובה בתורה, שלא נכרתו עליה ארבעים ושמנה בריתות של שש מאות אלף ושלשת אלפים וחמש מאות וחמשים. אמר רבי: לדברי רבי שמעון בן יהודה איש כפר עכו, שאמר משום רבי שמעון: אין לך כל מצוה ומצוה שכתובה בתורה, שלא נכרתו עליה ארבעים ושמנה בריתות של שש מאות אלף ושלשת אלפים וחמש מאות וחמשים, נמצא לכל אחד ואחד מאלפי ישראל שש מאות אלף ושלשת אלפים

וחמש מאות וחמשים. מאי בינייהו? אמר רב משרשיא: ערבא וערבא דערבא איכא בינייהו.

The Jewish people accepted a covenant at Har Sinai, at Arvos Moav and at Har Gerizim and Har Eival. These covenants signify responsibility for one another, even possibly to the extent that we became responsible for ensuring that others take responsibility.

This explains why Rashi places an emphasis on the *achdus* that took place at Har Sinai:

RASHI, SHEMOS 19:2

ויחן שם ישראל - כאיש אחד בלב אחד, אבל שאר כל החניות בתרעומת ובמחלוקת.

The Jewish people camped at the base of Har Sinai like one person with one heart.

The *Beis HaLevi* adds that this is why the words *na'aseh v'nishmah* are written in the plural:

BEIS HALEVI, PARASHAS MISHPATIM

דהיה לכל אחד לומר כל אשר דבר ה' אעשה והם אמרו בלשון רבים נעשה משום דכל אחד קיבל שתי קבלות, א' שהוא בעצמו יקיים התורה, וגם קיבל עליו להשגיח בחבירו שגם חבירו יקיימה ולא יניחנו לעבור עליה.

Accepting the Torah involved two commitments: a personal commitment to keep the Torah and a commitment of responsibility that others will also keep the Torah.

The *Sefer Chasidim* adds that collective acceptance was a prerequisite for kabbalas HaTorah:

SEFER CHASIDIM NO. 233

כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה שנאמר (שמות כ"ג) ויען כל העם קול אחד ויאמרו כל [הדברים] אשר דבר ה' נעשה אלו היה אחד מוחה לא נתנה התורה.

If a single person would have protested accepting the Torah, it would not have been given.

Accountability and Responsibility

What are the practical ramifications of this collective responsibility? The term “*arevus*” is based on a well-known phrase in the Gemara:

SANHEDRIN 27B

ובנים בעון אבות לא ... והכתיב (ויקרא כו, לו) וכשלו איש באחיו איש בעון אחיו מלמד שכולן ערבים זה בזה התם שהיה בידם למחות ולא מיחו.

Every Jew is a guarantor for one another and therefore, each person who had the ability to protest the sins of another and didn't do so, is held accountable for the other's sins.

The implication of the Gemara is that the primary application of *arevus* is that we are accountable for the sins of others. This raises several questions.

First, there is a mitzvah in the Torah of תוכיח את (Vayikra 19, 17), which requires us to rebuke others for their wrongdoing. What is the precise relationship between the mitzvah of *tochachah* and the concept of *arevus*? Is *arevus* simply a punishment for failure to perform *tochachah*? Or is *tochachah* a mitzvah that is part of a broader concept of *arevus*?

Second, why does the Gemara state that we are accountable when we had the ability to protest and failed to do so? If there is some sort of collective responsibility, shouldn't we be held accountable even if we didn't have the ability to protest?

To better address these questions, let us analyze a machlokes between R. Nechemiah and R. Yehuda. The Gemara discusses the sin of Achan (Yehoshua perek 7), who violated the ban against taking spoils of war from the capture of Yericho. The Gemara notes that while Achan also violated earlier bans during the time of Moshe Rabbeinu, collective punishment only applied to his violation of this ban:

SANHEDRIN 43B-44A

ועד השתא מאי טעמא לא איענוש, א"ר יוחנן משום ר' אלעזר בר' שמעון לפי שלא ענש על הנסתר עד שעברו ישראל את הירדן. כתנאי (דברים כט, כח) הנסתר לה' אלקינו והנגלות לנו ולבנינו עד עולם למה נקוד על לנו ולבנינו ועל עין' שבעד מלמד שלא ענש על הנסתר עד שעברו ישראל את הירדן דברי ר' יהודה א"ל ר' נחמיה וכי ענש על הנסתר לעולם והלא כבר נאמר עד עולם אלא כשם שלא ענש על הנסתר כך לא ענש על עונשין שבגלוי עד שעברו ישראל את הירדן אלא עכן מאי טעמא איענוש משום דהו ידעי ביה אשתו ובניו.

R. Yehuda and R. Nechemiah dispute if/when we are accountable for the sins of others.

R. Yehuda is of the opinion that before the Jewish People entered Eretz Yisrael, there was only collective punishment for public sins. After they entered Eretz Yisrael, there was collective punishment for private sins as well. According to R. Nechemiah, there was never collective punishment for private sins and collective punishment for public sins began only once the Jewish People entered Eretz Yisrael. Since Achan's sins weren't private—his family were aware of them—therefore, once the Jewish People entered Eretz Yisrael, Achan's sins were subject to collective punishment. How can this machlokes shed light on the underlying basis for the concept of *arevus*?

As noted earlier, collective responsibility stems from the idea that others had the ability to protest a

wrongdoing but failed to do so. How might this be understood according to R. Yehuda? If a person violated a sin in private and nobody else knew about it, how can we say that others are responsible because they should have protested? How could they have protested if they didn't know about it?

There is another, seemingly unrelated, area of halacha where failure to protest is significant. The third perek of *Bava Basra* discusses the concept of *chezkas gimmel shanim*. Reuven has been living on a property for three years and claims that he bought the property from Shimon but no longer has the documentation to prove it. Shimon disputes Reuven's claim and claims instead that Reuven is a squatter and never purchased the property. The halacha is that if Shimon voices a *macha'ah*—a formal protest—during those three years, Reuven cannot claim ownership simply on the basis of having enjoyed the benefits of living there for that time. However, if Shimon did not protest, we can assume that Reuven is the rightful owner. What is the role of Shimon's protest? *Ketzos HaChoshen* 140:2 presents two approaches to understanding this issue and claims that this is the subject of a machlokes between the Ramban and the Rambam:

RAMBAN, BAVA BASRA 42A

דטעמא דחזקה לאו משום איזדהורי ידיה בלחוד, אלא כיון דהאי שתיק רגלים לדבר, אלא שבתוך שלש אמרינן ליה למחזיק אחוי שטרך ולאחר שלש כיון דלא מזדהר בה טפי אתרע ליה האי טענה ואמרינן לא לחנם שתק.

Failure to protest is an indicator that the property belongs to the squatter.

RAMBAM, HILCHOS TO'EN V'NITAN 11:2

במה דברים אמורים שמצריכין ראובן להביא ראיה או יסתלק בשלא נשתמש בה זמן מרובה, אבל אם הביא עדים שאכל פירות קרקע שלש שנים רצופות ונהנה בכולה כדרך שנהנין כל אדם באותה קרקע, והוא שיהיה אפשר לבעלים הראשונים שידעו בזה שהחזיק ולא מיחו בו, מעמידין אותה ביד ראובן וישבע ראובן היסט שמכרה לו שמעון או נתנה לו ויפטר מפני שאומרים לו לשמעון אם אמת אתה טוען שלא מכרת ולא נתת למה היה זה משתמש שנה אחר שנה בקרקעך

ואין לך עליו לא שטר שכירות ולא שטר משכונה ולא מחית בו, טען ואמר מפני שלא הגיע אלי הדבר שהרי הייתי במדינה רחוקה אומרים אי אפשר שלא יגיע לידך הדבר בשלש שנים וכיון שהגיע לך היה לך למחות בפני עדים ותודיע אותם שפלוני גזל אותי למחר אתבענו בדין הואיל ולא מחית אתה הפסדת על עצמך.

Reuven's claim is valid as long as Shimon didn't protest.

The *Ketzos HaChoshen* explains as follows: According to the Ramban, Shimon's lack of protest is itself proof that Reuven is the rightful owner. Shimon's silence while Reuven enjoyed the benefits of the land for this length of time grants credibility to Reuven's claim of purchase—and entitles him to keep the property since he can't be expected to retain the documents for more than three years. According to the Rambam, however, Reuven's entitlement to keep the land does not derive from Reuven's passivity, but from his establishing a *chezkas shalosh shanim*, which substitutes for his proof of purchase. The ability for Shimon to protest is a technical tool that the chachamim granted Shimon to prevent Reuven from establishing a *chazakah*, requiring the squatter to preserve his original documentation. Absent such a protest, the *chazakah* establishes Reuven to be the presumed owner of the property.

With this analogy in mind, let us revisit the machlokes between R. Nechemiah and R. Yehuda regarding the nature of collective responsibility. We previously raised the question: how can R. Yehuda hold one person accountable for another's sin if it was done in private?

The Rishonim propose several suggestions:

MEIRI, BEIS HABECHIRAH, SANHEDRIN 43B

דייני ישראל וחכמיהם ומנהיגיהם צריכים הם לפשפש תמיד ולחזור ולחקור על מעשה בני עירם ואין להם התנצלות כשיעשו הראוי על הנגלה הבא לידם אלא צריכים לחקור ולרגל אחר הנסתרות כפי יכולתם וכל שמתרשלים בכך הרי הכל נענשים בנסתריהם של חוטאים שכל ישראל נעשו ערבים זה לזה משקבלו עליהם ברכות וקללות בגריזים ועיבל כמו שהתבאר בסוטה.

It is the responsibility of beis din to look out for potential sins that are being performed privately.

RABBEINU YONAH, SANHEDRIN 43B

אבל ר' יהודה סבר שאף על הנסתר נעשו ערבים לפי שאי אפשר שלא יכירו שום פגם כשהוא עובר בסתר.

R. Yehuda's opinion is that even private matters are traceable if one looks out carefully enough for character flaws.

As noted earlier, one way to understand why we are accountable for the sins of others is based on our failure to protest. Since there is a mitzvah of *tochachah*, it is incumbent upon us to do whatever we can to ensure that others observe the Torah. Failure to do so generates accountability (analogous to the Ramban's view of *chezkas shalosh shanim* that Shimon's failure to protest Reuven's squatting serves as the basis for validating Reuven's claim and awarding him the property). According to this approach, we can readily explain why R. Nechemiah limits accountability to public sins, since it is only for such obvious sins that we would be required to offer *tochachah*. In contrast, we aren't held responsible for sins committed in private—those we wouldn't reasonably be expected to know about.

Turning to R. Yehuda's position, we may suggest that he, too, agrees that the underlying basis for accountability is the failure to protest. However, he maintains that we are also held accountable for the private sins of others because we have the ability to prevent such sins as well—either because *beis din* has the capacity to investigate (Meiri) or because there are usually “red flags”—warning signs—that should alert us when someone is sinning in private (Rabbeinu Yonah).

There may be an entirely different way to explain why R. Yehuda holds that we are held responsible for private sins of others. Let's explore a comment of the *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*:

SHULCHAN ARUCH HARAV, OC 608:5

אבל דבר שאיסורו מפורש בתורה אע"פ שידוע לנו שהחוטא הזה לא יקבל ממנו אף אם נודיע לו האיסור אעפ"כ צריך למחות בידו לפי שכל ישראל ערבים זה בזה וע"י שמוחה בידו הוא מוציא את עצמו מן הערבות.

If the sinner won't listen, it is still worthwhile to protest because by doing so, the accountability is removed.

The basis for our being held accountable for the sins of others might not be the failure to protest, but rather a natural consequence of our commitment to the covenant. We accepted it as a nation and our collective acceptance means that our individual actions have a natural impact on all of *klal Yisrael*.

YALKUT SHIMONI YIRMIYAHU 334

שה פזורה ישראל. משולים כשה, מה דרכו של שה לוקה באחד מאבריו וכלם מרגישים, אף ישראל אחד חוטא וכלם נענשים. תני רבי שמעון בן יוחאי משל לשני בני אדם שהיו נתונים בספינה, נטל אחד מהם מקדח והתחיל קודח תחתיו, אמרו לו חבריו למה אתה עושה כך? אמר להם מה איכפת לכם לא תחתני אני קודח? אמרו לו מפני שאתה מציף עלינו את הספינה.

The actions of others have natural consequences for us, like the person who drills a hole under his seat in a boat.

What, then, is the role of protest or *tochachah*? It is a technical means of exempting us from such accountability. If we make an effort to stop a sinner from sinning and he follows through anyway, then we are exonerated and free from collective culpability. There is no *arevus* if *tochachah* was attempted. Yet, like the Rambam's view of *chezkas gimmel shanim*, the protest—or lack thereof—does not create the obligation; it merely generates an exception.

This logic is a more straightforward approach to explaining R. Yehuda's opinion. The reason we are held accountable for both public and private sins committed by others is simply because we are all part of the same collective unit of *klal Yisrael*. However, we are exempt from that accountability when genuine efforts have been made to prevent such sins from occurring.

In truth, the same could be said for R. Nechemiah's opinion. It is possible that even R. Nechemiah is of the opinion that by default, there is collective responsibility for all sins. The reason there is no accountability for private sins is not because there is no basis for such accountability, but because we are granted this exemption automatically. This perspective can be gleaned from a comment of the *Yad Ramah* regarding Achan. As we noted, according to R. Nechemiah, the reason that all of *Klal Yisrael* bore responsibility for the

sins of Achan, even though they were seemingly done clandestinely, is because his family knew. Why does that matter? The *Yad Ramah* explains:

YAD RAMAH, SANHEDRIN 43B

וכי תימא עכן מאי טעמא איענש ישראל עלויה הא נסתרות הוו, משום דהוו ידעי ביה אשתו ובניו ונפקי להו מכללא דנסתרות.

Because the family knew, it is no longer considered a private sin.

R. Nechemiah may distinguish between public and private sins, but it doesn't reflect a fundamental difference between his perspective and R. Yehuda's. Perhaps R. Nechemiah agrees that the sins of one person have a natural effect on all of klal Yisrael. However, in rare circumstances, when the matter is truly private, we are granted a special exemption. If, however, there are those among us who know about the sin, even if only a few family members, we are all held accountable.

We have seen that accountability for the sins of others—public sins for R. Nechemiah and private sins for R. Yehuda—did not go into effect until Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael. If so, what happened at Har Sinai? Let's examine the comments of the Mechilta:

MECHILTA, YISRO, PARSHA 5 AND COMMENTARY OF ZAYIS RA'ANAN

מכילתא: רבי אומר, להודיע שבחן של ישראל, שכשעמדו כולן על הר סיני לקבל התורה השוו כולם לב אחד לקבל מלכות שמים בשמחה, ולא עוד, אלא שהיו ממשכנין עצמן זה על זה.

זית רענן: מתמשכנין זה על זה – פי' נעשו ערבים זה על זה, ודייק מדכתיב ויחן כאיש אחד משמע שהן ערבים זה בזה.

At Har Sinai, the Jewish people joined as one to receive the Torah and take responsibility for one another as guarantors.

While accountability for the sins of others is an important aspect of *arevus*, and it didn't go into effect until the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael, the fundamental principle of *arevus*—that the observance of mitzvot is a collective effort—was foundational to our acceptance of mitzvot. This idea manifests itself in several ways beyond accountability.

SEFER CHAREDIM, LO SA'ASEH, EY NO. 2

ואם תאמר הרי כמה מצות תלויות בכהנים ובמקדש ובמלך, איך כל יחיד יכול לקיים תרי"ג, יש לומר דישאל כולם נפש אחת דכתיב שבעים נפש גם הם גוף אחד... והוא מה שנאמר גוי אחד בארץ, ולכן כתיב וכשלו איש באחיו ופרשו חז"ל איש בעון אחיו, וכולן מצווין במצות הוכח תוכיח אפילו תלמיד לרב, אם כן במה שמזרזין אלו את אלו במצות שהם יכולין לקיימן, אע"פ שאין המוכיח יכול לקיימן, בתוכחתו חשוב כאילו קיימן.

Through our responsibility towards others, we are able to observe all 613 mitzvot.

We know that it is impossible for a single person to observe all 613 mitzvot. Some mitzvot are directed to the king, some are limited to Kohanim, etc. The *Sefer Charedim* notes, however, that since each Jew is linked to the mitzvot of every other Jew, we each have a share in each mitzvah that is performed by others.

This idea is also applied practically to the recitation of berachot on behalf of another:

ROSH HASHANAH 29A AND RITVA

גמ': תני אהבה בריה דרבי זירא כל הברכות כולן אף על פי שיצא מוציא.

ריטב"א: פי' כל ברכות המצות אע"פ שיצא מוציא שאע"פ שהמצות מוטלות על כל אחד הרי כל ישראל ערבין זה לזה וכולם כגוף אחד וכערב הפורע חוב חבירו.

If one person already fulfilled a mitzvah, he can still recite a beracha for someone who didn't yet fulfill the mitzvah because we are all guarantors on each other's mitzvot and therefore, the one reciting the beracha is also fulfilling his own obligation.

Arevus isn't just about accountability and punishment. Our acceptance of the Torah at Har Sinai as one people forged a spiritual bond between all of us. Rav Chaim Shmulewitz (*Sichas Mussar* no.19) notes that at Har Sinai, we muted our individual identities and accepted the Torah as a collective identity. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, in his treatise *Kol Dodi Dofek*, adds that the covenant at Har Sinai was a *bris yi'ud*, a covenant of shared destiny. We became united in a singular mission to serve Hashem with a full sense of purpose. May we merit this Shavuot to take greater responsibility for all of our fellow Jews and inspire others to do the same.

Yatza Motzi: When Can We Make Berachos for Others?

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On Shabbos, a cup of wine is required three times: for Friday night Kiddush, daytime Kiddush, and Havdalah. Typically, the *ba'al habayis* (head of household) recites these for everyone present. But what if the *ba'al habayis* has already fulfilled his obligation? Can he still say the berachos on behalf of others? These common questions stem from the concept of *arevus*, that we are guarantors for each other's observance of mitzvos. This discussion will help clarify these issues.

Background

The more common scenario in which one person recites a beracha on behalf of others is when he is also fulfilling his own obligation at the same time. In such a case, he can recite the beracha for everyone based on the concept of *shomei'a k'oneh*—the listener is like the reciter. But what if he is not obligated to perform the mitzvah? Can he recite the beracha for someone else? For example, can a non-kohen recite the beracha said before *duchening* (*Asher kideshanu b'kedushaso shel Aharon*) on behalf of a kohen? The Mishna addresses this question:

MISHNA, ROSH HASHANAH 29A

זה הכלל כל שאינו מחוייב בדבר אינו מוציא את הרבים ידי חובתו.

A person who is not obligated in a mitzvah cannot perform it on behalf of others.

Based on the Mishna, it seems that if someone has no obligation to perform the mitzvah, he cannot recite the beracha for others. However, the Gemara offers an exception to this rule:

GEMARA, ROSH HASHANAH 29A

תני אהבה בריה דר' זירא כל הברכות כולן אע"פ שיצא מוציא חוץ מברכת הלחם וברכת היין שאם לא יצא מוציא ואם יצא אינו מוציא.

If one already fulfilled his obligation, he may recite a beracha for others, with the exception of the beracha on bread and wine.

In the Mishna's case, the person reciting the beracha was never obligated to do so. The Gemara's exception is a case in which the person reciting the beracha is no longer obligated to do so because he already fulfilled his obligation. However, prior to fulfilling his obligation, he was obligated on the same level as those currently listening.

What is the nature of this exception and why doesn't it apply to bread and wine?

RASHI, ROSH HASHANAH 29A

אע"פ שיצא מוציא: שהרי כל ישראל ערבין זה בזה למצות.

חוץ מברכת הלחם והיין: ושאר ברכת פירות וריחני שאינן חובה אלא שאסור ליהנות מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה ובזו אין כאן ערבות שאינו חובה על האדם לא ליתנה ולא ליבריק.

One who already fulfilled the mitzvah is a guarantor for others who have not. One cannot recite a beracha on food on behalf of others because eating is inherently optional.

What emerges is that there are three categories of obligation. The first is when one person is obligated and the other never was. Rashi implies that the reason *arevus* doesn't apply here is that we are only guarantors for the mitzvos we are obligated to perform.

The second is when both were obligated, but one has already fulfilled his obligation. Because he was initially obligated, he remains a guarantor for others with the same obligation and therefore, he can recite a beracha (and say *v'tzivanu*) because his obligation continues

even after he fulfilled his personal obligation.

The third category is when neither person is obligated. In such a case, *arevus* doesn't apply—because a guarantor can only take responsibility for an actual obligation. If Reuven is eating a sandwich and Shimon is not, Shimon cannot recite HaMotzi for Reuven because Reuven had no obligation to eat bread in the first place.

Let's now discuss the three Shabbos scenarios (for presentation purposes, we will go out of order).

Daytime Kiddush

Let's say Yehuda went to a Kiddush after Mussaf and already fulfilled his obligation to recite the daytime Kiddush. Now, he comes home and family members have not yet fulfilled their obligation, and he's expected to recite Kiddush for them. Can he do so on their behalf?

On the one hand, this seems to fit the second category: Yehuda was obligated to recite Kiddush earlier in the day and already fulfilled his obligation, so he can recite Kiddush for others. On the other hand, the daytime Kiddush is simply *Borei p'ri hagafen*. Perhaps we could argue that since it's merely a *birkas hanehenin* (beracha on food), it falls into the third category. This issue is discussed by Rav Yosef Karo:

BEIS YOSEF, ORACH CHAIM 273

כתב המרדכי בפרק ערבי פסחים (לה.) דקידוש דשחרית אינו יכול להוציא אחרים אם הוא מתענה כיון שאינו מברך אלא ברכת הנהנין לבד, אבל רבינו ירוחם כתב בח"א (סו.) שאע"פ שאינו מברך אלא ברכת הנהנין כיון דמשום דמצוה לקדש הוא מברך מוציא את אחרים.

According to Mordechai, one who already fulfilled daytime Kiddush cannot recite it on behalf of others. According to Rabbeinu Yerucham, since this particular Borei p'ri hagafen is obligatory, he may recite the beracha on behalf of others.

Rabbeinu Yerucham's opinion is codified by Rama, OC 273:4. *Mishna Berura* explains Rama's ruling and notes an important practical ramification:

MISHNA BERURA 27:19

אף דשם כל הקידוש הוא רק בפ"ג לבד מ"מ כיון דהיא מצוה ועיקרו נתקן שלא בשביל הנאה אלא מצוה עליו כשאר מצות משו"ה מוציא אחרים אע"פ שאינו נהנה כקידוש הלילה ולא דמי לברכת המוציא של שבת של כל השלש סעודות דאינו מוציא אם אינו אוכל עמהם דאף שהם חוב אין החוב עליו משום מצוה אלא כדי שיהנה מסעודת שבת ואין להמצוה עצמה חוב דהא אם הוא נהנה ממה שמתענה א"צ לאכול כדאיתא בסימן רפ"ח ע"כ אין מוציא אחרים אם אינו אוכל עמהם.

The beracha on wine is inherently obligatory. However, one who is not eating cannot recite HaMotzi at the Shabbos meals for others.

Mishna Berura's ruling is based on a comment of *Shulchan Aruch* OC 167:20, who writes that this whole discussion is only relevant when the one reciting the beracha is not planning on drinking the wine or eating the bread. As such, he may recite *Borei p'ri hagafen* for the daytime Kiddush and give the wine to someone else, but he may not do the same for HaMotzi.

Havdalah

Havdalah is usually recited in shul for those who wish to fulfill their obligation at shul. Those who plan on reciting it at home generally have in mind not to fulfill their obligation when they hear it at shul. This week, the gabbai asked Ari to recite Havdalah in shul. Can he now go home and recite Havdalah again for his wife and daughters?

The idea that someone who has already fulfilled a mitzvah can still recite a beracha on behalf of others is based on *arevus*. Since he remains responsible for ensuring that others fulfill their obligation, he retains a level of obligation. But what if the person he's helping is not technically obligated and is doing so voluntarily? Rama writes the following with regards to the beracha on shofar:

RAMA, OC 689:6

והמנהג שהנשים מברכות על מצות עשה שהזמן גרמא, על כן גם כאן מברכות לעצמן. אבל אחרים לא יברכו להן, אם כבר יצאו ואין תוקעין רק לנשים; אבל אם תוקעין לאיש המחוייב, מברכין לו אף על פי שכבר יצאו.

If a man who already fulfilled his mitzvah is blowing shofar on behalf of a woman, the woman should recite the beracha herself.

Women are exempt from *mitzvos aseh shehazman gerama*, and therefore they are exempt from the mitzvah of shofar. Nevertheless, according to Ashkenazi practice, a woman may recite a beracha when voluntarily fulfilling a *mitzvas aseh shehazman gerama*. However, Rama notes an important caveat: since the woman is not obligated to perform the mitzvah, *arevus* does not apply. A man who has already fulfilled his obligation cannot recite the beracha on her behalf, because she is performing the mitzvah voluntarily—and he therefore has no responsibility to ensure its fulfillment.

Are women obligated to recite Havdalah? Both Kiddush and Havdalah are *mitzvos aseh shehazman gerama*. However, the Gemara teaches that women are biblically obligated to recite Kiddush:

SHEVUOS 20B

אמר רב אדא בר אבהו נשים חייבות בקידוש היום דבר תורה דאמר קרא זכור ושמור כל שישנו בשמירה ישנו בזכירה והני נשי הואיל ואיתנהו בשמירה איתנהו נמי בזכירה.

Women are obligated to recite Kiddush because whoever is obligated in shemiras Shabbos (the negative commandments) is obligated in zechiras Shabbos (Kiddush).

Does the mitzvah of *zechiras Shabbos* (and the exception to the *zman gerama* principle) include Havdalah? This is the subject of a dispute among the rishonim:

MAGGID MISHNEH, HILCHOS SHABBOS 29:1

מדברי רבינו נראה בבאור שהוא סובר שההבדלה ג"כ דבר תורה והכל בכלל זכור וראיתי המפרשים ז"ל חלוקים בזה יש סוברים כדברי רבינו ואע"ג דבגמרא פ' ערבי פסחים (דף ק"ו) אין שם אלא זכרהו על היין בכניסתו אין לי אלא בלילה וכו' מ"מ ילפינן ליה מדכתיב ולהבדיל כמ"ש פרק ידיעות הטומאה (שבועות י"ח:) ולשון מכילתא זכור את יום השבת קדשהו בברכה ובבאור אמר זכרהו על היין ואמרו גם כן קדשהו בכניסתו וקדשהו ביציאתו. וי"א שההבדלה אינה אלא מד"ס אבל הקידוש הוא דבר תורה. ודע שלדברי הכל אחד אנשים ואחד

נשים חייבין הם בקידוש היום ומימרא מפורשת היא נשים חייבות בקידוש היום דבר תורה. ונפקא לן מזכור ושמור והבדלה נמי אם היא דבר תורה נפקא לן חיובא דנשים מהתם ואם היא מדבריהם דומיא דקידוש תקנוה ורבינו ז"ל סתם כאן וכיון שלא הזכיר בהן פטור מכלל שהן חייבות.

Havdalah is part of the mitzvah of zechiras Shabbos and as such, women are obligated to recite Havdalah.

ORCHOS CHAIM, HAVDALAH NO. 18

כתב הר"ש ז"ל נשים אין מבדילות לעצמן דאין הבדלה תלויה בשמירת שבת אלא רבנן אסמכוה אקרא.

Havdalah is a rabbinic enactment and therefore, women should not recite Havdalah themselves.

As a matter of halacha, *Shulchan Aruch* and Rama show deference to the opinion of *Orchos Chaim*:

SHULCHAN ARUCH AND RAMA, OC 296:8

נשים חייבות בהבדלה כשם שחייבות בקידוש ויש מי שחולק. הגה: על כן לא יבדילו לעצמן רק ישמעו הבדלה מן האנשים.

There are two opinions as to whether women are obligated to recite Havdalah and as such, women should listen to Havdalah from a man.

If the halacha follows *Maggid Mishneh*, then women are obligated to recite Havdalah. If the halacha follows *Orchos Chaim*, then they are exempt. Given that the machlokes is not definitively resolved, Rama recommends that a woman hear Havdalah from a man; this way, she can fulfill both opinions.

Even if following *Orchos Chaim*, why can't a woman recite Havdalah herself? While she is technically exempt, Ashkenazi practice allows women to recite berachos for mitzvos from which they are exempt. For this reason, *Bach*, OC 296, disagrees with Rama and permits women to recite Havdalah. *Magen Avraham*, 296:11, defends Rama's position and suggests that the reason women cannot volunteer to recite Havdalah if they are exempt is that women can only volunteer to recite a beracha on fulfillment of a mitzvah that involves an action. For example, when women listen to the shofar, they fulfill the mitzvah and may recite

a beracha prior to performing the mitzvah. However, if the mitzvah itself is to recite a beracha—as with Havdalah—they cannot volunteer. *Mishna Berura*, 296:35, concludes that if a woman has no other option, she should go ahead and recite Havdalah herself.

In our case, the man who is available to recite Havdalah already fulfilled his obligation in shul. According to *Orchos Chaim*, he may not repeat Havdalah on behalf of his wife and daughters because they have no obligation to recite Havdalah and there is no arevus. *Mishna Berura* suggests the following:

MISHNA BERURA 296:36

ואם האנשים כבר הבדילו לעצמם או שנתכונו לצאת בבה"נ לא יבדילו כדי להוציא הנשים אם אין שם זכרים גדולים או קטנים ששומעין ממנו דלחיש חולקין הוא ברכה לבטלה [מ"א ו"א] והנה בספר זכור לאברהם בערך הבדלה וכן בספר ברכי יוסף הביאו כמה פוסקים דס"ל דאפילו מי שהבדיל כבר יכול להבדיל בשביל הנשים מ"מ למה לנו להכניס עצמן בחשש ספק לענין ברכה אחרי דהיא יכולה להבדיל בעצמה וכמו שכתבנו בס"ק הקודם.

If a woman has a choice between listening to Havdalah from a man who already fulfilled his mitzvah or reciting it herself, she should recite Havdalah herself.

Kiddush on Friday Night

It is uncommon for someone to fulfill Kiddush Friday night before the Friday night meal. As such, there shouldn't be any question about the head of the household reciting Kiddush for everyone at the table. Even if he did already recite Kiddush, the issues we encountered previously are seemingly irrelevant. First, the primary beracha on Friday night is *Mekadesh HaShabbos*, which clearly qualifies for arevus—even according to the opinion of Mordechai. Second, Kiddush fulfills the mitzvah of *zechiras Shabbos*, and as noted earlier, women are equally obligated to perform this mitzvah. As such, a man who already fulfilled his mitzvah should have arevus for women who did not.

Notwithstanding these arguments, Rav Yechezkel Landau, *Dageul MeRivavah* to *Magen Avraham* 271:2, suggests that a typical Friday night Kiddush scenario

might present a problem. His suggestion is based on the combination of two factors. First, Rambam, *Hilchos Shabbos* 29:1,6, as well as Rabbeinu Tam (cited in *Tosafos, Nazir* 4a, s.v. Mai), are of the opinion that the biblical mitzvah of *zechiras Shabbos* doesn't require wine. The requirement to recite Kiddush over wine is rabbinic in nature. As such, when someone recites the beracha of *Mekadesh HaShabbos* at Ma'ariv, he has fulfilled his biblical obligation. When he gets home and is reciting Kiddush on wine, he is only obligated on a rabbinic level to do so. Those who have not recited Ma'ariv still have a biblical obligation. The only way for the rabbinically obligated person to recite Kiddush for the biblically obligated person is through the mechanism of arevus, which brings us to the second factor. Rav Landau quotes a comment of Rabbeinu Asher that implies that there is no arevus between men and women. If we combine these two factors, what emerges is that a man who davened Ma'ariv cannot recite Kiddush on behalf of a woman who did not. In many cases, this would mean that a man cannot recite Kiddush on Friday night for female members of his family.

Many acharonim disagree with Rav Landau's suggestion. Some of the opposition is based on the first factor. It could be argued that the man doesn't really fulfill his biblical obligation unless he does so over wine (*Tosafos, Pesachim* 106a, s.v. *Zochrehu*, final answer). It could also be argued that the text of Ma'ariv is insufficient to fulfill the biblical obligation because the Gemara, *Pesachim* 117b, implies that mentioning *yetzias Mitzrayim* is a biblical requirement, and in Ma'ariv there is no mention of *yetzias Mitzrayim* (*Minchas Chinuch* no.31, see also *Beur Halacha* 271:1). Another argument is that we can fulfill our biblical obligation by simply saying "good Shabbos" (Rabbi Akiva Eger to OC 271:2, see also *Beur Halacha* 271:2).

All of these arguments put those who davened Ma'ariv and those who didn't on the same footing—either they both remain biblically obligated, or both are only rabbinically obligated. In either case, arevus doesn't need to be invoked. We will now focus on the second question: Is it really true that arevus does not apply between men and women?

As noted earlier, this idea is based on a comment by Rabbeinu Asher. To understand the question he is addressing, let's first lay out the necessary background. There are two seemingly contradictory passages in the Gemara regarding recitation of Birkas HaMazon on behalf of someone else.

BERACHOS 48A

אמר ר' חייא בר אבא אר"י לעולם אינו מוציא את הרבים ידי חובתן עד שיאכל כזית דגן.

One cannot recite Birkas HaMazon on behalf of someone else unless the reciter ate a k'zayis of bread.

BERACHOS 20B

א"ל רבינא לרבא נשים בברכת המזון דאורייתא או דרבנן למאי נפקא מינה לאפוקי רבים ידי חובתן אי אמרת (בשלמא) דאורייתא אתי דאורייתא ומפיק דאורייתא (אלא אי) אמרת דרבנן הוי שאינו מחוייב בדבר וכל שאינו מחוייב בדבר אינו מוציא את הרבים ידי חובתן.

If women are only rabbinically obligated to recite Birkas HaMazon, they may not recite it on behalf of a man.

The biblical obligation to recite Birkas HaMazon applies only if one ate to the point of satisfaction (*k'dei seviah*). If a person ate a small amount (but larger than a *k'zayis*), the obligation is rabbinic. The Gemara, in stating that someone who ate a *k'zayis* can recite Birkas HaMazon for others, implies that someone with a rabbinic obligation can recite Birkas HaMazon for someone with a biblical obligation. In light of this, we need to better understand the Gemara's comment regarding a woman's obligation to recite Birkas HaMazon. The Gemara states that if a woman's obligation is only rabbinic, she cannot recite Birkas HaMazon on behalf of a man. Why should this be? Shouldn't we say that someone with a rabbinic obligation can recite Birkas HaMazon on behalf of someone with a biblical obligation?

Let's look at the answer of Rabbeinu Asher:

RABBEINU ASHER, BERACHOS 3:13

וא"ת מ"ש מהא דאמרי' לקמן בפרק שלשה שאכלו דף מח. להוציא את אחרים ידי חובתן עד שיאכל כזית דגן ובשיעור כזית אינו חייב אלא מדרבנן ואפילו הכי מוציא אחרים שאכלו כדי שביעה וחייבין מן התורה. ואם כן באשה נמי אע"פ שאינה חייבת אלא מדרבנן תוציא אחרים שחייבין מן התורה. י"ל דלא דמי דאיש אע"ג שלא אכל כלום דין הוא שיפטור את אחרים דכל ישראל ערבים זה בזה אלא מדרבנן אמרו שלא יברכו ברכת הנהנין בלא הנאה לפיכך כשאכל כזית אע"פ שאינו נתחייב אלא מדרבנן מוציא את אחרים שאכלו כדי שביעה. שערב הוא בעבורם ועליו הוא להצילן מן העון ולפטור אותן מן המצות אבל אשה אינה בכלל הערבות לכך אינה מוציאה אלא מי שחייבו מדרבנן.

In order to recite Birkas HaMazon for someone who is biblically obligated, we have to employ arevus. If women are rabbinically obligated, arevus can't be employed.

Rav Yechezkel Landau and Rabbi Akiva Eger have a machlokes about how to understand Rabbeinu Asher's comments. According to Rav Landau, Rabbeinu Asher's answer is that there is no *arevus* between men and women. As such, if a man has a biblical obligation to recite Birkas HaMazon and a woman's obligation is only rabbinic, we can't employ *arevus* to allow her to recite Birkas HaMazon on his behalf.

Rabbi Akiva Eger has a different understanding of Rabbeinu Asher's answer. Rabbeinu Asher is saying that if one assumes that a woman's obligation to recite Birkas HaMazon is only rabbinic in nature, that means that on a Torah level, she is completely exempt from Birkas HaMazon. A person who is completely exempt has no *arevus* for mitzvos that someone else is obligated to perform. That is the case in the Mishna that we began with.

Rav Landau applies his understanding of Rabbeinu Asher to our case of Kiddush. Since there is no *arevus* between men and women, just as a woman may not recite Birkas HaMazon for a man, so too, a man who already fulfilled his obligation may not recite Kiddush for a woman. Rabbi Akiva Eger disagrees and maintains that no such rule exists and the discussion in Rabbeinu Asher is specifically about Birkas HaMazon.

Conclusion

The application of *arevus* in the context of Shabbos presents several nuanced scenarios that require careful halachic consideration. From our analysis, we can derive several practical guidelines:

1. **For daytime Kiddush:** Following Rabbeinu Yerucham and the Rama's ruling, one who has already fulfilled his obligation may recite the daytime Kiddush on behalf of others, since the *Borei p'ri hagafen* in this context is considered obligatory rather than merely a *birkas hanehenin*.
2. **For Havdalah:** When a man has already fulfilled his obligation, the application of *arevus* becomes complicated by the dispute regarding women's obligation in Havdalah. Following *Mishna Berura's* guidance, it is preferable for women to recite

Havdalah themselves rather than hear it from a man who has already fulfilled his obligation.

3. **For Friday night Kiddush:** This presents the most complex case, particularly in light of Rav Landau's position regarding the absence of *arevus* between men and women. However, as many achronim have noted, there are several grounds to permit a man who has already davened Ma'ariv to recite Kiddush for women—either because they share the same level of obligation, or based on Rabbi Akiva Eger's understanding of Rabbeinu Asher, which indicates that *arevus* does, indeed, apply between men and women.

Understanding these distinctions helps navigate the complex interplay between obligation, exemption, and mutual responsibility that characterizes many aspects of halachic observance.

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The Uber Chavrusa

by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz

Abraham Arbesfeld Torah Dean, RIETS

Adapted by Rabbi Jordan Auerbach



A talmid asked a *shaila* after a fascinating experience in an Israeli taxi. The cab driver connected with this talmid over their names, both originating in Tanach. After making this connection, the talmid began discussing some Torah ideas with the (non-religious) driver. Following the ride, the talmid realized that the driver had most likely not recited Birchos Hatorah that day, and he wondered whether it had been permissible to learn Torah with this driver.

The questions that arise from this interaction touch on core aspects of hilchos Birchos Hatorah and, perhaps more significantly, relate to *hilchos ben adam l'chaveiro* and the interdependence among the Jewish people.

- Was this “chavrusa” halachically problematic?
- In the future, should the talmid avoid talking Torah with non-religious Jews?

We'll explore some sources to arrive at an approach to such scenarios.

The Requirement to Recite Birchos Hatorah Before Learning

BERACHOS 21A

מִנֵּיין לְבִרְכַּת הַתּוֹרָה לְפָנֶיהָ מִן הַתּוֹרָה — שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “כִּי שֵׁם ה' אֶקְרָא הָבו גֹּדֶל לְאַלְקֵינוּ”.

The Gemara in Berachos provides a biblical source for the recitation of Birchos Hatorah.

What is the nature of the obligation?

RASHI

כי שם ה' אקרא – כשבא משה לפתוח בדברי שירה אמר להם לישראל אני אברך תחלה ואתם ענו אחרי אמר כי שם ה' אקרא בברכה אתם הבו גודל לאלקינו באמן הכי מפרשי לה במסכת יומא.

Rashi understands the Gemara's interpretation of the pasuk as a description of Birchos Hatorah preceding Torah learning. The Gemara seems to indicate that the requirement to recite these berachos is a Torah-level obligation.

If the obligation to recite the Birchos Hatorah is Torah-mandated, there would be crucial practical differences l'halacha (in case of *safek*, if one recited the berachos, etc.).

However, the Rambam does not list the recitation of Birchos Hatorah in his *Sefer Hamitzvos*. This omission is the cause of some dispute. Was the Rambam intimating that, in his view, the recitation of these berachos is only a rabbinic obligation? Or is there an alternative explanation that allows the berachos to retain their Torah level obligation?

HASAGOS HARAMBAN TO SEFER HAMITZVOS

שנצטוונו להודות לשמו יתברך בכל עת שנקרא בתורה על הטובה הגדולה שעשה לנו בתת תורתו אלינו והודיענו המעשים הרצויים לפניו שבהם ננחל חיי העולם הבא, וכאשר נצטוונו בברכה אחר כל האכילה כן נצטוונו בזו. ובפרק ג' של ברכות (דף כ"א) אמרו מניין לברכת התורה לפניו מן התורה שנאמר כי שם ה' אקרא הבו גודל לאלהינו, ורצה ללמוד ברכת המזון לפניו שיהיה מן התורה ק"ו מזה אמר ומה תורה שאינה טעונה לאחריה טעונה לפניו מזון שטעון לאחריו אינו דין שטעון לפניו, ומשיבו על זה מדרך הפרכות מה לתורה שכן חיי עולם ועוד דתנן על המזון מברך לאחריו ואינו מברך לפניו, וחפצם בזה שכיון שבעל קרי אינו מברך לפני המזון והוא מברך לאחריו נלמוד שברכה לאחריו בלבד היא מן התורה ולפיכך אינה בטלה מפני תקנתם בטבילת בעלי קריין וש"מ דק"ו פריכא הוא. והעולה מזה שברכת התורה לפניו מצות עשה דאורייתא. ובגמרא דבני מערבא (פרק ז') אמרו כתוב בתורה ברכה לפניו ואין כתוב בה ברכה לאחריה מה כתוב בה לפניו כי שם ה' אקרא הבו גודל לאלהינו

כתוב במזון ברכה לאחריו ואין כתוב בו ברכה לפניו מה כתוב בו לאחריו ואכלת ושבעת וברכת ואין כתוב בו ברכה לפניו ומניין ליתן את האמור בזה לזה וכו'. מכל זה נתבאר שהברכה הזו מן התורה ואין ראוי למנותה מצוה אחת עם הקריאה כמו שמקרא בכורים אינו נמנה אחת עם הבאתו וספור יציאת מצרים עם אכילת הפסח:

The Ramban disagrees and includes Birchos Hatorah among his list of mitzvos forgotten by the Rambam. Their omission is erroneous, and their recitation is, in fact, obligated on a Torah level.

SHA'AGAS ARYEH NO. 24

שאלה: אם נסתפק אדם אם בירך בה"ת או לא – אם חייב לחזור ולברך מספק או דינו כשאר כל ברכות דרבנן שאין חוזר ומברך מספקא. תשובה: הרמב"ן בספר המצוות סוף חלק התשיעי (ט"ז) כתב מצוה שנצטוונו להודות לשמו ית' בכל עת שנקרא בתורה על הטובה הגדולה שעשה לנו בתת תורתו אלינו והודיענו המעשים הרצויים לפניו שנחל חיי העוה"ב, וכאשר נצטוונו בברכה אחר כל אכילה כן נצטוונו בזו. וע"כ ס"ל להרב שמצוות עשה מן התורה לברך קודם לימוד תורה, א"כ ספק ספקא כדאמר בפ"י מי שכתבו לגבי ק"ש למ"ד דק"ש דאורייתא ולגבי ספק אמר אמת ויציב...

The Sha'agas Aryeh sides with the position of the Ramban, that the requirement to recite Birchos Hatorah prior to learning is a Torah obligation. This has practical halachic ramifications as is evidenced in the responsum.

If, as is the view of the Ramban, the obligation of Birchos Hatorah is a Torah-level obligation, the laws of the berachos would be patterned after other Torah level obligations.

SEFER HACHINUCH NO. 430

וְכָל שֶׁאֵר הַבְּרָכוֹת כֻּלָּן הֵן מִדְּרַבָּנָן, חוּץ מֵאַחַת שֶׁהִיא מִן הַתּוֹרָה, וְכֵן הוּא מִפְּרָשׁ בְּגִמְרָא בְּבְרָכוֹת (כ"א א), וְהִיא בְּרַכַּת הַתּוֹרָה לְפָנֶיהָ. גַּם הַרְמַב"ן זְכָרוֹנוֹ לְבָרָכָה (במצוות עשה טו שהוסיף למנין הרמב"ם) יִחְשַׁב אוֹתָהּ מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה בְּפָנֶי עֲצָמָה. וְהַעֲנִין הַזֶּה שֶׁחִיבָנוּ הָאֵל בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּרַכָּה בְּקִרְיַת הַתּוֹרָה לְפָנֶיהָ וּבִמְזוֹן לְאַחֲרֵיוֹ מִן הַדּוּמָה שֶׁהִטְעֵם לִפְנֵי שֶׁהוּא בְּרוּךְ הוּא, לֹא יִשְׁאַל מִן הַחֶמֶר לְעִבְדוֹ וְלַהּוֹדוֹת בְּטוֹבוֹ, רַק אַחֵר שֶׁיִּקְבֹּל פָּרֶס מִמֶּנּוּ, כִּי הַחֶלֶק הַבְּהֵמִי לֹא תִפְרִי בְטוֹבָה רַק אַחֵר הַהֶרְגֵּשׁ. אֲבָל קִרְיַת הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁהוּא חֶלֶק הַשִּׁכָּל, וְהַשִּׁכָּל יוֹדֵעַ וּמִכִּיָּה וְקֹדֶם קִבְּלָת הַתּוֹשָׁעֶלֶת יָבִין אוֹתוֹ, עַל כֵּן יִחְיָבָנוּ הָאֵל לַהּוֹדוֹת לְפָנֶי קֹדֶם קִרְיַת הַתּוֹרָה, וּמוֹדָה עַל הָאֱמֶת יִמְצָא טַעַם בְּדַבָּרִי.

Sefer Hachinuch also writes clearly that Birchos Hatorah are required on a Torah level. And, therefore, the laws of their recitation would follow those of other Torah-level obligations.

KIRYAS SEFER, HILCHOS TEFILLAH 12:5

ברכת התורה לפניו מן התורה שנאמר כי שם ה' אקרא הבו גודל לאלהינו ולהרמב"ם ז"ל שאינו מונה אותה מצוה בפני עצמה נראה דהיא בכלל מצוות תלמוד תורה ולהכי לא באה במנין אבל היא מדאורייתא. ובקריאת תורה בצבור כשהיא מדאורייתא צריך הקורא לעמוד ובלא סמיכה דמה נתינת תורה בעמידה ובאימה כדכתיב וינועו ויעמדו כך קריאה באימה ועמידה.

The Mabit in his commentary on the Rambam, Kiryat Sefer, gives an alternative explanation to the absence of Birchos Hatorah in the Rambam's accounting of the 613 commandments. The Mabit argues that the Rambam agrees that the Birchos Hatorah are biblically mandated, however, the Rambam does not view them as their own distinct mitzvah; instead, they are subsumed within the broader commandment to study Torah.

The majority of rishonim seem to interpret the words of Chazal as indicative of a Torah command to recite berachos prior to learning Torah. This would seem to indicate that reciting the berachos is a Torah-level obligation and therefore, the practical laws would, ostensibly, follow the patterns of other Torah-level obligations.

SHEVIVEI EISH NO. 19

והנה הרמב"ן מנה למצוות ברכת התורה במנין המצוות שהושמטו ע"י הרמב"ם, והרבה ממפרשי הרמב"ם אית להו דהר"מ נמי מודה לי בהא מילתא והיא חיובא מן התורה, אלא דאית ליה והיא נכללת בכלל מצוות לימוד התורה וכמדויק מלשון הרמב"ן גופיה שם. ועיין בספה"מ להרס"ג שהרחיב בזה, וישם הוסיף דכיון דאסור ללמוד בלא ברכת התורה כשם שאסור לאכול לכן הרי היא נכללת במצוות הלימוד עיי"ש. וראה עוד להלן בכידון זה.

ואולי אפשר לומר דאינהו פליגי בגדר החובה דברכת התורה אם זה מדין ברכת השבח או ברכת המצוה, דמדברי הרמב"ן משמע להדיא דהוי בגדר הודאה על הטובה הגדולה שהנחילנו בנתינת התורה. אמנם הרמב"ם יתכן דאית ליה דהרי בגדר ברכת המצוה ולכן אין למנותה כחובה בפני עצמה, והוא פרט מפרטי המצוה לברכו לפני תחילת הלימוד על קיום מצוה זו. [ובאמת בירושלמי ברכות פ"ז הל"א איתא להדיא: עשאוה כשאר

מצוותיה של תורה, מה שאר כל המצוות טעונות ברכה, אף זו טעונה ברכה, ע"כ. ונהי דברכת התורה ברבים יליף התם מזימון ושמא יש בה גדר אחר' מ"מ ברכה יחידה הוי להדיא מטעם ברכת המצוה.

The Shevivei Aish posits that the root of the machlokes between the Rambam and Ramban is not regarding the level of obligation to recite the Birchos Hatorah, but about categorizing the berachos. The Ramban finds proof in the pesukim and believes that the berachos are recited to thank Hashem for the gift of the Torah and the opportunity to learn it. The Rambam, however, feels that they are just like any other birchas hamitzvah—rabbinic in nature—and recited before performing the mitzvah of learning Torah.

This new presentation of the machlokes may provide an alternative perspective which can, perhaps, present some potential for leniency.

SHULCHAN ARUCH, OC 47

א: ברכת התורה צריך ליזהר בה מאוד:

ב: צריך לברך בין למקרא בין למשנה בין לגמרא: הגה בין למדרש [טור]:

The Shulchan Aruch codifies the requirement as one requiring great care, and adds that the berachos are necessary before learning all areas of Torah.

MINCHAS SHLOMO NO. 91

אגב ראיתי דהדר גאונו סובר בפשיטות דלגמ' דידן אם אחד נמצא במצב שהוא אנוס על הברכה ואינו יכול בשום אופן לברך ברכת התורה דגם אסור לו ללמוד תורה משום דכמו שאסור ליהנות מהעוה"ז בלא ברכה כך אסור גם ללמוד תורה והברכה מעכבת דלמודו לא חשיב מצוה אלא עבירה, והוא חדוש גדול, שהרי לא מצינו שיאמרו חז"ל שאסור לעשות מצוה בלא ברכה כמו שאמרו לענין ברכת הנהנין ולמה יתבטל מלמוד תורה שהוא יותר חשוב מכל המצוות שבתורה בגלל זה שאינו יודע לברך

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l, in a teshuva to Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank zt'l, presents the possibility that if one is unable to recite Birchos Hatorah, even in a case of onnes, it would preclude one from learning.

However, Rav Nebenzahl shlita, in his commentary on the *Mishna Berurah*, B'Yitzchak Yikarei, points out that Rav Shlomo Zalman and the Chazon Ish both rule that one can learn when unable to recite the berachos due to the principle of *safek berachos l'hakel*.

SHEVIVEI EISH NO. 19

ולמסקנא דמילתא דאתיא מדברינו נראה דבאמת אין כל איסור בעצם הלימוד לפני הברכה אלא ובמניעת הברכה הרי הוא מבטל מצות ברכת התורה, אכל אין בזה כל הצדקה להמנע מן הלימוד בגין כך' ולכן בשבועות בהגיע עת עלות השחר ויש שנמנעים מן הלימוד מחמת דאין בידם למיעבד ברכת התורה מחמת ספיקא דדינא, לענ"ד נראה פשוט ראוי כל סיבה לבטל מצות תלמוד תורה מחמת ספק ברכת התורה, ואפילו אי נימא דאיכא איסורא מ"מ אין זה אלא מדרבנן וספיקא לקולא, וביותר דכיון דמספק אינו יכול לבדך ממילא ליכא איסורא כלל בתורת ודאיי דלא אסרו אלא היכא דרמי עליה חיוב הברכה. ברם לדעת מרן הרעק"א בסי' מ"ז דנקט בפשיטות דכל היכא דישן בערב שבועות ביממא חייל עליה חיובא בתורת ודאי לברך ברכת התורה בצפרא דשבועות, דיש כאן גם חיוב מחמת הלילה ובין מחמת השינה, וכמו כן לדעת המג"א סי' תצ"ד והפמ"ג שם דאית להו דכיון דמיעיקדא אין דעתו אלא לפטור את הלימודדהי יומא והלילה שלאחריו ומשו"ה שפיר מצי לבדך ברכת התורה מעיקר הדין, לדידהו יש להסתפק האם ראוי לבטל חובת הברכה מקמי הלימוד מחמת הקפידא לצאת על ידי אחרים שישנו בלילה, וכיון דמן הדין רשאי לברך אולי אין ראוי להמנע מברכה ומקיום מצות תלמוד תורה מחמת זה וצ"ע.

The Shevivei Aish writes that even if the obligation to recite Birchos Hatorah is a Torah obligation, the prohibition to learn without reciting the berachos is only rabbinic. Therefore, it would not be necessary to abstain from performing the mitzvah of learning Torah simply due to an inability to recite the berachos. On the morning of Shavuot, after having spent the entire night learning, there is a debate regarding one's ability/obligation to recite the berachos anew for the new day. The Shevivei Aish therefore rules that even if one wishes to listen to the berachos of one who slept during the night, and is therefore obligated according to all opinions in the recitation of the berachos, he would not need to stop learning prior to listening to the berachos.

Although there is a machlokes rishonim regarding the nature of the obligation to recite Birchos Hatorah, there is significant grounds to view the case of the non-observant driver leniently. Based on the opinions of several major poskim, one would not need to forego fulfilling the mitzvah of talmud Torah if unable to recite Birchos Hatorah.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

MINCHAS SHLOMO NO. 35

בהא דצריך כל אדם לשום דרכיו ולכוין מעשיו לשם שמים, חושבני, במי שבא אליו אורח חשוב, אשר איננו שומר תורה ומצוה, אבל עדיין יש לו אהבה לבני תורה, וגם תומך במוסדות תורה וכדומה, ואם הבעה"ב לא יתנהג אתו בנימוס המקובל לכבד אותו במידי ומיכל ומישת, בגלל זה שמצד הדין אסור ליתן לאכול אלא למי שיודע שנוטל ידיו ומברך (כמבואר בשו"ע או"ח סי' קס"ט סעי'), כ' וכמו בז' אם אפילו בצורה מכובדת יבקש ממנו ליטול ידים ולברך, יראה הדבר כפגיעה ועלבון בכבודו, וזה גם ירגיז אותו מאד, ויתכן שבגלל הדבר הזה יתרחק חס ושלום ביותר מהתורה, וגם יבוא לידי כעס ושנאה על כל ההולכים בדרך התורה

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l argues that when dealing with people who are not yet fully shomer Torah u'mitzvos, there is a relativity scale that factors into halachic considerations. While in general, the principle of lifnei iver could limit one's ability to learn Torah with someone who has not (and will not) recite Birchos Hatorah, Rav Shlomo Zalman points out that there may be times when the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. In our case one can certainly argue that the benefits of learning Torah with this taxi driver may outweigh his learning without having recited the berachos.

If it Will Never Occur

The Tzitz Eliezer discusses the issue of getting a ride from a taxi driver on Motzaei Shabbos, when clearly the taxi driver has not yet recited Havdalah:

TZITZ ELIEZER 11:34

נראה לי לחדש ולומר שאיסור עשיית המלאכה קודם אמירת המבדיל בין קודש לחול קיים ועומד כל עוד שיש בדעתו של האיש להבדיל, אבל בכגון נהגי רשיעי שאנן עסקינן בהו שמחמת רשעותם אין בדעתם כלל להבדיל באיזה צורה שהיא. לגבי כגון אלה חזר האיסור למקורו שהוא מה שאינו מקיים חובת מצות ההבדלה, וליכא לגבי כאלה איסור עשיית מלאכה בהיות ואין בדעתם כלל להבדיל, והגע בעצמך, הנהי רשיעי שאינם מתפללים האם קיים ועומד לגבי ידיהו איסור תמידי של איסור אכילה קודם תפלה ואסור לנו לסייע להם או להזמין לאכול? בודאי שלא, אלא בכגון אלה חל האיסור של אי התפלה אבל לא האיסור של איסור אכילה שזה חל על כאלה שבדעתם להתפלל, וא"כ ה"נ גם בנידוננו, על הנהי רשיעי שאין בדעתם כלל להבדיל לא חל האיסור של עשיית מלאכה במוצ"ש"ק הנובע מחובת אמירת הבדלה, אלא חל עלייהו

האיסור היסודי של אי עשיית הבדלה. באופן שיוצא לנו שלגבי דיין קלקלתם של הנהי נהגי רשיעי היא תקנתנו, שמותר לנו להזמין לעשות עבורנו מלאכתם, כי לא חל עליהו איסור עשיית מלאכה עם צאת השבת, ועונותם על עצמותם באי עשיית הבדלה, שלנו אין כל שייכות לזה, ושום גרמת סיוע לעבירה זאת אין אנו גורמים כלל, כמובן.

The Tzitz Eliezer writes that the prohibition to do any melacha before making/hearing Havdalah may be dependent on whether the person is going to make/hear Havdalah at all. If a person never makes Havdalah, never even thinks of making Havdalah ... then, the Tzitz Eliezer writes, the prohibition of doing melacha before Havdalah, or similarly to eat before davening etc..., does not apply if the person never davens, never makes Havdalah etc...

If, as in our case, the person with whom you wish to learn Torah has not and will not recite the berachos, there may not be a practical prohibition for that individual to learn Torah.

The question of the taxi chavrusa is a fascinating one. On the one hand, there is certainly an obligation to recite Birchos Hatorah prior to learning, and this obligation may in fact be on a Torah level. However, the potential prohibition against learning without reciting the berachos is only rabbinic in nature. Therefore, one can learn in a scenario in which they cannot recite the berachos, although we generally attempt to at least hear them from another who can.

Regarding our not-yet-observant taxi driver: since he never recites Birchos Hatorah and does not plan to start now, there is not really any prohibition for him to learn Torah without reciting the berachos. Subsequently, there would be no issue of *lifnei iver* for one who wishes to learn with him.

Also, while it is permissible to learn with this fellow Jew, I also believe that it is, in fact, a mitzvah to talk in learning with him. If it weren't permissible to talk in learning with someone who hadn't recited Birchos Hatorah, any sort of kiruv would be quite a challenge. It is through tasting the sweetness of Torah that neshamos are brought back to Hakadosh Boruch Hu.

As we celebrate *zman matan Toraseinu*, may we be zoche to learn with hislahavus and teach the Torah to others with a passion and excitement that draws them close to Hashem as well.

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