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Leiluy Nishmat David ben Mesuda.
Tihyeh Nishmato Betsurat Hachaim.

VA'ETCHANAN

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Shabbat begins: 20:01

Shabbat ends: 21:04



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
DIRECTOR, TAL

Are You Wise?

A Jew was riding on a train travelling through Russia. Seated next to him was a soldier of the Czar quietly boiling and seething with deep hatred toward the Jew. In one moment he let loose his anger to the Jew who, unaware of the danger, was staring into one of his holy books. He barked, "What makes you people so smart?"

The Jew was startled. He realized his life was at risk and he had better give the correct answer. Without hesitation, with help from heaven, he responded with perfect calm, one word - "Herring!" (That little bony fish) The soldier sternly inquired, "Do you have any?" The Jew acknowledged that he had a few pieces remaining which the soldier demanded with authority should be handed over to him.

Taking a big risk, the Jew refused and insisted he be compensated 20 Rubbles for the now desirous herring. The soldier hurriedly threw the money at him and took hold of the prize. In a one gulp, like a hungry bear, he swallowed the whole lot of them. After wiping his mouth brutally he turned to the Jew, who had calmly returned to his books, and protested, "20 Rubbles for those few pieces of fish?! Where we are going to in Moscow I can get five times that amount

sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' What makes us such a wise nation? The Torah hints to the secret in the above mentioned verse.

We are nation that is careful to observe – Ushmartem VaAsitem – we guard and perform. Rashi explains the difference between guarding and performing. Guarding is the learning Torah aspect, performing is the action of the Mitzvot. We learn and we put into practice what we learn. This enables us to internalise our Torah.



The Torah continues, it is not just those Mitzvot that we understand the meaning of that we perform, rather it is also the Chukim – statutes, in which we have no real understanding of, that enhances our wisdom and standing amongst the nations. The story is told of an ignorant villager that used to live on his own. One day he had a yearning for fish. He made his way to the fishmonger and asked for the tastiest fish. Whilst paying for the fish, he asked the fishmonger for the best recipe that would bring out the delicious flavour of the fish. The fishmonger wrote a list of instructions including how to salt the fish, what herbs to put, what temperature to heat it at, and for how long. The man paid, put the recipe in his pocket and went happily home. He arrived home, placed the fish on the table, and got ready preparing the herbs. He was

for the same price!" At that point the Jew turned to him with a full face and declared, "You see, it's starting to work already!"

Am Yisrael are known as a wise nation. The Torah states (Devarim 4:6) "Therefore be careful to observe them (Torah); for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the

Living with Mitzvos

1. Why does Parshas Voeschanon always come after Tisha BeAv, known as "Shabbos Nachamu"?
2. Rashi (3:23) brings that there are ten expressions of tefilla. Why did Moshe use here the expression of techina, supplication, asking for a matnos chinom, a present as opposed to any other expression or why not ask for permission due to his own merits?
3. What is so special about Eretz Yisroel that Moshe was so desperate to go there (something that we have found throughout the generations, the desire of great people to embark on difficult journeys to reach Eretz Yisroel)?
4. Moshe was allowed to see Eretz Yisroel from on top of a mountain. Was this viewing for his benefit or for the benefit of the other Jews?
5. Not only was Moshe not allowed to enter Eretz Yisroel when alive, but also his bones after death were not taken there (unlike Yakov and Yosef's as well as the other shevotim's bones). Why not? Was this a punishment for him or was it for the benefit of the Jews?
6. There is the mitzva of not adding to or detracting from the mitzvot of the Torah. It is easy to understand why we may not detract, but why can we not do more?

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shocked to notice a cat, swoop for the fish on the table, and yank it away with his teeth biting the fish in his mouth, cunningly escaping through the window.

The man shook his head towards the cat, and with a smile on his face, said "Silly Cat, what good will the fish be to you, - I have the recipe!"

The Taamei (reasons) Hamitsvot are tastes to the mitzvah. They give taste to the mitzvah, but the real Mitsva exists whether the taste is there or not.



**RABBI YITZCHAK
HAKOHN TAWIL**

"Allow me now to cross over and see the good Land that is on the other side of the



RABBI SHIMSHON SILKIN

Talk To Me

Picture the scene: You're standing in a supermarket checkout line behind a toddler clinging on to his mother's hand. Most youngsters feel like prisoners in a sweet shop at the checkout line because they are surrounded by all manner of treats towering above and swirling all around them.

Supermarkets are carefully designed this way to encourage what they call "impulse buying" – they know these kids will take less than ten seconds before badgering their parents for several varieties of everything they can see. And the toddler in our scene is no different: Mummy, can I have one? And the mother responds: No. Mummy

Our Sages state that although we should endeavour to learn Torah and understand the Mitzvot, there are plenty of Mitzvot that are known as Chukim – they were given to us, and we should perform them even without fully understanding them. The fact that Hashem commanded us to do these Mitzvot, should be enough of a reason to perform them.

When the nations of the world observe our heritage, and they see how we have stood through the waves of history with our

Jordan, this good mountain and the Lebanon." (3:25)

This good mountain – Jerusalem, And the Lebanon – The Holy Temple – Rashi

The Holy Temple was called Lebanon, which derives from the word, lavan [white], for through its remarkable powers of atonement, all our sins are whitened. – Sifri

Allow me now to cross over – Moses was not thinking about his own welfare when making this request. Rather, he feared that whoever would lead them into the Land would not complete the task and leave them at risk of being exiled eventually. Thus he requested, "Allow me to lead the people into the Land, for I will not rest until every last of

please? No. You're blood pressure starts to rise because you are also trapped – somebody has wedged their trolley in behind you – and you know what's about to happen: the child starts begging like his life depends on it. But the mother is steadfast: No! No! No! After several minutes of this, and with your headache now in full swing, you start thinking one of two things or both: either, can't this child just pack it in? What a spoiled brat! Or, this mother is so cruel! What would it harm? After all, you're the one who brought him shopping in the first place? Either way, you're exasperated. But our scene does not end there.

Picture this: All of a sudden the mother turns to the child and says: You ask me one more time and I'll buy you whatever you want! Now you're beginning to wonder about the sanity of this mother.

But it goes one step further: The child's response is to shrug his shoulders and say: It doesn't matter, I don't need anything. Hours later your head is likely to still be spinning. The child begged and begged, the mother resisted, then she finally relented, yet the child walks away – bizarre!

And yet that is exactly what appears to happen at the beginning of this week's Parsha. Moshe Rabbeinu pleads with Hashem no less than 515 times (Medrash Rabboh, Devorim 11:6) to gain entry to

traditions; how we stand strong in the performance of Mitzvot that we don't even understand, then they exclaim "This great nation is a wise and understanding people." Let us ensure we pass the mantle down through the generations, let us strengthen in our service of Hashem, through Mitzvot and Chukim and may we all be Zoche to the Wisdom of Hashem. Amen.

its current inhabitants are driven out, lest they later entice the Jews to sin and cause them to be exiled from the Land." His request was denied and his prediction proved prescient. – Sforino

If he requested to "cross over," wouldn't that automatically imply that he would "see the good Land"? R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk explained that many people merit to spend time in Israel, but few of them see only the good of the Land. Instead, they allow themselves to be sidetracked by the hardships and struggle that so often accompany one's existence in the Land. Moses promised G-d that if he were allowed to enter the Land, he would only see "the good of the Land," and not focus on its less savory aspects.

Eretz Yisroel – 515! And each time Hashem replies in the negative.

A casual observer could be forgiven for thinking one of two things, or both: Either, Moshe, the answer is no! It was no after the first time and the 100th time and 500th time! Or, Ribono Shel Olom, please let him in for just 5 minutes! He's Your ro'eh ne'emon, the leader of Your people, look how much it means to him – would it really be so bad? And then, as in our perplexing story, Hashem relents and says: Rav loch! Enough! One more request and you're in! At which point Moshe stops davening and effectively walks away. What on earth happened here?

Chazal (Shemos Rabboh 21:6 (see Pachad Yitzchok Pesach 14), describing the situation of Klal Yisroel at Krias Yam Suf, help us understand. The Yieden at that time were boxed in from all sides – the sea ahead of them, wild animals around them and the enemy closing in from behind. At which point they raised their eyes Heavenward and started crying to Hakodosh Boruch Hu as the posuk says "and the Bnei Yisrel cried out to Hashem". Why did Hashem do this to them? Because He "craves" their prayers. The Medrash goes on to compare this to a king who was travelling and heard the cries of a princess under attack who he immediately rescues. But after a short time passes

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the king yearns for the cry of the princess again and so he stages an “attack” from which he “delivers” her. Similarly when the Jewish nation fell quiet after their rescue from Mitzrayim, Hashem orchestrated this new threat so that He would hear their voices once more.

The powerful message that emerges from this Chazal is that contrary to the belief that we daven for our needs rather we have needs in order that we daven. The communication with the Ribono shel Olam, that is what He desires – it is about the relationship. When things go awry, it is only to fire up that communication again. (As an aside, this is true of any important relationship – the gadgets, gimmicks and presents are only valuable as a part of a

meaningful dialogue, something all the money in the world cannot buy).

No-one knew this more than Moshe. His overarching concern was not just to enter Eretz Yisroel, to receive that gift. Far more concerning was the fact that he was being barred in the first place. He knew that this was due to his misdemeanour (on his level) at Mei Meriva. He knew this had distanced him somewhat from Hashem. And that made him distraught. So before he departed from this world he set his mind to repair that damage, to close that gap. He understood that Eretz Yisroel was being held back from him as a means to bring him closer – Hashem was craving his entreaties. And so he began to daven. And daven. And daven. Until eventually Hakodosh Boruch

Hu told him: Moshe, you’ve done it, you’ve completely repaired the breach, there is nothing between us any more. Should you wish to still enter the Land I can make that happen but it will involve a reversal of My Divine plans. To which Moshe’s response was that he had no need to enter the Land if that was contrary to Hashem’s plans! His concern was the gap and that had now been closed. As far as he was concerned, it was mission accomplished.

For all of us, the same holds true. There is nothing Hashem covets more than our relationship with Him. Sadly, on occasion, we can drift into complacency. So Hashem wakes us up and shakes us up, as if to say: Talk to me! Is that too much to ask for? Vo’eschanan – talk to Hashem.



Rabbi Ezra Attiya was born in Aleppo in 1884 (5645) and died in Jerusalem in 1969 (5730).

Sephardic Jews, who in every generation have given Torah giants and luminaries to the Jewish people, have seen their spiritual stature dry up and their influence decline following the evil decrees and persecutions that have descended upon the world. Rabbi Ezra Attiya, a Sephardic Gaon of his generation, is the one who opened a new era and inaugurated a spiritual revolution among his brothers in Sephardic communities. His ideal was to boost the prestige of Sephardic sages, and during the 88 years of his life he encouraged generations of Talmidei Chachamim – rabbis and poskim, shochatim and chazzanim, teachers of young and old – who became leaders of Sephardic communities around the world. Sephardic Jews crowned him with the title of Rav Rabbanan (“the Rav of Rabbis”), and in fact Sephardic Jewry considers him as being the greatest of his generation.

Rabbi Ezra was born on Shevat 15, 5641 (1881) in Aram Tzova, i.e., Aleppo, Syria. His father Rabbi Yitzchak and his mother Leah were upright, G-d fearing people.

In 5651 (1891), his father and his family went and settled in the holy city of Jerusalem, but soon afterwards his father died suddenly. His mother, who was left a widow and without any resources, worked as a cleaning lady for a wealthy family in order to provide her son with food. The tiny Ezra studied Torah in poverty, content with some dry bread that he dipped in salt, and sleeping on benches in the Beit Midrash. Sometimes when his mother brought an egg to her beloved Ezra, he would slice it in two and give half to her. Even though he was often hungry, he never ceased studying Torah, and Torah was on his lips both day and night. He isolated himself in the tiny

Living with Mitzvos

1. Parshas Voeschanon contains the second Luchos. These express the idea that after the breaking of the first Luchos there is still hope. So too, after the churban there is still hope and we believe in the coming of Moshiach and that the third Beis Hamikdash will be built. It has a special name of Shabbos Nachamu being the first of the shiva d’nechemta, the seven weeks of comfort that follow Tisha BeAv, with a message from the parsha.
2. Perhaps the idea here is that Moshe as a great person who viewed nothing as coming to him and therefore did not use his merits as a reason to be allowed. He therefore asked for a present as opposed to demanding rights.
3. The Gemora (Sota 14a) says that there are certain mitzvos that can only be done in Eretz Yisroel and it was this that Moshe wanted so much to do. Additionally, since there is more kedusha there, even the same mitzvos that are done there are changed and are of a higher spiritual quality.
4. Rashi (3:27) implies that it was for Moshe’s benefit, the part of his request that was granted. Alternatively, we find elsewhere the power of seeing can cause goodness to be bestowed and here it was Moshe’s seeing the land that would somehow make it easier for the other Jews when they entered there. Perhaps the idea here is that the sin of the meraglim caused that their was negative seeing preceding the entry of the Jews into Eretz Yisroel. By Moshe now looking he was causing a positive seeing of Eretz Yisroel that would now precede the Jews entry into Eretz Yisroel.
5. Rabbeinu Bechai (3:27) brings that it was for the benefit of all the Jews who are buried outside of Eretz Yisroel – like the generation of the desert and all other Jews in exile throughout the ages. They now can feel “comforted” and honoured that also a great person like Moshe is also buried outside of Eretz Yisroel.
6. We must recognise that Hashem knows everything. If He gives a specific number of mitzvos then there is a reason for this number. Wanting to add mitzvos is like saying that ‘we know better’ and this is obviously wrong.

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