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PARSHA INSIGHT

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Read My Virtual Lips

“Moshe said if you do this thing...” (32:20)

Is it my imagination, or is there a completely new way of saying “No”? Albert Einstein once said that education is what remains after you’ve forgotten everything you learned in school. Part of my education, and I assume that of the vast majority of my “baby boom” peers, was how to say “No” politely. “I’m so sorry but...” “Please excuse me but...” “I’m afraid I’m going to have to say no...” Or, even, “I’m so sorry, but I’m going to have to pass on this...” But merely not to respond – that was unthinkable.

One of the less attractive features of our new cyber age — and it is certainly not lacking in unattractive features — is what I call “the email blaring silence.” “The email blaring silence” goes like this: You are involved in some email negotiation or other, to buy something or to rent something — and then all of a

sudden the “line goes dead”. Despite numerous follow-up emails, the other side just doesn’t respond. Nothing. Nada. Zilch. Now, maybe this is because of embarrassment. It’s true that people don’t like to say “No”, but what a waste of someone’s time — and expectations!

In this week’s Torah portion we learn from Moshe’s negotiations with the tribes of Reuven and Gad for their portion of the Land of Israel how precise an agreement must be. The condition must precede the subject of the agreement and the condition must be doubled. The wording must be thus: “If the condition is fulfilled, the agreement is valid, but if it is not fulfilled, the agreement is not valid... etc.” (*Kiddushin 61a*)

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Zevachim 79 - 85

The Mystery of the Ram's Horn

“The horns of the animal are also offered on the altar when they are still connected to the animal.”

This halacha is taught in the *mishna* on our *daf*, and refers to parts of the animal that are fit to burn on the altar in the case of an *olah* sacrifice, which is meant to be completely burned. The *mishna* cites the source for this halacha to also burn these particular parts as the words in a verse in Vayikra 1:9: “The *kohen* will cause *all* of the animal to go up in smoke on the altar, as a burnt offering.”

Rashi, in his commentary to a different verse in Chumash (Shemot 19:13), cites a *midrash* (Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer 31) which reveals the identity of the horn that G-d sounded at Mount Sinai to signal the departure of the Divine Presence following the Giving of the Torah. It was the horn from the ram that Avraham offered at the time of *akeidat* Yitzchak (the left one, to be specific; the right horn will be sounded at the future time of the final ingathering to Jerusalem of all exiles, as written in Seder Yeshayahu 27:13).

Based on this, a famous question is asked by the commentaries. The Ramban asks how was there a horn from that ram for G-d to sound at Mount Sinai since Avraham had already put it on the altar and burned it at the time of the *akeida*? One answer is that perhaps G-d gathered the ashes of horn and reconstituted it into a horn that was sounded at Mount Sinai. The Ramban also offers a second answer, based on Kaballah, and the reader is invited to learn it in the Ramban’s commentary to Shemot 19:13.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh (Rabbi Chaim Ibn Attar, 1696-1743, Morocco) offers three other possible answers to this apparent paradox that the Ramban addresses. Actually, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh poses the question in a slightly different manner: Why didn’t Avraham offer and burn the horn of the ram from the *akeida*, as we learn to be the halachic requirement from our *mishna* in *masechet* Zevachim? He offers three possible resolutions.

One is that Avraham did, in fact, put the horned-head of the ram on the altar to burn, in accordance with the halacha taught in our *mishna*, but that it fell from the altar. It is taught in a later *mishna* (86a) that if it should fall from the altar, it is not returned to there. (It is not evident why it would fall, and whether it fell with the head, or perhaps after it separated from the head due to the fire.)

In a second answer the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh also posits that Avraham placed the ram’s head with the horns on the altar, but that the horns became detached before the blood was sprinkled on the altar. In this case, the horns would not be placed on the altar as part of the offering, and it would even be permitted to derive benefit from them, such as using them for knife handles (as in the *gemara* on 86a).

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh suggests, in his third answer, that Avraham did not offer the horns on the altar, because it occurred at a time *before* the Torah was given. Although, he explains, we are taught that Avraham *Avinu* fulfilled all of the *mitzvot* even before they were commanded at Mount Sinai — and even before the rabbinical decree of *eruv tavshilin* (Yoma 28b) — there were exceptions to the rule before the actual giving of the Torah if there was an extraordinary need. Examples of these exceptions are the relationship between Yehuda and Tamar, and Yaakov marrying two sisters, Rachel and Leah. In the case of the ram’s horn, maintaining its existence would serve as a sign to inform future generations of the miracle of the *akeida* of Yitzchak. The ram’s horn was therefore intact at Mount Sinai.

The right horn will be blown at the future ingathering of the exiles as written, “On that day a great *shofar* shall be sounded, and those *lost* in the land of Assyria, and those exiled in the land of Egypt, shall come and they shall prostrate themselves before the G-d on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.” (Yeshayahu 27:13) A clever insight into this verse perhaps reveals the modern-day identity of these lands. The word for Assyria in Hebrew (*Ashur*) means “strength” and “validity.” The word for Egypt in Hebrew (*Mitzrayim*) means “troubles” (*tzar*). In the end, all Jews will return. They will return from a land (or lands) that derive great benefit from them in strengthening its economy, scientific knowledge and much more — a benefit they feel also strengthens them while there as well. In addition, Jews will also return from a land (or lands) that just plain cause them trouble, one that refuses to “let them go” without logical reason or benefit. In the end, all Jews will come home.

• Zevachim 85b

PARSHA Q&A?

Matot

1. Who may annul a vow?
2. When may a father annul his widowed daughter's vows?
3. Why were the Jewish People not commanded to attack Moav, as they were to attack Midian?
4. Those selected to fight Midian went unwillingly. Why?
5. What holy vessels accompanied the Jewish People into battle?
6. Those who killed in the war against Midian were required to remain outside the "machane" (camp). Which *machane*?
7. Besides removing traces of forbidden food, what else is needed to make metal vessels obtained from a non-Jew fit for a Jewish owner?
8. "We will build sheep-pens here for our livestock and cities for our little ones." What was improper about this statement?
9. During the conquest of the Land, where did *Bnei Gad* and *Bnei Reuven* position themselves?
10. What promise did *Bnei Gad* and *Bnei Reuven* make beyond that which Moshe required?

Masei

1. Why does the Torah list the places where the Jewish People camped?
 2. Why did the King of Arad feel at liberty to attack the Jewish People?
 3. What length was the camp in the *midbar*?
 4. Why does the Torah need to specify the boundaries that are to be inherited by the Jewish People?
 5. What was the *nesi'im*'s role in dividing the Land?
 6. When did the three cities east of the Jordan begin to function as refuge cities?
 7. There were six refuge cities, three on each side of the Jordan. Yet, on the east side of the Jordan there were only two and a half tribes. Why did they need three cities?
 8. To be judged as an intentional murderer, what type of weapon must the murderer use?
 9. Why is the *kohen gadol* blamed for accidental deaths?
 10. When an ancestral field moves by inheritance from one tribe to another, what happens to it in *Yovel*?
-

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

Matot

1. 30:2 - Preferably, an expert in the laws of *nedarim*. Otherwise, three ordinary people.
2. 30:10 - If she is under 12 1/2 years old and widowed before she was fully married.
3. 31:2 - Because Moav only acted out of fear against the Jewish People. Also, Ruth was destined to come from Moav.
4. 31:5 - They knew that Moshe's death would follow.
5. 31:6 - The *aron* and the *tzitz*.
6. 31:19 - The *Machane Shechina*.
7. 31:23 - Immersion in a *mikve*.
8. 32:16 - They showed more regard for their property than for their children.
9. 32:17 - At the head of the troops.
10. 32:24 - Moshe required them to remain west of the Jordan during the conquest of the Land. They promised to remain after the conquest until the Land was divided among the tribes.

Masei

1. 33:1 - To show G-d's love of the Jewish People. Although it was decreed that they wander in the desert, they did not travel continuously. During 38 years, they moved only 20 times.
 2. 33:40 - When Aharon died, the clouds of glory protecting the Jewish People departed.
 3. 33:49 - Twelve *mil* (one *mil* is 2,000 *amot*).
 4. 34:2 - Because certain *mitzvot* apply only in the Land.
 5. 34:17 - Each *nasi* represented his tribe. He also allocated the inheritance to each family in his tribe.
 6. 35:13 - After Yehoshua separated three cities west of the Jordan.
 7. 35:14 - Because murders were more common there.
 8. 35:16 - One capable of inflicting lethal injury.
 9. 35:25 - He should have prayed that such things not occur.
 10. 36:4 - It remains with the new tribe.
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LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

Grape — The Fruit of Joy

When Yotam presented his parable to the people of Shechem who had abandoned him and crowned his rival, Avimelech, as their ruler, he described the efforts of the trees to find one amongst them who would consent to be their king. The grapevine's refusal was based on a reluctance to give up its traditional role of supplying the wine which "gladdens G-d and men." (*Shoftim* 9:13)

Our Talmudic Sages (*Berachot* 35a) ask: "The fact that wine gladdens men is understood, but how does it gladden G-d?"

Their answer is that the Levites in the Beit Hamikdash offered their praise to G-d only in music and song, when the wine libations accompanying the sacrifices were poured on the altar.



Although there is a general blessing praising G-d as the Creator of fruit, which is made before consuming any fruit, even of the seven species, a special blessing is made before drinking wine. The reason, say our Sages (*ibid.* 35b), is because wine is unique in its ability to both satiate and gladden.

Caution must be exercised, however, as to how much gladdening wine, with its alcoholic element, should be allowed to induce. "There is nothing which brings so much sorrow to man," say our Sages (*Sanhedrin* 70b), "as does wine." This is a stern warning against intoxication induced by something with a capacity for bringing joy when used in moderation.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Matot

Moshe teaches the rules and restrictions governing oaths and vows — especially the role of a husband or father in either upholding or annulling a vow. *Bnei Yisrael* wage war against Midian. They kill the five Midianite kings, all the males and Bilaam. Moshe is upset that women were taken captive. They were catalysts for the immoral behavior of the Jewish People. He rebukes the officers. The spoils of war are counted and apportioned. The commanding officers report to Moshe that there was not one casualty among *Bnei Yisrael*. They bring an offering that is taken by Moshe and Elazar and placed in the *Ohel Mo'ed* (Tent of Meeting). The Tribes of Gad and Reuven, who own large quantities of livestock, petition Moshe to allow them to remain east of the Jordan and not enter the Land of Israel. They explain that the land east of the Jordan is quite suitable grazing land for their livestock. Moshe's initial response is that this request will discourage the rest of *Bnei Yisrael*, and that it is akin to the sin of the spies. They assure Moshe that they will first help conquer Israel, and only then will they go back to their homes on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Moshe

grants their request on condition that they uphold their part of the deal.

Masei

The Torah names all 42 encampments of *Bnei Yisrael* on their 40-year journey from the Exodus until the crossing of the Jordan River into *Eretz Yisrael*. G-d commands *Bnei Yisrael* to drive out the Canaanites from *Eretz Yisrael* and to demolish every vestige of their idolatry. *Bnei Yisrael* are warned that if they fail to rid the land completely of the Canaanites, those who remain will be "pins in their eyes and thorns in their sides." The boundaries of the Land of Israel are defined, and the tribes are commanded to set aside 48 cities for the *levi'im*, who do not receive a regular portion in the division of the Land. Cities of refuge are to be established: Someone who murders unintentionally may flee there. The daughters of Tzofchad marry members of their tribe so that their inheritance will stay in their own tribe. Thus ends the Book of *Bamidbar/Numbers*, the fourth of the Books of the Torah.

BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

Passover Mezuzah

From: Robert

Dear Rabbi,

I recently bought a new house. In anticipation of placing mezuzot (which I've learned are not the decorative boxes but rather the handwritten Torah passages on parchment placed inside the boxes), my family and I were discussing possible meanings for affixing mezuzot on the doorposts of one's house. I suggested that the source for this custom is from the ten plagues, where the placing of blood from the Passover sacrifice on the Israelites' doorposts was a sign to protect their homes from the Angel of Death. My brother thought that the purpose of the mezuzah is to create a space for G-d in the world in the form of a Jewish home. Our father felt strongly that the mezuzah is primarily a declaration — or even a statement of defiance to the world — as if to say, "Despite the many forces that would have it otherwise, here stands a Jewish home!" I was wondering if any (or perhaps all) of our ideas might be correct, and would appreciate your thoughts.

Dear Robert,

There certainly seems to be a correlation between the placing of both the blood of the Passover sacrifice in Egypt, and the *mezuzah*, on the doorpost. Even a cursory reading of the verses indicates that both emphasize placing a sign or remembrance on the doorpost, and in each case this sign serves as a protection and preserver of life:

Passover: "And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they will eat it... And the blood will be for you for a sign upon the houses where you will be, and I will see the blood and pass over you so that no plague will destroy you when I smite the

people of the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:7, 13).

Mezuzah: "And you shall set these words of Mine upon your heart and upon your soul... And you shall inscribe them upon the doorposts of your houses and upon your gates. In order that your days may increase, and the days of your children, on the Land which G-d swore to your Forefathers to give them, as the days of Heaven above the earth." (Deut. 11:18, 20-21)

In fact, the Zohar and Midrash explicitly correlate the blood on the doorpost of the first Passover to the *mezuzah*:

"A man builds a house and G-d says to him, 'Write My Name and put it on your door (as a *mezuzah*), and you will sit inside your house and I will sit outside your door and protect you'. Similarly, regarding Passover, He said, 'You mark on your doors the sign of the mystery of My faith (the blood of the paschal lamb) and I shall protect you from the outside.'" (Zohar Ex. 36a)

Similarly, "The blood of the Passover sacrifice was but of little significance, for it was required only once during the Exodus, not for all generations, and by night only, not by day; yet He would 'not allow the destroyer... to strike you.' How much more will He not permit the destroyer into the house which bears a *mezuzah*, which is of greater significance, seeing that the Divine Name is repeated there ten times (five times in the first paragraph in Deut. 6:4-9, and five times in the second in Deut. 11:13-21) — it is there by day and night, and it is a law for all generations." (Mechilta of Rabbi Yishmael, Bo 11)

Interestingly, several teachings indicate that the blood was to be smeared on the inside of the doorframe. And if the Passover event was the prototype for the *mezuzah*, this would support your brother's suggestion that the *mezuzah* demarcates a living space in which the inhabitants, focusing their attention on it and its call to holiness, make an abode for G-d in the private sphere. Therefore, the verse

Continued on page ten

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

Null and Void

The Torah grants a man the right to nullify the vows taken by his wife or young daughter. The legal mechanism by which he does this is called *hafarat nedarim* (“nullification of promises”). However, one who looks carefully in the Torah will notice that the act of cancelling a vow is sometimes *yani/heini* and sometime *heifer*. Do these two verbs refer to the same thing? If so, why does the Torah vacillate between using these two different terms?

Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) explains that the difference in the type of cancellation denoted by *heini* and *heifer* lies in that which is being cancelled. *Heinei* refers to the idea of cancelling or removing something which may not yet have come into existence. Psalms 33:10 says that G-d “cancels” (*heini*) the malicious thoughts of the enemies. Because those thoughts are merely abstract ideas and represent only a potential for something to happen, their cancellation is called *heini*.

On the other hand, the word *heifer* denotes cancelling or stopping something which had already come into existence. Rabbi Wertheimer writes that the word *heifer* is related to the word *pur* (“crumb”) because a *hafarah* breaks or “crumbles” something which already exists, and effectively pulverizes it out of existence. When one abrogates an agreement or expectation, such as a commandment (Num. 15:31) or covenant (Isa. 44:25), his actions are akin to somebody who takes a binding contract and rips into pieces. This is called *hafarah*.

Based on this, Rabbi Wertheimer explains why, when discussing nullifying vows, the Torah sometimes uses the word *heifer* and sometimes *heini*. In nullifying the vow of his wife or daughter, one has effectuated two parallel outcomes: He stopped her from carrying out that which she had promised to do, and, concurrently, he crumpled away the legal reality of her vow. The Torah uses the word *heini* only in reference to what the father or husband has done to the plans of the lady in question, because *heini* refers to the removal of something which had not yet come into existence. However, when referring to the abstract legal reality of

the vow, the Torah uses the word *heifer*, because that reality had already come into existence — and only then can *hafarat nedarim* destroy it.

Malbim similarly explains that *heini* refers to forcing something out of existence, while *heifer* refers to simply ensuring that something will not come to fruition, without necessarily using force.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Gen. 12:10-13) connects the word *heini* with the similarly spelled word *na* (“raw”). In his estimation, the common link between them is that they both denote “interrupting” or “stopping” because *na* refers to something half-cooked, in which case the cooking process was interrupted. This is similar to *heini*, which is a sort of interruption that hinders and impedes upon the fulfillment of one’s vow. (See *Midrash Sechel Tov* to Ex. 12:9 who also associated *heini* with *na*). Nonetheless, this association is somewhat questionable because although the verb *heini/yani* is generally spelled with an ALEPH (like *na*), in Psalms 141:5 the word *yani* appears sans the ALEPH.

The early grammarians struggled to explain what *yani** exactly means: Menachem ibn Saruq (910-970) explained that this verb means “to break”, while his famous interlocutor, Dunash ibn Labrat (925-990), followed Rav Saadia Gaon (882-942) in explaining that *yani* means “to deny” or “to withhold”. A century later, that controversy raged on, with Rashi (1040-1105) in his commentary to Num. 30:6 adopting Dunash’s view, while Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1167), in multiple places (see his commentary to Ex. 12:9, Num. 30:6, Num 14:3, and Ps. 141:5), adopts Menachem’s understanding. Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) weighs the merits and drawbacks of these two possibilities in a lengthy discussion concerning whether *heini* refers to the “removal of will” (in accordance with Menachem) or “withholding the [fulfillment of] will” (in consonance with Dunash). Interestingly, although Ibn Ezra defines *heini* as “breaking”, he also seems to explain that it is synonymous with *heifer*.

Another word for nullifying or stopping is *batel*. That

Continued on page eight

NEW
SERIES!

ANATOMY OF A MITZVAH

BY RABBI YITZCHAK BOTTON

Vows, Nazirut & Finding the Right Balance

If a man takes a vow to G-d, or swears an oath, to establish a prohibition upon himself, he shall not desecrate his word; according to whatever comes out of his mouth he must do (Parshat Matot, Bamidbar 30:3).

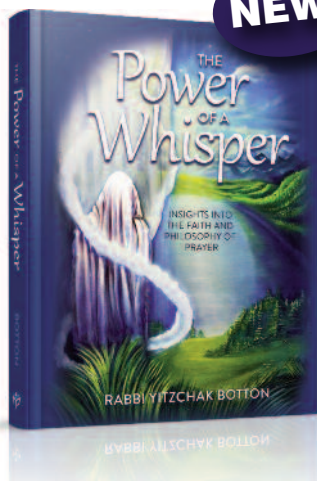
We are all looking for the right balance in life: Just the right amount of work, the right amount of play, a little laughter here and there and an occasional twist of excitement. And let's not forget about purpose and accomplishment. After all, what would life be without them?

The Torah, together with its complex body of laws, provides us with precise instructions on how to achieve a life of purpose with the perfect balance. If one were to look with truthful eyes at the 365 prohibitive commandments, one would see that they don't constrict or limit, but rather help one navigate through the twisting and turning road of life. Just as the lines on a road, both solid and dotted, help travelers reach their desired destination, the laws of the Torah help us reach our desired destination — a balanced life, full of accomplishment, excitement, true joy, laughter, everlasting satisfaction and much more.

Though the Torah is a perfect fit for each one of us, since no two people are exactly alike, and what works to stimulate one person may not have the same effect on another, the Torah provides us with the opportunity to establish additional prohibitions on ourselves. One of the goals of these self-imposed restrictions is meant to help a person who is having trouble achieving the perfect

balance in his life realize his true and full potential.

A story from the Talmud (*Nazir 4b*): Shimon Hatzaddik said: In all my days I never ate the guilt-offering of a ritually impure Nazirite, except for one occasion. One time, a man who was a Nazirite came from the South. I saw that he had beautiful eyes and was good looking, and the fringes of his hair were arranged in curls. I said to him, "My son, why have you seen fit to destroy this beautiful hair?" He said to me, "I was a shepherd for my father in my city, and I went to draw water from the spring. I looked at my reflection in the water and my evil inclination quickly overcame me and sought to banish me from the world. I said to my evil inclination (i.e., myself at the time, who was overcome with the inclination to sin), 'Good for nothing! Why do you pride yourself in a world that is not yours, where you will eventually be food in the grave for worms and maggots? I swear by the Temple service that I will shave you for the sake of Heaven.'" Rabbi Hatzaddik concluded: I immediately stood and kissed him on his head. I said to him, "May there be more members of the Jewish People who are like you, making vows of the Nazirite for this purpose. About you the verse states (Bam. 6:2), 'When a man or a woman will utter a vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to consecrate himself to G-d.'"



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BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

More than Kettle to the Metal

In this week's Torah portion we are taught the law of *tevilat keilim*, immersing vessels in the purifying Mikveh waters. When the Jews return from the war against Midyan with booty, Elazar instructs them not only to pass all metal vessels under fire, to make them kosher, but also to immerse them in Mikveh waters to sanctify them.

The law dictates that metal food-vessels that pass from non-Jewish to Jewish possession require immersion. This is true even if they were never actually used by the non-Jews, and if they never absorbed any forbidden foods. This is not a law of *kashrut* it is a law of *kedusha*. Its purpose is to teach the Jew that even the sensual enjoyment of food must be sanctified.

However, the fact that only metal (as opposed to earthenware) vessels require immersion teaches a more nuanced lesson. Metal represents man's intellectual mastery over the earth and its

materials. Eating serves man's physical and sensual nature. Thus, a metal utensil used for eating represents the intellectual side of man in the service of his sensual nature. This would be antithetical to the Torah's regime, where man's sensual drives are subordinate to his intellect. Only with this subordination can he freely choose to serve G-d.

Precisely where the symbolism could be understood as the intellect serving the sensual, the Torah ordains ritual immersion. Indeed, the Hebrew word used to describe the process of purification of these vessels — *yitchata* — is a conjugate of the Hebrew word for sin. In this context, the purification is intended to revive and strengthen the consciousness of moral freedom, and it is precisely this awareness — that the physical experience is at the service of the intellect — that reinforces the ability to abstain from sin.

• Sources: Commentary, Bamidbar 31:23

What's in a Word...continued from page six

word and its cognates are the favored word in Rabbinic literature for denoting nullification. *Bitul Torah* refers to unnecessary idleness in lieu of studying Torah, *bitul chametz* refers to declaring void one's leavened breads before Pesach, and *bitul b'rov* refers to non-kosher food becoming nullified in a mixture that consists of an overwhelming majority of kosher food. Because of the "futility" associated with *batalah*, the term came to refer to anything whose purpose was not readily clear, but seemed futile. The root of *batel* appears to be of Aramaic origin because it appears only seven times in the Bible (Koh. 12:3 and six times in Ezra 4-6), but makes more appearances in the Targumim. Perhaps

batel is conceptually-related to *tal* ("dew"), which appears in the early morning, but quickly dissipates out of existence.

*For more information about the meaning of the word *yani* in Ps. 141:5, and a historical controversy that this question generated, see Rabbi Dr. Yosaif M. Dubovick's article "Oil, which shall not quit my head": Jewish-Christian Interaction in Eleventh-century Baghdad," *Entangled Religions* vol. 6 (2018).

Liluy Nishmat my mother Bracha bat R' Dovid
and my grandmother Shprintza bat R' Meir

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BY RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

Only One Doorpost

Q: Our new home was designed in a style called “open plan.” In plain terms, this means that the living areas sort of flow into one another without a lot of conventional doorways with two posts and a lintel. Can you blame me for being a little confused about whether I need mezuzot at all!

A: The Sages debate whether the Torah’s use of the plural “doorposts” indicates that a doorway with only one post does not require a mezuzah. In practice, if the sole doorpost is on the left of the person entering the room, no mezuzah is necessary.

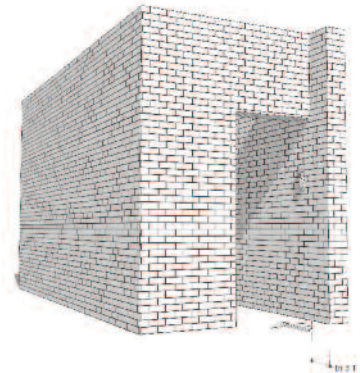
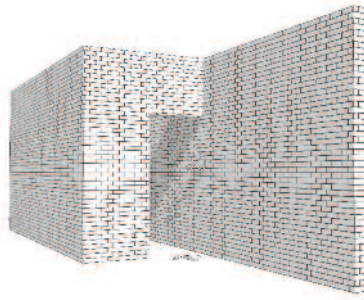
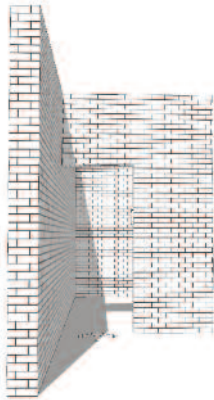
If the post is on the right, and on the left the wall

continues without a break, a mezuzah should be affixed to the right post, without a *beracha*.

If *no* wall continues on the left of the right post, no mezuzah is necessary.

However, if the left wall ends within three *tefachim* of the right post, they are deemed to be in alignment enough to require a mezuzah on the right post. Even so, no *beracha* is recited.

• Sources: *Shach Y.D.* 287:1; *Aruch HaShulchan* 287:8; *Shevet HaLevi* 5:160; *Agur B’ohalecha* 20:8,10; *Chovas HaDar* 7; *Mezuzos Beisecha* 287:1



Got a mezuzah question or story? Email rabbi@ohrsandton.com or submit on my website mymezuzahstory.com
Free “Mezuzah Maven” book for every question or story submitted (when published in the near future!)

PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

אֲחֵינוּ בְּלִבְיַת יִשְׂרָאֵל

“Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon.”

ASK...continued from page four

states, “And the blood will be *for you* for a sign... and *I* will see the blood”. From here, two opinions in the Midrash Mechilta (Bo 6) posit that the blood was smeared on the part of the doorway that was visible only to “you and I”, namely on the inside. The Midrash Rabbah (Ex. 17:3) also teaches that the lintel and doorposts upon which the blood was placed correspond to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Correlating to the *mezuzah*, this expresses and reminds those within that this home is dedicated to preserving the righteous ways and teachings of our Forefathers.

However, one opinion in the Midrash, as well as several classical commentaries, maintain that G-d commanded to display the blood on the outside of the doorway. And as a precursor for the *mezuzah*, which, in fact, is affixed outside the door, this would support your father’s suggestion that the *mezuzah* is primarily a statement to the world.

Rabbi Yitzchak in the Mechilta (Bo 6) says that the blood was placed on the outside of the doorways in order for the Egyptians to see their false god, the sheep, slaughtered, and the blood from the sheep smeared. This bold act and statement in the face of their enemies was a great risk and sacrifice. In fact, the Midrash Pesikta Zutreta (Lekach Tov, Ex., Bo 12:7) compares placing the blood on the doorways to a sacrifice: “Thus we learn that our ancestors in Egypt had four altars — the lintel, the two doorposts, and the doorstep.” The Me’am Loez summarizes these ideas by writing (Ex. 12:23), “The blood was a symbol that the people believed in G-d and were willing to risk their lives by defying the Egyptian deities. Because of this faith, no force would be able to harm them.”

According to the explanation of the verse by Chizkuni (Rabbi Chezekiah ben Manoach, c. 1250-1310, France), this was done so that even Egyptians who did not witness the earlier public slaughtering of

the deified sheep would now all see its blood exposed to ignominy. In addition, the blood on the lintel and two doorposts formed the letter “*chet*”, the sign of life (*chayim*), to protect the entrance from the “destroyer”.

Maimonides (Guide, Part III, ch. 46) also explains that the mark of blood was a public declaration: “We were commanded to kill a lamb on Passover... to cleanse ourselves of those [foreign] doctrines, and to publicly proclaim the opposite, to express the belief that the very act of slaughtering the Egyptians’ god, which was then considered as being the cause of death, would bring deliverance from death. This was the reward for publicly performing a service, every part of which was objected to by the idolaters.

Finally, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in his commentary also echoes the idea that the *mezuzah* makes a stand against harmful, outside forces. He writes that the doorposts and lintel, representing walls and roof respectively, are symbolic of the house, the home. The purpose of a house is twofold. The walls guard against human elements, protecting from unwanted, harmful intruders. The roof guards against physical elements, protecting from unwanted, harmful weather. Thus, the blood that was placed on the doorposts outside the doorway was designed to make a stand against, and repudiate, the unwanted, harmful and intrusive Egyptian culture by establishing clearly marked, prominent boundaries.

Accordingly, all of the ideas shared in your meaningful family conversation are correct!

• Sources: Dr. Yair Barkai, *Doorposts and their Symbolism*, translated by Rachel Rowen. (*Pesikta Zutreta and several classical commentaries*); Dr. Alexander Poltorak, *The Protective Power of Mezuzah*. (*Zohar and Mechilta Bo 11*)

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12:45 pm Rosh Hayeshiva **HaRav Nota Schiller**

1:45 pm Rav of Kehillas Ohr Somayach
HaRav Yitzchok Breitowitz

2:45 pm Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Shmuel
Rav Nachshon Schiller

3:30 pm **Rabbi Dovid Kaplan**

4:15 pm **Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb**

5:00 pm **Rabbi Avrohom Rockmill**

5:45 pm **Rabbi Reuven Laufer**

6:20 pm **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**

7:00 pm Mincha

7:40 pm **Rabbi Yehuda Samet**

Shacharis 7:50 am • Mincha 7:00 pm

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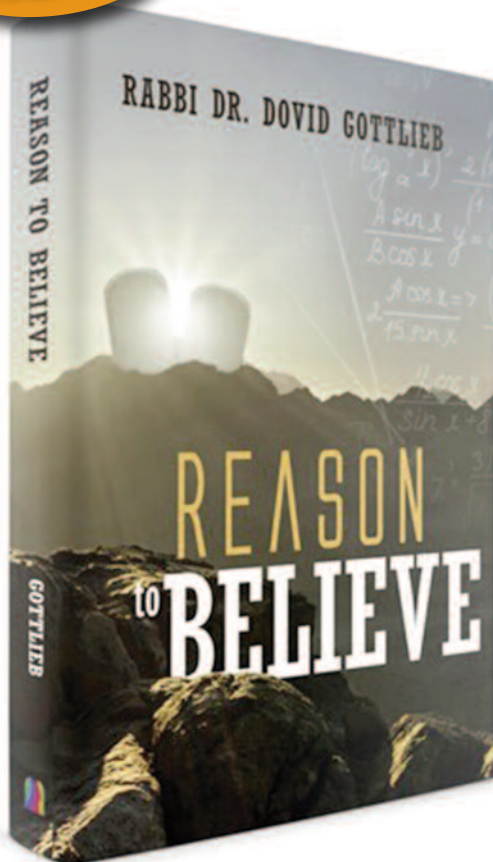
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