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## **DOV-ray TORAH**

**AN e-NEWSLETTER FOR LEARNERS &  
TEACHERS OF TORAH**

Written and Edited by Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins

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Date: Monday, October 24, 2005

Sidrah: **BERESHIT**

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**I – Divray Torah by Dov Peretz Elkins, Avi S. Olitzky  
and Ashira Konigsburg**

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**D’var Torah by Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins**

**Parashat Bereshit**

Both Rashi and the New JPS translation understand the first pasuk in the Torah to mean: “When God began to create heaven and earth...,” instead of the conventional translation “In the beginning God created Heaven and Earth.” What the pasuk does is set the time frame – i.e., the following occurred when God began to create.... The main point of this understanding of the pasuk is that creation is something that is ongoing. When humans create something, they can finish it. (By the way, the Hebrew here is bara’ – which is

only used in the Tanakh together with God – only God can “boray” – create – there are other Hebrew words for human creation). God’s creation of the world is still happening – all the time. Were it not for God’s constant continuation of the creative process, creation, the world, would fall apart. Thus we say in our tefillot that God in goodness renews creation daily, constantly. Of course, Jewish tradition assigns to humans the task of being partners with God in this process of on-going creation (shutafim b’maasay Bereshit). By doing so, we are elevated ourselves, and we elevate those around us. Creation is a gift from God to us to become more like our Creator. By being creators, and partners with our Creator, we are more like our Creator. Another commentator (*Hashavah l’Tovah*) gives a midrashic twist to this thought by saying that the pasuk also means that Bereshit – at the beginning of each day – we should focus on the idea that God created the heavens and the earth. Creation is such an important part of both God and God’s creatures, that the idea of creation should be our foremost thought each morning that directs us to a day filled with creativity. That we are creative beings is one of the most defining qualities of the human race.

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## **Divray Torah by Avi S. Olitzky**

### **D'var Torah - Bereshit**

“When God began to create heaven and earth--the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water-- God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.” Genesis 1:1-4

God is a master-builder. God is THE master-builder. And when God began to create our world, God used a special tool that we sometimes forget in our daily construction. God used separation to form and shape our world. God separated the waters to make sky and sea. God separated the land from the sea. But in the very beginning, during those early steps, God separated the light out of the darkness.

The world was a place of chaos and emptiness: Darkness. A very scary place. God dug deep into that darkness and pulled out the light. As beings created in the image of God (*B'tzelem Elohim*), we have the natural ability to separate as well. This is our world. A world of light drawn from the darkness. We too must draw upon this ability to separate the good from the bad, the bright days from the dreary days. To get the most out of life, we have to live actively in the light.

Maimonides, the 12<sup>th</sup> century Spanish-Jewish luminary, drives the same notion, urging us to explore our human freedom in his *Shemonah Perakim* (an introduction to his commentary on Mishnah Avot).

“One should not think that these [virtues or vices] cannot be transformed; everything open to choice can be changed from good to evil and from evil to good” *Shemonah Perakim* 8:4

We must change the evil to good. To truly cooperate in daily creation, partnered with God, we must separate, but not from our fellow human beings. We must together separate out the peace and the love (the light) from the pain and the hate (the darkness) in the world. In those first moments of creation God gave us the charge to shed more light and bottle up the darkness.

- (1) **What was God’s main tool for shaping our world?**
- (2) **What is light? What is darkness? How can we understand these terms in our world today, irrespective of their color and shade implications?**
- (3) **Why do you think God did not get rid of (destroy) the darkness and instead separated the light from it?**
- (4) **What can you do to shed more light in the world? What are some of the dark things in your life that you wish to separate out and shine more light on?**

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## Weekly Sparks

By Avi S. Olitzky

- (1) Genesis 1:2(b) “And a wind from God moved upon the face of the waters.”  
The liturgy refers to God as Creator and the One who creates. God is constantly creating. Whether or not we translate *ruah* as wind, breath or spirit, this Divine *Ruah* (of God or from God), *Ruah Elohim*, is the first physical manifestation of God in the Torah. The *Ruah Elohim* brought on creation. As the world spins and God continues to create today, the wind still blows. God still “breathes.” The next time you feel a breeze bring chills down your spine, know that God is with you, creating that very moment.
- (2) Genesis 1:3 “And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.”  
We learn from Rabbi Berekiah in *Genesis Rabbah* 3:2 that God creates neither by work nor by labor, but only by a word. And that word was “light” (*or*). Staying away from the philosophical interpretations, the Midrash happens to give us quite a *p’shat* (literal) reading of the text. Albeit our rabbis in the text disagree, Rabbi Judah (*Genesis Rabbah* 3:1) teaches that the light was created first, this being comparable to a king who wished to build a palace, but the construction site was a dark one.

The king then lit lamps and lanterns in order to know where to lay the foundation. God is that king. Our Majesty started with lights, as simple as it sounds, to see where S/He was going and where to build.

- (3) Genesis 2:4(b) “...When the Lord God made earth and heaven...”  
Why does God have a full name, namely, *Adonai Elohim*, in this verse? Rabbi David Kimhi (*Radak*) recalls a source in Midrash Bereshit Rabbah, stating that God is called with a “full” (*male*) name now that the world is full (*male*). Hizkuni calls upon Rashi, and offers the mystical ideal, that the name *Adonai* encompasses God’s attributes of *Rahamim* (mercy), while *Elohim* is God’s attributes of *Din* (Judgment). God thereby created the heavens with both *midat rahamim im midat dino*.
- (4) Genesis 2:7 “—the Lord God formed *Adam* from the dust of the earth.”  
Formed in this verse is *Vayyitzer*: a doubling of the Hebrew letter “yod.” There are many great explanations for the “*Shnei Yodin*.” One of the wide variety of explanations found in Bereshit Rabbah 14, (4) is interpreting this word not as a doubling of “yods,” but as a doubling of “yetzers.” With this word, and at this moment of creation, our great Sages of blessed memory believed that God gave human beings both a *Yetzer Tov* (inclination to do “good”) and a *Yetzer Ra* (inclination to do “evil”). No longer is this an argument of nature versus nurture. With two yods in *Vayyitzer*, it is clearly nature.
- (5) Genesis 3:1 “Now the serpent was more subtle (*arum*) than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made...”  
The famous serpent is introduced. Our Torah could have introduced our dastardly antagonist with any term, but why *arum*? While some translate *Arum* as subtle, most know it more commonly as naked, akin to its use in verses 7 and 10 (*Eyrumim* and *Eyrom*). Adam and Eve’s nakedness indicated a new level of knowledge and understanding. Their naïveté was removed and “the eyes of both of them were open.” Likewise, *Arum* conveys to the reader that the serpent was the most perceptive creature of all. Why did God not give such awareness to Adam and Eve? It would seem that their simplicity was the key to their innocence. But for us, as aware and complex beings, it is different. And so, our challenge in today’s world is to strive for a life full of acts of loving kindness, and cleaving to God.
- (6) Genesis 3:9 “And the Lord God called to Adam, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ (*Ayekah*)”  
*Ayekah* causes the reader to stumble slightly. The unusual word begs the question: could God truly not have known where Adam was? Of course God knew where Adam was – God is The Omniscient. Why then did God call out, “looking” for Adam? Rashi suggests that this was a way of starting a conversation without frightening Adam and without punishing

him outright. Think about the scene that follows Cain's murder of Abel. God asks Cain, "Where (Ay) is Abel your brother?" using the same language and the same underlying message. God is playing the role of nurturing parent. When a child misbehaves, and the parent learns of this, the conversation often begins with "who did such-and-such" or "did you do such-and-such," even though the parent already knows the answer. As Rashi teaches us, God wanted to enter with Adam, (just as we read later with Cain) with words of gentleness, seeking admission of guilt and repentance.

- (7) Mishnah Avot 5:6 "Ten things were created on the eve of Shabbat at twilight, and these are they: the mouth of the earth, the mouth of the well, the mouth of the she-ass, the rainbow, the manna, the rod, the *Shamir*, the text, the writing, and the tablets. And some say also the tomb of Moses, our teacher, and the ram of Abraham, our father, and some say: also the destroying spirits, and the tongs, too, made with tongs."

Although somewhat different than the list in Babylonian Talmud Pesahim 54a, the message is still the same. God created ten more things right before the first Shabbat—the last possible moment to create something. All ten of these items were miracles. More importantly, these miracles were premeditated objects of redemption. The message of our Sages of blessed memory is clear: God foresaw the tragedies that would befall humanity. God's power is manifested not in preventing the tragedy, but in picking up the pieces. These ten items represent all Divine acts of repair: God using one of these miracles to "fix what went wrong." Our Sages wanted us to focus on the day after the tragedy, not the tragedy itself. Our Sages wanted us to rejoice with God's omnipotence, and not the sorrow. Nevertheless, the question remains, and still we are left wondering, Why the need for tragedy in the first place?

- (8) Genesis 3:24 "God drove man out, and stationed east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life."

—One of the most magical and mystical images of our *parashah*. The image of the spinning burning sword haunts the reader, scolding us as we scurry out of Paradise. God's intention is clear: if you seek eternal life, as God is immortal, you will find immediate death—by way of the *herev mithapekhet*. Although it was terrifying for Adam, the message behind the image speaks to us today. By focusing on living forever and cheating death, a person cheats life instead, never taking the opportunity to "seize the day" or to "live each day as his/her last." We should live each day to our fullest, concentrating on the life that we have now, and not the death that will one day come.

- (9) Genesis 4:17 "Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch."

Cain was just banished by God to wander the earth, a "marked" man. End scene. Cain impregnates his wife, and Enoch is born. In modern times,

the question of “Who was Cain’s wife?” has always been an attack to refute the Bible (the Scopes trial, etc.). Our tradition does give an answer as to the identity of Cain’s wife. However, this answer may just be for what those critics are searching. We must jump ahead to the prohibition in Leviticus (20:17) for uncovering the nakedness and/or marrying one’s sister. In his comments on the Leviticus verse, Rashi invokes a verse from Psalms (89:3), commenting on God’s *hesed*: “Your steadfast love is confirmed forever.” Rashi explains that God is kind because God permitted Cain to wed his sister in order to prolong and continue humanity. And after this maze of verses we finally learn: Cain’s wife was his sister!

(10) Genesis 6:8 “and Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”

*Matza Hen B’einaim* is a very common expression when describing one’s sentiments toward another. Interesting in this verse, and Sarna recognizes this, is that *Hen* is an anagram of *Noah*. More importantly, it is the mirror of *Noah*—it is *Noah* flipped. This is a textual clue to the reader that not all is as it seems. Yes, we know that Noah was a *Tzadik* (righteous person), but perhaps this is further support for the idea that Noah was just a “better bad guy” as opposed to entirely righteous, as Rashi suggests.

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## D’var Torah by Ashira Konigsburg

### D’var Torah- Bereshit

And God called the light “day” and the darkness “night” and it was evening and it was morning day one.

*Genesis 1:5*

On each of the seven days of creation something new was brought into the universe. For example, on the first day, God creates light, and on the sixth day; animals and people. At the conclusion of each day, the Torah counts the number of days since the beginning of creation: the third day, the fourth day, the fifth day. However, for the first day it says “day one” instead of “the first day.” Rashi notices this and writes:

According to the system of language in this passage, the Torah should have written the first day, just like it does for all the other days second, third and fourth. Why did it write day one instead? Because The Holy Blessed One was alone in the world.

At the very beginning of the Torah, God is alone in the universe. The story of *Bereshit* is about the beginning of the relationship between God, the universe, and humanity. When God is alone, there is nothing to count, nothing to keep track of. Only on the second day once God starts building the world in which people will inhabit is there

something to count. Thus, the counting of days starts with the second day- the day that God began to fashion the world.

### **Four Questions:**

- 1) According to Rashi, what do we learn from the Torah saying “day one” instead of the “first day”?
- 2) What are some Jewish prayers that talk about the uniqueness of God and God’s relationship with the world?
- 3) Do we consider God to be part of the universe? How might our actions help to bring God closer to our world?
- 4) Why do you think God wanted to share the world with people?

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## **II – Book Review**

Halkin, Hillel: *A Strange Death*, NY: Public Affairs, 2005

Reviewed by Rabbi Herbert Rosenblum

A new book by Hillel Halkin is always a welcome treat, whether it is a provocative memoir, as in his first major work, in 1977, *Letters to an American Jewish Friend*, or the translation of major Hebrew classics into English, such as A. B. Yehoshua, Brenner, Agnon, Sholom Aleikhem, Mendele, and a host of others. It is particularly delightful when he follows the dictates of his own muse, and lets us share in his own literary insights and commitments, as in his regular series of essays in *Commentary*. His most recent work, *A Strange Death*, published earlier this year, is the result of 30 plus years of residence in Zikhron Yaakov, and his research into the accepted mythologies of the area and into the lives of some of the central figures in the evolution of the town.

Those familiar with the history of Zikhron Yaakov will, of course, be familiar with the role of the pioneers of Hovevei Zion, their subsequent double-edged relationship with the Rothschild administrators, and above all, the Aaronsohn family and the Nili espionage ring during WWI. Halkin retraces much of this, and gives these chapters a personal face, by interviewing the children and grandchildren of many of the first families. He makes a vigorous effort to avoid the traditional glorifications of the pioneering generations, and zeroes in with earnest debunking of the legends that have been generated regarding the founders, particularly those connected to the Aaronsohn family mystiques. Sarah, the classic Nili martyr, was not the pure soul that the Israeli legend-makers have portrayed; her brother Aaron was not the totally altruistic scientist/patriot/statesman that the popular wisdom has ingrained in the Israeli psyche; and above all, Alexander Aaronsohn was more a reprobate degenerate than the swashbuckling hero remembered by locals and nationals.

The title of the book, *A Strange Death*, revolves around the unanswered question of how did Perl Appelbaum die? She was a contemporary of Sarah Aaronsohn’s, and was



one of the local young women who publicly demonstrated against the activities of the Nili spy ring, particularly after the Turkish officials arrested some of its central figures and threatened reprisals against the town leadership. Perl was among those accused by the Aaronsohns of identifying one of the ringleaders of Nili, and making possible his capture and subsequent execution. Whether she did so or not, and whether her subsequent illness and death were accidental or not, is a major theme of this work.

Halkin has been interviewing Zikhron Yaakov-ites for the past 35 years, from the very beginning of his residency in the town. He became fascinated by the veteran personalities of the town, and grew to know more about them and their activities than did their own contemporaries, who had grown up with them. People like Yanko Epstein, the truth-embellishing hired guard, Moshe Shatzman, the prosperous farmer, Aryeh Samsonov, the town chronicler, Yosef Davidesco, the CID double agent, and some of the pre-48 Arab neighbors.

Halkin is not above injecting his personal politics into this seemingly forthright, non-fiction account. He clearly identifies the historic leadership of Zikhron with the right-wing revisionist parties, as opposed to the left-wing Labor politicians of the Second Aliyah, particularly Ben-Gurion. He portrays the town's early leadership as being on working (if not good) terms with the neighboring Arab clans, well-versed in Arabic language, culture and life-style skills, unlike the Labor party leaders, who never cultivated serious personal relationships with the Arab sector and never bothered to learn Arabic.

Halkin waxes eloquent about the extensive Lange estate in central Zikhron, Carmel Court, established in pre-WWI days, by Michael and Nita (Bentwich) Lange, wealthy English expatriates, who both died young (probable suicides) in the 1920's. Oddly, he doesn't mention the New York Lange connection, Nita's sister Lillian Bentwich Friedlaender, who came to Zikhron and managed much of the estate after her renowned husband, Professor Israel Friedlaender, was murdered by bandits in the Ukraine in 1920, on a philanthropic mission to needy Jews. Much of the subsequent history of the Lange estate in Zikhron is actually tied in with Bet Daniel, established by Ms Friedlaender as an artists' retreat house to honor the death of her young son Daniel, a talented musician.

Although Halkin does not manage to solve the mystery of Perl Appelbaum's "strange death", he does manage to impart the reasons why different people had different explanatory versions of her untimely death. Hints of all kinds are shared with him by the local old-timers – natural causes, poisoning by pro-Aaronsohn activists, revenge for alleged informing on spies, etc., etc. Halkin emerges as a fascinating story-teller, lending a charm to his informants that they may or may not have intrinsically had. One doesn't have to have familial connections to the town (as I do) to be captivated by the local color he is able to share with us. His closing pages describe a Zikhron that has been radically transformed in recent decades into a gentrified (and expensive) Haifa/Tel Aviv suburb, and yet the old-timers still control much of the local municipal apparatus. We are all much the richer for this tale of old (and new) Zikhron Yaakov.

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## III – Story

### The Voluntary Tattoo

A few weeks ago a friend of mine told me a rather startling story. I started to wonder whether it was a "This could only happen in Israel" kind of story (of which I have heard and experienced many), or whether it reflected some kind of new movement of which I am unaware. I haven't been able to get it out of my mind since, and so I thought you all might want to hear it too. I am still trying to formulate my own thoughts about it, so I welcome your insights and opinions as well.

So this friend of mine was hanging out at a pub in downtown Be'er Sheva with some other friends. As he approached the counter to order his drink, he noticed that the young bartender, a student dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, had a short row of numbers tattooed on his arm. Given that the guy was a good fifty years too young to be a Holocaust survivor, my friend's curiosity got the better of him and he asked what the tattoo was. The young man answered, "Exactly what you think it is." My friend couldn't stop there, and pressed him further. The man replied that his grandmother survived Hitler's camps and was now nearing her end. She had given her grandson her blessing to tattoo onto his arm a likeness of the very same numbers she had on her own. My friend, in recounting this story to me, remarked that he was quite moved by the gesture.

I must admit that at first I was quite taken aback. Quickly, however, my shock turned into appreciation and not a small amount of admiration. I have spent most of my academic life studying the Holocaust from political, psychological, and personal perspectives, and this is the first time I can remember that I have come across a truly original idea in the domain of Holocaust memorialization. With what amounts to probably twenty minutes in a tattoo artist's chair and the marking of a 1-inch by 3-inch area of skin, this young man has managed to both honor his grandmother and her experience, as well as send a rather striking societal message. Indeed, whether the people around him are respectful of or appalled by his choice, there is no doubt that he causes at least a hundred people a day to think about the Holocaust, if only for a moment.

My friend was most impressed by how the young man's action represents a kind of "taking back" of the image of the tattoo and the victim experience. In much the same way as African Americans have reclaimed and empowered the term "nigger" by using it amongst themselves, there

is something powerful and honorable about taking a tattoo that was forced upon his grandmother without her consent and purposefully choosing to place it upon himself with her blessing.

The fact that Jews still exist in the world is proof that Hitler didn't succeed, and many say that simply living an honorable life can be our own revenge. This young bartender has taken this a step further. His existence would not have been possible without his grandmother's survival, but in thirty years when her life is a distant memory, his simply being alive won't be enough to memorialize her. Perhaps these numbers on his arm will be.

Indeed, one of my biggest fears regards the landscape of our global society in thirty or forty years. What will Holocaust education and memory be like when the last survivor has left us? I fear this period deeply, and I will weep the moment when our world will be deprived of the brilliance and strength of spirit and beauty and insight that Holocaust survivors bring to us.

When the Holocaust exists only in history textbooks and museums, this young man will have and show a personal connection that won't be attainable in any other way. In the summer, when he will roll up his sleeves and have no choice but to show his tattoo, he will make people think and feel and react in a way that no one else will be able to do.

So I have informally polled a great deal of people already, and received greatly mixed reviews. People over the age of 60 have tended to be enthusiastically in favor of the young man's choice, while those between the ages of 35-55 have generally been vehemently against it. Responses from individuals in my own generation have been fairly equally split. I'm still not totally sure how I feel about it, but I'm inclined to believe that anything that can evoke such strong emotion, on both sides of the spectrum, is worthy of deeper investigation. In any case, that young bartender in Be'er Sheva has certainly made a lot of us think.

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## **IV - Torah Study**

### **THE VARIETY OF GOD'S CREATION**

Rabbi Akiva used to quote, "What variety You have created, Lord!" (Ps. 104:24). You have creatures that grow in the sea and You have creatures that grow on dry land.

If those of the sea were to come up on dry land , they would immediately die; and if those of the dry land were to go down into the sea, they would immediately die. You have creatures that grow in fire [note: salamanders were believed to live in fire], and You have creatures that grow in the air. If those of the fire were to come up into the air, they would immediately die. [If those of the air were to come down into the fire, they would immediately die.] The place of life for the one is the cause of death for the other; and the place of death for the one is the cause of life for the other. "What variety You have created, Lord!"

Hulin 127a

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## V – D’var Tefilah

וַיְבָרֵךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת הַיַּבָּשָׁה וְאֶת כָּל הַחַי וְהָרֹמֵם וְאֶת כָּל הַיְצֵר וְאֶת כָּל הַמְּשֻׁבָּה וְאֶת כָּל הַמְּשֻׁבָּה וְאֶת כָּל הַמְּשֻׁבָּה

### “Yotzer Or u-voray hoshekh” – God creates light and darkness

"And there was evening and there was morning, one day" (Gen. 1:5). Scripture says here not, "Let there be evening," but, "There was evening." Thus it follows that the order of time had already existed before creation.

Bereshit Rabbah 3:7

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## VI – D’var Torah for Special Occasions

### November 2 – Balfour Day

BALFOUR DECLARATION, British declaration of sympathy with Zionist aspirations. The declaration was communicated to Lord Rothschild by Arthur James Balfour, in his capacity as foreign secretary, in the following letter, dated November 2, 1917, and made public a week later:

Balfour's name has been associated with the Declaration, as he warmly advocated it; but the final decision rested with the war cabinet, which gave its approval as a considered act of policy.

Alone of the Great Powers, Great Britain had before World War I shown in a practical form a sympathetic interest in the Zionist movement. This was evidenced by the consideration given in 1902 to Herzl's request for facilities for Jewish colonization in the Sinai Peninsula (El Arish), and by the offer, in 1903, of a tract of land for an autonomous Jewish settlement, under Zionist auspices, in British East Africa (Uganda Scheme). Though nothing came of these projects, British contacts with the Zionist Organization before the war form part of the background to the Balfour Declaration. At the outbreak of war in 1914, one of the members of Asquith's cabinet was Herbert Samuel. Though he had never made it known, he was in sympathy with the Zionist movement. When Turkey entered the war on the side of the Central Powers, Samuel at once began advocating the idea that Great Britain and the Jews had a common interest in the detachment of Palestine from the Turkish Empire, and that Britain should encourage Zionist aspirations. The foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey showed some interest in Samuel's ideas, which, from the outset, had a strong appeal to another leading member of the Asquith government, Lloyd George.

Very early in the war, Chaim Weizmann, already a prominent, though not yet a commanding, figure in the World Zionist Movement, had begun what he described as a political reconnaissance. Starting from the same premises as Samuel, he likewise became convinced that Great Britain and the Zionists were natural allies. In September 1914 he engaged the interest of C. P. Scott, the influential editor of the *Manchester Guardian* and a close personal friend of Lloyd George. Through Scott, Weizmann was brought into contact with Samuel in December 1914 and discovered that Samuel's views were substantially identical with his own. In January 1915 Samuel arranged for him to meet Lloyd George. Weizmann was further encouraged by receiving an assurance of sympathy with the Zionist cause from the ex-prime minister Balfour, on whom he had made a lasting impression in an interview in 1906. Weizmann's scientific gifts enabled him to render important services to the Admiralty and the Ministry of Munitions; these brought him to the notice of Lloyd George, who became minister of munitions in the spring of 1915. They also kept him in contact with Balfour who, about the same time, joined the Asquith cabinet as first lord of the admiralty. In 1915–16 Weizmann interested leading public figures, among them Lord Robert Cecil, in Zionist associations. In his talks with them he laid the foundation of opinion favorable to the Zionist cause when it was later brought into the sphere of practical politics. At the end of 1914 Weizmann's efforts had been strengthened by the arrival in London of Nahum Sokolow who, unlike Weizmann, had the status and authority of a member of the Zionist executive. In 1917 Sokolow played a prominent part in the events leading to the Balfour Declaration, exercising during that decisive year an important influence in contacts and negotiations and undertaking missions to Paris and Rome, where his diplomatic talents were used to the marked advantage of the Zionist cause.

The Zionists gained an important supporter early in 1916, when Samuel attracted the interest of Sir Mark Sykes, one of the government's most influential advisers on eastern affairs. Sykes' education in Zionism was continued by his contacts with Moses Gaster and, later in 1916, with Aaron Aaronsohn. He believed that it was essential for Great Britain to establish a firm foothold in Palestine and that an understanding with the Zionists could help to strengthen Great Britain's position as a partner in the Anglo-French condominium in Palestine envisaged by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916. From other quarters the government had been advised that an appeal to Zionist sentiment might be an effective means of enlisting the sympathy of American Jews, who, mainly because of their antipathy for Czarist Russia, were inclined, on the whole, to look coldly on the Allied cause. In the spring of 1916 Grey had gone so far as to suggest to the French and Russian governments, but without success, that the Allies should jointly issue a declaration pledging them to take Zionist aspirations in Palestine into account in the postwar settlement.

By the end of 1916 the combined efforts of Weizmann and Samuel, energetically seconded by C. P. Scott, resulted in the emergence in the inner circle of policy makers of an influential body of opinion among the circle favorably disposed to the idea of some link between Great Britain and the Zionists. This, however, had not crystallized into a decision or a British pledge to the Zionists. The change of government in December 1916, with Lloyd George becoming prime minister and Balfour foreign secretary, and the decision taken about the same time in favor of a British invasion of Palestine, told strongly in favor of the Zionists. Lord Milner, an important member of Lloyd George's war cabinet, became a strong supporter of a pro-Zionist policy. Through James Malcolm, the London representative of the Armenian liberation movement, Weizmann met Sykes at the end of January 1917. At a meeting with Zionist leaders immediately afterward (February 7, 1917), attended also by Herbert Samuel, Sykes opened the negotiations which were to lead to the Balfour Declaration.

Two months later the British government began to display an active interest in the idea of a Jewish National Home or, as it was sometimes phrased, a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine, under British protection. They were actuated, apart from sentiment, by the idea that by expressing a strong desire for British control of Palestine, the Jews could in some measure strengthen the British case for abandoning the Anglo-French condominium projected in the Sykes-Picot Agreement and for substituting, instead, some form of British control. To this was added, after the March revolution in Russia, the hope that an appeal to Zionist sentiment among the Russian Jews might win their sympathy to the Allied cause and thus help to stem the pacifist tide to sweep

revolutionary Russia out of the war. The influential body of Anglo-Jewish opinion represented by the Conjoint Foreign Committee, composed of representatives of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association, was strongly anti-Zionist. But when, in June 1917, an adverse vote at the Board of Deputies discredited the committee, the way was opened for invitation by Balfour to Weizmann to arrange for the drafting of a pro-Zionist declaration for consideration by the British government. Sokolow prepared the document, but not until early in September did the matter come before the war cabinet. Because a pro-Zionist policy was vehemently opposed by Edwin Montagu, a Jewish member of the government, it was decided to delay a decision and in the meantime, to consult President Wilson. The American reply was noncommittal, and the whole question was shelved. As a result, however, of Weizmann's personal appeal to Lloyd George, it was restored to the agenda and reconsidered early in October. Once more the war cabinet temporized, deciding to consult President Wilson again and also to invite the views of representative Jews, both Zionists and anti-Zionists. This time Wilson did not discourage the proposal; influenced, it would seem, by the representations of the American Zionist leader, Louis Brandeis, he now agreed to the proposed declaration.

By this time the arguments in favor of a pro-Zionist pronouncement had been strengthened in three respects. The situation in Russia was rapidly deteriorating, and the British government hoped that, if the Russian Jews were convinced that an Allied victory would open the way for the fulfillment of Zionist aspirations, they would exert themselves to keep Russia in the war or, should this be impossible, would try to prevent Russian resources, especially the produce of the Ukraine, from being exploited by the Germans. Though the war cabinet was thinking first and foremost of Russia, it also believed that a pro-Zionist pronouncement might have a good effect in the United States, where a large section of the Jewish population was reported to be apathetic about the war. Last, there were rumors that the Germans were courting the Zionists and might come out first with a pro-Zionist declaration, if the British government failed to act promptly. Thus, the question which the British government considered in the autumn of 1917 was not whether it should work, in the eventual peace settlement, for the fulfillment of Zionist aspirations, but the narrower question whether it should there and then make a public pledge to the Zionists. It is, therefore, not surprising that the propaganda value of the Declaration was strongly emphasized by Balfour in commending it to the war cabinet and securing final approval by that body on October 31, 1917. But though the decision to authorize the Declaration was reached strictly on grounds of expediency, other motives and ideas were involved. Speaking in London in 1949, Field Marshal Smuts, who had been a member of the war cabinet at the time of the Declaration, said that a powerful argument in its favor had been that "it would rally Jewry on a worldwide scale to the Allied cause." But, he continued, moral and religious motives reinforced the political considerations.

The Declaration was approved on April 24, 1920, at the Allies' conference at San Remo and incorporated in the Mandate on Palestine conferred upon Britain by the League of Nations on July 24, 1922. The struggle over its practical implementation lasted throughout the entire 30 years of British rule in Palestine.

**[Leonard J. Stein]** - *Encyclopedia Judaica*

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## **VII – ISRAEL MATTERS -Important Current Material**

vhnuv hsuvm apb vnhbp cckc sug kf

### **How they vote in the United Nations:**

**Below are the actual voting records of various Arabic/Islamic States which are recorded in both the US State Department and United Nations records:**

Kuwait votes against the United States 67% of the time  
Qatar votes against the United States 67% of the time  
Morocco votes against the United States 70% of the time  
United Arab Emirates votes against the U. S. 70% of the time.  
Jordan votes against the United States 71% of the time.  
Tunisia votes against the United States 71% of the time.  
Saudi Arabia votes against the United States 73% of the time.  
Yemen votes against the United States 74% of the time.  
Algeria votes against the United States 74% of the time.  
Oman votes against the United States 74% of the time.  
Sudan votes against the United States 75% of the time.  
Pakistan votes against the United States 75% of the time.  
Libya votes against the United States 76% of the time.  
Egypt votes against the United States 79% of the time.  
Lebanon votes against the United States 80% of the time.  
India votes against the United States 81% of the time.  
Syria votes against the United States 84% of the time.  
Mauritania votes against the United States 87% of the time.

#### **U S Foreign Aid to those that hate us:**

Egypt, for example, after voting 79% of the time against the United States, still receives \$2 billion annually in US Foreign Aid.

Jordan votes 71% against the United States and receives \$192,814,000 annually in US Foreign Aid.

Pakistan votes 75% against the United States receives \$6,721,000 annually in US Foreign Aid.

India votes 81% against the United States receives \$143,699,000 annually.

**Perhaps it is time to get out of the UN and give the tax savings back to the American workers who have to skimp and sacrifice to pay the taxes (and gasoline).**

Pass this along to every taxpaying citizen you know. And send to your congressman,

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## **VIII – Values in the Talmud**

### **Advice on Mate Selection**

*K'fotz zabayn ar'a  
Matun n'seev it'ta.*

*To acquire land, make haste.  
To pick a mate, deliberate slowly.*

Yevamot 63a

I must confess that I have not read through the entire 63 tractates of the Talmud. It's like reading through a thirty-volume encyclopedia. There are others I know who have done so, but I have had neither the inclination nor the time (to be honest, I have not made the time). This is not the place to enter into my feelings about Talmud study. Suffice it to say that the literature of Judaism - including belles-lettres, midrash, Jewish law codes, essays, pietistic and kabbalistic works, biblical interpretation, history, and so much more - is so vast, that it is constantly a difficult choice which works to tackle. I love study and reading, so it is surely not a disinterest in intellectual wrestling. Study is one of my chiefest joys.

All of the above is a preface to expressing my surprise at some of the things I am finding as I continue to write these brief musings on Talmudic values. Maybe I should not be surprised, in light of the fact that I have not, by my own admission, swum through the entire sea of Talmudic literature. But I have studied enough Talmud, and read enough about the Talmud, and enough books and biblical commentaries that quote the Talmud, that I would think that some of these precious gems would have come to my attention long ago. But they have not. And I am constantly surprised at the deep wisdom, insightful metaphors, and clever, pithy sayings that I come across as I search for themes. It is true of the Talmud, I am finding, as it is of the Torah - "Turn it and turn it, for everything is in it." One constantly finds new ideas and creative spins on old thoughts when leafing through the folios of Talmudic wisdom.

The idea that one should not jump into the selection of a mate or a spouse is not a new one, or even a very deep one. The fact is, however, that many people often find countless excuses to do so anyway. Have you not heard of "Love at first sight?" And there is just enough truth in the notion that there is often sufficient electricity in meeting someone we find attractive to overcome whatever ancient wisdom that was transmitted by our ancestors, the books we have read, and the teachings of many generations.

So how does one educate young people - and older people - about the necessity to be cautious, deliberate, judicious, circumspect, and prudent about making such an important decision? How does one advise those with hormones raging and sexual desires flaming in their bones, passionate lovers who think often only of the moment and do not project very far into the future, to take enough time to make a careful and reasoned choice in picking a life-partner? The rabbis in the statement above chose to make a comparison, and in my view their formulation works very effectively. If I were to express this same thought in a less elegant way, I would say: "Buying property and taking a wife are not done with the same haste." It is far easier to get out of the first decision, if it proves unworkable, than



the second. One purchases something, and if it does not fit, you take it back, or you sell it. With a large investment of funds, it's not quite as easy as running back to Macy's and exchanging a blouse or pair of slacks. But there's no wrenching emotional crisis, as there is in divorce. Or for that matter, even if mates decide to live together and then choose to sever their relationship, even before marriage, it's far more difficult than selling a house.

So the rabbis put in perspective the matter of choosing a mate by comparing another choice. The main difference they want to convey is that one choice can be made rapidly with only minor long-term consequences if the decision turns out to be a mistake. The other choice has serious long-term effects on the pocket-book, but more importantly on the heart and soul, and probably in most cases on the rest of one's life. Another thought in the mind of the business-oriented person is that a property can be grabbed up by someone else in an hour – or a minute –if you hesitate. Hesitation could be a dangerous move in buying property. By contrast, hesitation and careful slow thought is a prerequisite in the choice of a mate. While haste may be useful in the field of business, it can be disastrous in the area of human relationships.

I marvel at the fact that the Sages are able to convey a profound lesson in six short words. This is the power of an aphorism, and it's why I love them. I am a quotation saver, and am influenced strongly by the wisdom of the sayings I have managed to store in the computer of my brain. The rabbis were master teachers, and the more I read of their teachings, their values, and their ideas, the more respect and awe in which I hold them.

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## **Closing Prayer**

You are our God, the Source of life and its blessings. Wherever we turn our gaze we behold signs of Your goodness and love. The whole universe proclaims Your glory. Your loving spirit hovers over all Your works, guiding and sustaining them. The harmony and grandeur of nature speak to us of You; the beauty and truth of Torah reveal Your will to us. You are the One and eternal God of time and space!  
*(The New Union Prayer Book)*

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