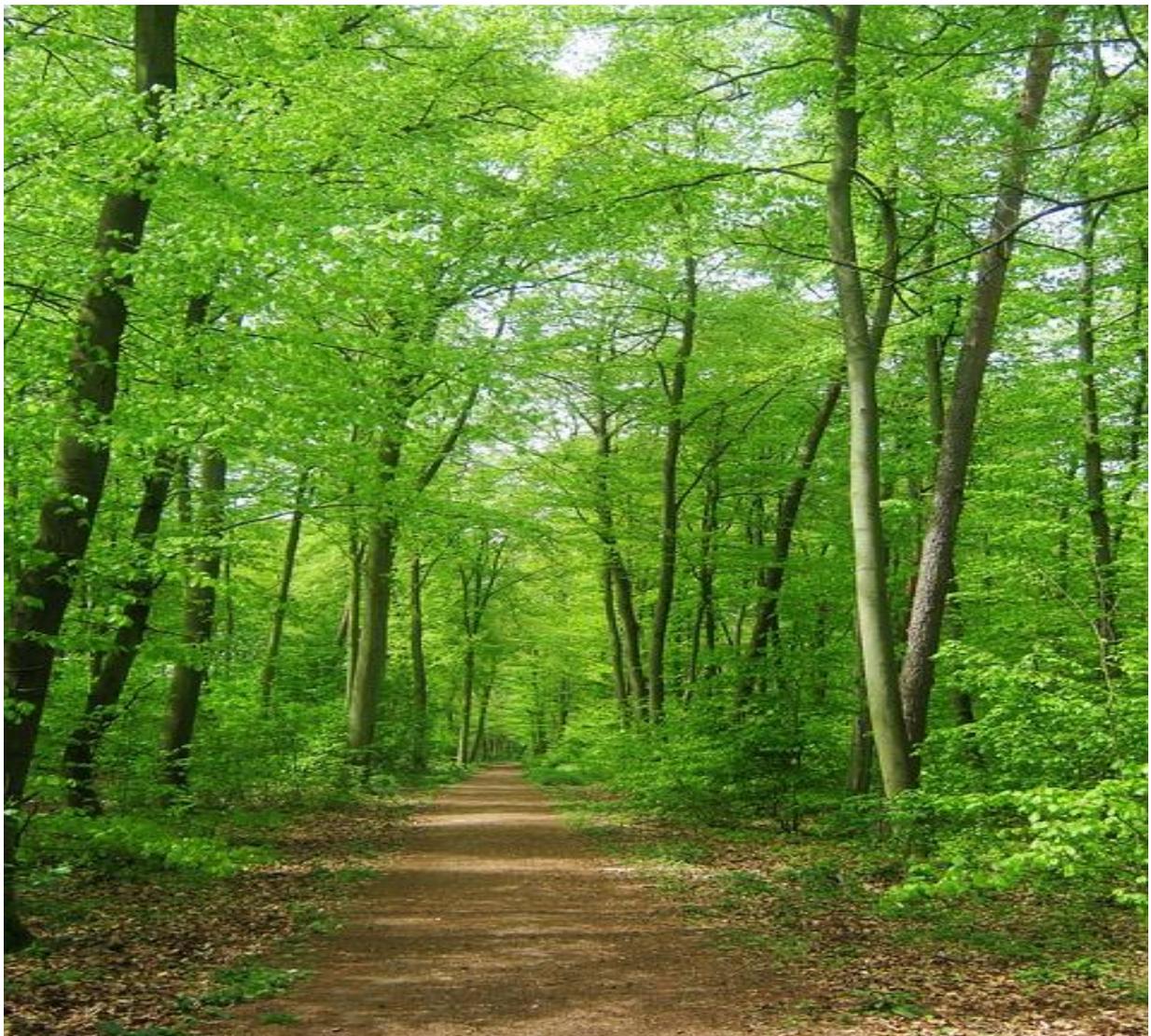


# SOUTH AFRICAN TORAH JOURNAL

**ROSH HASHONA 5781 2(1)**

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Editor: Paysach Burke



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### Preface

In this issue of the South African Torah Journal, first we honour a servant of the community whose 1<sup>st</sup> *yortseit* will be on 13<sup>th</sup> Kislev, Rabbi Yekutiel Tzvi Shalpid zt'l.

Then there are a couple of articles relevant to Rosh Hashona. We are taken through a progression of degrees of crowning Hashem as King. This is followed by an exploration as to the meaning of life.

The concluding spirited and rousing article shares a few insights related to Simchas Torah, one being why the person called up to finish the yearly Torah reading cycle is called a *Choson Torah*.

The rest of the journal is sweetened by no less than four Torah poems.

May Hashem sweeten for us this new year and bless us with good health amongst an abundance of other good blessings.

I am yours

Paysach Burke

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**Harav Yekutiel Tzvi Shalpid zt'l<sup>1</sup>***Rabbi Hylton Herring*

Rabbi Shalpid passed away on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2019, corresponding to the 13<sup>th</sup> of Kislev 5780, in Johannesburg, and devoted 45 years of his life to the South African Jewish community.

He was born in 1945 in Bershat, Ukraine. As a young *bochur* (*yeshiva* student) he became a great Talmudic scholar while learning in Yeshivat Chevron in Yerushalayim and with his father, of blessed memory, who was an *illui* (genius) and who had learned one-on-one with the Radziner Rebbe. Rabbi Shalpid later received *semicha* (rabbinical ordination) from Yeshivat Lomze in Petach Tikva.

Rabbi and Rebbetzin Shalpid came to South Africa in 1968. He held numerous rabbinical positions including as rabbi of Oudtshoorn, followed by Salisbury, Rhodesia (Harare, Zimbabwe), East London, Port Elizabeth and then returning to East London. During his four and a half decades of spiritual work he made an indelible impact on Jews throughout the country and beyond. He became a *shochet* and *mohel* to provide the communities with *kashrut* and *brit milah*. He was also a world-class *chazan* and trained under great *chazonim* in Tel Aviv. He loved people and devoted so much of his time to teaching and giving his *talmidim* (students) typed out questions and answers from various rabbinic sources, including the Rambam, Ramban, Ari HaKadosh, Shulchan Aruch and both Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi.

Every Sunday, our family would invite the Rabbi and Rebbetzin for Sunday luncheons at our home and afterwards the Rabbi would teach us Sefer HaMiddot written by the Dubno Maggid. The Sefer was out of print for many decades yet we obtained a copy from the Bar-Ilan University Library.

Rabbi Shalpid was a man completely devoted to his family, the community, and *klal Yisrael* (the Jewish people). He was a man filled with warmth, empathy, compassion, kindness, generosity and sincerity. His love for his fellow human beings was exemplary. He inspired and uplifted so many with his infectious smile and words of wisdom, spreading *Torah* and *mitzvot* wherever he went. As a loving father, teacher, and friend he gave so much of his time to inspire and guide others to reach their potential and to make correct decisions.

Rebbetzin Malka was the most wonderful and devoted wife who looked after the Rabbi throughout his illness. Her *hachnasat orchim* (hospitality to guests) was legendary. We spent many years having *shabbos* meals in their apartment above the *shul* and even had our own guest room. The Rabbi's *gemora shiur* before *shabbos mincha* was a highlight and I recall him quoting from many sources throughout *shas*. We learnt so much about *Torah*, *menschlichkeit*, *nussach* (cantorial liturgical tunes) for the *yamim noraim* (high holidays), *shalosh regalim* (festivals), *leining* (*Torah* reading) and *shabbos niggunim* (songs) and *tefillot* (prayers). He was a brilliant *talmid chacham* (*Torah* scholar) and had a photographic memory. His *shiurim* were always well prepared with deep insights and *chiddushim* (new ideas). He had a thirst and love for knowledge, and he was worldly in a variety of subjects and topics.

The Rabbi was a firm believer in justice and always did his best to defend the rights of the elderly, sickly, disadvantaged, and orphaned. When he arrived in Oudtshoorn, the *kehilla* (community) offered the Shalpid's a domestic worker. In the late 1960's domestic workers could not sleep on the employer's premises, and after work they had to be taken back home to the township.

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this article was originally published at HERRING, H. 2020. Rabbi who inspired SA Jews in word and deed. *South African Jewish Report*. 17 Jan 2020. 24(1):35 <https://www.sajr.co.za/news-and-articles/2020/01/16/rabbi-who-inspired-sa-jews-in-word-and-deed>

The Rabbi drove the domestic worker home and noticed that she went to sit in the back seat. A discussion took place where the Rabbi insisted that she sit up front. She protested but eventually agreed, knowing that this could be a problem if the police were to stop them.

On the way to her home in the township the police did stop them, and a very lengthy discussion took place between the Rabbi and the officer. In the end the newly appointed Rabbi of Oudtshoorn had to comply with the law of the land. Needless to say that the whole episode had bothered the Rabbi tremendously and instead of just cooperating with the officer the Rabbi had put up a challenge and tried to defend her honour and respect which he felt every human being deserved. He would not just accept but rather questioned and challenged.

In addition to his care and genuine concern for others, Rabbi Shalpid was a phenomenal leader and teacher, and through his actions he accomplished so much for the various *kehillot* that he served with distinction. I vividly remember that when we sat down to learn *Torah* in his study, he first enquired about the wellbeing of my parents, sister and brothers and only then was he able to teach *Torah* with absolute passion and clarity.

It's very seldom amongst *rabbonim* that when one is gifted in all aspects of *Torah* knowledge that one can also be considered a "*chevraman*" – a friend amongst people in the community. The Rabbi and Rebbetzin had that unique gift to inculcate and develop personal relationships with people, whether they were connected to *yiddishkeit*, or not necessarily even part of our tribe. The value of a human being was of pivotal importance to them and they both spent invaluable time speaking and guiding others to the best of their ability.

We wish Malka, Chaim, Oriella Davis, Gal'yah, Yakirah and Rachel Schwartz *arichut yamim* (long life) and may the legacy of the Rabbi be a source of great comfort knowing that he accomplished so much and that he touched so many lives.

*Yehi zichro baruch* (may his memory be remembered as a blessing)

## Rosh Hashana: Hues of Kingship and the Rise of Malchut <sup>2</sup>

*Rebbetzin Tamar Taback*



### PART 1

As a former art student, one of the essential exercises my instructors gave me was to create a scale of values (see image above). This is done by adjusting the pressure that is applied through the medium onto the paper over a series of blocks to create a closed system of relative pigment saturation, that progresses ever so steadily to its full tonality. It occurred to me while looking at the ten verses of Kingship that we are going to say during *Mussaf* on Rosh Hashana that the verses depict G-d's Kingship *on a scale of value* that contextualizes the purpose of the world in general and the purpose of Rosh Hashana in particular. The value in flux on this scale is called "*Malchut*", understood colloquially as "Kingship", a concept which needs far more understanding than a single word translation.

What is fascinating about the attribute of *Malchut* – G-d's Kingship – is that the sages say that at times it has been high, like during the time of King Shlomo when peace reigned in the world, and at times it has been low as we so painfully experienced during the holocaust. All the sages agree that there is something deeper happening in our historical panorama. "*Malchut*" is rising as we progress towards our future and the final stages of our collective story. When we read these ten verses on Rosh Hashana, blow the *shofar* and stand in awe on the day of judgement we become instrumental in its ascent.

But what exactly is "*Malchut*", Kingship? Isn't Hashem King no matter whether we "make" Him King or not? What is this mysterious spiritual work that we do on Rosh Hashana? What is this epic journey dubbed "the rise of *Malchut*" and how can we help her rise?

<sup>2</sup> Originally published for the Nexus Blog 18 Sept 2019 "Rosh Hashana: Hues of Kingship and the Rise of Malchut", available <https://thenexus.org/11829-2/>; republished here with slight revisions by kind permission of the author.

The first thing worth noting is that when it comes to the ten verses, the number ten is not an arbitrary one. Every spiritual process, according to our sages, progresses through a ten step trail *every time*. These ten steps are none other than the ten attributes or mechanisms that define all of Hashem's interactions with His finite creation. You may have heard of the ten *sefirot*, esoterically translated as "emanations". Whatever these ten beats are, hard as they may be to grasp, we can be sure that they are perfectly reflected in everything Jewish (think ten plagues, ten commandments, ten utterances in the story of creation...). Each one of these "*sefirot*" has its own "colour", expression, and when emulated by man, soul power.

Except, that is, for *Malchut*. Our sages teach that *Malchut*, the final attribute of G-d, in contradistinction to all the other nine expressions of Divinity, has "nothing of its own". It is but a funnel through which all the other attributes pass through, sort of like the screen that projects all the higher lights outward, making them visible to the world. When *Malchut* is diminished, its limited capacity to receive does not allow the light of all the other attributes of Hashem to shine through. As *Malchut* becomes more developed, she becomes more and more transparent until she is completely see-through and Hashem is fully revealed.

The sages liken the *sefira* of "*Malchut*" to the moon. An enormous rock, the moon's beauty is not herself but within her ability to reflect the sun's light and project it to the places that need it most – the deepest black of the darkest sky. It is no wonder then that just like the moon has phases, *Malchut* too has phases. Hence the concepts of *Malchut*, the moon, and the feminine archetype are deeply resonant of each other. Sometimes *Malchut* is up and sometimes she is down, sometimes a sliver and sometimes a full disc. She is also both a receiver and a transmitter of light depending on her orientation. It is the purpose of the Jewish people to do whatever they can to help her *rise*, as her glow is none other than the glow of Hashem in our very mundane and physical world. When we do this fully, the moon, or *Malchut*, will be able to reclaim her full capacity to shine until night turns to day, immediately calling an end to the exile. Practically, this means that we are able to be receivers and reflectors of Hashem's light while it is still dark, a state referred to by the mystics as raising the *Shechina* (presence of G-d). This is the mission of the Jew.

Culling more from the wisdom of the *Talmud*, we learn that not only does *Malchut* not own any of her greatness, but that "there is no such thing as a King without subjects" – i.e., G-d's *Malchut* somehow needs *others* to activate and qualify it. Since the beauty of *Malchut* is in her sharing of light, without others in need of her light her beauty is not real. The nature of beauty is that it requires a beholder, and so it is with Hashem's *Malchut* – without man to receive His Kingly transmissions, He is not a *Melech*, because *Malchut* requires a beholder.

Thus, *Malchut* is the essence of co-creation. By not revealing the fullness of His light during our six thousand year-long odyssey, Hashem is inviting us to come forward and make Him King, precisely when there seems to be so much compelling evidence to the contrary. *Malchut* subtly scintillates in the night sky and does not impose herself on her subjects but invites others to approach and behold her through their own will. *This is why the last of the ten attributes of G-d strongly echoes everything feminine – Malchut is unforceful, beautiful, evocative of will – and most importantly, receptive to our overtures.* Similarly, Hashem's feminine expression is waiting for us to partner with Her<sup>3</sup> in bringing the world to its destination. **It is precisely because *Malchut* isn't yet fully revealed that we are being invited to become a player in the story of redemption!** Together with Hashem, as fully-fledged partners, we will have a good and sweet new year.

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<sup>3</sup> Because we are speaking about *Malchut* we use the pronoun "Her" instead of the usual "Him" when referring to G-d

This Rosh Hashana, know that although much of the world is blind to the glow of Hashem's Kingship, it is His chosen people who open their eyes to see it. There will come a time, when *Malchut* will have risen, that this will be obvious to all.

## PART 2

Having understood the idea of *Malchut* and it's unfolding through time, let us now track the evolution of *Malchut* through the ten verses through which we make Hashem King on Rosh Hashana, as the *Talmud* says<sup>4</sup>: “*Say before Me Malchiot so that I will be made King over you.*”

~ ~ ~

Verse 1:

י-ה-נ-ה ימלך לעלם ועד

“*He will rule forever and ever*”.

The verses begin with a taste of the end to direct the journey ahead – **the final revelation of Hashem's Kingship.**

Verse 2:

לא הביט און בניעקב ולא ראה עמל בישראל י-ה-נ-ה א-ל-היו עמו ותרועת מלך בו:

“*He doesn't look at the evil in Jacob or the iniquity in Israel, Hashem his G-d is with him and the affection of the King is present in him.*”

**Hashem loves us even with our imperfections. This is the starting point from which we continue to better ourselves, evolve and flourish.**

Verse 3:

ויהי בישרון מלך בהתאסף ראשי עם יסד שבטי ישראל:

“*And there is in Jeshurun a King, in the ingathering of the leaders of the nation when all the tribes of Israel are one.*”

**We can only truly make Him King when we are a unified force, many spokes on a wheel connected to the central point.**

Verse 4:

כי לי-ה-נ-ה המלוכה ומשל בגוים:

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<sup>4</sup> Rosh Hashana 16a

*“To Hashem belongs Kingship as well as dictatorship to the nations”*

A true King is one whose subjects recognize him as the essence of good and beneficence out of their own free will. Once the truth is revealed for all to see, it will be too late to come to this recognition and all those who haven't yet made Hashem King while it wasn't glaringly obvious will be “forced” by the sheer compelling nature of the Redemption. **The trick is to choose to make Him King while the illusion of there being other options is viable.**

Verse 5:

יְהוָה-הוּא מֶלֶךְ גְּאוּת לְבַשׁ לְבַשׁ יְיָ-הוּא-הוּא עוֹז הַתְּאֲזָר אֶף תִּכּוֹן תִּבְּל בְּל תִּמּוֹט:

*“Hashem rules, He dons grandeur, Hashem dons might, girding and establishing the earth that it will never falter.”*

Hashem hasn't yet donned the cloak of His full strength which is why it counts for so much when we make the choice to crown Him. As opposed to the masculine mode of expression that He will transmit in the future revelation that will accompany the redemption, **He is now in a feminine mode of interaction, waiting to receive our gestures of approach.**

Verse 6:

שָׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רְאשֵׁיכֶם וְהִנְשֹׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם וַיָּבֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד: מִי זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד יְיָ-הוּא עֲזוּז וְגִבּוֹר יְיָ-הוּא גִבּוֹר מִלְחָמָה:  
שָׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רְאשֵׁיכֶם וּשְׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם וַיָּבֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד: מִי הוּא זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד יְיָ-הוּא צְבָאוֹת הוּא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד סֵלָה:

*“Raise up your heads, O gates, and be uplifted, you everlasting entrances, so that the King of Glory may enter. Who is this King of Glory? – Hashem, the mighty and strong, Hashem, the strong in battle. Raise up your heads, O gates, and raise up, you everlasting entrances, so that the King of Glory may enter. Who then is the King of Glory? G-d of hosts, He is the King of Glory. Selah!”*

This verse repeats on itself, indicating two times when the gates of the Temple opened themselves to receive the King's presence. This is the magical moment when the King “moves in” to the structure that was erected to house Him and represents a culmination of the purpose of creation. The indwelling and continual presence of the King is what we refer to as the *Shechina*, the Divine Presence.

The first time the verse refers to the entrance of the King into the gates during the first *Bait HaMikdosh*. The second time the verse refers to it is alluding to the third Temple, coming soon with the ultimate redemption (the second Temple was bereft of this Presence and is therefore not included).

***Shechina* – Divine Presence – is the result of our creating the vessel for it. *Malchut* is thus the powerful system of co-creation that Hashem employs through us.**

Verse 7:

כֹּה אָמַר יְיָ-הוּא-הוּא מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגֵאלוֹ יְיָ-הוּא-הוּא צְבָאוֹת אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן וְנֹאֲנִי אַחֲרוֹן וּמִבְּלַעֲדֵי אֵין אֱלֹהִים:

*“So says Hashem King of Israel and their redeemer, G-d of hosts; I am first and I am last and besides for Me there is no other god.”*

**The world progresses as the other “options” evaporate and no longer cast their tempting allure. G-d's light starts to shine through.**

Verse 8:

וְעָלוּ מוֹשִׁיעִים בְּהָר צִיּוֹן לְשֹׁפֵט אֶת הַר עֵשָׂו וְהָיְתָה לִי-הַהָר הַמְּלוּכָה:

“And the saviours will ascend on the mountain of Zion to judge the mountain of Esau and all Kingship will be G-d’s.”

**Malchut is only complete when all obstructions, from without and within, are removed and the light now shines clearly for all to see.**

Verse 9:

וְהָיָה יְ-ה-ו-ה לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִיָּה יְ-ה-ו-ה אֶחָד וַיִּשְׁמוּ אֶחָד:

“And Hashem will be King on the entire land on that day it will occur that G-d and His Name will be One.”

G-d’s Name represents how He reveals himself, as opposed to His essential being which we cannot pronounce while *Malchut* is still crouching low. **At this second to last frame, *Malchut* will have risen completely and the gap between Hashem’s Name and essence will have totally closed.** He will be as He truly is. This is the last time the word *Malchut* itself is used [Note for the mystic: Hashem’s Name will literally be “י-ה-ו-ה”, an indication that the final ה (*Malchut*) will have risen<sup>5</sup>].

Verse 10:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְ-ה-ו-ה אֶחָד יְ-ה-ו-ה אֶחָד יְ-ה-ו-ה אֶחָד:

“Listen, Israel, Hashem, Our G-d, Hashem, Is One.”

Here the world will have entered into the sweetness of the messianic future. Since *Malchut* will be completely revealed, as a concept it will have become obsolete, because in essence, *Malchut* never had anything of its own. It is but a carrier for the Oneness of Hashem, which will be fully expressed. ***Malchut* is fully revealed as we proclaim: *Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad.***

<sup>5</sup> The name י-ה-ו-ה is the name of G-d during the exile. Because the 10<sup>th</sup> of His sefirot will have risen, the vav no longer has to keep itself extended to supply *Malchut* with her light, because in the times of moshiaich she receives it directly from the source.

## Choose Life (Parshat Netzavim)<sup>6</sup>

*David Fachler*

Parshat Nitzavim is always read (whether on its own or together with Parshat Vayelech) a week before Rosh Hashanah. Naturally, it is a time we think about the meaning of life. Interestingly, the results of a search on the *Concordance*<sup>7</sup> reveal that Nitzavim is the only parsha that speaks about life (*chayim*) in an abstract form. The word *chayim* can either be a verb (when used in the plural form) or an adjective (describing if something is alive) or it can be an abstract noun meaning life. It is only in our parsha where it denotes the last meaning and in this context, it is used a few times<sup>8</sup>.

One of the most famous contexts for this use is the simple instruction “choose life” which appears in the second last verse of our parsha (Deuteronomy 30:19). Our commentaries have argued what exactly this statement means. In the translation attributed to Jonathan ben Uziel, the author states that G-d is telling us to choose a life of Torah. In a similar vein, the *Baal Haturim* tells us that the numerical value of the Hebrew word בחיים is 70 and this alludes to the 70 ways in which the Torah may be interpreted. The later commentator and polemicist, the *Malbim*, agrees with this interpretation and says that choosing life means choosing the path of the Torah.

There are however dissenting views in this respect. The Jerusalem Talmud in Tractate *Kiddushin* (cited by the *Torah Temimah*) says that choosing life means teaching one’s child a trade, and if that child was not taught by his father he has an obligation to teach himself. Interestingly the *Torah Temimah* adds that dealing in commerce and business also qualifies under this injunction. Other *Tanaim*, notably Rabbi Akiva, interpret this verse as a commandment for parents to teach their children to swim. This was a particularly useful survival tool in the days when sea vessels were primitive but often used as necessary transportation.

There appears to be a sharp divide between the two schools of thought on what ‘life’ here, in an abstract sense, entails. One school, which is probably dominant, sees ‘life’ as eternal or spiritual and concludes that the only ‘life’ which encompasses these values is one based on Torah values and Torah learning. The other school sees ‘life’ in a more literal way. It suggests that G-d is telling us that our lives must be sustainable and self-supportable, and we should embark on a trade and profession and not rely solely on G-d’s beneficence. Some even see it as basic survival skills.

I propose that a careful reading of the context in which this statement is made may accommodate both interpretations. Let us look closely at the last two verses of Chapter 30 in Deuteronomy:

**19. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your seed; 20 to love the LORD thy God, to hearken to His voice, and to cleave unto Him; for that is your life, and the length of thy days; that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.**

We see that the words: “choose life” do not come at the beginning or end of a verse but rather in the middle. This would suggest that they do not form a separate commandment but rather G-d is telling us that since He has placed life and death before us and since we would therefore choose life we should do so for the reasons stated in the next verse. Indeed verse 20 opens with the word “to” and can only be read as a reason or result of verse 19.

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from a drasha I delivered at Alon Shvut Darom Synagogue on 15 September 2017, 24 Elul 5777

<sup>7</sup> An online Concordance <https://mg.alhatorah.org/MikraotGedolot/Concordance>

<sup>8</sup> In other places in Tanach it is also used in the abstract form, but as far as the Chumash is concerned this is the first parsha to use it in such a manner.

What exactly are the reasons for choosing life? The verse tells us: “to love...G-d, and to...cleave to Him”. And why should we cleave to Him, “for He is your life and the length of your days”. This first half of the verse accords with those who say that life should be lived in the spiritual G-dly realm, and as Jews we all agree that this spirituality can only be found in living the ways of the Torah and learning its lessons and insights.

The question is what we are to make of the continuation of the verse. Does it mean, as Samuel David Luzzatto implies<sup>9</sup>, that we should cleave to G-d so that we may dwell in His land? Following this interpretation there is a three-pronged process. We first choose life, so that secondly, we can cleave to G-d, who is an All-Sustaining Deity and by cleaving to Him we thirdly merit dwelling in the Holyland.

Alternately (and the JPS punctuation suggests this alternate reading), the verse could be providing two reasons for why we should choose life. First, to cleave to G-d, the source of all life, and secondly so that we may dwell in His land. Indeed, this reading is suggested by the *Or HaChayim* who instructs us to imagine a *vav* placed before the second clause- so that it should read “to love G-d...; [and] that you may dwell”. In other words, life is worthwhile both for living a Torah life, and equally importantly for dwelling in Israel, which the *Or HaChayim* reminds us is tantamount to keeping all the commandments.

I would like to adopt this commentary by the *Or HaChayim* but with a slight variation. While the verse is definitely speaking about living in Israel, it is also speaking about the concept of “dwelling in the land”. If we accentuate this aspect and try and bracket off the fact that it is the land which G-d promised us, we could read the verse as telling us that we should choose life both to lead a spiritual life, and to lead a life where we can sustain ourselves in one land, one country. To fulfil the second clause, it is obvious that one needs to build an economy and in order to do so we must produce a population that is made of professionals and of businessmen.

The idea that both Torah and the ways of the world (*derekh erez*) are necessary components of living in this world was greatly popularized by the German Jewish writer and commentator Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, but its roots may be traced back to the Mishna. In *Ethics of Our Fathers* (2:2) it states:

**Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Judah HaNassi would say: Beautiful is the study of Torah with the way of the world, for the toil of them both causes sin to be forgotten. Ultimately, all Torah study that is not accompanied with work is destined to cease and to cause sin.**

The idea therefore that a “beautiful” Jewish life is one that combines Torah with the way of the world goes back to Mishnaic times. Indeed, if one only studies Torah and does not concurrently work this brings about sin. According to most commentaries this is because if one does not work, one cannot make money and if one cannot make money this causes people to engage in theft. However, my illustrious ancestor Rabbi Marcus Lehmann<sup>10</sup> tends to disagree. According to his reading even if a person is wealthy and does not need to earn money he should do voluntary work and not engage solely in Torah study. There is something ennobling in work that makes it indispensable and without which one’s quality of life is reduced.

Though we have concluded that a life best lived is one which combines Torah and the ways of the world we may also learn some hints as to how this Torah and this way of life is best practiced. I would like to isolate two lessons. At the beginning of the parsha we learn that the covenant between G-d and His People does not only apply to the generation entering the Land of Canaan but “also with him that is not here with us this day” (*ibid.* 29:14) which probably is a reference to future generations.

<sup>9</sup> S D Luzzatto commenting on Deuteronomy 30:20:

נ"ל לאהב"ה את ה' אלוהיך לשמוע בקולו ולדבקה בו כי הוא חייך וצרך ימך, ה' הוא חייך, ואתה תבחר לאהבה אותו ולדבקה בו לשבת על האדמה.

<sup>10</sup> *Lehmann\_Prins Pirkei Avoth* Feldheim 1992 p.74

In the middle of the parsha we discover that observing the commandments is something anyone is capable of doing. Indeed “the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou may do it” (*ibid.* 30:14). Thus, if on the one hand the covenant is binding on all future generations and on the other hand it is eminently feasible for those bound by it, *per force* it must be relevant.

Torah committed Jews often look to the past for guidance to deal with modern challenges. Since it believes that the Torah’s values are timeless and unchangeable, this makes sense. However, we sometimes confuse values with practice. We follow certain behaviours merely because they were effective in the past. By doing so we risk making the Torah seem old-fashioned and out of touch. The late Rabbi Pinchas Teitz of Elizabeth New Jersey reportedly said that the “Torah speaks in the language of tomorrow”. We therefore need to update our educational methods, our modes of dress (within the parameters permitted by Halacha) and the viewpoints we adopt. In this way we retain the loyalties of our children and we appeal to those who are not yet observant.

We also need to rethink how we relate to the outside world and what we perceive as a just economic system. We must abandon the romantic notion that those who work in the fields, who settle the land and who teach are necessarily superior to those occupied in business related fields. We should realize that good and evil is found in any profession; there are teachers who exert a bad influence on the classroom, and there are lawyers and stockbrokers who provide for their family and who are a credit to their society. It is often the free market that provides equitable solutions while social welfare unfairly punishes the worker and rewards the slothful.

A second lesson we may learn, and one that is related to the first comes from the famous verse in the middle of the parsha: “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (*ibid.* 29:28). On a simple level, it means that we and our children should perform the words of the Law that have been revealed to us. However, I think it is also teaching us about the Law, the Torah. It is telling us that only that which is truly revealed to both us and our children constitutes true Torah.

In order for our life to be run in a proper fashion we have to abide by a Torah that is transparent. We cannot tell others that they are too removed to understand the Torah and it is too complicated and mysterious for them. Quite the opposite. The Torah is not in heaven. It is plain, simple, and transparent. It may not be easy; it may require the toil of the mind to uncover some of its more brilliant aspects. However, it is rational, logical, and understandable and does not rely on heavenly secrets which only the elite few can unlock.

In the same vein in business and in any profession, we need to strive towards a life that is as transparent as possible. We need to account for what we teach, for what we earn and for what we charge. This is an obligation as well as an opportunity of spreading certainty and pleasantness into our lives.

So long as everything is performed for the sake of heaven we should only look forward to continued blessings and a life well lived.

**Choson Torah<sup>11</sup>***Rabbi Moshe Chaim Mirvish z'l*

וְלֹא־קָם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה, אֲשֶׁר יָדָעוּ ד' פְּנִים אֶל־פְּנִים לְכָל־הָאֹתוֹת וְהַמּוֹפְתִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח ד' לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּוֹ וְלִכְלֵל הַיָּד הַחַזָּקָה וְלִכְלֵל הַמּוֹרָא הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מִשָּׁה לְעֵינֵי כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל.

And there was not again a prophet in Israel like Moshe, who knew Hashem face to face, for all the signs and wonders which Hashem sent him to perform in the land of Egypt etc. and for all the mighty hand and for all the great awesomeness that Moshe did in the eyes of all of Israel.<sup>12</sup>

לְעֵינֵי כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל. שְׁנֵשָׂאוּ לְבוֹ לְשֹׁבֵר הַלְוִיחוֹת לְעֵינֵיהֶם שְׁנֵאָמַר וְאֲשֶׁבְרָם לְעֵינֵיכֶם וְהִסְכִּימָה דַעַת הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְדַעְתּוֹ, שְׁנֵאָמַר אֲשֶׁר שִׁבְרָתָּ. יִישֵׁר כְּתוּבָה שְׁשִׁבְרָתָּ

“in the eyes of all of Israel”. This refers to the fact that his heart inspired him to shatter the Tablets before their eyes, as it is said, “And I smashed them before your eyes”<sup>13</sup>, and the opinion of the Holy One, blessed be He, regarding this action agreed with his opinion, as it is stated that God said of the Tablets, “Which you have broken”.<sup>14</sup> “*Shkayach*”<sup>15</sup> that you have broken them”<sup>16</sup>

Any intelligent person will be dumbstruck by this wonderous statement, which, at the end of the Torah, after concluding with the subject of fundamentals and matters that go to the essence of belief of the Nation of Israel there is also a hint to the smashing of the Tablets! Surely this is a side point irrelevant to the Torah in its entirety and its continuity?!

Perhaps there is here a guiding principle for life, something verifiable in our own lives, that when something is performed with a will and desire, it will not seem burdensome or heavy, and if it does involve some toil and great effort, nevertheless one won't leave the work. One who works his own plot of land will sweat over it, ploughing, weeding, sowing, harvesting, and not only it won't feel like a yoke for him, to the contrary, whatever he does will be done with a joy in the knowledge that the result is food for his family, and so too with any work a person does. But if a person gets no satisfaction from his work, particularly, if what he does is against his will, or he finds himself under a tough manager, whose will and whim he is forced to follow, for such a person his work is very difficult, and he strategizes how to get out of it, and seeks all kinds of justifications and excuses to be free of it.

With this in mind we can read the words of the poet in ‘a song of ascents: ...Who sow with tears, with joy they will reap, they will go and weep, who carries the measure of grain, they will come with song, bearing his sheaves’,<sup>17</sup> meaning to say that while there are those that sow with tears, there are also those that sow with joy, ‘they will reap’, both will reap yet each is vastly different from the other, since ‘they will go and weep’, this is the one who sows with tears, weeping, without desire, will afterwards just carry ‘the measure of grain’, he will reap almost what he sowed but no more, since his work does not result in profits. But ‘they will come with song’, is he who at the time of sowing did his

<sup>11</sup> Originally published in MIRVISH, M. C. 1935. *Sefer Derushe ha-Ramah*. Jerusalem: Defus Vais. 198-201; translated for SATJ by the Editor; Rabbi Mirvish served the Beth Hamidrash Hachodosh Congregation of Cape Town 1908 – 1947 and was the first Cape Town Av Beth Din.

<sup>12</sup> Devarim 34:10-12

<sup>13</sup> Devarim 9:17

<sup>14</sup> Shemot 34:1

<sup>15</sup> [Ed: This is the predominant South African pronunciation, derived in turn from the Litvish pronunciation]

<sup>16</sup> Devarim 34:12, Rashi quoting Sifrei Devarim 357:45

<sup>17</sup> Tehillim 126

work with joy, with the knowledge that this work is the start of something honourable, something good, such a person will afterwards be ‘bearing his sheaves’, many sheaves, his work will result in a blessed abundance of profits.

If this is so in the physical realm, where all can recognize the proven reward for the energetic over the lazy, then surely how much more so should it be in the spiritual realm?! For keeping the Torah and *mitzva*, where a person does not see the reward given, nor feel the punishment of the sinner. In this is he simply truly faithful to Hashem and His Torah and he does all out of a love for Hashem, he will feel the unlimited pleasantness of every *mitzva* he performs, and gets a taste of the Garden of Eden in this world and whatever he does he does with a great joy, as the poet says ‘serve Hashem with joy, come before him with song’<sup>18</sup>, ‘sing, o righteous, before Hashem; for the upright, praise is fitting, give thanks to Hashem with a harp, with a ten-stringed lyre make music to Him, sing to Him a new song, play well with *terua*’,<sup>19</sup> and *Tehillim* is full of this, depicting this manner of service of Hashem. And the person who merits to serve in such a manner seeks to do more and more, for is he not elevated by this?! His soul cleaves increasingly to the God of all spirits. Rabbi Akiva laughed even as his flesh was being raked with iron combs.<sup>20</sup> And in earlier generations were there not hundreds and thousands who did like Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues, who died while reciting *shema*, with laughter on their lips, that they merited to fulfil this elevated matter in the service of Hashem, to fulfil the words of the Torah ‘with all of your soul’.<sup>21</sup>

But when there is an astounding degeneration so that whatever we do is only by rote, without feeling, without a lively spirit, then all acts become burdensome, a yoke too heavy to carry, since a person acts only out of habit, or out of shame. It follows then that when he comes to a land or amongst people with different habits, and there is no one before whom to feel shame, then it will be easy for him to cast off this yoke, and all that is precious and holy to his Nation, all of his spiritual inheritance that he inherited from his father and his father’s father, he will trample underfoot. And if he sometimes performs it, it is as a dullard, as a lifeless lump. What kind of impression could such acts make on the heart, on the mind?! It would not be a surprise if, for example, once concluding *shmone esrei* and saying ‘My God guard my tongue from evil and my lips from deceit’, he turned to his neighbour standing next to him and talked to him at length and his tongue spoke evil, and his lips spoke deceit, since even as he read these words his ears did not hear the words he spoke, and if they heard, he gave them absolutely no attention [...] [W]hatever parents do is like a robot, senseless, without any sign of a flicker of a feeling, of an elevation of the soul, for the parents did not experience the spirit of the Torah, did not see the light in it, so do not show it to their children. The children see and understand that whatever the parents do is out of habit, a type of burden squatting on them which they have to carry against their will, and the children ask innocently, what is this service to you?

Previously in Israel there was fulfilled ‘and for the upright of heart is joy.’<sup>22</sup> Children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren would see the soulful joy of parents at the time of the performance of a *mitzva*, or when they did something good or kind. The children tangibly felt that there are such things that are beyond the physical realm, that can provide satisfaction to the soul, and great joy, without having to resort to debauchery and frivolity, which bring but a fleeting joy, and the morning after, an empty wallet, empty heart and soul, and a pounding headache. Not so the joy of the parents, the joy of a *mitzva* that fills the whole soul with a heartfelt joy [...] Little children understand and feel that the mundane spirit of the weekday is valued as small coins compared to the unlimited pleasure, the unbounded inheritance of the festivals of Israel. So there remains a permanent impression upon the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 100

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 33

<sup>20</sup> Berachot 61b

<sup>21</sup> Devarim 5:4

<sup>22</sup> Tehillim 97:11

younger generation, who will then be faithful Jews for their Nation and Torah, and they will love the tradition of their fathers, and all the winds of the world won't be able to shift them from their place.

And with this we can understand a secret in a statement of our sages.<sup>23</sup> 'When Moshe went down from the mountain and the two Tablets were in his hand, and the Tablets were light in his hands, he felt no heaviness. But because he saw the Golden Calf, and the dancing, he gazed at the Tablets and saw the letters flying, then they became heavy in Moshe's hands, and they fell from his hands and smashed.'

One could say that there is a hint here that when Moshe descended from the mountain he saw how astoundingly degenerate the Nation had become, as had they not just heard the holy ten commandments, including 'do not make yourself a carved image nor any'<sup>24</sup> 'molten image'<sup>25</sup>?! Had they not been like prophets, who heard and saw, knowing the knowledge of the Most High, seeing a vision of *Shakai* (the Almighty)?! Despite this they were still able to say of a molten calf 'this is your god, Israel, who took you out of the Land of Egypt'! See, to our great sorrow, how spiritless was this Nation, who took from Mount Sinai the external but not the spirit. Such gross physicality and externality was not capable nor fit nor allowed to receive such Godly Tablets. People who were able to say of a man-made molten calf 'it is a god', how much more so such a people would certainly elevate and empower the Tablets, which are God's handiwork, and prostrate themselves to them, and give sacrifices to them, and emerge with dances. The letters would rather fly from such people, the spirit of the Tablets would not enliven them, they would not merit to sense the letters nor understand them. Such Tablets, bereft of the letters that flew from them, remained but stones, heavy stones, that would in the end be a burden too heavy to bear, and so would fall and completely smash.

[...]

And so therefore precisely at the end of the Torah, where we find revealed to us the foundations of our faith, the faith born out of Godly appearance in the presence of the entire Nation, and the miracles performed in Egypt before all the Egyptians, and the continuous miracles in the wilderness for 40 years, such as the manna, the water from a rock, and so on, all of which were before all of Israel and not before individuals. But for the sake of individuals Hashem hints to us about this principle, which is essential and beneficial to keeping and fulfilling this Torah, for only then will the Torah restore our soul and gladden our heart, when we perform everything with a feeling heart, with the knowledge and recognition that this is our life and length of our days, that it is for our good, only then will the Tablets be light and easy for us, to carry with us in every place. And if, God forbid, the letters fly from the Tablets, they will become heavy stones for us, difficult to fulfil, to hold on to, in that moment when the waves of the sea, the sullen sea of life, crash against us, it will require of us strength and abundant vigour to withstand.

This is such an important principle and foundation for the keeping of the Torah that it was fitting and appropriate to warn about it at its conclusion, by way of this matter of the smashing of the Tablets, and which is then followed by saying *chazak chazak venitchazek* (be strong, be strong and let us strengthen) [...].

And privately to have courage to enter the inner chambers of Torah, to reveal its light and Godly glimmer, to turn it over and over as all is in it,<sup>26</sup> as the Wiseman said 'if you seek it as for silver, and as for buried treasure you search for it, then you will understand Godly reverence, and find Godly

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<sup>23</sup> Midrash Tanchuma Ki Tisa 26

<sup>24</sup> Shemot 20:3

<sup>25</sup> Devarim 27:15

<sup>26</sup> Pirkei Avot 5:26

knowledge'.<sup>27</sup> Only in this manner of search, at the least, can result in finding the pearls, the gems, hidden in the Torah.

Therefore, the title given to the one who concludes the Torah is the *Choson Torah* (Groom of the Torah). Meaning that, even if he is a great Rabbi, he knows that he still does not really know the Torah. He is yet to know her quality and he is like a Groom with regard to the Torah. Even if he has studied it 1000 times, he still has not drawn out all of its living waters, as the Torah is compared to a spring, ever-flowing, and it is impossible in any way to draw from all of its waters. In every generation you will find a faithful thinker who reaches into the depths for wonderful pearls in Torah, previously unimagined. Many answers will be found in it for contemporary questions. In it will be fulfilled the words of the poet 'God's Torah is perfect, restoring the soul, the testimony of God is assured, making the easily seduced wise. The directives of Hashem are straight, gladdening the heart, the commands of Hashem are clear, enlightening the eyes. More treasured than gold or an abundance of refined gold, and sweeter than honey or drippings of honeycombs.'<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Mishlei 2:4-5

<sup>28</sup> Tehillim 19:8-11

## עקידת יצחק

הנה האש והעצים  
ואיה השה לעולה אבי  
כל הבוקר רכבנו חרש  
חמושים במאכלת ועצים  
והדרך סימנת בדמעות

עצוב ומסוגר רכבת בדד  
רק שפתותיך נע חרש  
"אלוקים יראה לו השה" נאנחת  
אז מדוע זה הכאב  
מדוע אינך מתבונן בי אבי

ההרים סוגרים סביב  
מהדהדים בעקבות צעדי  
גלמודים השמים ממעל  
כעדים אלמים במחזה  
צופים ויודעים את הסוד

קדורנית מדדה החמור  
לאט מתנהל למחוז עצבו  
ועיניך תוהות ובוהות

מה בין זבח זה לאחרים  
ואייהו בכלל הקורבן

מבשר רע הבוקר הזה  
השכם בבוקר נחפזנו לדרך  
משרה לא נפרדנו לשלום  
שה לא לצידנו  
ואתה דומם ודומע

אט אט נבנה המזבח  
בכבודות נערכים העצים  
ומבטך מתמקד במרום  
וידך לחבל מגששת  
אך מאיין יבוא השה

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May 1984

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## שערי תשובה

מאנו שערי שמיים להיפתח  
תפילותי תלויות אי שם  
האם יגביהו עוף ויקלטו  
או רוע חטאי יפילם  
לא צחות וקלות כנף הן  
אך גם לא כבדות זדון  
מרחפות הן במרומים  
וכתמי עוונותי מסגירן

נוקשות הן על פתחי שחקים  
כולם מוגפים על בריח  
עלוב מראן, קרועות ציצית  
מחשבות פגומות, כוונות רצוצות  
חסרות טוהר, צבועות יוהרה  
באין זריזות ומסירות נפש  
לא נבקע אף סדק צר  
אזלו הכוחות, כבד המשא

נופלות הן, ראשן סחרחר  
ואין להאחז באף מצווה לשמה  
ביטול תורה הכריעה הכף

חלודים הם שערי החסד  
נעולים שערי רחמים  
נופלות וצונחות כאבן  
לשער היחיד - אבן מושכת  
שערי תשובה תמיד פתוחים

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## *Tsuf D'vash*

### *Mishlei Chapter 10 Verse 4*

*Paysach Burke*

רָאשׁ עֹשֶׂה כַּף־רְמִיָּה וְיָד חָרוּצִים תַּעֲשִׂיר

*“Rash Oseh Chaf Rmia Vyad Charutsim  
Ta’ashir”*

*“A deceitful palm impoverishes while an  
industrious hand enriches”*

☆

*False practice to others trick*

*Will only self impoverish<sup>29</sup>*

*While industrious work an honest pick*

*Will wealth and good accomplish<sup>30</sup>*

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<sup>29</sup> M'D; Ralbag

<sup>30</sup> M'D; Ralbag

*An honest person gives an all in effort  
Zealously moves energetically toils<sup>31</sup>  
The swindler rather cheats to profit  
And himself in loss embroils<sup>32</sup>*

*Scarcity is made with an idle palm  
While from industry comes wealthy balm<sup>33</sup>*

*Showing off to be palmed off wise  
By learning summaries of laws  
Will only be a temp compromise  
As he'll forget not knowing the source<sup>34</sup>*

*One poor in Torah shares a false Law  
Just are the upright who seek Truth more<sup>35</sup>*

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<sup>31</sup> M'D; Ralbag; Malbim

<sup>32</sup> M'D; Ralbag; Malbim

<sup>33</sup> Targum; Ralbag; Malbim

<sup>34</sup> Gra

<sup>35</sup> Rashi

*A deficient hand is a closed palm  
That withholds money, to hand compress  
While wealthy is he who has no qualm  
To open his hand, to poor redress<sup>36</sup>*

*Be honest in your weights and scale<sup>37</sup>  
Check them lest they be false or faulty  
Put safeguards in place to know when they fail  
Lest you too soon unwittingly crook be<sup>38</sup>*

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<sup>36</sup> Gra

<sup>37</sup> M'D; Rashi; E'E; Gra

<sup>38</sup> E'E

**Faith in the unseen**

*Paysach Burke*

You tested positive for covid-19

I have no symptoms

You need to quarantine

Faith in the unseen

Quarantine what do you mean

Stay in doors within four walls

I'm not sick

Kindly sir follow the laws

10 days right? For you 14

Where did it come from?

Its a false positive!

Please keep your room clean

This can't be right

Let me go out!

Keep out of sight!!

Faith in the unseen

Isolation so I'll be an ascetic

Honour the moment

With my humility

Rethink how I treat it

I can still work

Read a book

Learn wisdom

My life relook

Perhaps with Divinity connect

In gut wrenching soulful prayer

To the Master whose signet on the world is stamped

Could it be that He does not care?!

Be calm and still

Fear not

Let your heart not grow faint

Be happy with your lot

Pleasantries

Encouraging

Hit the mark yet?

Does it give your heart outlet?

When life is a gift  
We realize  
Any moment He could it redeem  
Have I lived my lifesong theme?

He has brought us to the refinery  
To bring out our hope and dream  
To emerge with unique livery  
Faith in the unseen

Here I end this song  
Starting a new one before long  
Giving honour to the One who is keen  
For Faith in the Unseen