


THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

WEXNER FIELD FELLOWSHIP &
WEXNER GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP/DAVIDSON SCHOLARS PROGRAM
ALUMNI INSTITUTE 2023



**Rebuild
&
Renew**

Beit Midrash Sourcebook

Welcome

to the Alumni Institute Beit Midrash!

We have modeled this program after a traditional Beit Midrash. To that end, you are presented in this packet with texts which you will prepare in pairs, in *chevruta*. In a traditional *beit midrash*, this preparation time is called "*seder*." The people around you will be studying all different texts and having all sorts of conversations. Your learning and discussion may, in some ways, be influenced by the conversation going on around you. In other words, this program will be loud, and that's part of the experience. Should you need assistance as you study, feel free to ask anyone nearby or the person who prepared your chosen source sheet. After you study with your partner, there will be classes, "*shiurim*," taught by the compilers of these source sheets.

We are starting out the Institute with this session because we believe that the Torah has a lot to contribute to our conversation. We have paired you with strangers in the belief that shared Torah study builds covenantal community.

We hope that these texts and the conversations that they engender will shape your thinking about our theme: Rebuild & Renew.

Instructions

- 1 Please find your *chevruta* (study partner).
 - 2 With your *chevruta*, choose one source sheet to study. Just one - though we've given you all of them so that you can study the rest of them at another time.
 - 3 Using the guiding questions on the source sheet, study the sources provided. Do not feel the need to rush through all the sources; deep investigation of a text is always preferable to a quick read.
 - 4 When prompted by the Beit Midrash coordinator, please move to your respective *shiur* location, where a class will be taught on the sources you chose to study.
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SOURCESHEETS

What Does Rebuilding Look Like?

Tali Adler, WGF/DS Class 28

From Samuel the Prophet to Herzl the Visionary: The Roots of Modern Zionism

Matthew Berkowitz, WGF/DS Class 6

Top Chef: Wilderness Edition (or: You Can't Go Home Again)

Sari Laufer, WGF/DS Class 14

Integration of the Past as a Roadmap for the Future

Leon Morris, WGF/DS Class 4

ReCreation Every Day

Scott Perlo, WFF Class 2

Did my ancestors pray better? Past, future and prayer

Shani Rosenbaum, WGF/DS Class 31

Remember That Time...A rumination on our relationship with the past and the future

Aki Yonekawa, WGF/DS Class 26

Special thanks to Leah Sarna, WGF/DS 27 for her thoughtful planning and coordination of this Beit Midrash program

What Does Rebuilding Look Like?

Tali Adler, WGF 28

Note: Please study sources 1-3 in chevruta, with an emphasis on 2-3.

1. Psalms 126

This psalm, written during the Babylonian exile, imagines the return to Zion. As you read, pay attention to the emotional content. Is this how you imagine a return from Exile actually feeling?

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה אֶת־שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים: אֲזַי מָלֵא שְׂחֹק פִּינוּ וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה אֲזַי אָמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם הַגְּדִיל יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם־אֱלֹהֵי: הַגְּדִיל יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ הֵינּוּ שְׂמֵחִים: שׁוּבָה יְהוָה אֶת־שְׁבוּתֵנוּ [שְׁבִיתָנוּ] כְּאֶפְיָקִים בְּנֶגֶב: הַזְרָעִים בְּדַמְעָה בְּרִגְהָ יִקְצְרוּ: הָלוֹךְ יֵלֵךְ | וּבִכְהָ נִשְׂא מִשְׁרֵ־הַזֶּרַע בָּא יִבּוֹא בְּרִגְהָ נִשְׂא אֶל־מִתְיוֹ:

A song of ascents. When the LORD restores the fortunes of Zion —we see it as in a dream— our mouths shall be filled with laughter, our tongues, with songs of joy. Then shall they say among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them!” The LORD will do great things for us and we shall rejoice. Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like watercourses in the Negeb. They who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy. Although he goes along weeping, carrying the seed-bag, he shall come back with songs of joy, carrying his sheaves.

2. 2. Ezra 3

This text describes the beginning of the rebuilding of the temple following the Babylonian Exile. What emotions would you expect the people to feel at this moment? What do they feel? Why?

וַיִּסְדּוּ הַבְּנִיִּים אֶת־הַיְכָל יְהוָה וַיַּעֲמִידוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים מְלִבְשִׁים בְּחֻצְרוֹת וְהַלְוִיִּם בְּגֵי־אֶסָף בְּמַצְלֵתִים לְהַלֵּל אֶת־יְהוָה עַל־יְדֵי דָוִד מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל: לְיַעֲנוּ בְּהַלֵּל וּבַהוֹדֹת לַיהוָה כִּי טוֹב כִּי־לַעֲוֹלָם חֻסְדּוֹ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל־הָעָם הֲרִיעוּ תְרוּעָה גְדוּלָה בְּהַלֵּל לַיהוָה עַל הוֹסֵד בֵּית־יְהוָה: (ו) וְרַבִּים מֵהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם וְרַאשֵׁי הָאֲבוֹת הַזְּקֵנִים אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ אֶת־הַבַּיִת הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּיָסְדוֹ זֶה הַבַּיִת בְּעֵינֵיהֶם בְּכִים בְּקוֹל גְּדוֹל וְרַבִּים בְּתְרוּעָה בְּשִׂמְחָה לְהַרִים קוֹל: וְאֵין הָעָם מְכִירִים קוֹל תְרוּעַת הַשִּׂמְחָה לְקוֹל בְּכִי הָעָם כִּי הָעָם מְרִיעִים תְרוּעָה גְדוּלָה וְהַקוֹל נִשְׁמַע עַד־לְמִרְחֹק: (פ)

When the builders had laid the foundation of the Temple of the LORD...All the people raised a great shout extolling the LORD because the foundation of the House of the LORD had been laid. Many of the priests and Levites and the chiefs of the clans, the old men who had seen the first house, wept loudly at the sight of the founding of this house. Many others shouted joyously at the top of their voices. The people could not distinguish the shouts of joy from the people’s weeping, for the people raised a great *teruah*, the sound of which could be heard from afar.

3. 2. Nehemiah 8

Soon after the return from exile, Ezra, the leader of those who returned to the land, gathers them to read the Torah out loud and rededicate the people to its commitments. As you read, notice what strategies Ezra employs at this reading. What techniques does he use and what sort of atmosphere is he trying to create? What could he have done differently? Why does he choose this method in this moment?

וַיִּאָסְפוּ כָּל־הָעָם כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד אֶל־הַרְחֹב אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמַּיִם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְעֶזְרָא הַסֹּפֵר לְהַבִּיא אֶת־סֵפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיָּבִיא עֶזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה לִפְנֵי הָקָהָל מֵאִישׁ וְעַד־אִשָּׁה וְכָל מִבֵּין לְשִׁמְעַת בְּיוֹם אֶחָד לְחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי: וַיִּקְרָא בּוֹ לִפְנֵי הַרְחֹב אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמַּיִם מִן־הָאוֹר עַד־מַחְצִית הַיּוֹם נֹגֵד הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַמְּבִינִים וְאֲזָנֵי כָּל־הָעָם אֶל־סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה... וַיִּפְתַּח עֶזְרָא הַסֹּפֵר לְעֵינֵי כָּל־הָעָם כִּי־מַעַל כָּל־הָעָם הָיָה וַיִּכְפַּתְחוּ עֲמָדוֹ כָּל־הָעָם: וַיְבָרֶךְ עֶזְרָא אֶת־יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים הַגָּדוֹל וַיַּעֲנוּ כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן | אָמֵן בְּמַעַל יְדֵיהֶם וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לַיהוָה אֲפִים אֶרְצָה:... וְהַלְלוּם מְבִינִים אֶת־הָעָם וְהַתּוֹרָה וְהָעָם עַל־עַמְדָם: וַיִּקְרָאוּ בִּסְפֹר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים מִפָּרָשׁ וְשׁוּם שֶׁכָּל וַיְבִינוּ בְּמִקְרָא: (ס) וַיֹּאמֶר נְחֵמְיָה הוּא הַתְּרַשָּׁתָא וְעֶזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן | הַסֹּפֵר וְהַלְלוּם הַמְּבִינִים אֶת־הָעָם לְכָל־הָעָם הַיּוֹם קִדְשֵׁהוּא לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֶל־תִּתְאַבְּלוּ וְאֶל־תִּבְכּוּ כִּי בּוֹכִים כָּל־הָעָם כִּשְׂמֵעָם אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לִכּוּ אֲכִלוּ מִשְׂמֵנַיִם וּשְׁתוּ מִמִּתְקִים וּשְׁלְחוּ מְנוֹת לְאֵין נֶכּוֹן לוֹ כִּי־קִדְּוֹשׁ הַיּוֹם לְאֲדִינֵינוּ וְאֶל־תִּעַצְבוּ כִּי־חֲדַנְתִּי יְהוָה הִיא מַעֲזָכֶם: וְהַלְלוּם מִחֲשֵׁים לְכָל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר הִסּוּ כִּי הַיּוֹם קִדְּשׁ וְאֶל־תִּעַצְבוּ: וַיִּלְלוּ כָּל־הָעָם לְאֲכָל וּלְשִׁלַּח מְנוֹת וּלְעֲשׂוֹת שְׂמֵחָה גְדוֹלָה כִּי הִבִּינוּ בְּדְבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹדִיעוּ לָהֶם:

The entire people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the scroll of the Teaching of Moses with which the LORD had charged Israel. On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Teaching before the congregation, men and women and all who could listen with understanding. He read from it, facing the square before the Water Gate, from the first light until midday, to the men and the women and those who could understand; the ears of all the people were given to the scroll of the Teaching... Ezra opened the scroll in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people; as he opened it, all the people stood up. Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," with hands upraised. Then they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the LORD with their faces to the ground... and the Levites explained the Teaching to the people, while the people stood in their places. They read from the scroll of the Teaching of God, translating it and giving the sense; so they understood the reading. Nehemiah the Tirshatha, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were explaining to the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God: you must not mourn or weep," for all the people were weeping as they listened to the words of the Teaching. He further said to them, "Go, eat choice foods and drink sweet drinks and send portions to whoever has nothing prepared, for the day is holy to our Lord. Do not be sad, for your rejoicing in the LORD is the source of your strength." The Levites were quieting the people, saying, "Hush, for the day is holy; do not be sad." Then all the people went to eat and drink and send portions and make great merriment, for they understood the things they were told.

4. Exodus 20

וְכָל־הָעָם רְאוּם אֶת־הַקּוֹל וְאֶת־הַלְפִיזִים וְאֶת־קוֹל הַשֹּׁפָר וְאֶת־הַהַר עֹשֵׂן וַיֵּרָא הָעָם וַיִּנְעוּ וַיַּעֲמִדוּ מֵרָחֵק: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר־אַתָּה עִמָּנוּ וְנִשְׁמָעָה וְאֶל־יְדִבֵּר עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים פֶּן־נָמוּת: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָעָם אֶל־תִּירְאוּ כִּי לְבַעֲבוֹר נִסּוֹת אֲתֶכֶם בָּא הָאֱלֹהִים וּבַעֲבוֹר תִּהְיֶה יְרֵאתוֹ עַל־פְּנֵיכֶם לְבַלְתִּי תַחֲטְאוּ: וַיַּעֲמֵד הָעָם מֵרָחֵק וּמֹשֶׁה נִגַּשׁ אֶל־הָעַרְפֶּל אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם הָאֱלֹהִים: (פ)

All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance. "You speak to us," they said to Moses, "and we will obey; but let not God speak to us, lest we die." Moses answered the people, "Be not afraid; for God has come only in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may be ever with you, so that you do not go astray." So the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.

חדש ימינו כקדם

From Samuel the Prophet to Herzl the Visionary: The Roots of Modern Zionism

Sources Curated by Rabbi Matt Berkowitz, WGF Class VI

1. Judges 19:29-30

When he came home, he picked up a knife, and took hold of his concubine and cut her up limb by limb into twelve parts. He sent them throughout the territory of Israel. And everyone who saw it cried out, "Never has such a thing happened or been seen from the day the Israelites came out of the Land of Egypt to this day! Put your mind to this; take counsel and decide!"

2. Judges 21:25

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did as he pleased.

3. Samuel I 8:1-22

When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons judges over Israel. The name of his first born son was Joel, and his second son's name was Abijah; they sat as judges in Beersheva. But his sons did not follow in his ways; they were bent on gain, they accepted bribes, and they subverted justice.

All the elders of Israel assembled and came to Samuel at Ramah, and they said to him, "You have grown old, and your sons have not followed in your ways. Therefore appoint a king for us, to govern us like all other nations. Samuel was displeased that they said, "Give us a king to govern us." Samuel prayed to the Lord and the Lord replied to Samuel, "Heed the demand of the people in everything they say to you. For it is not you that they have rejected; it is Me they have rejected as their King. Like everything else they have done ever since I brought them out of Egypt to this day—forsaking Me and worshipping other gods—so they are doing to you. Heed their demand; but warn them solemnly, and tell them about the practices of any king who will rule over them."

Samuel reported all the words of the Lord to the people, who were asking him for a king. He said, "This will be the practice of the king who will rule over you: He will take your sons and appoint them as charioteers and horsemen, and they will serve as outrunners for his chariots. He will appoint them as his chiefs of thousands and of fifties; or they will have to plow his fields, reap his harvest, and make his weapons and the equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters as perfumers, cooks and bakers. He will seize your choice fields, vineyards and olive groves, and give them to his courtiers. He will take one tenth of your grain and vintage and give it to his eunuchs and courtiers. He will take your male and female slaves . . . and put them to work for him. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you will become his slaves. The day will come when you cry out because of the king whom you yourselves have chosen; and the Lord will not answer you on that day."

But the people would not listen to Samuel's warning. "No," they said, "We must have a king over us, that we may be like all the other nations. Let our king rule over us and go out at our head and

fight our battles.” When Samuel heard all that the people said, he reported it to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, “Heed their demands and appoint a king for them.” Samuel then said to the men of Israel, ‘All of you go home.’”

4. Leo Pinsker, *Auto-Emancipation*, 1882

The essence of the problem, as we see it, lies in the fact that, in the midst of the nations among whom the Jews reside, they form a distinctive element which cannot be assimilated . . . The Jewish people has no fatherland of its own, though many motherlands; it has no rallying point, no center of gravity, no government of its own, no accredited representatives. It is everywhere a guest and nowhere at home. The nations never have to deal with a Jewish nation but always with mere Jews. The Jews are not a nation because they lack a certain national character which is determined by living together in one country under one rule.

The ghostlike apparition of a people without unity or organization, without land or other bond of union, no longer alive, and yet moving about among the living—this eerie form scarcely paralleled in history, unlike anything that preceded or followed it, could not fail to make a strange and peculiar impression upon the imagination of nations.

5. Theodor Herzl, 1896

We are one people—One People. We have honestly striven everywhere to merge ourselves into the social life of surrounding communities, and to preserve only the faith of our fathers. It has not been permitted to us. In vain are we loyal patriots, in some places our loyalty running to extremes; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and property as our fellow citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our native land in science and art . . . Let sovereignty be granted to us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the requirements of the nation—the rest we shall manage for ourselves.

6. George Steiner, “A Kind of Survivor,” in *Language and Silence: Essays*, 1958-1966, 167

The Israeli Jew cannot look back often; his must be the dreams not of night but of day, the forward dreams.

7. Excerpt from *Hatikvah*, The Hope, Israeli National Anthem

And towards the East, An eye looks to Zion,
Our hope is not yet lost, The hope that is two-thousand years old.
To be a free nation in our land, The Land of Zion, Jerusalem.

8. Ariel Hirschfeld, “Locus and Language,” 1011, as in David Biale, *Cultures of the Jews*

This simple word, *kadimah*, touches upon the deepest mythical roots of Hebrew culture. The word contains three distinct elements: it is derived from *kadim*, which means East, and from *kedem* in the sense of to proceed forward, to make progress. But *kedem* also has a temporal sense of a primordial era, an *Urzeit*. . . The word *kadimah* in *Hatikvah* contains not one movement but a cluster of movements, of vectors . . .

Top Chef: Wilderness Edition (or: You Can't Go Home Again)

Source Sheet by Rabbi Sari Laufer, WGF XIV (14)

Numbers 11:5

במדבר י"א:ה'

We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.

זָכַרְנוּ אֶת־הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר־נֹאכַל בְּמִצְרַיִם חֲנָם אֶת הַקִּשְׁאִים וְאֶת הָאֲבִטְחִים וְאֶת־הַקִּצִּיר וְאֶת־הַבְּצָלִים וְאֶת־הַשּׁוּמִים:

The list is both specific and diffuse, particular objects of a restless desire that cannot find full gratification. But the unappeasable nature of desire is already implicit in the cognate verb and object: "They desired desire." A blank wishfulness haunts their cry: who will gratify this desire....

God understands their *bassar* fantasy as a profound shift in loyalties, in loves, as though God hears the intimate implications of their craving for meat...Their speech betrays a repressed passion of which they themselves might not be fully conscious.

-Dr. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg

Rashi on Numbers 11:5

רש"י על במדבר י"א:ה'

(1) אשר נאכל במצרים חנם [WE REMEMBER THE FISH] WHICH WE DID EAT IN EGYPT FOR NOTHING — What then is the force of the word חנם? It means: free from (i.e. without us having been burdened with) heavenly commands (Sifrei Bamidbar 87).

(א) אשר נאכל במצרים חנם. ומהו אומר חנם, חנם מן המצוות (ספרי): (ב)

Nostalgia is a powerful emotion. Wistful memories of the past can move us to tears and can motivate us to recreate and reclaim aspects of the past. The grass is always greener, in the lawns of our memories. As an emotion, nostalgia is very human and morally neutral....

The fish that the Israelites ate in Egypt were free of mitzvot. We were nostalgic for a carefree life where we could eat and work and not have to worry about any responsibilities beyond ourselves. That too is a kind of nostalgia. It is not uncommon to feel nostalgia for a time when we were too young to be burdened with heavy responsibilities. It's natural and it's human to think back with fondness to a simpler time of life. But it's wrong to yearn for existence without moral accountability. The prime of life cannot be a stage of life in which we were too young to be accountable to others and unable to make a positive difference in the world.

--Rabbi David Wolkenfeld

Shabbat 116a:3

שבת קט"ז א:ג'

As it was taught in a *baraita* that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: In the future, this portion will be uprooted from here, where it appears, and will be written in its proper place. And why was it written here, even though it discusses the travels of the children of Israel, and the portion before it does not? It is in order to demarcate between the first punishment and the second punishment. What is the second punishment that appears immediately afterward? It is the verse: "And the people complained wickedly in God's ears, and God heard and became angry, and the fire of God burned in them and it consumed

דתנא: רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר: עתידה פרושה זו שתיקרא מכאן ותכתב במקומה. ולמה כתבה כאן — כדי להפסיק בין פורענות ראשונה לפורענות שנייה. פורענות שנייה מאי היא — ויהי העם

the edge of the camp” (Numbers 11:1). What is **the first punishment**? It is the verse: **“And they traveled from the mountain of God [*mebar Hashem*] for three days”** (Numbers 10:33), **and Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, said: That they turned from after God [*me’aharei Hashem*]** and hurriedly fled Mount Sinai. The Gemara asks: **And** if so, **where is** the proper **place** for this paragraph? **Rav Ashi said: In** the portion of the **flags**, where there is a description of the manner in which the Jewish people traveled through the desert.

במתאוננים. פורענות ראשונה — ויִסְעוּ מֵהַר ה', וְאָמַר רַבִּי חֲמַא בְּרַבִּי חַנִּינָא: שָׁסְרוּ מֵאַחֲרֵי ה'. וְהֵיכֵן מְקוּמָהּ? אָמַר רַב אֲשִׁי: בְּדִגְלִים.

Ramban on Numbers 10:35:1

AND IT CAME TO PASS WHEN THE ARK SET FORWARD.

“God made for this section [i.e., this verse and the following one] a special mark in front of it and behind it [by placing two inverted letters *nun* at the beginning and end of it] in order to indicate that this section is not in its proper place. Why then was it written here? In order to separate between [the narrative of] one punishment and that of another punishment...The first ‘punishment’ is that which says, *And they set forward from the mount of the Eternal*, on which Rabbi Chanina said: This teaches us that they turned aside from the Eternal.” ...But the meaning of this interpretation [of the Rabbis that *they set forward from the mount of the Eternal* indicates a punishment, is based on that which] they found in the Agadah, that “they set forward from Mount Sinai with joy, just like a child who runs away from school, saying: ‘Perhaps God will give us more commandments [if we stay]!’” This then is the sense of the expression, *And they set forward from the mount of the Eternal*, meaning that their intention was to remove themselves from there *because* it was the mount of the Eternal. This is the first “punishment” [i.e., the first sin, as explained further on], ...Perhaps were it not for this sin of theirs God would have brought them into the Land immediately [and so there was indeed a “punishment”].

רמב"ן על במדבר י':ל"ה:א'

ויהי בנסוע הארון עשה לו סימן מלפניו ומלאחריו לומר שאין זה מקומו ולמה כתב כאן כדי להפסיק בין פורענות לפורענות ... פורענות ראשונה דכתיב ויסעו מהר ה' (במדבר י':ל"ג) ואמר רבי חנינא מלמד שסרו מאחרי ה'... אבל ענין המדרש הזה מצאו אותו באגדה שנסעו מהר סיני בשמחה כתינוק הבורח מבית הספר אמרו שמא ירבה ויתן לנו מצות וזהו ויסעו מהר ה' שהיה מחשבתם להסיע עצמן משם מפני שהוא הר ה' וזהו פורענות ראשונה... ושם אלמלא הטאם זה היה מכניסם לארץ מיד:

We miss the days in which we were stationary, the days without this arduous journey toward becoming a people. We long for a simpler time. Give us back the delicious predictability of unchanging routine. We can hardly remember who we are in this wilderness. Please, return to us a taste of who we were.

-Rabbi Rebecca Gutterman

Maybe one of the lessons is that the wilderness is a place where we can't rely on the familiar, which can seem like a hardship but might also be an invitation--an invitation into the reality of our existence, an invitation into the truth of our vulnerability.

Maybe the call of the wilderness is to ask us to think more deeply, more broadly, more adventurously, more boldly, about the maybes.

-Rachel Held Evans (z"l)

Integration of the Past as a Roadmap for the Future

Leon A. Morris (WGF Class IV)

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה יג ע"א

...נטלו משה והביאו אצלו. וכל אותן שנים שהיו ישראל במדבר היו שני ארונות הללו, אחד של מת ואחד של שכינה, מהלכין זה עם זה. והיו עוברין ושבין אומרים: מה טיבן של שני ארונות הללו? אמרו: אחד של מת ואחד של שכינה. וכי מה דרכו של מת להלך עם שכינה? אמרו: קיים זה כל מה שכתוב בזה.

Talmud Bavli, Sota 13a

Moses took it and carried it with him. All those years that the Israelites were in the wilderness, those two chests, one of the dead and the other of the Shechinah, proceeded side by side, and passersby used to ask: 'What is the nature of those two chests?' They received the reply: 'One is of the dead and the other of the Shechinah'. 'But is it, then, the way of the dead to proceed with the Shechinah?' They were told, 'This one [Joseph] fulfilled all that was written in the other'.

Franz Rosenzweig, "The Builders"

Our independence from history or, to put it positively, our eternity, gives simultaneity to all moments of our history. Turning back, recapturing what has remained behind, is here a permanent and life necessity. For we must be able to *live* in our eternity...

...As our whole being is at every moment placed before the task of returning home, not only certain layers and domains of being... so also must the acceptance of the task be made by our whole being, not only certain moments of history... For what may be a hard task for other nations, that is to turn back in the onrushing stream of life – because they consider themselves united by time and space and only on festive days and in hours of destiny do they feel as members in a chain of generations – this is just the very basis of our communal and individual life: the feeling of being our fathers' children, our grandchildren's ancestors. Therefore we may rightly expect to find ourselves again, at some time, somehow, in our fathers' every word and deed; and also that our words and deeds will have some meaning for our grandchildren. For we are, as scripture puts it, "children"; we are, as tradition reads it, "Builders."

Richard Rubenstein, "Atonement and Sacrifice in Contemporary Jewish Liturgy," *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, 1966

One of the greatest achievements of historic Judaism has been its ability to retain a meaningful aspect of every layer of Jewish religious experience in its contemporary expressions. Nothing which has ever been meaningful in the Jewish past has been entirely suppressed. It may have been sublimated, subdued, partially altered, but, until modern times, nothing was ever

suppressed without trace. Thus the student of religious history can find in the religious experience of the Jew residues of the pagan and Canaanitic traditions which form a substratum of Jewish religious history. Psalm 29 is now known to have had its origins in Canaanite religious poetry, et as a hymn to God, whose voice is over the waters and is mighty in strength, it is sung on the Sabbath day in connection with the reading of the Torah, the literary residue of that same Divine voice. Parents long ago gave up the slaughter of the first-born, yet the transition from this expression of the hostility of the generations has been formed through a ceremony in which the hostility is acknowledged but deflected by a surrogate offering of coin in the "redemption of the first-born" ceremony. Canaanite agrarian holidays are no longer celebrated as orgiastic occasions for magically increasing the fertility of the land, but they continue to form one substratum of the Passover-Shavuoth-Succoth festival cycle. Neither prophet nor priest has won the day in traditional Jewish practice. Each has found his place in a tradition which was wise enough to endure the tension between them, rather than falsely choose one in preference to the other.

Even the sacrificial cult was never done away with. It served many purposes. It was a means by which a community was dramatically made one substance in holy communion. It was an enormously efficacious instrument of moral and social control. It brought the ever-pressing problems of orality, aggression, and sadism into the domain of the sacred, where they could be regulated and dealt with effectively rather than ignored. And, if Freud is correct, it offered a dramatic catharsis wherein mankind's oldest and darkest crime was continually confessed through symbolic re-enactment and, in the process, again abjured.

REBURIAL OF HERZL IN JERUSALEM SET

Body of Zionist Founder Will
Be Flown From Vienna to
Israel on Aug. 16

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

JERUSALEM, Aug. 7—The body of Dr. Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, who in the Eighteen Nineties promoted the first practical steps which led ultimately to the establishment of Israel, will be reinterred in Jerusalem on Aug. 17. It will arrive here by plane on Aug. 16 from Vienna, where he died and was buried in 1904.

This event is regarded here as the biggest of its kind since the burial near Nablus of the mummified remains of Joseph, which the Prophet Moses took along on the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.

המחדש בטובו בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית

ReCreation Every Day -

Rabbi Scott Perlo, Romemu Brooklyn

WFF 2

Siddur Ashkenaz, Shabbat,

Shacharit,

Master of wonders, **God renews in goodness, each day, continuously, the work of creation, as it is said: "Who MAKES the great lights,"** for God's kindness is everlasting." Shine a new light upon Zion, and may we all soon be privileged to [enjoy] its brightness. Blessed are You, God, Former of the luminaries.

סידור אשכנז, שבת, שחרית

אָדוֹן הַנְּפִלְאוֹת: הַמְּחַדֵּשׁ בְּטוֹבוֹ בְּכָל יוֹם תָּמִיד מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית. כְּאָמֹר לַעֲשֵׂה אוֹרִים גְּדֹלִים. כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסָדוֹ: אוֹר חֲדָשׁ עַל צִיּוֹן תִּתְאִיר וְנִזְכָּה כְּלָנוּ מִהֲרָה לְאוֹרוֹ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'. יוֹצֵר הַמְּאוֹרוֹת:

By the time of the Hassidim there's an idea ensconced in Jewish thought, that God renews the creation of the world daily. As we'll see, the idea only intensifies over time.

This section is from the prayerbook, and the prayer itself does the work of explaining how it knows that the world is created daily. What point of grammar and tense allows for this reading?

Hillel Zeitlin, *Longings for Beauty*

It's written in the Torah: "and God created the human in God's image. Male and female God created them..." Others came afterwards and switched the verse around, "And the human created God in their image, in the image of the human they created God."

And as for us, what shall we answer to this? "Both these are those are the words of the living God." These two depths meet at a single point; these two profundities unite together when we peer at the root of things - go and see how heaven and earth kiss each other: "God created the human" - "The human created God."

But which human being creates? A person of *atzilut** creates, one who was created in the image of God. And when does that person create? In the moment they kiss the Divine. Hillel Zeitlin, *Longings for Beauty*, P. 26

כתוב בתורה: ויברא אלקים את האדם בצלמו, בצלם אלוקים ברא אותו. זכר ונקבה ברא אותם... באו אחרים וסרסו את המקרא: "ויברא האדם את האלקים בצלמו, בצלם האדם ברא אותו" ... ואנן מה נענה אבתרן? [ואנו מה נענה אחריהם?] - אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים. שני עומקים אלו נפגשים בנקודה אחת, שני תהומות אלו מתאחדים יחד לכשנסתכל בשרשם של דברים - תא ואחוי לך היכי דנשקי שמיא וארעא אהדדי [בוא ואראה לך איך נושקים השמים והארץ זה לזה]... "האלקים ברא את האדם" - "האדם ברא את אלקים". תפוס לשון אחרון. אבל איזה אדם בורא? - אדם דאצילות בורא, מי שנברא בצלם אלקים. ומתי הוא בורא? בשעת נשיקת האלקים.

הלל צייטלין, געגועים ליופי (ירושלים תשי"פ) ע' 26.

This is Hillel Zeitlin (1871-1942), who was really something. We'll discuss his life and times more together. What is he saying? Do pieces of it remind you of other 19th century thinkers? *Atzilut is the highest of the four Kabbalistic worlds of emanation - the process of cosmogeny from the existence of God beyond time and space into the world of the physical.

Beit HaLevi on Torah, Bereshit 3

And like it says in the prayerbook...**God renews in goodness, each day, continuously, the work of creation...**

For in each moment God fashions the world *yesh m'ayin* (lit. "that which is out of that which is not), and thus God creates now as God did in the first six days. The distinction is that during the six days God created that which was (completely) new, that which had not existed before...

From thence, God creates [the world] in each moment [based] on the picture of the way the world was the second before, according to the laws of nature and [natural order]...

בית הלוי על התורה, בראשית ג'

וכמו שסידרו בברכות יוצר המחדש
בטובו בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית
כאמור לעושה אורים גדולים כל"ה,
דבכל רגע הוא ממציאו להעולם יש
מאין ונמצא דגם עתה הוא בוראו כמו
בששה ימים הראשונים, רק החילוק
הוא דבששה ימים ברא בו דבר חדש
מה שלא היה בו מקודם וזהו שקראו
הפסוק בלשון עשה בהם מלאכה,
ומאז והלאה בוראו בכל רגע על
התמונה שהיה העולם ברגע הקודם
כטבעו וכסידורו

This piece is from the Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, the father of the Brisker Rav and ancestor of the 20th century Rav Soloveitchik, the giant of Modern Orthodoxy. He takes this idea to its highest level: that God is continually renewing creation in every moment. This idea can also be found in the *Tanya, Sha'ar haYichud ve'haEmunah*.

Here's the question - what kind of possibilities does this philosophy bring? If one "sees" the world being recreated in every moment, what new avenues of thought and action become possible?

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Darkness | Gives shape to the light |
| As light | Shapes the darkness. |
| Death | Gives shape to life |
| As life | Shapes death. |
| The universe | And God Share this wholeness, |
| Each | Defining the other. |
| God | Gives shape to the universe |
| As the universe | Shapes God. |

Did my ancestors pray better? Past, future and prayer

Wexner Alumni Institute 2023

Shani Rosenbaum, WGF Class 31

Instructions

- Read text #1 below in either translation or the original language. We'll read text #2 as a group.
- Spend no more than 15-20 min reading and processing the text itself, so you have 10-15 min to discuss the content with your chevuta.
- For the sake of time, even if you can access the original, you may want to use translation today.

Reading tips

- There are a few moves of Talmudic argumentation here that may feel confusing if you haven't learned much Talmud before. Check in with Shani if you are new to Talmud and she'll give you a few extra tips to get oriented.
- When the rabbis say "pray" here, they mean recite what we call the *amidah*. In Rabbinic prayer on a regular weekday, the *amidah* is recited three times: evening, morning and afternoon.
- "juxtapose redemption with prayer" refers to a specific blessing—whose theme is redemption—that follows the *shema* recitation and precedes the *amidah* in the daily liturgy

Questions for reflection

- What concerns or tensions do you notice in this text? What seems important to the voices here?
- Do any of these concerns or tensions resonate with your own experience? Any feel dissonant with your lived experience?
- What is this text's relationship...
 - to the *past*?
 - to the *future*?
 - to the *passage of time*?
- What is the relationship between the past, the future, and prayer?

1. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 26a (part I)

Mishna: The morning prayer is until noon. Rabbi Yehuda says: until the fourth hour. The afternoon prayer is until evening. Rabbi Yehuda says: until halfway through the afternoon. The evening prayer is not fixed. And the musaf service is all day. Rabbi Yehuda says: until the seventh hour.

Gemara: But note the contradiction [between our *mishna*, and the following text]:

The mitzvah [of reciting the *shema*] is with sunrise, so that one will juxtapose redemption with prayer, and will end up praying during the day.

That [second text] was taught with regards to the pious ones of old (*vatikin*). As Rabbi Yohanan said: the pious ones of old would finish [reciting the *shema*] with sunrise.

And does everyone else have only until noon, and not longer? But didn't Rav Meri son of Rav Huna son of Rabbi Yirmiya say bar Abba say that Rabbi Yohanan said: If one erred and did not pray in the evening, they should pray twice in the morning; in the morning—pray twice in the afternoon!

A person can go ahead and pray all day. Until noon, they give him credit for prayer on time; from here forward, they give him credit for prayer, but do not give him credit for prayer on time.

תלמוד בבלי ברכות נו.

מת': תפלת השחר עד חצות. רבי יהודה אומר: עד ארבע שעות. תפלת המנחה עד הערב, רבי יהודה אומר: עד פלג המנחה. תפלת הערב אין לה קבע. נשל מוספים כל היום, רבי יהודה אומר: עד שבע שעות.

גמ': ורמינהו: מצותה עם הגז החמה, כדי שייסמוך גאולה לתפלה, ונמצא מתפלל ביום!

כי תבא ההיא לנתיקין. דאמר רבי יוחנן: נתיקין היו גומרים אותה עם הגז החמה

וכולי עלמא עד חצות ותו לא, והאמר רב מרי ברביה דרב הונא ברביה דרבי ירמיה בר אבא אמר רבי יוחנן: טעה ולא התפלל ערבית — מתפלל בשחרית שתיים, שחרית — מתפלל במנחה שתיים. פולי יומא מצלי ואזיל, עד חצות, יחבי ליה שחר תפלה בזמנה, מכאן ואילך, שחר תפלה — יחבי ליה, שחר תפלה בזמנה — לא יחבי ליה.

2. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 26a (part II)

It was asked of them: if a person erred and did not pray in the afternoon, should they pray the evening prayer twice?

...Come and hear that Rav Huna bar Yehuda said that Rabbi Yitzhak said that Rabbi Yohanan said: If a person erred and did not pray in the afternoon—they should pray the evening prayer twice, and there is no concern here that “its day passed, its sacrificial offering is null.”

But here is a contradictory statement: “What is bent cannot be fixed, and what is lacking cannot be counted” (Eccl. 1:15). “What is bent cannot be fixed”—this refers to someone who neglected the evening or morning *shema* or evening or morning prayer. “What is lacking cannot be counted”—this refers to one whose peers joined together for some matter of mitzvah, and he was not counted among them.

Rabbi Yitzhak said that Rabbi Yohanan said: what are we dealing with [in the second statement]? A person who deliberately neglected [prayer].

Rav Ashi said: That interpretation is precise—since the text specifically says “neglected,” and does not say “erred.”

איבעיא להו: טעה ולא התפלל מנחה, מהו שיתפלל ערבית שתיים?

...תא שמע דאמר רב הונא בר יהודה אמר רבי יצחק אמר רבי יוחנן: טעה ולא התפלל מנחה — מתפלל ערבית שתיים, ואין בזה משום דעבר יומו בטל קרבנו.

מיתיבי. “מענת לא יוכל לתקן וחסרון לא יוכל להמנות”: “מענת לא יוכל לתקן” — זה שבטל קריאת שמע של ערבית וקריאת שמע של שחרית, או תפלה של ערבית או תפלה של שחרית. “חסרון לא יוכל להמנות” — זה שנמנו חביריו לדבר מצוה, ולא נמנה עמהם. אמר רבי יצחק אמר רבי יוחנן: הכא במאי עסקינן — שבטל במזיד. אמר רב אשי: דיקא נמי, דקתני “בטל”, ולא קתני “טעה”, שמע מינה.

Remember That Time...

A rumination on our relationship with the past and the future

Wexner Alumni Institute 2023

Aki Yonekawa, WGF/DS Class 26

Below is a verse from Lamentations followed by a rabbinic exegesis on that verse. This verse is a plea to God in the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and a part of our liturgy today.

What does it mean for us to ask to have our days *renewed* to the past?

What does it mean for us to say it now?

If we want to be returned to something, what part of the past do we want to renew?

What do the rabbis think we are asking to be returned to?

What is the nature of these time periods? Are these the good ol' days that you would want to model our future on?

What does this kind of nostalgia say about what the rabbis value?

Eicha 5:21

Take us back, O LORD, to Yourself,

And let us come back;

Renew our days as of old!

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה | אֵלֶיךָ וְנִשׁוּב וְנִשְׁוֶבָה חֲדָשׁ
יְמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:

Eicha Rabah 5:21

"Renew our days as of old [*kekedem*]."

Like Adam the first man, just as it says: "He banished the man; He stationed...east [*mikedem*] of the Garden of Eden" (Genesis 3:24).

Alternatively, "renew our days as of old." Just as it says: "The offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years" (Malachi 3:4).

"As in the days of old," this is Moses, as it is written: "He remembered the days of old, Moses, His people" (Isaiah 63:11).

"And as in former years," like the years of Solomon.

Rabbi [Yehuda HaNasi] says: "As in the days [*kime*] of old," as in the days of Noah, as it is stated: "For, like the waters of [*ki mei*] Noah, this is for Me" (Isaiah 54:9).

"And as in former years," like the years of Abel, when there was not yet idolatry in the world.

חֲדָשׁ יְמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם,
כְּאֵדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן, כְּמָה דָּאֵת אָמַר (בראשית ג, כד): וַיִּגְרַשׁ אֶת
הָאָדָם וַיִּשְׁקֵן מִקְדָּם לְגַן עֵדֶן.

דָּבָר אַחֵר, חֲדָשׁ יְמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם, כְּמָה דָּאֵת אָמַר (מלאכי ג, ד):
וְעָרְבָה לָהּ מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַיִם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וְכַשְׁנִים קְדָמִנִיּוֹת,

כִּימֵי עוֹלָם, זֶה מִשָּׁה, דְּכָתִיב (ישעיה סג, יא):
וַיִּזְכֹּר יְמֵי עוֹלָם מִשָּׁה עִמּוֹ.

וְכַשְׁנִים קְדָמִנִיּוֹת, כְּשָׁנוֹת שְׁלֵמָה.

רַבִּי אוֹמֵר: כִּימֵי עוֹלָם, כִּימֵי נֹחַ, שְׁנֵאֲמַר (ישעיה נד, ט): כִּי מִי נֹחַ
זֹאת לִי.

וְכַשְׁנִים קְדָמִנִיּוֹת, כְּשָׁנוֹת הַבַּל, שְׁלֵא הִיְתָה עֲבוֹדַת פֹּכְבִים עֲדֵי:
בְּעוֹלָם.

On the following page are two poems that explore our relationship to the past and the future.

What is the relationship to the past in each poem?

What is the relationship between past and future?

What could it mean to "wish a life back" as *Threshold* puts it, and how does that resonate with the other two texts?

How do these sentiments about the past resonate with you? When do you feel nostalgia, regret, the desire to get the past back, the desire to move forward and leave the past behind?

Threshold
By Maggie Smith

You want a door you can be
on both sides of at once.

You want to be
on both sides of here

and there, now and then,
together and—(what

did we call the life
we would wish back?

The old life? The before?)
alone. But any open

space may be
a threshold, an arch

of entering and leaving.
Crossing a field, wading

through nothing
but timothy grass,

imagine yourself passing from
and into. Passing through

doorway after
doorway after doorway.

Note: This poem was written before the pandemic took hold of the world, but it hits different when you take into account how the world would change just weeks from its publication.

Source: www.poetryfoundation.org February 2020

IF ONLY
By Leann Shamash

If only I had eaten better,
if only I hadn't had so much to drink,
if only I didn't like sugar so much,
if only I had exercised,
if only I have read more books,

if only we had tried harder,

if only I went back,
if only I had waited,

if only I had been more thoughtful,
if only I had told the truth,

if only I had been nicer,
if only I hadn't lost my temper,

if only I had followed the law,
if only I had read the fine print,
if only I could return,
if only I could go forward,

if only I had laughed more,

if only I had forgiven,
if only I had been forgiven,

if only I could find the words,
if only I hadn't spoken too much,

if only I could see now what I saw then,
if only my eyes were not clouded,

if only I could rewrite it,
if only I could erase it,

if only I could add one more word,

if only I had reached out,
if only I had replied,

if only if only I had stepped in,
if only I had stepped away,

if only the tides would turn,

if only others could hear me,
if only I could hear others,

if only I could see them one more time,

if only once more

if only
if only
if only

Note: Inspired by Numbers 14:2: "If only we had died in the land of Egypt," the whole community shouted at them, "or if only we might die in this wilderness!"

Source: www.wordshavewings.net

THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

The Wexner Foundation trains and inspires leaders in the North American Jewish Community and the State of Israel. Through diverse, cohort-based educational programs, the Foundation invests in promising professionals (with the William Davidson Foundation and the Jim Joseph Foundation) and volunteers and gives them tools to exercise transformative leadership. Working in partnership with other foundations, philanthropists and communities, the Foundation strengthens North American Jewish life and Israel's public sector by making their leaders more skilled, visionary and collaborative.

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