
THE TANACH STUDY CENTER www.tanach.org
In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag
Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag

GOD'S THIRTEEN MIDDOT HA-RACHAMIM
for SELICHOT, ROSH HA'SHANA & YOM KIPPUR

[For slides: www.tanach.org/special/13mid.ppt]

Our recitation of the thirteen 'middot ha-rachamim' [God's thirteen attributes of mercy] is certainly the focal point of the 'selichot' prayers and the highlight of 'ne'ila' on Yom Kippur. But how are we to understand this recitation? Is it a 'hokus pokus' type magic formula through which one can achieve automatic atonement?

In the following shiur, we attempt to prove quite the opposite. By undertaking a comprehensive analysis of when and why God first declared these middot (in the aftermath of 'chet ha-egel'), we will show how their recitation relates to the very essence of 'tefilla' [prayer] and our special relationship with God.

Our conclusions will also help us appreciate the transition from Rosh Ha'shana to Yom Kippur; as the focus of our prayers shifts from 'din' [judgement] to 'rachamim' [mercy].

INTRODUCTION - FROM CREATION TO COVENANT

When we speak of 'attributes' [middot] in relation to people, we usually find that they are not absolute. For example, the same person can be a loving, kind, and merciful father, while at work he can be a strict, demanding, and uncompromising boss over his employees. The reason why is quite simple - attributes are often a function of a relationship. So too, we posit in relationship to God. Should we find that God exhibits different attributes - it may stem from the very nature of His relationship with man.

In our daily lives, we are all familiar with the complexity of relationships, no less so is the nature of our relationship with God. In fact, from a certain perspective, we could consider Chumash as the story of the development of the special relationship that forges between God and the people of Israel.

Therefore, we begin our shiur by tracing that relationship from its very inception, while paying careful attention to how the concept of covenant evolves from Sefer Breishit to Sefer Shmot.

BRITOT IN SEFER BREISHIT

Recall from our study of Sefer Breishit how Gan Eden reflected an ideal (intense) relationship between man and God. However, due to man's sin, that relationship became tainted and Adam and Eve were banished from that garden.

Despite this banishment, God continued His relationship with mankind, but at a more distant level. Therefore, when Adam's offspring developed into a totally corrupt society, God found it necessary to destroy that society with a Flood [i.e. the **mabul**], saving only Noach and his family.

After the **mabul**, God's relationship with mankind entered a new stage, reflected by God's covenant with Noach ('brit ha-keshet' / see 9:8-16). Note that for the first time, we find a **brit** between God and mankind, a concept that will be found later as well in God's relationship with Am Yisrael.

God's hopes for the generation of Noach's offspring were shattered by the events at Migdal Bavel (see 11:1-9). In the aftermath of these various 'failures' of mankind, Sefer Breishit shifted its focus to the story of how God chose Avraham Avinu to become the forefather of His special nation, whose goal would be to steer mankind back in the proper direction (see 12:1-8, 15:1-20, 17:7-8, 18:17-19 etc.).

As those events unfold, we find once again, how this evolving relationship is defined by various **britot** [covenants] between God and Avraham; the classic examples being: - brit bein ha-btarim (see 15:18) and brit mila (see 17:7-8) - or what is commonly referred to as '**brit avot**'.

[For a more complete explanation, see Seforno in his introduction to Sefer Breishit, see also TSC shiurim on Parshiot Noach & Lech Lecha. See also the introductory

section of the piyut 'Amitz koach', which describes the avodat kohen gadol (that 'nusach ashkenaz' uses for Mussaf on Yom Kippur). It is not by chance that its author begins that piyut with the story of Creation from a similar perspective.]

FROM BRIT AVOT TO BRIT SINAI

Sefer Shmot begins as God redeems Bnei Yisrael from their bondage in Egypt, as He promised Avraham Avinu in **brit** bein ha-btarim. But according to that covenant, Bnei Yisrael were also destined to inherit the Land of Israel (after their redemption), thus fulfilling brit avot.

However, to enhance the very purpose of brit avot, God convenes an additional covenant with Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai, before they enter the land. According to this covenant [often referred to as '**brit Sinai**'], not only will Bnei Yisrael become a 'great' nation (see Breishit 12:1-3), they are to become a **holy** nation - a 'goy **kadosh**' (see Shmot 19:6).

To appreciate this 'upgrade', let's take a closer look at God's proposal to Bnei Yisrael, upon their arrival at Har Sinai:

"[God summons Moshe and proposes:] 'You have seen what I did to Egypt... and now I have brought you to Me.
* Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My **brit**, and you will be My **segula**...

* Then you shall become for Me a kingdom of priests and a **goy kadosh** [holy nation], speak these words to Bnei Yisrael" (see Shmot 19:4-6).

Note how this proposal describes a '**two sided**' deal; hence a covenant - a brit. By accepting and keeping God's special commandments, Am Yisrael becomes a goy kadosh - a holy nation - and hence a 'kingdom of priests', thus representing God as His special nation.

[Just as within Am Yisrael the kohen serves as the representative of God for the twelve tribes - on a universal level, the nation of Israel serves as God's representative, by acting as a model nation for other nations to follow. (See Ramban on Devarim 32:26!)]

Upon their acceptance of this proposal (see 19:7-8), the next step will be to receive the laws [mitzvot] that will make them a goy kadosh. Hence, Bnei Yisrael are instructed to prepare themselves for this special occasion (see 19:9-25), better known as Ma'amad Har Sinai, where they will receive the first set of laws, better known as the 'Ten Commandments' (see 20:1-15).

THE FIRST COVENANT - BRIT MA'AMAD HAR SINAI

This backdrop can help us appreciate why the Torah refers to the Ten Commandments (and the mitzvot which follow) as a **covenant** (between God and Bnei Yisrael). For example, recall the opening statement of Moshe Rabbeinu's main speech of Sefer Devarim (that begins with the Ten Commandments):

"The Lord our God made a **covenant** with us at Chorev. Not [only] with our forefathers did God make this covenant, but rather with us..." (see Devarim 5:2-6)

This also explains the need for the covenantal ceremony that takes place at Ma'amad Har Sinai, as described in the closing section of Parshat Mishpatim (see 24:3-11), where Bnei Yisrael declare their acceptance of these laws. Note as well how the Torah's refers to these laws as 'sefer ha-brit':

"And Moshe took the **sefer ha-brit** and read it to the people, whereupon they declared: All that God has commanded we will do and listen [na'aseh ve-nishma]. Then Moshe took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying: Behold this is the blood of the **covenant** ['dam ha-brit'] between you and God concerning these laws..." (Shmot 24:7-8, note context from 24:3-7).

Therefore, as a testimony of this covenant, Moshe ascends Har Sinai to receive the 'luchot' (see 24:12-13); later referred to as 'luchot ha-**eidut**' (see Shmot 31:18) and 'luchot ha-**brit**' (see Devarim 9:9-11).

With this background, we can begin our shiur.

'COMMANDMENTS' or 'STATEMENTS'

Thus far, we have shown how **brit Sinai** is more than just a 'list of laws'. Rather, it reflects a special **relationship** between God and His people. Furthermore, a covenant by its very nature is a two-sided deal. Therefore, it includes not only laws and conditions, but also the **consequences** should one side break these laws. [Ask your lawyer, it's in every legal contract!]

And this is precisely what we find in the Ten Commandments. To your surprise, in addition to the laws, the Ten Commandments also describe **how** God will reward (or punish) those who obey (or disobey) His commandments.

[Note that the popular translation of the 'aseret ha-dibrot' as the Ten **commandments** can be misleading. Dibrot means 'statements' - and these statements includes both laws **and** their consequences!]

GOD'S MIDDOT IN THE FIRST LUCHOT

With this in mind, let's take a closer look at the opening section of the Ten Commandments, to see **how** God threatens to react, should one break this covenant. In our selective quote, we will take note (in CAPS) of any phrase that indicates a specific divine attribute [MIDDA]:

"I am the Lord your God...

You shall have no other gods besides Me...

Do not bow down to them or worship them, for I the Lord am a **KEL KANA** - a **ZEALOUS** God

POKED AVON AVOT AL BANIM -

REMEMBERING THE SIN of parents upon their children...

[LE-SON'AI] - for those who reject Me, but

OSEH CHESED - SHOWING KINDNESS...

for those who love me and follow my laws -

[LE-OHAVAL u-leshomrei mitzvotai]"

(See 20:2-6).

Note how the second Commandment includes three attributes concerning our relationship with God:

1) **KEL KANA** - a zealous God

2) **POKED AVON AVOT AL BANIM** - **LE-SON'AI** HARSH punishment for those who reject God

3) **O'SEH CHESED LA-ALAFIM** - **LE-OHAVAL** Kindness & reward for those follow God.

Similarly, in the third Commandment, we find yet another MIDDA [divine attribute]:

"Do not say in vain the NAME of God - ki **LO YENAKEH HASHEM** - for God will NOT FORGIVE he who says his Name in vain." (20:7)

Let's add this fourth attribute to the above list:

4) **LO YENAKEH HASHEM** - He will not forgive

How should we consider these four attributes? At first glance, most of them seem to be quite harsh!

Even the MIDDA of - **OSEH CHESED** - Divine kindness, does not necessarily imply **MERCY**. Carefully note in 20:6 that God promises this kindness **only** for those who **follow** Him, and hence not for any others.

Most definitely, all four of these attributes are quite the opposite of mercy; they are: **middot ha-din** - attributes of exacting retribution.

Although these **middot** do have their 'down side', for they threaten immediate punishment for those who transgress ('le-son'a"), they also have their 'up side', for they assure immediate reward for those who obey (le-ohavai).

In other words, these **middot** describe a very intense relationship, quite similar [and not by chance] to God's relationship with man in Gan Eden (see Breishit 2:16-17).

MORE MIDDOT HA-DIN

Yet another example of this intense relationship, and yet

another attribute, is found at the conclusion of the unit of laws in Parshat Mishpatim. Recall that immediately after the Ten Commandments, Moshe was summoned to Har Sinai to receive a special set commandment to relay to Bnei Yisrael (see Shmot 20:15-19). At the conclusion of those laws, God makes the following promise:

"Behold, I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and help bring you into the Promised Land.

Be **careful** of him and **obey** him, Do not defy him -

ki lo yisa le-fish'eichem

for he shall not pardon your sins -,

since My Name is with him...

[On the other hand...]

"...should you obey Him and do all that I say - **I will help you defeat your enemies**..". (see Shmot 23:20-24).

Once again, we find that God will exact punishment should Bnei Yisrael not follow His mitzvot and reward (i.e. assistance in conquering the Land) should they obey Him.

This **midda** of '**lo yisa le-fish'eichem**' is first presented as that of the **mal'ach** [angel?] of God. However; based on the context of these psukim, it seems rather clear that God's intention is for this **mal'ach** to be Moshe Rabbeinu - for He will speak to the people on behalf of God and lead them to the Land, and God's Name is with him. Hence we can consider it an attribute of God, by which Moshe - as God's emissary - must relate to the people.

A final example of this **harsh** nature of brit Sinai is found in the Torah's account of the aftermath of Bnei Yisrael's sin with the golden calf [chet ha-egel]. Because the people had agreed to these harsh terms of brit Sinai, we find how God intends to punish them precisely according to these attributes of **middat ha-din**:

"And God told Moshe, go down from the mountain for your people has sinned... they made a golden image... and now allow Me, and **I will kindle my anger** against them that I may destroy them -**ve-yichar api bahem**..." (see Shmot 32:7-10; see also Shmot 22:23!).

[Note also that the story of chet ha-egel is a direct continuation of the narrative which ended in Parshat Mishpatim when Moshe went up to receive the **luchot**. Note how 24:12-16 flows directly to 32:1 in Parshat Ki Tisa!]

Here we find yet another divine attribute - **CHARON AF HASHEM** - God's instant anger.

Before we continue, let's summarize these six attributes that we have found thus far. Later, this list will be very helpful when we compare these **middot** to God's **middot** in the second **luchot**.

- 1) **KEL KANA**
- 2) **POKED AVON... LE-SON'AI**
- 3) **OSEH CHESED... LE-OHAVAL**
- 4) **LO YENAKEH**
- 5) **LO YISAH LE-FISH'EICHEM...**
- 6) **CHARON AF**

CHET HA-EGEL / THE COVENANT IS BROKEN

According to these terms of the covenant at **matan Torah**, now symbolized by the **first luchot** (and as we just read in 32:7-10), Bnei Yisrael should have been punished immediately and harshly for the sin of chet ha-egel (32:8). However, Moshe Rabbeinu intervenes. In his famous prayer (see 32:11-14), he reminds God of the potential 'chillul Hashem' as well as **brit avot** - which God promised Avraham Avinu would never be broken.

God accepted Moshe's prayer (which forestalled their immediate punishment), but according to the terms of the 'contract' of **brit Sinai** - those who sinned at chet ha-egel still required some sort of punishment.

How could they be saved? At first it seemed as though there was only one answer: **brit Sinai** had to be annulled!

THE LUCHOT ARE BROKEN

This need to annul brit Sinai - in order to save Bnei Yisrael from punishment - may explain Moshe's decision to break the **luchot**, as they constituted the symbol of that covenant. In other words, when Moshe Rabbeinu descended from the mountain and saw the people dancing around the Golden Calf, he realized that to save Bnei Yisrael from immediate punishment he would need to break the **luchot**, and hence the terms of that covenant (see 32:15-20)!

[See also Masechet Shabbat 87a - "'asher shibarta...' (34:1)-yishar koach asher shibarta", where the Midrash praises Moshe for breaking the luchot.]

To prove that **brit Sinai** has been broken, we must follow the story that ensues.

After the 3000 'troublemakers' are punished (see 32:24-29), Moshe begs that God **forgive** Bnei Yisrael for their sin "Then Moshe told the people: You have committed a terrible sin, and now I will approach God - possibly He will forgive you for your sin..." (see 32:30-32).

However, God seems to have rejected Moshe's eloquent request for forgiveness (see 32:33). Instead, God informs Moshe that the nation will be punished, but not immediately - rather only after Moshe will lead them to the Promised Land:

"And now - go lead the people [to the Land of Israel]... **u-beyom pokdi u-pakadti...** - and on the day that I choose to punish - I will punish them for their sins" (see 32:34!).

God's 'negative' response to Moshe's request leaves us with the impression that indeed He will fulfill brit avot - thus assuring that the nation will enter the Land of Israel; however, sooner or later they will be punished for their sins.

In the next set of psukim, God explains more explicitly how brit avot will be fulfilled, but also hints to the inevitable conclusion that brit Sinai has been broken:

"And God said to Moshe - Set out from here, you and the people that you have brought out of Egypt to the Land that I swore to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov (brit avot)..."

but **I will not go in your midst** for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I destroy you on the journey" (see 33:1-3).

In contrast to God's original promise that He will send a **mal'ach** with **His name** in their midst ['shmi be-kirbo' / see 23:20-23], now God states emphatically that **He** will no longer be with them - 'ki lo a'aleh be-kirbecha' (see 33:3). Due to the events of chet ha-egel, Bnei Yisrael had proven themselves unworthy of the special intense relationship of **brit Sinai**. Hence, by bringing them to the Promised Land, God will fulfill His promise in brit avot for Am Yisrael to become a '**goy gadol**' (see Breishit 12:3) - however, His aspiration (from brit Sinai) for Am Yisrael to become a **goy kadosh** - has been shattered!

Proof that brit Sinai has been broken is found in God's next commandment that Bnei Yisrael must remove 'their jewelry' that they received on Har Sinai, undoubtedly the symbol of the high level they reached at **matan Torah** (see 33:5-6). Similarly, God's instruction that Moshe must now move his own tent **away** from the camp - so that God can remain in contact with him, also reflects the fact that God has taken away His Shchina from their midst.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

If you carefully follow this narrative in Chumash, a very strange predicament has arisen (that often goes unnoticed). Even though Bnei Yisrael will not be destroyed (thanks to **brit avot**), God instructs Moshe to continue on to Eretz Canaan **without** brit Sinai.

As unthinkable as this may sound, God's decision is very logical. Considering His conclusion that Bnei Yisrael are an 'am ksheh oref' - a stiff-necked people (see 32:9, 33:5 and TSC shiur on Parshat Ki Tisa), and hence will not change their ways, there

appears to be no other solution. After all, should He keep His **Shchina** in their midst, Bnei Yisrael would not be able to survive (see Shmot 33:5!).

Fortunately for Am Yisrael, Moshe Rabbeinu is not willing to accept God's decision. As we will see, his argument will set the stage for God's declaration of His **middot ha-rachamim**.

A GOOD LAWYER

At this point, Moshe Rabbeinu intervenes. Let's take a careful look at his petition; noting how he demands that God keep His Presence [**Shchina**] with them, threatening a 'sit down strike' should God refuse:

"And Moshe beseeched God: 'Look, you have instructed me to lead this people... but recognize that this nation is **Your** people!

God answered: I will lead [only] you. But Moshe insisted: 'Im ein panecha holchim al ta'aleinu mi-zeh' - Unless **Your presence will go with us** do not make us leave this place. For how should it be known that Your people have gained Your favor unless You **go with us...**' (33:12-16).

[These psukim are quite difficult to translate, I recommend that you read the entire section inside.]

Moshe's refusal leaves God ['kivyachol'] in a most difficult predicament. On the one hand, He cannot allow His Shchina to return - for according to the terms of **brit Sinai** - an am ksheh oref (Am Yisrael's level) could not survive His anger, and would eventually be killed.

On the other hand, He cannot leave them in the desert (as Moshe now threatens), for **brit avot** must be fulfilled!

But, He cannot take them to the land, for Moshe is not willing to lead them **unless** He returns His **Shchina**.

Something has to budge! But what will it be?

It is precisely here, in the resolution of this dilemma, where God's 13 **middot ha-rachamim** enter into the picture.

A NEW COVENANT

Let's take a closer look now at God's response to Moshe's request. Note that here is the first time in Chumash where God introduces the concept of divine mercy:

"And God said to Moshe, 'I will also do this thing that you request... [to return His **Shchina** / Moshe then asked that God show His Glory -] then God answered: 'I will pass all my goodness before you, and I will proclaim **My Name** before you, and **I will pardon** he whom I will pardon and **I will have mercy** on he to whom I give mercy (ve-chanoti et asher achon, ve-richamti et asher arachem)..." (see 33:17-22).

The possibility of 'divine pardon' will now allow God's **Shchina** to return. God now agrees to allow Bnei Yisrael a 'second chance' even should they sin. With this promise, the stage is set for the forging of a **new** covenant though which **brit Sinai** can be re-established, but according to these new terms.

Hence, God instructs Moshe to ascend Har Sinai one more time, in a manner quite parallel to his first ascent to Har Sinai [but with significant minor differences], to receive the **second luchot** (see 34:1-5 and its parallel in Shmot 19:20-24).

As we should expect, the laws should and do remain the same. However, their **terms** must now be amended with God's attributes of mercy. Hence, when Moshe now ascends Har Sinai, it is not necessary for God to repeat the laws of the Ten Commandment, for they remain the same. Instead, this time when God descends upon Har Sinai, the **new** luchot will be presented together with His proclamation of an important **amendment** to brit Sinai - i.e. His attributes of mercy.

Just as God had promised Moshe (see 33:19!), a new covenant, reflecting this enhanced relationship, is now forged:

"And God came down in a cloud...& passed before him and proclaimed: 'Hashem, Hashem Kel rachum ve-chanun, erech apayim ve-rav chesed ve-emet, notzer chesed la-alafim...' (see 34:5-8).

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE ATTRIBUTES

With this background, we can now better appreciate the Torah's choice of words that describe these middot ha-rachamim.

Recall the six phrases that reflected **middat ha-din** that we found in our study of **brit Sinai** (in the beginning of our shiur). Now, as we compare them, we will notice that each **new** attribute relates directly to one of these original attributes of **din** from the first covenant.

The following table (study it carefully), followed by a more detailed explanation, explains this rather amazing parallel:

FIRST LUCHOT	SECOND LUCHOT
1) Kel KANA	Kel RACHUM VE-CHANUN
2) POKED AVON...le-sonai	POKED AVON AVOT AL BANIM..
3) OSEH chesed la-alafim ... LE-OHAVAI	RAV chesed ve-emet NOTZER chesed l'arafim...
4) LO YENAKEH	VE-NAKEH, lo yenakeh
5) LO YISA le-fish'eichem	NOSEI AVON VA-FESHA...
6) CHARON AF	ERECH APAYIM

Note how each attribute from the original covenant switches from **middat ha-din** to **middat ha-rachamim**. [To appreciate this parallel, it is important to follow these psukim in the original Hebrew.] Let's take now a closer look:

A. HASHEM KEL RACHUM VE-CHANUN

--> (1) HASHEM KEL KANA

rachum ve-chanun based on 33:19 (see above)
a **merciful** God in contrast to a **zealous** God

B. ERECH APAYIM --> (6) CHARON AF

slow to anger in contrast to **instant** anger

C. RAV CHESED VE-EMET --> (3) OSEH CHESED... LE-OHAVAI

abounding kindness for all, potentially even for the wicked

[This may allow the possibility of 'rasha ve-tov lo']

in contrast to **exacting** kindness, and hence, limited exclusively to those who obey Him.

[Note that the midda of 'emet' is now required, for this abounding kindness for all must be complemented by the attribute of truth to assure ultimate justice.]

D. NOTZER CHESED LA-ALAFIM

--> (3) OSEH CHESED LA-ALAFIM... LE-OHAVAI

He **stores** His kindness, so that even if it is not rewarded immediately, it is stored to be given at a later time.

[This may allow the possibility of 'tzaddik ve-ra lo']

in contrast to **immediate** kindness and reward for those who follow Him.

E. NOSEI AVON VA-FESHA... --> (5) LO YISA LE-FISH'EICHEM

forgiving sin in contrast to **not forgiving** sin.

F. VE-NAKEH, LO YENAKEH --> (4) LO YENAKEH

sometimes He will forgive, sometimes He may not.

[See Rashi, forgives those who perform teshuva.]

in contrast to **never** forgiving.

G. POKED AVON AVOT AL BANIM...

--> (2) POKED AVON le-son'ai

He **withholds** punishment for up to four generations
[in anticipation of teshuva / see Rashi]
in contrast to **extending** punishment for up to four generations.

[Even though these two phrases are almost identical, their context forces us to interpret each pasuk differently. In the first luchot, all four generations are punished, in the second luchot, God may **hold back** punishment for four generations, allowing a chance for teshuva. See Rashi.]

These striking parallels demonstrate that each of the new middot lies in direct contrast to God's middot in His original covenant at Har Sinai.

Now we can return to Chumash to see how Moshe's immediate reaction to this proclamation reflects his original request that God keep His **Shchina** with the people

"And Moshe hastened to bow down and said: 'If I have indeed gained favor in Your eyes - **let Hashem go in our midst** - 'ki' = **even though** they are an **am ksheh oref** - a stiff necked people, and you shall pardon our sin..." (34:8-9).

Note how Moshe's request that God return His **Shchina** to the people **even though** they are an **am ksheh oref** is in direct contrast to God's original threat that "He will not go up with them **because** they are a stiff necked people, less He smite them on their journey..." (see 33:3 / compare with 34:9)!

Once these new terms are established, allowing God's **Shchina** to remain even though Bnei Yisrael may sin, Moshe begs that God indeed return to be with His nation (as he requested in 33:12-16).

These Divine attributes of mercy now allow the Shchina to dwell within Yisrael even though they may not be worthy.

From a certain perspective, this entire sequence is quite understandable. For on the one hand, to be worthy of God's presence, man must behave perfectly. However, man is still human. Although he may strive to perfection, he may often error or at times even sin. How, then, can man ever come close to God? Hence, to allow mortal man the potential to continue a relationship with God, a new set of rules is necessary - one that includes **middot ha-rachamim**.

The original terms of **brit Sinai**, although ideal, are not practical. Therefore, God's middot ha-rachamim are necessary to allow **brit Sinai** to become achievable.

In this manner, middot ha-rachamim can be understood as God's kindness that allows man to approach Him and develop a closer relationship without the necessity of immediate punishment for any transgression.

SELICHOT

This explanation adds extra meaning to our comprehension and appreciation of our recitation of the Selichot. Reciting the 13 **middot** comprises more than just a mystical formula. It is a constant reminder of the **conditions** of the covenant of the **second luchot**.

God's attributes of mercy, as we have shown, do not guarantee automatic forgiveness, rather, they **enable the possibility** of forgiveness. As the pasuk stated, God will forgive only he whom He chooses ('et asher achon... ve-et asher arachem' / 33:19). To be worthy of that mercy, the individual must prove his sincerity to God, while accepting upon himself not to repeat his bad ways.

Thus, our recitation of the 13 middot serves as a double reminder:

- 1) Not to 'give up' in our strive towards holiness, for indeed middot ha-rachamim allow us to come close. Yet, at the same time:
- 2) To recognize that Divine mercy is **not** automatic.

This recognition should inspire one who understands the terms of this covenant to act in manner by which God will find him worthy of Divine mercy. After we have been judged on Rosh Hashana, we ask on Yom Kippur, on the very same day on which Bnei Yisrael first received the second luchot - that God act according to His attributes of Mercy. We pray that our recitation of the 13 middot during **Ne'ila** should not only wipe out sins of the year which has passed, but also set is in the proper path of teshuva for the new year which is now beginning.

gmar chatima tova
menachem

=====

FOR FURTHER IYUN - shiur on the 13 midot

A. Immediately after God announces His willingness to use His attributes of Mercy in 33:19, we find a very interesting divine statement that follows:

"But, He said, you can not see my face ... Station yourself on the Rock as My Presence passes by ... you will see my back, but My face must not be seen. [lo tuchal lir'ot **panai** - ki lo yir'ani ha-adam ve-chai -... ve-Ra'ita et **achorai** - u-**panai** lo yira'u.]" (see 33:20-23).

As the new covenant allows for mercy, the perception of God now becomes less clear. While the first covenant boasted a clear relationship of 'panim el panim' (face to face/ see 33:11), this new covenant, even to Moshe, is represented by a 'face to back' relationship:

This new level has a clear advantage - middat ha-rachamim - however there is still a price to pay - the unclarity of Hashem's Hashgacha. No longer is punishment immediate; however, reward may also suffer from delay. Hashem's Hashgacha becomes more complex and now allows apparent situations of tzaddik ve-ra lo- rasha ve-tov lo.

1. See Chazal's explanation of 'hodi'eni na et drachecha' (33:12) How does this relate to this explanation?

2. As communication is clearer when talking face to face with someone as opposed to talking to someone with his back turned, attempt to explain the symbolism of the above psukim.

3. Why must Moshe Rabbeinu also go down a level in his nevu'a?

B. The second luchot are carved by man, and not by God. Attempt to relate this requirement based on the nature of the 13 **middot**.

Relate this to the mitzva for Bnei Yisrael to build the mishkan which follows in Parshat Vayakhel.

Compare this to the mitzva to begin building a **sukka** immediately after Yom Kippur, and in general, why the holiday of **Sukkot** follows Yom Kippur.

C. After God declares His 13 middot of rachamim (34:6-9), He makes a promise (34:10), and then adds some commandments (34:11-26).

Are these commandments new, or are they a 'repeat' of mitzvot which were given earlier in Parshat Mishpatim?

[Relate especially to Shmot 23:9-33.]

If so, can you explain why they are being repeated?

[Hint: Which type of mitzvot from Parshat Mishpatim are not repeated?]

Relate your answer to the events of chet ha-egel.

D. In the story of chet ha-egel, we find a classic example of a 'mila mancha', i.e. use of the verb 'lir'ot' - to see [r.a.h.].

Review chapters 32-34 in this week's Parsha while paying attention to this word. 'See' for yourself if it points to a theme. As you read, pay careful attention to: 32:1, 32:5, 32:9, 32:19, 32:25, 33:10, 33:12-13!, 33:20-23, 34:10, 34:23-24!, 34:30, and 34:35. What does it mean when God 'sees'..., when man 'sees'..., and when man 'sees' (or is seen by) God?

Relate also to the use of this verb (r.a.h.) at Ma'amad Har Sinai, especially 20:15, 20:19. See also 19:21, 24:10, & Devarim 5:21!

Could you say that 'seeing is believing'?

If you had fun with that one, you can also try an easier one: the use of the word 'ra'a' [evil / reish.ayin.hey.] in 32:12-14. Relate to 32:17, 32:22, 32:25?, 33:4. Relate to Shmot 10:10; see Rashi, Ramban, Chizkuni, Rashbam.

E. Chazal explain that God's original intention was to create the world with His attribute of 'din' [judgment], but after realizing that it could not survive, He included (in His creation) the attribute of 'rachamim' [mercy] as well.

[See Rashi Breishit 1:1 - 'bara Elokim...']

Relate this to the above shiur. Would you say that this Midrash reflects Sefer Shmot as well as Sefer Breishit.

F. Note 'kol tuvi' in 33:19. Relate this to 'va-yar Elokim ki **tov**' mentioned after each stage of **creation** in Breishit chapter 1.

Can you relate this to the above question and above shiur?

See also Rambam Moreh Nevuchim 1:54 / second paragraph. [page 84 in Kapach edition Mossad Harav Kook]

G. Even though it appears as though Bnei Yisrael had the choice to either accept or reject this proposal, Chazal explain in the famous Midrash 'kafa aleihem har ke-gigit' that had Bnei Yisrael said **no**, all creation would have returned to 'tohu va-vohu'!

Can you relate this to the above shiur as well?

H. Note 34:10 'hinei anochi koret brit...' & 34:29-30. Relate this to why we refer to middot ha-rachamim in selichot as 'brit shlosh esrei' .