

Eitan Urkowitz

Bar Mitzvah Speech

Shabbat Shalom

Birshut harav

This morning I read from two Torahs, the first one Parshat Vayikra, which was the Torah reading for the week, and a part of the annual cycle to finish the entire Torah reading in one year.

The second one was a special Torah reading associated with Shabbat Zachor, which always occurs the Shabbat before Purim.

This second Torah reading was chosen because it speaks about the surprise and vicious attack on the Jews by the nation of Amalek, just after the Jews had left Egypt in the time of Moshe. As a result,

living in Persia and Media during the period between the two Batei Mikdash, the two Temples. And the attempt by the wicked Haman, to destroy the Jewish people, until the Jews were saved by Queen Esther and her ^{relative} ~~uncle~~-Mordechai.

Each of these three readings has its own obligations which are tied to it, and I would like to discuss some of the similarities and differences between them.

For example, about a year and a half ago, when Tropical Storm Allison hit, I looked out the ^{several} window^s o'clock that morning and we saw a river between our house and the one across the street. We figured we would be staying in because it would be impossible to get to shul. But about an hour later, the water went down and we got ready to go to shul. However when we got to ~~the~~

have happened if we could not have davened in shul that Shabbat?

The answer is that ~~the~~ next week we would have had to read the Torah reading for the week which was missed and for the next week.

The reason for this is that there is an obligation for the public to have a continuous Torah reading, without interruption.

In Hebrew this is known as a ^{חובת} ~~חובת~~ ^{לכל}. So that if a person is

sick one Shabbat and cannot make it to shul, he does not have to make up the Torah reading, because the Torah was still read in the shul for other people. The obligation for the individual to hear the Torah reading every Shabbat morning, or on Monday and Thursday mornings is called a ~~חובת~~ ^{חובת} ~~יחיד~~ ^{יחיד}.

closed and everyone would go to the synagogue for Torah reading.

This may be understood as follows: that the people did not go to the synagogue for davening, because there is no obligation for an individual to daven prior to the time of the burial. There is no

חובת יחיד. Rather they went to the synagogue for the Torah reading because the mourning which they were practicing does not override the public obligation to read the Torah. The **חובת צבור** remained

However, for the Torah reading of Parshat Zachor, we are not talking about an obligation which is there for the public, There is no **חובת צבור** but one which is there for every individual Jew, there is a **חובת יחיד**. The mitzvah is for each one of us to read parshat Zachor by ourselves, but the rabbis said that we can fulfill the mitzvah by hearing it read in the synagogue when there is a

lived in the 18th century central Europe, suggested that when Zachor is read, that those who want to fulfill the mitzvah of Zachor should also concentrate on the berachot which are said before and after the Torah reading, since each person has the mitzvah to hear Zachor.

The third reading which I would like to deal with this morning is the megillah reading, which will be this Monday night and Tuesday morning.

The obligation for the Megillah reading is a combination of the weekly Torah reading and of Zachor. It is similar to the weekly Torah reading in that it is something which should be done publicly, as one of the mitzvot associated with the megillah is **פרסומי ניסא** publicly showing that a miracle had taken place. That

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I would like to thank my sister, Atara for constantly giving up the tv, without an argument, so I could play Playstation 2. I would like to thank Tzvi leaving my room after I asked him for the 15th time.. I would also like to thank my roommate Ariel for being my alarm clock every morning and waking me up for school. But seriously, Tzvi, Ariel and Atara, I could not begin to list all of the great things which we do for each other. Just knowing that you are there makes me happy, even if I don't always say it.

I would also like to thank all of my teachers who care about me

They are always there with a smile for me, making me feel good, telling me jokes and so many other things. I really think that my Poppy is more nervous than I am about my Bar Mitzvah. I hope that after this speech, he will take a deep breath and relax.

Going from the most nervous to the one who has the most nachas at family simchot, I am so happy that my great grandmother, whom I call Grandma, is here with me and my family celebrating this weekend. Watching Grandma being happy is a pleasure to see. And this weekend for her is a special time, with two simchot, this morning, and tomorrow evening.

I would like to thank my cousins from Israel, Elishai, Tal and Or, for coming all this way for my bar mitzvah. From my cousins who came from the four corners of America, from the Northeast, southeast, northwest and west

I would like to wish my 92 year old young, grandmother in

And אחרון תביב Last but not least, would like to thank my dear, loving, and caring parents for everything, they are there not only for this day, but for everyday of my life. I thought it is hard being a kid, but it has to be even harder being a parent. I guess that my parents will have it even tougher when they have four, yes four, teenagers at one time.

I would also like to thank the whole Houston Jewish community for making growing up in Houston so much fun, and such a great place to be.

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MARCH 1981
 Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

by and large

One of the major problems of our day is the breakdown of any objective standard of what is right or wrong. Our society has bought ^{hook} ~~almost~~ ^{by and large} hook, line and sinker, the idea of subjective morality, the idea that if something feels good, it must be good, that how you feel about something determines completely its morality. This type of thinking is destructive of society and is even worse than the Greek idea which stated that if something was beautiful, it must be good. At least, with the Greek conception there was some objective criteria. Beauty had to have some form.

In our day and age, it all depends upon your feelings and even our art, music, and literature reflect this. They are almost all formless because feeling, itself, is amorphous. This idea of subjective morality, also, strips away from parents any authority over their children and, also, takes away from them their function as role models. Children can now say, "You are right, your particular life style may be good for you but, as for me, I feel another life style is much better". The trouble with subjective morality and the elevation of feelings as the sole repository of right and wrong is that human feelings can be very destructive. To some people, it may feel good to hit another person. To other people, it may feel so good to kill and, in fact, in the ancient world and in even modern India there have been cults of professional killers. Right now, crime is rising in our country at a ^{terrific} featful rate. This can be directly attributed, in my opinion, to the rise of the idea that if something feels good you should do it.

Philosophically, the underpinnings for this idea were laid out by Kant who talked about the autonomous man. Morality was to spring from man himself. Man, himself, was to determine what was right and wrong. No outside law could ever be imposed on man because this would limit his

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freedom. This concept ^{posited} ~~posited~~ the notion that every man, unaided, could arrive at the same standards of morality. This proved to be false and all we are left with, today, is the idea that each one of us has our own subjective, individual morality and that it is based upon how we feel about certain things.

Of course, there are problems with trying to live with objective standards that stem from outside ourselves. They sometimes seem to stifle us as individuals. They sometimes are not always the true expression of our inner state. They sometimes can lead to depression and neurosis if the concept of Teshuva ^{repentance} or ~~a second and third chance~~ ^{one} does not accompany it, but they will allow us to measure ourselves and to rise to higher, loftier levels. If a person falls short of the basic objective standards of honor and integrity as laid down in the Torah, he can still try again to reach them. It is wrong to say that all values depend only on feeling. There is a right and a wrong outside of each of us and we must always try to do what is right even though sometimes we may fail.

In Judaism, we try to combine subjective and objective morality by education. We try to educate people in values so much and so long that subjectively they would always feel that they must do only what is objectively right. That really is the purpose of Jewish education, to internalize Jewish ^{values} values, to make them second nature. We must work at it, though. That's what it means to be a "mentsch." Sometimes, though, in spite of our Jewish education, we may feel we want to do things that we know are objectively wrong. When this happens, we must heed the objective morality outside of ourselves and not our feelings.

This idea is expressed clearly in the very substance on which the Ten Commandments were given. The Ten Commandments were given on tablets of

