



Kedoshim 2022

Sacred Space

6 minute read | Intermediate

If you ask people what the defining traits of religion are, holiness will be on most people's lists.

Holiness is a shorthand code word everyone recognizes, and we sagely and solemnly nod our heads. Yes, yes, holiness, absolutely!

But what is holiness?

We sometimes think of holiness as something we do on our own. Withdrawing from the world, from the joys and vices of life, fasting, going into the woods, or perhaps profound meditations on lofty metaphysics, retreating deep into the recesses of the mind.

There may be substance to some or even all those things, but that's not how the Torah talks about holiness.

The Torah talks about withdrawing in part and designating times and spaces; the Hebrew word for holiness literally means to designate or separate – קדושה.

But there is a critical element missing from the everyday use of the word. Most appearances of holiness throughout the Torah describe it as a function of plurality, something we do with others, together.

When the Torah asks us to be holy, Rashi notes that the instruction is given to everyone together – דָּבָר אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֻת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדוֹשִׁים תְּהִיוּ. Moreover, it follows this instruction with commands to be charitable, fair, and honest in our dealing with others. As the Chasam Sofer notes, the Torah's conception of holiness is one of connection and interdependence, not disconnection and asceticism.

When the time comes to build the Mishkan, everyone must come together for God to be found in their work:

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם – And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. (25:8)

Standing at the hallowed Mount Sinai, on the cusp of receiving the Torah, God tells the gathered people their overarching mission:

וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ-לִי מְמַלְכֵת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ – You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation... (19:6)



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Beyond the Torah explicitly speaking about holiness as a function of togetherness – ותקו / ועשו – our Sages emphasize the central importance of the Jewish People coming together at Har Sinai – ויתחן-שם – ישראל נגד הקר / כאיש אחד בלב אחד.

Almost all sacred gatherings require a group, from prayers and sacrifices to reading the Torah and weddings – כל דבר שבקדושה לא יהא פחות מעשרה –

So why is holiness so tightly linked to togetherness?

In the Torah's formative story of the emergency of humanity, it describes the first man's existential aloneness as bad – לא-טוב היות האדם לבדו – Being alone and doing things alone is terrible; being together and doing things together is good.

Our prophets and sages talk about the soul as the thing that animates our consciousness, the part of you that makes you uniquely you, and they speak of soul fragments directly connected to God – חלק מאלוק ממעל.

But when we come together, we become whole, and that's why holiness is so linked with connectedness. Somewhat esoterically speaking, our souls interface in a kind of superstructure which is where the magic happens – כנסת ישראל –

R' Jonathan Sacks suggests that if the Creation story is about the space God makes for us, the Mishkan narrative is about the space we make for God. Noting that the Torah spends a lot more time discussing the Mishkan than Creation, R' Sacks teaches that the Torah is far more interested in what we do for God than what God does for us.

Far more esoterically, Chassidus speaks of tzimtzum, the space or vacuum God separates from God's fullness so that existence can have an independent existence and reality. But maybe when we build a Mishkan, a separate return space, we form an inverse or parallel tzimtzum of our own, which we can only do in our enhanced state of togetherness.

Back in the real world, it starts with individuals, human to human. The Torah has its fair share of lofty arcane things, but a full half the Ten Commandments are grounded in interpersonal regulations – בין אדם לחברו. It's not enough to love humanity in the abstract; you have to love people in particular – your annoying neighbor as well as the guy who never stops talking.

Among the most misunderstood laws are the mitzvos about sanctifying and profaning God's name – ולא תחללו את-שם קדשי ונקדושתי בתוך בני ישראל. But in the context of holiness as something we do together, they make perfect sense – בתוך בני ישראל. If holiness is related to togetherness, our public actions either draw people in or alienate them.

The Chemdas Dovid explains that while an individual is like a string, a group is more like a rope; far stronger than the individual components alone, which is to say that togetherness generates something vastly greater than the sum of its parts.



While the Mishkan project had an open call for donations of all kinds of things that were wonderful and welcome, the core donation to the Mishkan project was a simple half-shekel and was required of everyone – *הַעֲשִׂיר לֹא-יִרְבֶּה וְהַדֵּל לֹא יִמְעִיט מִמִּחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל לְתַת אֶת-תְּרוּמַת ה' לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם* –

While the Torah predates the notion of corporations or public companies, it sure seems thematically similar. Every single person was invested in the Mishkan, or perhaps better, every single person was a contributor and owner of that holiness, which could be precisely what made it holy in the first place.

There is certainly an aspect of generosity that we need to welcome and celebrate – *כל המרבה הרי זה* – *משובח*. But it can often feel like we miss the everyman who can't quite swing a high roller donation.

The unit of the mandatory universal contribution to the Mishkan was a half shekel, not a whole shekel, and most or all of the measurements in the Mishkan ended in half cubits, reflecting the same core theme, that your contribution can only ever take you halfway. The Mishna in Pirkei Avos teaches that it is not for us to complete the work, but neither are we free to desist, with the obvious conclusion that we count on others by necessity – *לא עליך המלאכה לגמור, ולא אתה בן חורין ליבטל ממנה* –

We ought to remember the Mishkan project that indicates smaller nominal contributions are just as valuable as everyone else's. Everyone gives the whole of what they are supposed to, rich and poor alike. You give a fraction, and not only does it count, but it's enough, and that's all we need. More than how much you give, it matters that you participate.

This isn't cutesy moralizing – the half-shekel contributions were melted down to form the sockets that connected the base of each wall segment, which is to say that the part everyone gave together formed no less than the foundation of the entire Mishkan.

We're better off through what we do together, for and with others. The Gemara says that collecting the half shekel from everyone elevated and uplifted them – *כי תשא את-ראש בני-ישראל, לפקדיהם, ונתנו איש כפר* – *נפשו*. Avos d'Rabi Nosson notes how valuable human contribution is; God is everywhere, but we can manifest the divine presence a little more palpably by coming together to make something for God. The Midrash goes so far as to suggest that God is most pleased by what we do down here as exhibited by God leaving Heaven behind to be a little closer to us – *דירה בתחתונים* –

Perhaps it is almost natural that the thing we build when everyone comes together is the holiest thing there can be. As R' Shmshon Raphael Hirsch notes, it follows that it is the physical and spiritual center of our lives, which the entire camp is built around, the site we aim our prayers, and the place we come closest to the divine.

Moreover, it follows why our sages attribute the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash to animosity and hatred; disputes and internal strife led to division, and without togetherness, it only followed that sanctity would disappear as well. The Ohr Pnei Moshe notes that the inverse is true as well; for Moshe to inaugurate the Mishkan, he must bring all the people together – *וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת-כָּל-עֵדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* –



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The Torah commands the commission of each utensil in the Mishkan in the second person singular, but not the Aron, which it commands in the plural – ועשית / ועשו. The Alshich notes that the Torah is not like monarchy or priesthood, which fall to specific individuals; the call to Torah is open-ended and universally accessible – it beckons to all of us, to you.

R' Menachem Mendel of Vorki notes that if holiness is something that everyone has to do, it has to be according to the capabilities and circumstances of every individual. There can be no one-size-fits-all; as the Kotzker famously put it, God doesn't need more angels.

The Chafetz Chaim teaches that the Torah is everyone's to take up, even if our stakes look different; a bit more of this, a bit less of that. You might be a scholar, maybe you offer financial support, or perhaps you help tidy up your shul a little. Everybody counts, and everybody's contribution is counted.

We are not designed to be alone; we cannot exist alone. We need each other, and it's not weakness; it's our greatest strength. Where you find togetherness, you'll find wholeness and holiness; and we must yearn for it perpetually – בְּרִכְנוּ אֲבֵינוּ בְּלֵנוּ בְּאֶחָד בְּאוֹר פְּנֵיהֶּ –

But don't just yearn for it; work for it too. Find somebody to learn something with, anything. Find an interesting local community project or charity to support or perhaps get involved with, in a big way or small.

Your participation doesn't just make a difference; it makes it better.

Language Redux

3 minute read | Straightforward

Humans are the apex predator on Earth.

We share this planet with thousands of species and trillions of organisms, and none but humans carry a lasting multi-generational record of knowledge of any obvious consequence. And yet, a feral human being left alone in the woods from birth to death kept separate and alive, would be not much more than an ape; our knowledge isn't because humans are smart.

It's because we speak – מְדַבֵּר –

We communicate and cooperate with others through language, giving us a formidable advantage in forming groups, sharing information, and pooling workloads and specializations. Language is the mechanism by which the aggregated knowledge of human culture is transmitted, actualizing our intelligence and self-awareness, transcending separate biological organisms, and becoming one



informational organism. With language, we have formed societies and built civilizations; developed science and medicine, literature and philosophy.

With language, knowledge does not fade; we can learn from the experiences of others. Without learning everything from scratch, we can use an existing knowledge base built by others to learn new things and make incrementally progressive discoveries. As one writer put it, a reader lives a thousand lives before he dies; the man who never reads lives only once.

Language doesn't just affect how we relate to each other; it affects how we relate to ourselves. We make important decisions based on thoughts and feelings influenced by words on a page or conversations with others. It has been said that with one glance at a book, you can hear the voice of another person – perhaps someone gone for millennia – speaking across the ages clearly and directly in your mind.

Considering the formidable power of communication, it follows that the Torah holds it in the highest esteem; because language is magical. Indeed, the fabric of Creation is woven with words:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים, יְהִי אֹר; וַיְהִי-אֹר – God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. (1:3)

R' Jonathan Sacks notes that humans use language to create things as well. The notion of a contract or agreement is a performative utterance – things that people say to create something that wasn't there before; a relationship of mutual commitment between people, created through speech. Whether it's God giving us the Torah or a husband marrying his wife, relationships are fundamental to Judaism. We can only build relationships and civilizations with each other when we can make commitments through language.

Recognizing the influential hold language has over us, the Torah emphasizes an abundance of caution and heavily regulates how we use language: the laws of gossip and the metzora; and the incident where Miriam and Ahron challenged Moshe; among others. Even the Torah's choice of words about the animals that boarded the Ark is careful and measured:

מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה, תִּקַּח-לָךְ שְׁבָעָה שְׁבָעָה-אִישׁ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ; וּמִן-הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא טְהוֹרָה הִוא, שְׁנַיִם-אִישׁ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ – Of every clean creature, take seven and seven, each with their mate; and of the creatures that are not clean two, each with their mate. (7:2)

The Gemara notes that instead of using the more accurate and concise expression of “impure,” the Torah utilizes extra ink and space to articulate itself more positively – “that are not clean” – אֲשֶׁר לֹא טְהוֹרָה הִוא. While possibly hyperbolic, the Lubavitcher Rebbe would refer to death as “the opposite of life”; and hospital infirmaries as “places of healing.”

The Torah cautions us of the power of language repeatedly in more general settings:

לֹא-תֵלֵךְ רֵכִיל בְּעַמֶּיךָ, לֹא תַעֲמֹד עַל-דַּם רֵעֶךָ: אֲנִי, ה' – Do not allow a gossip to mingle among the people; do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor: I am Hashem. (19:16)



The Torah instructs us broadly not to hurt, humiliate, deceive, or cause another person any emotional distress:

וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת-עֲמִיתוֹ, וְיִרְאַתָּ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ: כִּי אֲנִי ה', אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – Do not wrong one another; instead, you should fear your God; for I am Hashem. (25:27)

Interestingly, both these laws end with “I am Hashem” – evoking the concept of emulating what God does; which suggests that just as God constructively uses language to create – שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבָּרוֹ – so must we – אֲנִי ה'. The Lubavitcher Rebbe taught that as much as God creates with words, so do humans.

The Gemara teaches that verbal abuse is arguably worse than theft; you can never take back your words, but at least a thief can return the money!

The idea that language influences and impacts the world around us is the foundation of the laws of vows, which are significant enough that we open the Yom Kippur services at Kol Nidrei by addressing them.

Of course, one major caveat to harmful speech is intent. If sharing negative information has a constructive and beneficial purpose that may prevent harm or injustice, there is no prohibition, and there might even be an obligation to protect your neighbor by conveying the information – לֹא תִעֲמֹד – על-דַם רֵעֶךָ.

As R’ Jonathan Sacks powerfully said, no soul was ever saved by hate; no truth was ever proved by violence; no redemption was ever brought by holy war.

Rather than hurt and humiliate, let’s use our language to educate, help and heal; because words and ideas have the power to change the world.

They’re the only thing that ever has.

Foiled by Randomness

8 minute read | Advanced

The Purim story unfolded over a protracted period, but we celebrate the holiday on the fourteenth of Adar. The holiday is unusual, in the sense that with most holidays, something happened on a given date, and we celebrate the holiday on its anniversary. That’s not quite the case with Purim because half the story, and the name itself, revolve around why events happened on that particular date.

Haman, the antagonist, decided to mandate a legal genocide, a one-day purge against the Jewish People. He had it all figured out; he’d bribe the king, draft the law, enact it. That’s bad, he’s bad; it’s TorahRedux | Ancient Words, Timeless Wisdom Subscriptions and feedback: Neli@TorahRedux.com



not hard to understand. But in a puzzling turn of events, he wasn't sure when his law should take effect, so he cast a lottery to determine the right day and settled on the fourteenth of Adar – על־כֹּן קָרְאוּ – לַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה פּוּרִים עַל־שֵׁם הַפּוּר

Casting lots is distantly removed from our primary experience, and seeing as it is a core feature of the holiday in some sense, we ought to take it seriously.

Why did Haman cast a lottery?

Today, we understand that a lottery applies randomness to confound any notion of certainty or predictability. When a process can generate all outcomes with equal probability, we will perceive the resulting outcome of that uncertainty as fair. The Torah uses this randomizing methodology to select goats for sacrifice on Yom Kippur and to allocate the tribal lands of Israel.

Today, we would use a coin toss as a conventionally reasonable way to decide between two equal options, heads or tails. It's intuitive, it's fair, it makes sense, and there's nothing to argue about – בְּחֵיק – יוּטֵל אֶת־הַגּוֹרֵל וּמָה' כֹּל־מִשְׁפָּטוֹ / מְדַנְּנִים יִשְׁבִּית הַגּוֹרֵל וּבֵין עֲצוּמִים יִפְרִיד

Either goat can be the scapegoat; it doesn't matter at all. Which portion of land goes to which tribe doesn't really matter. It could be any, which is the point; that's why it's fair.

But that's not the only way the ancients used lotteries.

Ancient civilizations would also cast lots as cleromancy, a form of divination where they would attribute Divine Providence to the outcome – הַשְּׂגָחָה פֶּרֶטִית. By removing human choice and influence over what course of action to take – so the thinking went – destiny and fate could reveal themselves. The Torah uses this form of lottery to expose a looter, Achan, who illegally claimed spoils in the Book of Joshua; to identify that Jonathan had violated Saul's command to fast; and by Jonah's Gentile shipmates to reveal that the terrible storm was his fault.

Cleromancy, the second form of lottery, has nothing whatsoever to do with fairness or uncertainty. It's about ascribing not just certainty but divine significance to a random outcome, treating it as the Divine Will, and proceeding accordingly. Achan was the guilty looter, and no one else; Jonathan had broken the vow, and not someone else; Jonah, and not some other sailor or passenger, was responsible for the storm. These individuals faced real consequences in the physical world due to the perception of their divinely ordained guilt through cleromancy.

The Torah explicitly forbids utilizing this second form of lottery multiple times in uncharacteristically strong terms – לֹא תִנְחָשׁוּ וְלֹא תַעֲוִנּוּ / לֹא־תִמְצָא בָּךְ מַעֲבִיר בְּגוֹיֹבְתוֹ בְּאֵשׁ קִסֵּם קִסְמִים מְעוֹנֵן וּמְנַחֵשׁ וּמְכַשֵּׁף... פִּי־תוֹעֵבַת ה' – כֹּל־עֲשֵׂה אֵלֶּה וּבְגִלְלַת הַתּוֹעֵבַת הָאֵלֶּה ה' אֶלְקִיךָ מוֹרִישׁ אוֹתָם מִפְּנֵיךָ... תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה עִם ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ

Whether magic is real and this is how it works doesn't matter; what matters is that people ascribe divine significance to cleromancy and act accordingly – that's the superstition the Torah takes great issue with.



To hone in on why Haman cast lots, we need to determine which kind of lottery he utilized.

Laws take effect whenever they are relevant – you can ban membership of a terrorist group instantly, but you'll draft tax laws years in advance so that everyone has adequate notice. There's no point in a randomized lottery to select a date for genocide because there is no question of fairness to resolve. Scheduling a lottery for fairness purposes makes no sense because all dates are already equally random and fair; the question of when is trivial and mundane, and so is the answer – genocide this Friday is every bit as good as genocide next Wednesday. We can be quite certain that Haman didn't consult a lottery for fair scheduling.

Far more sinister, Haman cast a lottery to seek divine sanction for his genocidal purge. As Rashi notes, his question wasn't which moment to start; but which moment was most auspicious for him to succeed. The Purim holiday is named for Haman's lottery, his lottery of cleromancy and divination, his attempt to predict a divinely sanctioned moment for his plot, and arguably, his attempt to abdicate any choice or responsibility in the matter.

The entire story revolves around the comical reversal of Haman's attempt at divination to reduce his uncertainty; God's actual Will guides all outcomes and confounds Haman at every turn. The monstrous and powerful Haman is quickly diminished from the dizzying heights of palace society, helplessly humiliated into a weak and wretched joke on the way down to an ignominious death, to be publicly derided and laughed at for all time by the children of history.

The Purim story contains a powerful and timeless moral; not just that God is concealed in the story but revealed in the outcomes, and that God alone has the power of outcomes entirely. Humans don't control much at all, so the glory of outcomes is God's alone; the small, improbable outcomes that stack to shape the history and reality we know are one of God's most decisive and lauded capabilities – קונה הכל. We can only hope to recognize God's Hand retroactively in hindsight at best, and never prospectively, as Haman attempted.

God operates invisibly in the background, orchestrating everything with the power of outcomes; Haman didn't stand a chance, and we know from history that the bad guys never have a chance either – אֵלֹהִים שֶׁבְּכֹל דּוֹר וָדוֹר עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ, וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצִילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם –

We live in a world of possibilities; a probabilistic world, not a magical one. Probability distributions accurately describe our universe and predict the expected outcomes of all possible values; it is the language God speaks to us every day. We can predict how likely something is to happen, but we can only make that prediction in the abstract because God alone has the power of outcomes – הכל בידי שמים –

But we can only say that in the abstract. The Jewish People may have survived the Holocaust, but a lot of individuals didn't. When it's your feet in the story, and you stand face to face with mortal danger, that's scary, and you have to respond; you have to actually do something. When Haman's plan went public, they correctly recognize it as an imminent catastrophe! No one in the story thought that they



just need to strengthen their faith, that they just needed to trust God to do His thing and sort it all out, and that everything was going to be okay.

When Mordechai encourages Esther to go to the king and make her case to save her people, Esther declines at first because she is afraid – and she should be! She is afraid because she correctly understands that going to the king uninvited is a gross breach of palace protocol and puts her life in serious danger.

Mordechai can't tell her that she's wrong, or even that she's going to be fine. He can't say that because he can't possibly know that – or he would say so! Esther is correct about the risk and uncertainty of this proposed course of action, and all Mordechai can say is that someone has to step up, and it might as well be her, but if she won't, someone else will; which is to say that she can choose to do her part, but must leave the rest to God's power of outcomes.

Even once convinced to accept her fate and role, Esther asks Mordechai to have the Jewish People fast and pray for her success. She wasn't sure it was going to work, and she didn't think she would make it through; she was terrified, and Mordechai couldn't correct or reassure her.

Everything is going to be fine, but nobody knows if you're going to be, and that's scary; we should take comfort in the fact our heroes also experienced fear. As one writer put it, the only time you can be brave is when you're afraid. This understanding unlocks the entire story of Purim and perhaps sheds light on some foundational tenets of Judaism, including what faith and trust actually look like in a practical and real sense – אמונה / בטחון.

We are probably overly familiar with the story, too numb for Esther's last words to Mordechai to chill our blood the way they deserve – “and if I die, I die.”

Whereas Haman abdicates choice and responsibility to his magical lottery, Esther bravely and deliberately chooses to advocate for her people and courageously resolves to stand before the king, not because she knows she's going to succeed, but because it is the right thing to do. Where Haman is a coward who consults a lottery out of fear of failure, Esther puts her best foot forward and takes a chance; the outcome of her last stand no longer matters to her because she has accepted that God alone has the power of outcomes. If she dies, she dies, and salvation will indeed have to come from someplace else. Her willingness to give her life to this cause is a moral victory that places her in our pantheon as a heroine worthy of the highest honors.

God alone can see all ends, God alone can determine ultimate destiny and fate; all we have to decide is what to do with the time and opportunities we are given. Esther is only responsible for her choice to make her stand, she is not responsible for the outcome, which is in God's hands alone; not removing the significance of her choice, but redeeming it. Mordechai and Esther's determination to do what they could while counting God's power of outcomes is a complete and total inversion of Haman's attempt to control or force the outcome; their immortal hope stands before us forever – ותקוותם לכל דור ודור.



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The Purim story is filled with chance and coincidental events and encounters, like Mordechai foiling an assassination attempt, leading to outcomes of such significance that it is plain to readers that they were orchestrated by God. God's Hand is not directly perceptible to Mordechai and Esther, nor to us; but we can see it in lucky events, where God intervenes without compromising the freedom of His creations.

We can get so drunk that there's no difference between Haman and Mordechai, and from the perspective of history, that's perfectly true. God alone has the power of outcomes, and Haman can't hurt us otherwise. We can get blackout drunk and be totally vulnerable; we're safe in God's hands.

Appearances are deceptive, and what you see is not always what you get – our inputs do not always lead to the outcomes we expect or predict, for better and for worse; maybe that's why we dress up in silly costumes and disguises, hiding behind masks.

Chance and probability are the undercurrents of the entire story; they're what the holiday is named for. Purim is the holiday that can never die, and even the somber day of Yom Kippur is but a reflection of Purim. Perhaps everything is like Purim in a sense – it looks random, but it's not.

While there is doubt that is a function of concealment – הסתר – the notion of uncertainty itself is a fundamental feature of existence and reality, and it has to be that way. We live within the constraints of a dimension called time – we can only ever exist now, with no access to the past or future. We can recall the past, and we can forecast and prepare for the future, but that's the best we can do; because uncertainty itself is an iron law of reality and all existence, that won't change even in the utopian age of Mashiach.

Haman is descended of Amalek; who not only grapple with doubt and uncertainty but are numerically equivalent, which is to say inextricably linked – עמלק / ספק. But instead of their mistake of reaching into the future in an attempt to dispel uncertainty, we can transform their doubt. The doubt doesn't transform into something else, but like Esther who learned to act within uncertainty, we can find joy amidst the uncertainties of life as well; satisfaction is the same exact word as uncertainty if we only look at it differently – סיפוק / ספק.

We believe in God, and God runs the show. But even though Haman can't hurt us, it sure seems like he can; when it looks like people are in danger, we have no choice but to act accordingly. Although you don't control the outcome; you must act as if you can do something, like what you do matters, because that's the only thing within your power to do.

If that sounds like our life is theatrics, maybe that's kind of how it is! Our Sages suggest that the Jews were never even in serious danger; God put on a show for them like they'd put on a show in participating in the feast at the story's outset – לא עשו אלא לפנים אף הקב"ה לא עשה עמהן אלא לפנים.

In the reality we inhabit, playing along with the theatre is all we can do. If you have a test tomorrow, you'd better study and make sure you know the material well. Sure, God runs the world, but the



probability distributions conclusively demonstrate that people who know the material usually pass; people who don't study typically fail. You can pass or fail, and the test might never ultimately matter in the fullness of your life as it unfolds. But you won't ever know that sitting in the room, staring at the paper, scratching your head struggling for an answer.

There's only one way to find out.

Thought of the Week

Unsolicited honesty is the worst excuse for casual cruelty.

— Ed Latimore, @EdLatimore

הוכיח תוכיח את עמיתך - but be gentle. Focus on honesty, not brutality.

Quote of the Week

We are our Bubbies' and Zaidys' wildest dreams.

— Rabbi Josh Rosenfeld, @shuaros

I present TorahRedux l'ilui nishmas my late grandfather, HaGaon HaRav Yehuda Leib Gertner ben HaRav HaChassid Menachem Mendel.

I hope you enjoyed this week's thoughts. If you have questions or comments, or just want to say hello, it's a point of pride for me to hear from you, and I'll always respond. And if you saw, heard, read, or watched anything that spoke to you, please send it my way - Neli@TorahRedux.com.

Neli

PS If you liked this week's edition of TorahRedux, why not share it with friends and family who would appreciate it?

Redux: *adjective* – resurgence; refers to being brought back, restored, or revived; something familiar presented in a new way. Not to see what no one else has seen, but to say what nobody has yet said about something which everybody sees.