



BS"D

initiate prophecy at any time. Here too the proof text is from this week's parsha. "Stand and I will hear what Hashem will command you."

- [1] The present forum is not suited for an explanation of why this is so
- [2] All translations are from the Stone Edition of Tanach

To: parsha@parsha.net  
From: cshulman@gmail.com

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BEHAALOSCHA - 5768

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From TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> to  
weeklydt@torahweb2.org date Thu, Jun 12, 2008 at  
11:04 PM subject Rabbi Mayer Twersky - The Greatest of Men  
**Rabbi Mayer Twersky The Greatest of Men**

The seventh principle of the Rambam's thirteen principles of faith affirms the unique, unprecedented, never to be equaled level and quality of Moshe Rabbeinu's prophecy. Rambam's presentation of this principle is especially interesting. Whereas he presents the other twelve principles rather sparsely (e.g. in principle two he merely affirms the oneness of Hashem, without explaining any of the profundities and implications), principle seven is presented in great detail. Rambam lists the four distinguishing features of Mosaic prophecy. The message is abundantly clear: Rambam felt it was of great importance that we be familiar with these four features[1].

This week's krias haTorah highlights two of the four unique features of Moshe Rabbeinu's prophetic experience. Thus it seems appropriate to review these differences in conjunction with the krias haTorah.

1. Hashem communicates with all other prophets via the medium of an angel, but with Moshe Rabbeinu He communicated directly. The proof text is from this week's parsha. "Mouth to mouth do I speak to him, in a clear vision and not in riddles"[2]
2. All other prophets prophecy in their sleep, whereas Moshe Rabbeinu was fully awake, alert and in control of his senses. "It is there that I will set my meetings with you, and I shall speak with you from atop the Cover."
3. All other prophets are completely overwhelmed and terrified by the experience of prophecy, and accordingly feel as though they are on the verge of death. Moshe Rabbeinu, on the other hand, was not in the least fazed by his prophetic experience. "Hashem would speak to Moshe face to face, as a man would speak with his fellow."
4. No other prophet could initiate prophecy. Moshe Rabbeinu could

From: ravfrand-owner@torah.org on behalf of **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: Thursday, June 15, 2006 10:26 PM To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Beha'aloscha "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Beha'aloscha [From 2 years ago]

Aharon's Greatness: Forty Years of Consistency

There is a very famous comment of Rashi on the pasuk [verse] in this week's Parsha "And Aharon did so." [Bamidbar 8:3] Rashi states: "This teaches that he did not deviate" (melamed shelo shinah). These few words of Rashi have been the springboard for countless homiletic expositions by commentaries and expounders of Chumash throughout the ages.

The obvious question is: What novelty is there in telling us that Aharon did exactly as he was commanded by G-d, in terms of the practice of lighting the Menorah? Of course Aharon did what G-d told him to do!

Rav Elya Meir Bloch explains that the novelty of Aharon not changing is simply that he did the same thing daily for almost forty years.

Let us think to ourselves – what mitzvah have we done day in day out for the last forty years? There are not many items that fall into this category. True, some of us can say that we have put on Tefillin every day (except Shabbos and Yom Tov) for the last forty years. But there are not many things that a person can say he has done consistently for such a long period of time. How many people can say "I have never missed a minyan in the last 40 years?" or even "I have never missed the zman [proper time for] Krias Shma once in the last 40 years?" It is not so simple.

The praise of Aharon is that he did the same thing for 40 years without fail. That is greatness!

Upside Down Nuns Separate Between Two Sections of Punishment

There is another very famous passage in Parshas BeHa'aloscha: the two verses which begin with the words "And it was when the Ark traveled, Moshe stated..." and "And when it came to rest he would say..." [Bamidbar 10:35-36]. The Talmud records the tradition that these two pasukim are set off by a pair of inverted letter Nuns. Rashi quotes the Gemara [Shabbos 116] that the purpose of these upside down Nuns is to separate between one section of punishment and another.

Which are the sections of punishment (pur-oniyos)? According to some Rishonim, the first section of punishment is the fact that "They traveled from the Mountain of Hashem a three day journey." [Bamidbar 10:33] The Talmud describes their departure from Mt. Sinai "as a child running away from the school house." The Ramban adds that they were afraid that if they stayed at Har Sinai any longer, the Almighty would pile upon them additional mitzvos.

The second section of punishment is that of the 'misoninim' [complainers]. Rashi explains that their complaint centered around the fact that they had to travel so far during the three days of travel.

The Ramban notes that the reason for the separation of the sections of punishment by the pasukim regarding the travel of the Ark was so that there would not be three consecutive sections of punishment that would establish a 'Chazakah' [a precedent setting chain of events] for punishment.

What is the 'third' section that the Ramban is referring to? It is the murmuring of the Ayrev Rav [mixed multitude] that prompted the Children of Israel to desire and complain about the lack of meat.

But according to this Ramban, we would have expected the pause of the upside down Nuns to come between the second and third incidents. If that were the case, the pause would effectively stop the 'Chazakah' from taking

effect. In fact, however, the separation comes between the first two incidents, when there was not yet an imminent chazakah.

What does the Ramban mean?

I saw a very interesting insight from Rabbi Zev Leff. The Almighty is particularly annoyed by inconsistency, i.e. hypocrisy. Hashem can deal less harshly with a person who may be bad, but who is at least consistent in his evil ways. But a person who demonstrates hypocrisy and inconsistency really riles the Almighty.

This is reminiscent of the Medrash regarding Yosef's first question to his brothers after revealing himself to them: "Is my father still alive?" [Bereshis 45:3] The Medrash comments: "Woe to us from the Day of Judgment. Woe to us from the day of humiliation. The Tribes had no answer to Yosef's chastisement."

What was the chastisement? It was their hypocrisy. Their whole interchange with Yosef had been that they could not bring down Binyamin, because if they separated him from his father, their poor old father would die. Yosef challenges them, "If you are so worried about your poor father, why weren't you worried about him twenty some years ago, when you separated him from his favorite son?"

Return to the sections of punishment here in our Parsha, what was the people's second complaint? "We are traveling too fast." The significance of that complaint cannot be appreciated without considering the next section. They were not concerned about traveling so fast when they fled Mt. Sinai – like a child running away from the schoolhouse. When they were worried about receiving more mitzvos, they knew how to travel very quickly for a great distance. No one said a peep about "too fast" in that situation.

Suddenly, a few days later, they are worried that they are going "too fast." This is inconsistent. It is hypocritical. When they were acting for THEMSELVES, it is not "too fast," but when it is for G-D, it is "too fast."

That is why the pause is between the first and second punishments. The glaring inconsistency in their deeds is manifest in the sharp contrast between these two sections. In order to dull the contrast, so to speak, we needed a pause between these two sections.

We must always bear in mind the hypocrisy of glaring inconsistencies in our deeds. We are inconsistent when we complain that we don't have enough money for this tzedaka or for that religious need and then we go spend great sums on other things that are perhaps not so important.

The Almighty can understand that a person may not have money. The Torah excuses one facing circumstances beyond his control [Ownes Rachmana patrei]. However, when we have money for 'this' but not for 'that,' the Almighty does not deal well with that, so to speak.

The same applies when a person says that he has no time to learn or to do chessed, but he has time for other crazy endeavors. Not having time is a reasonable excuse, but when one really does have time for much less important matters, we are not dealing with lack of time but with hypocrisy.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA DavidATwersky@aol.com

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic portions for this parsha from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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Covenant & Conversation

**Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from  
Sir Jonathan Sacks**

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British  
Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago - 5766]

<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Beha'alotcha

Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible, is remarkable for the extreme realism with which it portrays human character. Its heroes are not superhuman. Its non-heroes are not archetypal villains. The best have failings; the worst often have saving virtues. I know of no other religious literature quite like it.

This makes it very difficult to use biblical narrative to teach a simple, black-and-white approach to ethics. And that – argued R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes (Mevo ha-Aggadot) – is why rabbinic midrash often systematically re-interprets the narrative so that the good become all-good and the bad all-bad. For sound educational reasons, Midrash paints the moral life in terms of black and white.

Yet the plain sense remains ("A biblical passage never loses its plain interpretation", Shabbat 63a), and it is important that we do not lose sight of it. It is as if monotheism brought into being at the same time a profound humanism. G-d in the Hebrew Bible is nothing like the gods of myth. They were half-human, half-divine. The result was that in the epic literature of pagan cultures, human heroes were seen as almost like gods: semi-divine.

In stark contrast, monotheism creates a total distinction between G-d and humanity. If G-d is wholly G-d, then human beings can be seen as wholly human – subtle, complex mixtures of strength and weakness. We identify with the heroes of the Bible because, despite their greatness, they never cease to be human, nor do they aspire to be anything else. Hence the phenomenon of which the sedra of Behaalotecha provides a shattering example: the vulnerability of some of the greatest religious leaders of all time, to depression and despair.

The context is familiar enough. The Israelites are complaining about their food: "The rabble among them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, 'If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!'" (Num 11: 4-6)

This is not a new story. We have heard it before (see for example Exodus 16). Yet on this occasion, Moses experiences what one can only call a breakdown:

He asked the Lord, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? . . . I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how You are going to treat me, put me to death right now—I if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin." (Num. 11: 11-15)

Moses prays for death! Nor is he the only person in Tanakh to do so. There are at least three others. There is Elijah, when after his successful confrontation with the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, Queen Jezebel issues a warrant that he be killed:

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he

might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." (I Kings 19: 3-4)

There is Jonah, after G-d had forgiven the inhabitants of Nineveh:

Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a G-d who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." (Jonah 4: 1-3)

And there is Jeremiah, after the people fail to heed his message and publicly humiliate him:

"O Lord, You enticed me, and I was enticed; You overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me . . . The word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long . . . Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, made him very glad, saying, "A child is born to you—a son!" . . . Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?" (Jeremiah 20: 7-18)

Lehavdil elef havdalot: no comparison is intended between the religious heroes of Tanakh and political heroes of the modern world. They are different types, living in different ages, functioning in different spheres. Yet we find a similar phenomenon in one of the great figures of the twentieth century, Winston Churchill. Throughout much of his life he was prone to periods of acute depression. He called it "the black dog". He told his daughter, "I have achieved a great deal to achieve nothing in the end". He told a friend that "he prays every day for death". In 1944 he told his doctor, Lord Moran, that he kept himself from standing close to a train platform or overlooking the side of a ship because he might be tempted to commit suicide: "A second's desperation would end everything" (these quotes are taken from Anthony Storr, Churchill's Black Dog).

Why are the greatest so often haunted by a sense of failure? Storr, in the book mentioned above, offers some compelling psychological insights. But at the simplest level we see certain common features, at least among the biblical prophets: a passionate drive to change the world, combined with a deep sense of personal inadequacy. Moses says, "Who am I . . . that I should lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3: 11). Jeremiah says: "I cannot speak: I am only a child" (Jer. 1: 6). Jonah tries to flee from his mission. The very sense of responsibility that leads a prophet to heed the call of G-d can lead him to blame himself when the people around him do not heed the same call.

Yet it is that same inner voice that ultimately holds the cure. The prophet does not believe in himself: he believes in G-d. He does not undertake to lead because he sees himself as a leader, but because he sees a task to be done and no one else willing to do it. His greatness lies not within himself but beyond himself: in his sense of being summoned to a task that must be done however inadequate he knows himself to be.

Despair can be part of leadership itself. For when the prophet sees himself reviled, rebuked, criticized; when his words fall on stony ground; when he sees people listening to what they want to hear, not what they need to hear – that is when the last layers of self are burned away, leaving only the task, the mission, the call. When that happens, a new greatness is born. It now no longer matters that the prophet is unpopular and unheeded. All that matters is the work and the One who has summoned him to it. That is when the prophet arrives at the truth stated by Rabbi Tarfon: "It is not for you to complete the task, but neither are you free to stand aside from it" (Avot 2: 16).

Again without seeking to equate the sacred and the secular, I end with some words spoken by Theodore Roosevelt (in a speech to students at the Sorbonne, Paris, 23 April 1910), which sum up both the challenge and the consolation of leadership in cadences of timeless eloquence:

It is not the critic who counts, Not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, Or where the doer of deeds could actually have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena,

Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, Who strives valiantly, Who errs and comes short again and again – Because there is no effort without error and shortcomings – But who does actually strive to do the deed, Who knows great enthusiasm, great devotion, Who spends himself in a worthy cause, Who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement And who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly – So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls Who know neither victory nor defeat.

Leadership in a noble cause can bring despair. But it also is the cure.

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From: **Rabbi Meir Goldwicht** [rgoldwicht@yutorah.org] Sent: Monday, June 19, 2006 7:35 PM To: Shulman, Charles Subject: (belated) Parashat Behaalotcha 5766 WEEKLY INSIGHTS BY RAV MEIR GOLDWICHT Parashat Beha'alotcha

The end of Parashat Beha'alotcha deals with the Miriam's sin of lashon hara, of relating to Aharon, her brother, that which she had heard from Tziporah, Moshe's wife. Rashi explains that Miriam overheard Tziporah comment that Moshe had separated from her in order to be constantly prepared for nevuah. Miriam was punished for this in three ways: 1) with tzara'at; 2) the whole machaneh waited a week to travel until Miriam healed, during which time they most certainly spoke of her punishment; 3) for all generations, we must recall Miriam's sin every day as one of the six zechirot – along with remembering Amalek, yetziat Mitzrayim, Kabbalat haTorah, Shabbat, and the Cheit haEigel. Why was Miriam punished so harshly for speaking about Moshe, especially since, as Rashi explains, she did not intend it derogatorily?

At the beginning of the next parasha, parashat Shelach, the Torah deals with the sin of the meraglim. Rashi explains the reason for the juxtaposition of these two parshiot: Miriam was punished with tzara'at for speaking against Moshe, but these resha'im, the nesie'i ha'eidah, witnessed the incident but didn't take mussar from it. This explanation is troublesome, for how can we even compare between the two incidents? The meraglim specifically intended to speak degradingly of Eretz Yisrael, whereas Miriam had absolutely no derogatory intent!

To answer these questions, we will explain as follows: Of the five basic senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell – four are for the most part objective, in the sense that a person perceives the stimulus as it is. If a person smells a fragrance, he either smells it as pleasant or unpleasant, depending on whether it is in fact pleasant or unpleasant. The only sense that is subjective by nature is sight. A person sees things as he wishes to see them. One person sees a cup as half-full, while another sees it as half-empty. The subjective nature of vision allows for the concept of ayin tovah and ayin ra'ah. The tremendous strength of ayin ra'ah can be seen from the gemara which relates that Rabbi once pointed out to his talmidim as they passed a cemetery that 99% of the people buried there died before their destined time because of ayin ra'ah. We see that a person has tremendous ko'ach in his eyes, ko'ach which can be used either for good or, chas v'chalilah, for evil.

Not only do we have eyes, but even the land has eyes. Balak's messengers tell Bilam about us, Am Yisrael, saying, "Hinei am yatza miMitzrayim hinei chisah et ein ha'aretz, Behold, a nation has left Egypt; behold it has covered the eye of the land" (BaMidbar 22:5). In other words, even the land has the power of the ayin to influence a person's actions. Our job is not to be influenced by the ayin of the land, but rather to influence the land through our own ayin tovah. For this reason, there are many examples in Chazal demonstrating the tremendous power of the eyes.

Miriam haNeviah is to a great extent the reason for Moshe's birth. As a young child, her father, Amram, who was the gedol hador, separated from his wife, Yocheved, after Pharaoh decreed that all male children be cast into the Nile, and the entire generation followed suit. Miriam pointed out to her father that by separating from his wife he was essentially making a decree even worse than Pharaoh's – Pharaoh only decreed that the males be killed;

Amram was essentially decreeing that no children, not even females, be brought to life. At this, Amram returned to his wife, and the entire generation again followed suit. That Miriam was able to see the greater picture is demonstrative of her ayin tova. This positive attribute was granted to all of Am Yisrael at Har Sinai, as the Torah says, "V'chol ha'am ro'im et hakolot, And the entire nation saw the sounds" (Shemot 20:15). However, afterwards they all returned to normal, as the Torah says, "Lech emor lahem shuvu lachem l'oholeichem, Go tell them, 'Return to your tents'" (Devarim 5:27). Only Moshe remained at the original level of Har Sinai, as the Torah continues, "V'atah poh amod imadi, And you, stand here with Me" (v. 28).

The Rambam explains that Moshe was the master of the nevi'im, different from all other nevi'im in four key ways, one of which was his ability to speak with Hashem whenever he wanted, constantly in Hashem's presence, like a malach Hashem. Miriam was unable to perceive this difference, and so when she heard from Tziporah that Moshe separated from her because of a tzivuy Hashem, she should have asked Moshe directly, rather than discussing it with Aharon. Her sin was in speaking to Aharon about Moshe. For this reason, the Torah stopped the whole machaneh and publicized her sin to such an extent, in order that we understand that improper sight leads to improper speech.

The same way that there exists ayin tova and ayin ra'ah, there exists lashon tov and lashon hara. The Torah wanted to arouse within us a sensitivity to ayin tova and lashon tov, because all of the major corruptions in the world began with improper sight. The sin of Adam ha'Rishon began with, "Vateire ha'isha ki tov ha'eitz l'ma'achal, And the woman saw that the tree was good for eating" (Bereishit 3:6). Cheit ha'Eigel began with, "Vayar ha'am ki boshesh Moshe laredet min hahar, And the nation saw that Moshe delayed from descending the mountain" (Shemot 32:1). HaKadosh Baruch Hu wanted us to understand that sight, proper or improper, is the key to success or failure.

This is the relationship between the sin of Miriam and that of the meraglim. In each case there was improper sight (despite the fact that Miriam was really looking out for Moshe, not looking to disparage him, as explained earlier). The nesie'i ha'eidah saw Eretz Yisrael improperly, even though Moshe had explicitly warned them to look at the land properly, as it says, "Ur'item et ha'aretz, And you shall view the land" (BaMidbar 13:18). Their sin was that they preceded their mouths to their eyes, influencing their sight and biasing their judgment. This is one of the reasons that the hadassim are higher than the aravot in the arba'at haminim – the hadassim represent the eyes, while the aravot represent the lips. The eyes must be given more importance than the lips, because otherwise, if the lips are given precedence, there is no chance for ayin tova. The number of hadassim in the bundle teaches a similar lesson. The lulav corresponds to the spine, and therefore there is one lulav in the bundle, just as we have only one spine. The etrog corresponds to the heart, and therefore there is only one etrog in the bundle. The aravot correspond to the lips, and therefore there are two of them – one for the upper lip and one for the lower lip. Accordingly, then, there should be only two hadassim in the bundle, since the hadassim correspond to the eyes. Yet the Torah commands us to take three hadassim in the bundle! The explanation is that not only must a person see with his two physical eyes, but he must also see with the eye of his mind, his seichel.

The ability to see with ayin tova can be gained only through Torah. On this, the first Shabbat after Kabbalat haTorah, we must take this message to heart, adopting the lesson of ayin tova. To the extent we accomplish this, we will merit speedily to see the fulfillment of, "Ki ayin b'ayin yiru b'shuv Hashem tzion, For they shall see, eye to eye, Hashem returning to Zion" (Yeshayahu 52:8).

Shabbat Shalom! Meir Goldwicht

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PARSHAS BEHA'ALOSCHA

When the Ark would journey, Moshe said, "Arise Hashem, and let Your foes be scattered, let those who hate You flee from before You. (10:35) The pasuk above, and the one following, it are separated from the rest of the Torah by means of inverted letter nuns before and after them, which separate them from the rest of the narrative. The reason for this is that these pesukim really belong in Parashas Bamidbar, which relates the tribal formations and the Degalim, Banners, of each tribe. The passage was placed here, so that the Torah would not record these sins successively.

The second sin occurred when the Jews began complaining soon after they left Har Sinai. Defining the first sin seems to be an area of dispute between Rashi and Tosfos in their interpretation of a statement of Chazal in the Talmud Shabbos 116a. According to Rashi, the first sin occurred when they asked for meat. Tosfos disagrees, contending that the first sin happened when they left Har Sinai seemingly in a rush, "like a child running from school." Tosfos feels that the quest for meat was part of the sin of the misonenim, complainers. It was not an independent sin in its own right. Why does Rashi stipulate that the sin of asking for meat was exclusive of the sin of the complainer? It seems to have been one more aspect of their complaining.

Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, zl, explains that when Klal Yisrael left Har Sinai, their attitude changed. They left from a spiritually elevating atmosphere in which they had experienced Revelation only to enter into the great desolate wilderness. The sudden deterioration led to their quest for meat. This was a clear indication of their rapid downswing into the world of materialism. They no longer had an aspiration for the spiritual; their quest was not for the elevated and hallow, but for the material and shallow. Their sheifah, striving, had changed. They no longer yearned for spiritual excellence; rather, they pursued the mundane. This descent was in itself a sin. Digression is a sin, because it demonstrates a change in direction, a deviation from a forward, upward movement, to a backward, downward spiral.

A Jew should have a sheifah, ambition, an aspiration and a striving for a lofty goal, not a focus on when he will have his next portion of meat. A weakening of a Jew's sheifah is an indiscretion that is in itself sinful. This decrease in their level of ambition led them to find complaints. The word misonenim is defined by Rashi to be synonymous with the word alilah, libel. In other words, they needed nothing. They conjured a reason to complain. It was the result of a deviation from their original goals. When one loses sight of his goal; when his ambition begins to waiver, when his aspirations start faltering, he seeks an excuse to justify his behavior. He creates a libel, a scurrilous attempt to validate his indiscretion, to cover up his deviation. Rather than be on the defensive, he begins to complain, to project blame for his behavior. The best defense is a strong offensive. This is why they complained.

The Rosh Yeshivah explains that there are two stages in a person's decline: first, he interrupts his upward climb, his sheifah, aspiration, for spiritual growth; second, he begins to complain, to find fault, to lay blame, to create a libel in order to justify his desires.

Rashi feels that Klal Yisrael's level of learning at Har Sinai was exemplary. Their problem is attributed to a sudden interruption in their striving for excellence, their ambition to achieve gadlus, greatness. The two accompany one another. With Torah study, one needs to have a desire and an aspiration

to know more, delve deeper, analyze further, to ascend the ladder of eminence in Torah. Tosfos, however, offers the opinion that their actual learning was deficient. Something was missing in the depth of their recognition of Hashem. Had they really been "into it," had their hakarah, recognition, of Hashem been on a more profound level, they could not have journeyed away from Har Sinai, like "a child running from school." Such behavior reflects a flawed attitude toward Torah study. It shows that they considered it a heavy yoke - not something that they valued and held dear to their hearts. When one cares about something, he savors it. He does not try to avoid it.

We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, and the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. (11:5)

Klal Yisrael had been liberated after hundreds of years of bitter enslavement to their Egyptian oppressors. It was not simply back-breaking work. The Egyptians played mind games with the Jews, attempting to break them both physically and mentally. Chazal explain that after each Jew had put in a full day's work in the field, he would go home and then the Egyptian taskmaster would have him serve him by making him carry out simple, menial chores around the house. The Jew was not allowed a moment's rest. Women were forced to perform labor that was traditionally considered "men's work," and men were forced to do "women's work." The labor was only one aspect of their misery. They had to contend with the Egyptian decrees against their families. First, their midwives were instructed to kill their sons. Then, all male babies were to be cast in the river. This, coupled with other decrees, certainly made Jewish life in Egypt disheartening.

The Jews called out to Hashem, and He listened. He heard their pain and misery and liberated them from the Egyptian bondage. They came to the wilderness amidst a multitude of spectacular miracles. They were protected by the Pillars of Cloud, which protected them from any danger that they might confront. Finally, they had it made - or so one might think. Everything seemed perfect - or so it seemed. Yet, the Jewish People found reason to complain. First it was the eirev rav, mixed multitude, who instigated the complaint about a lack of meat. If this were not bad enough, they had the insolence to declare, "We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge." The Ramban notes that Jewish People, not just the mixed multitude, articulated the complaint about the "free fish" that they had in Egypt. They wanted what they had in Egypt. This is absolutely ludicrous! We know what they had in Egypt. It was misery, pain and slave labor. Why would they want to return to that type of life? This is in addition to the fact that they had the manna through which they experienced every form of food. Their complaints made absolutely no sense.

Horav Chaim Vital, zl, expresses this question in stronger terms. How can a nation which is called the dor deiah, generation of knowledge, for their profound perception and understanding of the workings of Hashem ask for the "fish in Egypt"? This is a request that one would expect of fools. Why would a nation that already has access to everything degrade themselves for some "fish"?

In the Talmud Yoma 75b, Chazal say that the people sought to revoke the prohibition of forbidden relationships. They felt it was too much for them. The Sifri explains that it was not merely the Egyptian food that they missed. Their idea of "free of charge" was an allusion to freedom from mitzvos, freedom from obligations, freedom from responsibility. It was not the free fish that they sought. Food was plenty in the desert, but it had a catch: mitzvos. That, they could do without. As the Maharal m'Prague writes, "We remember the fish that we had free of charge. This means free of mitzvos. We want fish without any strings attached. They sought chinam m'mitzvos. Why? It is not as if the Jews who had left Egypt had no idea what obligation and servitude meant. Compared to the travail and bondage that they suffered in Egypt, the yoke of mitzvos with its Divine obligations was light. After years of misery, why would a few mitzvos disturb them?

Man's nature is to be free, to seek freedom at every opportunity.

Constriction and restraint of any kind stifle a human being and often cause him to rebel against his constraints. Acquiescing to another's domination over him is a challenging and often antagonistic experience. Horav Chananyah Malkah, Shlita, explains this further. A person's character, his essence, is comprised of two components. One is intrinsic, while the other is external. His physical being is his extrinsic component, while his nefesh, spirit, represents his inner being. The spirit is also subdivided into various components: the thought process; emotions; inner struggles, etc. One can subjugate another person's body, make him a slave, and dominate over him. He cannot, however, enslave his mind. The most powerful dictator can prevail over another's body, but he cannot control his mind. No one has the power to suppress another person's thoughts and feelings - unless the individual willingly grants that power to his subjugation.

Thus, when the Jewish People were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, only their bodies belonged to Pharaoh. He controlled their physical movements, but he could not get into their minds, unless they allowed him to enter. The mind of the Jew, his ability to think what he wanted to think, to feel how he wanted to feel, to love, to hate, to experience any form of emotion, was all his. The Egyptians could not take that freedom away from him. Indeed, we see it all of the time. People who are incarcerated for years only become prisoners when they relinquish their inner ability to think as free men. As long as they retain their pride and self-esteem, they are not prisoners. Their bodies are incarcerated, but their spirit is free.

That is all acceptable in the secular world. In the world of Judaism, Hashem demands complete dominance over every aspect of the Jewish psyche: physical, spiritual, and emotional. The Jew is obligated to serve Hashem with all of his faculties- his body, as well as his mind. The Torah's mitzvos penetrate to the inner essence of a Jew, instructing him to love his fellow man and not to hate, not to covet, to think proper thoughts. In other words, our thoughts and emotions also belong to Hashem. That is what being Jewish is all about. One cannot just be a part time Jew, observing what he chooses and thinking what he wants. If one's thoughts are inappropriate, then his actions will eventually follow in iniquity.

We note in Parashas Mishpatim the case of an eved Ivri who expresses his desire to continue serving his master past the original six years of servitude. Why would one want to remain a slave? Chazal explain that the lifestyle of slaves is one of great abandon and dissoluteness. They are prone to licentious behavior because they are exposed to greater freedom. Physically he is a slave, but in matters of the spirit, his mind is free to wander.

Not so in the area of religion. The Torah addresses every area of man's physical and spiritual endeavor. We now understand why the Jews would rather have returned to the Egyptian slavery than live with the "freedom" of the wilderness. In Egypt, every day was free - free of mitzvos. True, their bodies belonged to the Egyptians, but their spirit belonged to them. Now, if they wanted to eat, they had to begin the process of first confirming its kashrus, then reciting a blessing. There were restrictions on how to eat, what to eat, when to eat, and where to eat. Too many restrictions! They wanted freedom - even if it meant being a slave!

Being observant is more than an obligation - it is a mindset. Regrettably, people often focus on the "do nots," the prohibitive commandments, without taking the time to realize that all of these prohibited mitzvos add up to a very positive and meaningful lifestyle. We must accentuate the positive. When we emphasize the positive way of life that Torah observance engenders, we will see that there are really no prohibitive mitzvos. Indeed, the "do nots" help us to "do." A mind that is "clean" and pure can think lofty thoughts. Yes, the Torah controls what we are to think about, but why put a clean beverage into a dirty cup? It is all part of positive reinforcement. Obedience to the Almighty is the harmony and integration of body and spirit towards one common positive objective: performing the will of Hashem. This is what it means to be a Jew.

Moshe heard the people crying in their family groups, each one at the entrance of his tent. (11:10)

A person should train himself to tolerate what Hashem sends him, regardless of its nature. Acceptance, justification and tolerance are all part of being Jewish. As the Chasam Sofer notes, however, this is only concerning the individual's personal life, his own problems and issues. When it comes to someone else's problems, one may not be tolerant. He must pray, help, and do everything within his power to assist another Jew in need. This is what troubled Moshe Rabbeinu when the Jews complained about their lack of meat. Had they complained about the "other" Jew's problems, his lack of meat, it might have been acceptable, even laudable, but these were people who were concerned with their own petty stomachs. It was their own hunger which they were trying to satisfy, not their friends'. This way is not the Jewish way. "Moshe heard the people crying." What were they crying about? Why were they crying? "In their family groups." They were crying about themselves, their families, not for others. "Each one at the entrance of his tent." They cared only about their individual tent, their individual family. Such selfish weeping was not to be tolerated. It is not the Jewish way.

In the Talmud Kesubos 17a, Chazal teach that a person must do his utmost to understand the needs of others. Yet, for himself, a person should have as few needs as possible. He should shy away from honor, but see to it that others are honored. One should forego personal pleasure, trust that Hashem will provide for his material needs and not worry. One should try not to borrow, but should lend money freely. One should try never to accept charity, but should generously give as much charity as possible. In short, one should seek ways to improve the lot of others and not worry about himself.

We might think that the great acts of charity are performed by those who have an abundant supply of money, or that in order to "do something" one needs a large organization. We have only to study the background of every major chesed organization to note that they all began with an idea: someone noticed a need; someone had a plan; someone wanted to "do something." In other situations, it was a person who felt a personal sensitivity to a particular need and either in the course of helping himself, he helped countless others, or, he simply felt the responsibility to go beyond "weeping in front of their own tents" and decided to "do" something about it.

Stories abound about individuals in the Jewish -- as well as secular -- world who took the initiative and went beyond the "weeping" to the "doing." One that is very near to my heart is about a man who, because of his outstanding humility, will permit me to mention neither his name nor the city in which he lives, but those in the "know" are certainly aware of his wonderful acts of chesed, which I take the liberty of sharing with the reading audience. I do confess that I have an ulterior motive: I envy what he does. I feel that perhaps by inspiring others, I might share in this wonderful mitzvah.

Almost sixteen years ago, a New Yorker with an eye for chesed and a heart of gold was prompted to single-handedly establish a chesed organization which today goes by the name of Sheeris Ha'plate or Edible Leftovers, Inc. Attending a wedding, he noticed the caterers packing up the food after the chupah. Being inquisitive by nature, he asked, "What are you doing with all of that food?" The caterer replied, "Why? Do you want it?" Five words, that was all. It was those five words, however, that motivated our friend to establish a unique food g'mach, sometimes known as a free-loan association. He took the food home, where he repackaged it and discreetly dropped it off at the homes of people whom he knew were in dire need.

Soon he had set up an entire network of volunteers. They accumulated the food from simchah halls throughout the New York area, distinctively, often elegantly, repackaging the food to give to those whose families could use it. Alternatively, they delivered it to those who were making a simchah, but could not afford all of the food. Indeed, the leftovers from a simchah could supply about thirty families with a perfectly nourishing meal - a

phenomenon that with today's poverty levels is unfortunately not an anomaly.

Our friend recently shared a letter that the organization received from a chassan, an orphan, who was the beneficiary of a sumptuous, lavish kiddush, benefit of this wonderful g'mach: "I did not have to feel like an orphan at my own aufruf (Shabbos before a young man marries). I was able to have a kiddush, reception, fit for a prince, just like my friends' parents make for them."

A few months ago, a distraught mother called the g'mach. She had a large family, consisting of seventy-five members, and the upcoming Shabbos was to be her son's Bar-Mitzvah. Her problem? She had no way to provide the food for the Bar mitzvah, because she simply had no money. Should her child be deprived? Could the g'mach help? The g'mach provided the woman with delicious meals, as well as flower arrangements collected from a wedding hall the previous night.

Edible Leftovers Inc. collects food and flowers from approximately three hundred simchos each year. In addition, they collect the food after Pesach from New York area hotels and five hotels in Florida. The inspiration of one man, coupled with the dedication of many volunteers, ensures that some unfortunate parents will not have to tell their children, "Sorry, tonight this is all we have to eat," or, "I am sorry, but I cannot make a Bar-Mitzvah celebration for you." All of this occurs as a result of a few people going beyond "weeping by the door of their tents."

This message has been written as a public service for those people all over who just do not have. Perhaps we can help.

Va'ani Tefillah Rommemu Hashem Elokeinu. Elevate Hashem our G-d.

There are two "rommemus" here, each with a different focus. In the sefer Avodas Hakodesh by Maharam Ben Gabbai, the author explains this redundancy in a manner that should elevate our daily prayers. When the time to sing praises to Hashem arrives, the malachim, angels in Heaven, wait for a "signal" to commence their song. The ministering angel who is "in charge" listens intently for the sounds of the Jews praying in this world to begin and ascend Heavenward. Why does he do this? Because the malachim are not permitted to begin their shirah, song of praise, until after the people in this world have begun their shirah. This is the meaning of the double rommemu. The first verse is a reference to Klal Yisrael who begin their shirah, and the second rommemu refers to the ministering angels who now begin to sing their shirah. Perhaps we should keep this in mind in the morning when we are laying in bed, contemplating if and when we should go to davening and how we should daven. After all, the melachim are waiting for us!

Sponsored In memory of Our dear Aunt Annette Cohen  
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Parsha Page by Fred Toczek A survey of parsha thoughts from Gedolei Yisroel compiled by Fred Toczek. Perfect for printing and use at your Shabbos tisch.

Behaaloscha ...

E. Living Each Day (**Rabbi Abraham Twerski**)

The Centrality of Humility. "Moshe was humble, more than any other human being on earth." Moshe obviously had many fine character traits; why, then, does the Torah mention only his humility? Since humility is the source of all other commendable traits. While Moshe was aware of his tremendous gift of prophecy, he nonetheless remained humble. One of the Chassidic masters related a parable of a king who, wanting to get a first-hand look at life in his kingdom, disguised himself as a foot soldier and asked one of his officers to escort him. Wherever they went, the townspeople gave honor to the officer and ignored the king. The officer, however, wasn't pleased with the recognition -- "if only they knew who it is that is with me", he thought "in their ignorance of his presence, they accord honor to me". One who is aware of Hashem's constant presence and awesome majesty isn't affected by honor; rather, like the officer, he becomes more humble. We shouldn't deny our potential but, by recognizing that whatever we have is a G-d-given gift, should remain aware to whom the honor for our achievements really belongs.

#### F. Love Thy Neighbor (**Rabbi Zelig Pliskin**)

1. The Prohibition Against "Loshon Hora" ("gossip"). Miriam heard from Moshe's wife Zipporah that he had separated himself from her; Miriam felt his behavior was improper and related this to her brother Aharon. The Chofetz Chaim learns out from this several principles about loshon hora: (a) it is prohibited even if you are speaking about someone who is humble and doesn't mind others speaking against him (for this reason, immediately after Moshe was spoken against, the Torah states that Moshe was humble); (b) even if one has done favors for another (e.g., Miriam saved Moshe's life when he was an infant), one doesn't have a right to speak against him; and (c) the prohibition even applies to telling just one other person, and even if the recipient is a relative who won't relay it to anyone else.

2. We should aid in their time of need even those who act against us. Not only did Moshe not get angry at Miriam for speaking against him, but he even prayed for her recovery.

#### G. Majesty of Man

Hashem's guidelines for giving rebuke. In rebuking Miriam and Aharon for speaking loshon hora, Hashem said "please listen to My words . . ." Why was it necessary for Hashem to soften his rebuke, especially when dealing with people on as high a level as Miriam and Aharon? Hashem, in His infinite wisdom of human nature, knew that His rebuke would lose some of its effectiveness if it wasn't given in this imploring manner. The Sifsei Chachamim concludes that if Hashem addressed His servants in such a manner, how much more so should we speak gently to others, correcting them with love and gentleness. If our words come from the heart, they are more likely to penetrate and be accepted in our friends' hearts as well.

#### H. Project Genesis

Our obligation to "light" the Menorah. "The week's reading begins with the Commandment to light the Menorah in the Tabernacle. And as my teacher Rabbi Asher Z. Rubenstein pointed out, G-d doesn't need our candles. He doesn't need our light. There is no darkness before G-d. In a house, the narrowest part of a window is on the outside - this is even true today. This method of construction allows maximal light to enter the house through the window. Yet the Holy Temple was constructed with just the opposite design - to allow the internal light of the Temple to radiate outwards. So G-d doesn't need our light - what He wants is for Israel to be engaged in the act of lighting. Yet, what does this symbolize? The answer may be found in Proverbs (20:27): "The light of HaShem is the soul of man." ["Ner HaShem Nishmas Adam."] Again, G-d does not need our light, but He offers us the opportunity to radiate light. And we are to be involved with the lighting. This applies, said Rav Rubenstein, not only to ourselves. If we find a "candle" which isn't burning, it is our obligation to light it. If we find a Jewish soul which is not shining, we cannot leave it dim. Torah enlightens the mind and gives joy to the heart. A person may be "dim" because he or she is unhappy, or simply lacking the shine of Jewish spiritual life. One way or the other, we must participate in sharing light. One candle can light thousands of others - if it is, itself, burning brightly. There is no question - here too, G-d does not "need" our help. He alone can light the lights. But He wants us to be involved in the lighting. We -- every one of us -- has the opportunity to share, and to grow brighter along with others. G-d gives us not merely a place under the lights - He gives us the opportunity to radiate on our own, and to help others to shine as well.

menorah but also in life generally - in raising and educating children and students, in inspiring others with ideals, skills and knowledge.

It is a rule in the home, the classroom, the workplace and anywhere else in human life where people intersect and influence one another. It applies in those areas of life that are also subject to this challenge - that the wick has to catch fire and rise on its own.

The ability to let the "wick" catch fire and flame eventually on its own is a necessary trait in successful parenting and teaching. It is always difficult to let go of a child and a student. One becomes so emotionally involved that letting go becomes increasingly impossible. But the truth is that only by letting go and allowing the "wick" - child, student, etc. - to flame on its own is one's parental and educational responsibility fulfilled. We cannot live another person's life for that person. We can only attempt to provide that other person with the wherewithal to succeed and accomplish.

The other side of the coin in this matter is equally valid and important. The kohein may not remove the flame from the wick prematurely. He must make certain that the flame of the wick will not sputter out when he removes his flame from the wick.

The responsibility of parents and teachers remains as long as the child or student is still unable to flame on its own. Many times in life it is difficult to light the flame in others. It always seems never to catch and flame on its own efforts and abilities. The tendency therefore is for the flame giver to despair and eventually give up on the effort.

Students are expelled from schools and parents and children remain distant. No two instances in life are alike and there are therefore no real general rules that can be imposed in such situations. Yet it must be obvious to all that infinite patience and untiring efforts must first be expended before reaching a point of impasse and no return.

Some people are late bloomers and thus the flame has to be kept to their wick longer than usual. These are all naturally individual judgments and uncertain decisions. Perhaps that is why the Torah emphasizes this seemingly ordinary act of lighting the menorah in the Temple because it represents the ambiguities that lie at the heart of many basic issues in life, family and community affairs. Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

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<http://www.rabbiwein.com/Weekly-Parsha/2008/06/267.html>

Weekly Parsha

BEHALOTCHA

Friday, June 13, 2008

Lighting the menorah - the great candelabra - in the Temple seems to be a very straight forward, cut and dried matter. One needs little skill or training apparently to light a candelabra. Yet the Torah's emphasis in this week's parsha insures that a deeper meaning is also present to this seemingly mundane and simple act.

Rashi already indicates the presence of this deeper idea by his comment that the obligation of the kohein was to keep his fire at the candelabra's wick, "until they caught and burned brightly on their own." This is a rule not only in lighting a

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**RABBI ELI BARUCH SHULMAN**

Parshas Bahaloscha 5763

How are you all this morning? ברוך השם. That is the typical Jewish response. We punctuate the past with השם, and the future with אם ירצה השם, and the present with בעזרת השם.

Likewise many of us write on the top right hand corner of every document - בעזרת השם, or דשמיא בסיעתא, which means the same thing.

I am told that one of the Israeli ministers, from the Shinui party, when given a document that was issued under his Shas predecessor, is careful to first cross out the words השם at the top of the document. But that only shows how estranged he and his party are from our heritage.

Where did all this come from? Whence this compulsion to infuse "הקב" into every utterance? When did it begin?

We can trace it back at least as far as the sixteenth century. Already the של"ה, almost 500 years ago, observed that the practice of Jews is to constantly say השם ברוך, and אם ירצה השם. And the של"ה seeks a source for this practice, and he finds it in this weeks פרשה.

The Torah says in today's פרשה that as the Jews travelled from encampment to encampment, from מהנה to מהנה, on their journey to the promised land, every station on their journey was ordained by the רבש"ע. When the ענן moved, they pulled up camp and followed it; when it came to rest, they stopped and pitched their tents. ועל פי השם יחנו ועל פי השם יסעו; they encamped by the word of השם, and they travelled by the word of השם.

We, too, says the של"ה, go through our march through with this sense that השם יסעו על פי השם יחנו ועל פי השם יסעו. Every step that we take is informed by the conviction that it is השם. And therefore at every step we acknowledge His presence and guidance. If we are well, it is because of His grace - ברוך השם. If we undertake something, we count on His support - בעזרת השם. If we plan for the future, our plans are contingent on His sanction - אם ירצה השם.

There is a fascinating Gemara which I think it worthwhile to share with you in this context. The הלכה is that a Jew is forbidden on Shabbos to walk 2,000 אמות - about 3,000 feet - beyond the place where he resided at the beginning of Shabbos. If he lives in a city, then this 2,000 אמות is measured from the outskirts of the city. If, however, he begins Shabbos alone, outside any city or town, then he measures the 2,000 אמות from where he stands.

The Gemara in עירובין says, in this regard, as follows:

ואמר רבה בר בר חנה לדידי חזי לי ההוא אתרא, והוי תלתא מודדין להן אלא מפתח בתיהן. מתיב רב חסדא (מדבר ל"ג) ויחנו על הירדן מבית הישמת אמר רב הונא: יושבי צריפין אין קאמרת? כיון דכתיב בהו (במדבר ט') על פי ה' יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו כשהן נפנין - אין נפנין לא לפניהם ולא לצדיהן אלא לאחריהן. אמר ליה רבא: דגלי מדבר: פרסי על תלתא פרסי. ותנאי דמי - כמאן דקביע להו.

Beyond its halachic context, the Gemara is telling us something of great importance. The Jews in the מדבר travelled from place to place, living a seemingly nomadic existence. Each morning they woke up, not knowing where they would sleep that night, ready to move at a moment's notice across the trakless desert. They were, it would seem, the first DPs, displaced persons with nowhere to call home.

And that kind of existence, we know from the experience of refugees around the world, is profoundly unsettling. A displaced person is disoriented, he feels himself cast off and adrift without an anchor. He feels alienated, with nowhere to call home. And that, presumably, was the experience of the Jews in the מדבר.

Not so, the Gemara tells us. על פי ה' יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו. כמאן דקביע להו דמי כיון דכתיב בהו על. In a deep sense, the Jews were not adrift at all, they were not even in motion. To be in motion means to mean from one place to another on the map; but the Jews mapped their existence not against the backdrop of the shifting sands of the desert, but against the focal point of the ארון and the דגלים. And from that perspective, דמי כמאן דקביע להו דמי - they were not in motion at all. Each Jew was always at the same דגל, at the same distance and the same direction from the ארון. The ארון was at the center of their existence, and so long as the ארון moved with them, they were always at rest, and always at home.

And this has been the secret of our existence throughout history. To an outside observer it would have seemed that we were the most rootless people in the world, moving from province to province, from land to land, from continent to continent, without a land that we could call our own, seldom even staying more than a few generations in one place. "Rootless cosmopolitans", Stalin called us.

But in a deeper sense, we were the most rooted people in the world, because we carried with us the secret of השם יסעו על פי השם יחנו. The shifting landscape of Babylonia, and Rome, and North Africa, and Germany and France and Poland and Russia, was a passing blur. We mapped our existence not against it, but against the דבר השם that was the center of our lives.

Wherever we encamped we erected the משכן בתי מדרשות and בתי כנסיות that are the portable homeland of the Jew, and set up our דגלים around them. And before our mind's eye we saw the ענן and the אש before us, guiding us on our way.

Leaf through the pages of history, and you will see pictures of people Jews throughout the centuries, at home in many different lands, speaking many different languages and wearing many different costumes, a kaleidoscope of humanity. Yet if we could speak to those Jews, if somehow we could reach across space and time and talk to them, we would have no difficulty at all - we could tell them a דבר תורה, a vort on the parsha, a question on the גמרא that we are learning - and they could converse with us as freely as our neighbor next to us in shul.

I'm reminded of a story my grandfather used to tell. My grandfather זצ"ל his wife, along with my mother, ran from Poland in 1939, through Russia and Persia and Iraq to Palestine and from there to South Africa. En route they passed through Teheran. You can imagine how displaced they felt, three ליטווישע אידן alone in the middle of Persia. My grandfather asked for the Jewish quarter, and there he found an Oriental looking building with Hebrew letters on the outside, which he understood to be the shul, although it didn't look anything like the shul's he was used to. And he walked inside, and there he saw a group of Persian Jews, seated around a table, and learning - משנה ברורה ה'היים הפץ. And suddenly he felt at home.

I cannot think of a more striking illustration of the Gemara's principle: 'כיון דכתיב על פי ה'

יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו - כמאן דקביע דמי.

Often, in our history, we had to take flight; but we were never refugees. Seldom did we strike root; but we were never rootless. Rarely did we stay in one place; but we never moved.

We have not yet come to the end of the journey. America has been good to us, but we know that this is not the last encampment. Sometimes I wonder if we haven't already been shown the handwriting on the wall. But whatever comes, whatever will be, we too know that השם יסעו על פי השם יחנו. And we affirm that knowledge by saying always - ברוך השם, Who has sustained us through stations past; בעזרת השם, Who is with us in our present station; and בביתא גוא"צ בב"א, He will bring us soon to that final station.