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From Pain to Humility

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

David Brooks, in his new best seller, *The Road to Character*, [1] draws a sharp distinction between what he calls the résumé virtues – the achievements and skills that bring success – and the eulogy virtues, the ones that are spoken of at funerals: the virtues and strengths that make you the kind of person you are when you are not wearing masks or playing roles, the inner person that friends and family recognize as the real you.

Brooks relates this distinction to the one made by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in his famous essay, *The Lonely Man of Faith*. [2] There he speaks of Adam I – the human person as creator, builder, master of nature imposing his or her will on the world – and Adam II, the covenantal personality, living in obedience to a transcendent truth, guided by a sense of duty and right and the will to serve.

Adam I seeks success. Adam II strives for charity, love and redemption. Adam I lives by the logic of economics: the pursuit of self-interest and maximum utility. Adam II lives by the very different logic of morality where giving matters more than receiving, and conquering desire is more important than satisfying it. In the moral universe, success, when it leads to pride, becomes failure. Failure, when it leads to humility, can be success.

In that essay, first published in 1965, Rabbi Soloveitchik wondered whether there was a place for Adam II in the America of his day, so intent was it on celebrating human powers and economic advance. Fifty years on, Brooks echoes that doubt. “We live,” he says, “in a society that encourages us to think about how to have a great career but leaves many of us inarticulate about how to cultivate the inner life.”

That is a central theme of Behaalotecha. Until now we have seen the outer Moses, worker of miracles, mouthpiece of the Divine word, unafraid to confront Pharaoh on the one hand, his own people on the other, the man who shattered the tablets engraved by God himself and who challenged Him to forgive His people, “and if not, blot me out of the book You have written” (Ex. 32: 32). This is the public Moses, a figure of heroic strength. In Soloveitchik terminology, it is Moses I.

In Behaalotecha we see Moses II, the lonely man of faith. It is a very different picture. In the first scene we see him break down. The people are complaining again about the food. They have manna but no meat. They engage in false nostalgia: “How we remember the fish that we used to eat in Egypt for free! And the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic!” (Num. 11: 5). This is one act of ingratitude too many for Moses, who gives voice to deep despair. “Why did You bring all this trouble to your servant? Why haven’t I found favor in your eyes, that You are placing the burden of this entire people on me! Did I conceive this people or give birth to them, that You tell me to carry them in my lap the way a nurse carries a baby... I cannot carry this whole nation! The burden is too heavy for me! If this is how you are going to treat me, please kill me now, if I have found favor in your eyes, because I cannot bear seeing all this misery!” (Num. 11: 11-15).

Then comes the great transformation. God tells him to take seventy elders who will bear the burden with him. God takes the spirit that is on Moses and extends it to the elders. Two of them, Eldad and Medad, among the six chosen from each tribe but left out of the final ballot, begin prophesying within the camp. They too have caught Moses’ spirit. Joshua fears that this may lead to a challenge to Moses leadership and urges Moses to stop them. Moses answers with surpassing generosity, “Are you jealous on my behalf. Would that all God’s people were prophets and that He would rest his spirit on each of them” (Num. 11: 29). The mere fact that Moses now knew that he was not alone, seeing seventy elders share his spirit, cures him of his depression, and he now exudes a gentle, generous confidence that is moving and unexpected.

In the third act, we finally see where this drama has been tending. Now Moses’ own brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, start disparaging him. The cause of their complaint (the “Ethiopian woman” he had taken as wife) is not clear and there are many interpretations. The point, though, is that for Moses, this is the “Et tu Brute?” moment. He has been betrayed, or at least slandered, by those closest to him. Yet Moses is unaffected. It is here that the Torah makes its great statement: “Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than any other man on the face of the earth” (Num. 12: 3).

This is a novum in history. The idea that a leader’s highest virtue is humility must have seemed absurd, almost self-contradictory, in the ancient world. Leaders were proud, magnificent, distinguished by their dress, appearance and regal manner. They built temples in their own honour. They had triumphant inscriptions engraved for posterity. Their role was not to serve but to be served. Everyone else was expected to be humble, not they. Humility and majesty could not coexist.

In Judaism, this entire configuration was overturned. Leaders were to serve, not to be served. Moses’ highest accolade was to be called eved Hashem, God’s servant. Only one other person, Joshua, his successor, earns this title in Tanakh. The architectural symbolism of the two great empires of the ancient world, the Mesopotamian ziggurat (the “tower of Babel”) and the pyramids of Egypt, visually represented a hierarchical society, broad at the base, narrow at the top. The Jewish symbol, the menorah, was the opposite, broad at the top, narrow at the base, as if to say that in Judaism the leader serves the people, not vice versa. Moses’ first response to God’s call at the burning bush was one of humility: “Who am I to lead?” (Ex. 3: 11). It was precisely this humility that qualified him to lead.

In Behaalotecha we track the psychological process by which Moses acquires a yet deeper level of humility. Under the stress of Israel’s continued recalcitrance, Moses turns inward. Listen again to what he says: “Why have you brought all this trouble to your servant? ... Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? ... Where can I get meat for all these people? ... I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me.” The key words here are “I,” “me” and “myself.” Moses has lapsed into the first person singular. He sees the Israelites’ behaviour as a challenge to himself, not God. God has to remind him, “Is the Lord’s arm too short”? It isn’t about Moses, it is about what and whom Moses represents.

Moses had been, for too long, alone. It was not that he needed the help of others to provide the people with food. That was something God would do without the need for any human intervention. It was that he needed the company of others to end his almost unbearable isolation. As I have noted elsewhere, the Torah only twice contains the phrase, *lo tov*, “not good,” once at the start of the human story when God says that “It is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2: 18), a second time when Yitro sees Moses leading alone and says, “What you are doing is not good” (Ex. 18: 17). We cannot live alone. We cannot lead alone.

As soon as Moses saw the seventy elders share his spirit, his depression disappeared. He could say to Joshua, “Are you jealous on my behalf?” And he is undisturbed by the complaint of his own brother and sister, praying to God on Miriam’s behalf when she is punished with leprosy. He had recovered his humility.

We now understand what humility is. It is not self-abasement. C. S. Lewis put it best: humility, he said, is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less. True humility means silencing the “I.” For genuinely humble people, it is God, and other people and principle that matter, not me. As it was once said of a great religious leader, “He was a man who took God so seriously that he didn’t have to take himself seriously at all.”

“Rabbi Jochanan said, Wherever you find the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, there you find His humility.” [3] Greatness is humility, for God and for those who seek to walk in His ways. It is also the greatest single source of strength, for if we do not think about the “I,” we cannot be injured by those who criticise or demean us. They are shooting at a target that no longer exists.

What Behaalotecha is telling us through these three scenes in Moses’ life is that we sometimes achieve humility only after a great psychological crisis. It is only after Moses had suffered a breakdown and prayed to die that we hear the words, “The man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone on earth.” Suffering breaks through the carapace of the self, making us realise that what matters is not self regard but rather the part we play in a scheme altogether larger than we are. Lehavdil Brooks reminds us that Abraham Lincoln, who suffered from depression, emerged from the crisis of civil war with the sense that “Providence had taken control of his life, that he was a small instrument in a transcendent task.”[4]

The right response to existential pain, he says, is not pleasure but holiness, by which he means, “seeing the pain as part of a moral narrative and trying to redeem something bad by turning it into something sacred, some act of sacrificial service that will put oneself in fraternity with the wider community and with eternal moral demands.” This, for me, was epitomized by the parents of the three Israeli teenagers killed last summer, who responded to their loss by creating a series of awards for those who have done most to enhance the unity of the Jewish people – turning their pain outward, and using it to help heal other wounds within the nation.

Crisis, failure, loss or pain can move us from Adam I to Adam II, from self-to other-directedness, from mastery to service, and from the vulnerability of the “I” to the humility that “reminds you that you are not the centre of the universe,” but rather that “you serve a larger order.” [5]

Those who have humility are open to things greater than themselves while those who lack it are not. That is why those who lack it make you feel small while those who have it make you feel enlarged. Their humility inspires greatness in others.

[1] David Brooks, *The Road to Character*, Allen Lane, 2015. [2] Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, Doubleday, 1992. [3] Megillah 31a. [4] *Ibid.*, 95. [5] Brooks, *ibid.*, 263.

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Be'eros by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein
Parshas Behaaloscha

Missing the Wedding Moshe said...“Why have you dealt evilly with Your servant? Why have I not found favor in Your eyes, that you place the burden of the entire nation upon me? Did I conceive this entire people, or did I give birth to them, that You say to me, ‘Carry them...as a nurse carries an infant?’”

Be’er Mayim Chaim: Examining these verses superficially, we hear a Moshe who complains to Hashem that he has been mistreated, and who is overly critical of the Bnei Yisrael. Simply put, it is impossible for us to accept this about Moshe Rabbenu! His words are out of character, as well as inconsistent with the Torah’s expectations of even ordinary people!

How could Moshe bemoan his fate? Moshe, who understood the totality of Torah, both Written and Oral, was surely aware of its instruction[2] that we bless Hashem for all events in our lives, whether the ones that please us or the ones that don’t. Moreover, it tells us[3] to accept all those events joyously! This leaves no room for Moshe complaining about his treatment. Was he not prepared to serve Hashem with every ounce of strength he had?

Can it be that a disgruntled Moshe would point an accusatory finger at the Bnei Yisroel? At each and every juncture that the people sinned and failed, Moshe had rushed to defend them. He made the ultimate sacrifice in turning down Hashem’s offer to literally become the father of a new Jewish people after He would abandon the old. (While he did not withhold words of reprimand and stern rebuke from the people when they needed it, he did so only out of love. He aimed his words at their hearts – not at G-d’s ears. When other prophets expressed their disappointment about the spiritual state of the people in language that were too strong, they were faulted for it. Chazal tell us that Hashem simply has no use for those who speak evilly of the Jewish People.

Moshe’s intent was the polar opposite of what it might seem. He neither balked at the misery of his lot, nor criticized the people. Rather, he offered a crucial and effective defense of the people against some anticipated criticism by Hashem.

A thought experiment will help us understand Moshe’s argument. Parents must endure all kinds of hardships in raising young children. They care for them in trying circumstances, feeding them, cleaning them, clothing them, often at great personal inconvenience. They agonize over the development of their children, worrying that they fall short of the goal of becoming mature, capable, loyal Torah Jews. The burden is eased by looking ahead to the goal line. Parents look to the day when they are able to watch their child venture forth to start their own families, equipped with the tools for success.

Imagine, now, that a horrible turn of events befalls a Jewish couple on the day of their child’s wedding. Both parents lie near death, and realize that they will not live to see the chupah of their son or daughter. They are conscious of the fact that they are dying. Added to contemplating their own deaths, the parents are overcome with sadness for failing to behold with their eyes the moment that they had toiled for all through the difficult years of child-rearing. They will not stand with their child under the marriage canopy. Each one thinks of his or her investment in the child, and is crushed by the terrible irony within the tragedy.

Imagine further that one of the parents died during the child’s infancy, leaving the survivor to play the role of two parents, not just one. If that parent should be stricken on the child’s wedding day and die before the event, the tragedy is multiplied.

Decades earlier, Moshe began to suspect that he would not lead the people into the Land. They had not yet sinned; they were still enslaved in Egypt at the time. Yet Moshe picked up on something that Hashem said – and on something He did not say. In the long conversation at the burning bush, Hashem first forecast the future. “I will descend to save [the nation] ...and to bring it up to the Land.”[4] Later, however, the description changes. “I will send you to take out my people from Egypt.”[5] Hashem does not add that Moshe will also take them into the Land. Moshe learns that he is to be Hashem’s human emissary, but sees the mission shrink to merely leading the Exodus. G-d is ominously silent about the concluding chapter of the drama,

in which the Bnei Yisrael would enter the Land. Moshe senses that somehow, he would not live to see it.

This, then, was Moshe's argument to Hashem. "Despite whatever complaints You may have regarding this people, You do not have grounds for concern. I am the one who must deal with disappointment. You can and do look at the future. You see ahead to their entry into the Land, their building of the Beis ha-Mikdosh, and the beauty of their service to You with the years of avodah there. All their failings at the moment ought to be bearable to You, just like the tribulations of child-raising are borne by parents.

"But I do not contemplate the same. I will not enter the Land. All that I have had to endure will not be offset by the nachas of watching the people achieve maturity by entering Canaan. Why have You dealt evilly with me? In other words, why have You placed all the evil upon me, while You have not had to bear any of it, since Your disappointment in them is tempered by Your knowledge of the future? Why did I not find favor in Your eyes that I should bear their burden completely? In other words, had I found favor, I would bear all of the burden, including the wars that lie ahead in the conquest of the Land. But I would gladly bear all of it if I could expect to witness the joy of the realization of the dream – the building of the Beis ha-Mikdosh.

"Did I conceive this child and give birth to him? I have had to lead this people like a single parent raises a child alone! Emerging from slavery in Egypt, the people were like children. I had to clean up after their mistakes, and defend them constantly. All was bearable for me, since I could think about how they would mature.

"Moreover, even as I tended to them, I never really had the status of a parent. Rather, I ministered to them as a wet-nurse does to an infant, even though it is not her natural child. This, too, I would gladly accept, if You would allow me to enter the Land that You promised to the Forefathers."

This is Moshe at his best, not his worst. He argues that unlike himself, a Divine Father ought not be perturbed by the sins of the nation in the wilderness. All aveiros can be offset by the nachas that He knows they will bring Him in the future.

[1] Based on Be'er Mayim Chaim, Bamidbar 11:11 [2] Berachos 54A [3] Berachos 60B [4] Shemos 3:8 [5] Shemos 4:13

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The Message of the Backward "Nuns" **by Rabbi Ezra Wiener**

Many of the commentaries have sought to solve the mystery of the backward "Nuns" (the 14th letter in the Hebrew alphabet) that bookend the section in the Torah which mentions the traveling of the Aron and Moshe's declaration and prayer during this event (BeMidbar 10:35-36).

Rashi (ad loc. s.v. VaYhi BiNso'a HaAron) quotes the Gemara (Shabbat 116a) and explains the backward "Nuns" in the following way: "...Asah Lo Simani'ot MiLefanav UMiLeAcharav Lomar SheEin Zeh Mekomo," "...The symbols ("Nuns") that appear before and after [the section of how Bnei Yisrael traveled] represent its misplacement." Hashem strategically placed the "Nuns" in this section of the Torah in order to separate the amazing journey of Bnei Yisrael with the Aron in the desert from two acts of insubordination from Bnei Yisrael. The former of these acts, according to Rashi, is derived from the phrase, "VaYis'u MeiHar Hashem," "And they traveled from the mountain of Hashem" (10:33), which refers to the Eirev Rav, a group of Egyptians and outcasts who journeyed with Bnei Yisrael to and from Har Sinai who complained about the lack of meat in the desert. The latter defiant act was due to the Mit'onenim, members of Bnei Yisrael who sought to remove themselves from the rest of the nation by complaining about their exhaustion from the constant traveling (11:1).

Ramban agrees with Rashi's overall assertion, but disagrees with his claim that the first rebellious act was due to the Eirev Rav's complaint about the lack of meat, as this is written after the section of "VaYhi BiNso'a", rather than before it. Ramban suggests that the act of defiance that is to be derived from the phrase, "VaYis'u MeiHar Hashem", is that Bnei Yisrael took leave from Har Sinai, "KeTinok HaBorei'ach MiBeit HaSeifer," "Like a child flees from school." Ramban explains that Bnei Yisrael quickly and anxiously left Har Sinai after they were given the Aseret HaDibrot, lest Hashem contemplate additional Mitzvot to "inflict" upon them.

In his Tiferet Yonatan, Rav Yonatan Eybeschutz explains that the section of "VaYhi BiNso'a" itself teaches a defiance of Bnei Yisrael. This section begins with the word "VaYhi," "And it was", a language which signals approaching calamity and misfortune. Rav Eybeschutz explains the following: "Ki Nasa'at HaAron Min HaMachaneh Hayah Pur'anut VeTzarah LeYisra'eil SheLo Zachu Lihyot HaAron BeTocham," "This section foreshadows a time when the Aron would "travel" away from the camp. Although Bnei Yisrael currently were privileged to have the Aron in their midst, there would come a time in the future when the Aron would be hidden and Bnei Yisrael would no longer have its protection. It is at that time that we will need Moshe's prayer, "Rise up Hashem... and cause Your enemies to flee from Your face" (10:35). Our behavior will determine whether we are privileged to have the Aron. In its absence, we must rely only on Tefillah and Mitzvah observance. If we are lax in these areas, then we are ultimately to blame for our Nefillah (downfall).

The Gemara (Berachot 60b) adds: "Mipnei Mah Lo Ne'emar Nun BeAshrei Mipnei SheYeish Bah Mefaltan Shel Sonai Yisraeil, Dichtiv Naflah Lo Tosif Kum Betulot Yisra'eil," "Why don't we say [a phrase starting with] 'Nun' in Ashrei? Since it represents the errors of [Bnei] Yisrael [in the desert], as it is written, '[Yisra'eil] has fallen, and not even its young girls will be able to get back up.'" Our "Nuns", therefore, represent the Nefillah of our people (R"L) if our actions have caused the Aron to travel from the camp and abandon us.

The fact that the "Nuns" are backward can be explained based on the Targum from the last Pasuk of Shir HaShirim: "Berach Dodi UDemeih Lecha LiTzvi O LeOfer HaAyalim Al Harei Vesamim," "Flee quickly my beloved, like a gazelle or young hart, to the mountains of spices" (8:14). In this Pasuk, Bnei Yisrael ask Hashem, our beloved, to quickly go to and bring the Ge'ulah. Interestingly, Hashem is compared to a deer. The Targum explains, "DeBeldan DaAchi Mistakeil BeChorehah," "as it is running, it looks behind it." Although Hashem and His Aron may run ahead of us and leave our midst because of our actions, He is always looking back at our pain and suffering.

This is the image which the backwards "Nuns" portray. Although there will be times of Nefillah in which we do not experience divine intervention, the backward "Nuns" remind us that even during these times Hashem is looking back in our direction, waiting to see if we take the steps to catch up to Him.

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The Hebrew Calendar and its Missing Years – Part Three by Reuven Herzog ('13) and Benjy Koslowe ('13)

In the last two weeks we presented *Seder Olam Rabbah* and its chronology. We showed how its approach to texts and history reveals a consistent methodology, if it does not match conventional dating. With all that we mentioned above, there still must be a reason why *Seder Olam* skipped so much. While it is a minimalist work, there still should be justification for this course of action. Several suggestions are given, and we will present two that seem to be the most compelling. V. Purpose of Seder Olam V-A. 1,000 Years since Yetziat Mitzrayim

The first answer has to do with Minyan Shetarot, also known as the Seleucid era or the *Anno Graecorum* ("Greek year"). This is the dating system that Jews accepted in the latter half of the Second Temple period.

This count began in what we today refer to as 312 BCE. During this year was fought the Battle of Gaza, leading to Seleucus's successful conquering of Babylonia. The Greeks decided that this year would be "Year One." Along with the Seleucid Empire and other Hellenistic civilizations, the Jews adopted the system. Throughout the Talmud there is evidence of documents being dated with respect to this year.

At first glance the year 312 BCE is not especially significant for Jewish history. The Vilna Gaon points out, though, that as per the *Seder Olam* calculation, 313 BCE (the effective "Year Zero") is found to be exactly 1,000 years after Yetziat Mitzrayim (2448)! Because of *Seder Olam*, the Seleucid year was effectively sanctified. A document dated with this count to the 45th year, for example, suddenly became synonymous with 1,045 years since Yetziat Mitzrayim. Support for this can be found in the line at the end of *Seder Olam*, "*UveGolah Kotevin BiShtarot LeMinyan Yevanim 'Alfa*," "And in the exile they write on Shetarot of the Greek count (Minyan Shetarot) 'One Thousand.'"

One may notice that even so, a slight gap exists in *Seder Olam*'s chronology. The Macedonian conquest is calculated to have occurred in 3442[1], yet Minyan Shetarot begins in year 3448!

This can be explained by a Gemara in Mesechet Avodah Zarah (10a), discussing Minyan Shetarot and its inherent connection to Yetziat Mitzrayim:

ההוא שטרא דהוה כתיב ביה שית שנין יתירתא, סבור רבנן קמיה דרבא למימר: האי שטר מאוחר הוא, ניעכביה עד דמטיא זמניה ולא טריף, אמר רב נחמן: האי ספרא דוקנא כתביה, והנך שית שנין דמלכו בעילם דאנן לא חשבינן להו, הוא קחשיב ליה, ובזמניה כתביה; דתניא, מתקיף לה ר' יוסי אומר: שש שנים מלכו בעילם, ואח"כ פשטה מלכותן בכל העולם כולו. רב אחא בר יעקב: ממאי דלמלכות יונים מנינן? דלמא ליציאת מצרים מנינן, ושבוקיה לאלפא קמא ונקטיה אלפא בתרא, והאי מאוחר הוא! אמר רב נחמן: בגולה אין מונין אלא למלכי יונים בלבד.

There was [produced in court] a document which was dated six years ahead. The Rabbis who were sitting before Rava were of opinion that it should be pronounced a post-dated document, which is to be deferred and not executed until the date which it bears. Whereupon Rav Nachman said: This document must have been written by a scribe who was very particular and took into account the six years of the Greek Reign in Eilam which we do not reckon. The dating is therefore correct, for we have learnt: Rabi Yosi said, Six years did the Greeks reign in Eilam and thereafter their dominion extended universally. Rav Acha b. Ya'akov then put this question: How do we know that our Era [of Documents] is connected with the Kingdom of Greece at all? Why not say that it is reckoned from the Exodus from Egypt, omitting the first thousand years and giving the years of the next thousand? In that case, the document is really post-dated! — Said Rabi Nachman: In the Diaspora the Greek Era alone is used.[2] *Seder Olam* mentions that Alexander ruled for 12 years. However, it is unclear if this refers to his complete rule or only to his rule over the former-Persian Empire. Though historically inaccurate, this Gemara implies that those 12 years are his total reign, of which six were only in Greece and six were following the conquest of Persia. These six years are from 3442 to 3448 of *Seder Olam*, achieving the desired goal of 1000 years after Yetziat Mitzrayim.

So how did *Seder Olam* achieve this desired date? *Seder Olam*'s biggest jump is the Darius skip, which we have demonstrated is achieved by equating Daryavesh with Artachshasta, and by skipping from Darius I to Darius III. This jump accounts for the vast majority of the missing years. It was well known that Alexander the Great came to power by killing a Persian ruler named Darius. This fact, coupled with the motivation of giving significance to the date of Minyan Shetarot, was good reason to make this skip and shorten an inconveniently-long history[3]. V-B. No Progress is No History

Another apparent justification for *Seder Olam*'s skipping over 165 years is the assumption that years without Jewish progress, particularly in the context of the second Beit HaMikdash, are effectively removed from Jewish

history, as they are not worthy to have existed. This notion can explain the three sets of years which we have shown to be skipped over by *Seder Olam*.

Before demonstrating how *Seder Olam* approaches this nadir of Jewish performance, it is worth discussing Sefer Yeshayahu tangentially. Modern academic and a growing number of Jewish scholars suggest a theory that after Perek 39 of Sefer Yeshayahu, a new author takes over. This claim has several bases, including the dramatic shift after Perek 39 from rebuke and destruction to visions of comfort (see Yeshayahu 40:1), the explicit mention of King Koresh (44:28 and 45:1), and the explicit call for Bnei Yisrael to leave Bavel (48:20). Additionally, Yeshayahu is named in the first half of the book 15 times, whereas in the second half he is not mentioned even once. The conclusion is that this anonymous second author, referred to as Yeshayahu HaSheini or Deutero-Isaiah, was a prophet hundreds of years after the Yeshayahu of middle-late Bayit Rishon.

According to this theory, Deutero-Isaiah was a prophet for Bnei Yisrael when Koresh announced that the Jews could return to Israel. This Navi, alongside the leadership of Zerubavel, called on the people to return and to not give up hope (see 40:9 and 40:29). He tried to show how Hashem still desired the nation and had not abandoned them (see 41:8-10), and how He was willing to give the people a new start (44:22). But, as is clear from Sefer Ezra, the Jews at large fail to answer the call.

Shivat Tziyon was a period of tremendous hope and excitement in Jewish history, yet it ended in utter disappointment. The feeling of the time, as presented by the Nevi'im, was that this is the ultimate Redemption and Renewal. This time, the Jewish people would properly serve God as an entire Nation in the Land of Israel; they would correct the mistakes and sins of Bayit Rishon. Zechariah prophesizes a reversal of Yirmiyahu's prophecies of torture, of God returning to His people, and telling Bnei Yisrael that they should finally fulfill the destiny of the Jewish people, to be a nation of Tzedek and Mishpat, of Emet and Shalom. Malachi consistently makes allusions to Moshe, implying that the Covenant is being renewed and Bnei Yisrael are starting again on their journey to God. However, as is tragically depicted in Sefer Ezra, this does not occur. The return to Israel is miniscule and the Beit HaMikdash itself is much smaller. Furthermore, for the vast majority of the time the Jews are leaderless, both politically and spiritually, and they assimilate into the surrounding society. Not until Shimon HaTzaddik, during the period of Alexander the Great, do we learn of a religious revolution, and even then it was a different approach of scholar-based Judaism and not a fulfillment of the original path of Bayit Rishon. Politically, too, Bayit Sheini did not achieve its potential. For two and a half centuries, the Jews were ruled by a foreign power with no known strong leader. The Chashmona'im's revolution did not last, and the last stand against the Romans was doomed by sectarian splits and infighting. Bayit Sheini was the great hope of the Jewish people, but ended as a failure.

We have stated that years of the second Beit HaMikdash without Jewish progress are effectively removed from Jewish history. This explains why Deutero-Isaiah was hidden, as it were. Although an ambitious Navi, Deutero-Isaiah was unable to convince Bnei Yisrael to return to Israel. The result? Deutero-Isaiah was made to be an appendix to Sefer Yeshayahu. Like his local message, Deutero-Isaiah's real name is forever lost in the annals of history[4].

This brings us back to our discussion of *Seder Olam* and the missing years. Modern historians tell us that Cyrus II the Great allowed the Jews to return to Israel in 539 BCE and that the Second Beit HaMikdash was completed in 516 BCE. As we have shown, these two decades marked a low-point in Jewish history. A mere 42,360 Jews heeded the call to return to Israel (Ezra 2:64), and internal strife led to a "building freeze" (4:24). Chazal therefore hid the prophet Deutero-Isaiah.

Moving slightly forward in history, modern history reveals that the Purim story probably took place after the Second Beit HaMikdash was already built. The main events of the Megillah take place in the 12th year of Achashveirosh's reign. Though this fits in *Seder Olam*'s count, assuming Koresh ruled only three years after his conquest of Bavel, if we assume that

Koresh ruled for nine, and that the construction of the Beit HaMikdash took place 18 years after Koresh's proclamation, even a 12-year reign of Achashveirosh cannot possibly occur between Koresh and Daryavesh.

Rather than leaving the exile even after the Beit HaMikdash's construction, Jews were living and thriving in Shushan HaBira. The Pasuk "Ish Yehudi Hayah BeShushan HaBira UShemo Mordechai," "There was a certain Jew in Shushan the capital, whose name was Mordechai" (Esther 2:5), should be read with shock rather than with pride. Mordechai is a leader in Persian politics when his nation has the ability to return to Israel. Even his name is derived from the Persian deity Marduk![5]

For the same reasons why Chazal hid Deutero-Isaiah, Chazal adjusted the years of Achashveirosh's reign. By moving Achashveirosh from after Daryavesh to before Daryavesh (see previous installments to understand how this was possible), the years of Jewish history when the Jews failed to return to Israel were effectively erased from the count.

Even well after the Mikdash was built, though, Jewish history failed to significantly progress toward the Divine goal. The Mikdash is completed in Year 6 of Daryavesh (Ezra 6:15), after which Jewish life was weak and leaderless for several decades until Ezra's ascent in Year 7 of Artachshasta (Ezra 7:7). For thematic reasons, the book of Ezra closes the gap on these years in which there was no progress. *Seder Olam* takes the next step and makes it that these years never existed. *Seder Olam* puts these two dates immediately next to each other, thus skipping nearly 60 years of history. Again, the purpose of this skip was to demonstrate that years in which Jewish history stalemated are not worthy to have existed. According to *Seder Olam*, they effectively did not.[6] VI. Conclusion

Seder Olam's goal may not be primarily to give a comprehensive and precise history of all time, but rather to use history as a tool for teaching. The book assumes that its readers were aware of history. Likely, they knew when exactly the Purim story happened. Given this, it does not need to match up with secular dating. On the contrary, its adjusting of chronology not only remains loyal to the literal sense of the canonized texts, it also yields two tremendous benefits – making Yetziat Mitzrayim be the point of reference for all Jewish dating, and (on a more subtle level) teaching an important lesson about Ge'ulah and the goals of the Jewish future, what needs to happen next. Appendix

Calculation of Years According to *Seder Olam*:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Time Elapsed</u>	<u>Total Years</u>
Birth of Adam	0	0
Birth of Avraham	1948	1948
Birth of Yitzchak	100	2048
Yetziat Mitzrayim	400	*2448
Binyan Bayit Rishon	480	2928
Churban Bayit Rishon	410	3338
Binyan Bayit Sheini	70	3408
Macedonian Conquest	34	3442
Begin Minyan Shetarot	6	*3448
Churban Bayit Sheini	380	3828
Present Day	1947	5775

<u>Year of Bavel</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Regnal Year</u>	<u>Year of Persia</u>
1	Nevuchadnetzar's conquest of Middle East	4 Yehoyakim	-
7	Galut Yehoyachin	11 Yehoyakim	-
18	Churban HaBayit	11 Tzidkiyahu	-
70	Cyrus Proclamation	1 Koresh	1
	Achashveirosh's Party (Esther Perek 1)	3 Achashveirosh	6
	Miracle of Purim	12 Achashveirosh	15
	Binyan Bayit Sheini	2 Daryavesh	18
	Aliyat Ezra	7 Artachshasta	23
	Aliyat Nechemyah	20-36 Artachshasta	36-52
	Closing of Tanach	1 Alexander the Great	52

[1] See end of section II-B. [2] Translation by Soncino. [3] Additionally, *Seder Olam's* skip allowed for a simple explanation of a rather esoteric prophecy in Sefer Daniel, which we described in last week's installment. By combining Artachshasta with Daryavesh and skipping from Darius I to Darius III, *Seder Olam* is able to present a history that indeed involves three Persian kings and then an even greater Greek king, as per the prophecy. [4] It is worth explaining that Deutero-Isaiah is not merely "hidden" in a random book of Tanach. Rather, his Nevu'ot form a perfect second half to the earlier Nevu'ot of Yeshayahu, and the book certainly should be read as a single, unified work. Though the majority of Yeshayahu's prophecies discuss Pur'anut, suffering and destruction, the general structure of the book reveals that this suffering will always be followed by Nechamah, comfort and reconstruction of Bnei Yisrael's relationship with Hashem. In this vein, Deutero-Isaiah could not be a more appropriate conclusion to Yeshayahu, his Nevu'ot discussing the Nechamah that was so long waited for after the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. [5] Much more can be said about the ironic undercurrent of Megilat Esther, as a harsh criticism to the Jews who stayed in Bavel at the time. [6] It is worth mentioning Mitchell First's *Jewish History in Conflict: A Study of the Major Discrepancy between Rabbinic and Conventional Chronology* (1st ed.; New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1997). The bulk of the work presents several lists of Jewish figures and how they addressed the discrepancy in calendars. His lists begin chronologically with Azariah de Rossi who, in 1574, accepted conventional history both because of the many testimonies from different historians, as well because of inconsistencies between Tanach and *Seder Olam*. For example, he points to Nechemyah 12:10-11, a list of succession of high priests that spans many more years than prescribed by *Seder Olam's* chronology. First's research is full and informative and can serve as useful further reading for those who want to continue learning about the topic of our essay and how it was addressed over the years. Most relevant to our essay is First's evaluation of the responses that he details, as well as his conclusion. While he raises the "1,000 Years since Yetziat

Mitzrayim” explanation and the general tendency of Chazal toward minimalism, Mr. First, for reasons that he elucidates, prefers another answer to the dilemma. Daniel 9:24-27 vaguely describes a period of 490 years, and the author of *Seder Olam* was interested in presenting this prediction as having come true. Thsse author of *Seder Olam* assumed that the beginning of the first exile and the end of the Second Temple, respectively, began and ended this period (much can be said about this interesting assumption, which is reasonable but certainly not self-evident). Additionally, he knew that there were 380 years from the onset of Minyan Shetarot until Churban Bayit Sheini. Left with only 40 years for the beginning of the Bayit Sheini under Persian rule, as well as sufficient room to use the text as support, *Seder Olam* recorded a significantly altered version of Persian history. For more details, see Part IV (pp. 113-137) of *Jewish History in Conflict*.

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**Weekly Blog :: Rabbi Berel Wein
'Fife' On Fifa**

Last week there were many dramas that took place regarding the international soccer association known as FIFA. Many of its top officials were arrested and more were indicted in the United States for brazenly corrupt practices. They were charged with accepting millions of dollars in bribes in assigning venues for the World Cup and other major soccer sporting events.

The head of the association, Sepp Blatter, himself under suspicion, with rumors of improper personal and financial behavior, nevertheless was reelected to serve for a fifth term as the executive head of FIFA. His declared rival for the position was from a Moslem country and was backed by the large Moslem representation in FIFA.

For reasons that remain unclear and somewhat murky, this rival withdrew his candidacy at the last moment thus allowing the reelection of Sepp Blatter unopposed. But as far as we here in Israel were concerned, all of this was only a sideshow to what to us was the main issue under discussion and up for voting in the convention of FIFA - the resolution put forward by the Palestinian Authority to expel Israel from membership in the august body of FIFA.

This tactic of the Palestinian Authority was part of its overall strategy of conducting a diplomatic intifada against Israel in all international bodies where Israel is now a member. It is part of the Palestinian campaign to have the United Nations pass Security Council resolutions against Israel and to make the State of Israel vulnerable to international sanctions, in the event that these resolutions are somehow not abided by. So this question, as to whether Israel would be expelled from the world soccer federation, carried with it grave potential for future more serious damage to the Jewish state. The attempt of the Palestinian Authority to accomplish its goal failed when it became apparent, even to the Palestinians that the resolution would not pass at this year’s conference. There were attempts in the days before the resolution would have to come to a vote to engineer a compromise. This would give the Palestinians a moral victory and some concessions on the grounds that they demanded.

Israel stood firm in opposing such a resolution, claiming correctly that it would only open the door to constant resolutions regarding Israel. So at the end of the day, nothing really happened. Israel is still a member of FIFA and the Palestinians have promised to continue to kick the can down the road and bring up the issue again when the soccer association once meets in its annual gathering.

But it is interesting to note that there is no moral hesitation on the part of an organization riddled with corruption and exposed as being venal, indecent and unfair, to sit and pontificate about absurd charges of oppression and

discrimination brought against the State of Israel. Since hypocrisy is the gristmill of all diplomacy, one should not be surprised, shocked or disappointed about the behavior of FIFA. Those who proclaim themselves to be the champions of sport, fairness and inclusion are really robbers, exploiters and unprincipled haters.

It makes no difference to me whether Israel belongs to FIFA or not. I am not that much of a soccer fan. I find it disturbing though that many of the soccer matches that take place here in Israel involve desecrating the holiness of the Sabbath day. If I were a holy person that had intimate connections with Heaven, I would be tempted to say, in this instance, it is no accident or coincidence that the attempt to expel Israel from a world organization should involve FIFA and soccer.

Nevertheless, I am delighted that the efforts of the Palestinians have failed and that Israel still remains a member in good standing of FIFA. However, I am reminded of the famous quip of Groucho Marx that he really would not want to be a member of any group that would accept him as a member. It seems to me that there is little honor being associated with FIFA and its corrupt practices and officials. But apparently we are not in a position to refuse even the smallest of crumbs extended to us by the international community.

So, we should feel some satisfaction in the fact that we are still a member in good standing of an organization that itself is not in such good standing. I know that there is irony in this but we live in a very ironic world. In Yiddish word the “fife” is a word of derision and scorn. Well I for one say, ‘fife’ on FIFA.

Shabbat shalom

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**Weekly Parsha Blog:: Rabbi Berel
B'halotcha**

Without warning disaster strikes the people of Israel on their journey to the Land of Israel. Moshe boldly proclaimed that “we are traveling now on the way to the land of our destination.” The tribes have been numbered and counted, assigned flags and positions of march and they are accompanied on their journey by the Tabernacle of God placed in their midst. Everything is seemingly poised for their successful entry into the Land of Israel. But one of the traits of human nature is the penchant for dismissing the good that we enjoy and the blessings that we have. Instead we long for and complain loudly about what we believe we don't have. The search for perfection in human life is equivalent to drinking saltwater in an attempt to slake one's thirst.

So we read in the parsha how the father-in-law of Moshe abandons the Jewish people in the desert to return home to Midian where, according to Rashi, he is convinced that he will be able to convert a pagan society into believing in one God. His absence is harmful to the Jewish people encamped in the desert and as is apparent from the later narratives in the Bible, his conversion attempts were in the main unsuccessful.

Though blessed with daily food – manna from heaven – the Jewish people complain about their diet - they express their ingratitude and demand meat and other foods. They were tired of having to eat directly from God’s hand, so to speak. All of their grouching and complaining only serves to bring plague, depression and disaster on them.

The prophet Jeremiah, in essence, states that human complaints are not really justified in the eyes of Heaven, so to speak. The Talmud puts it pithily: “Is it not sufficient for you that you are alive and functioning?” But we often take life for granted and are underappreciative of this most basic and generous of all gifts.

It is within the nature of humans to pursue wealth at the expense of health, power and notoriety at the expense of family and harmony, and temporal pleasures at the expense of eternal values and reward. The story of the desert

illustrates for us how a section of the Jewish people valued a meat meal over entry into the Land of Israel. There will always be a refrain repeated in the desert, that it is better for us to return to Egypt than to meet the challenges that will be placed before us in establishing a Jewish national state in the Land of Israel.

This type of attitude is unfortunately not lacking in the current Jewish world. And no matter how wealthy and successful the Jewish state is now and will be in the future, there will always be a longing for more, better and different. And this longing breeds the insidious feeling of dissatisfaction with what blessings one already possesses. The parsha comes to teach us this basic lesson of human nature, of how we must be aware of it in order to overcome and truly reach our proper goals in life.
Shabat shalom

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Beha'alotcha

For the week ending 6 June 2015 / 19 Sivan 5775

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

Hands Up!

“In your ascending...” (8:2)

In the battle against Amalek in Parshat Beshalach, Moshe raises his hands toward the Heavens, and the Jewish People prevail over their enemy; when he lowers them, they begin to lose. For many years, the classic Jewish pose of prayer was with the arms outstretched above the head. It was only changed when the non-Jewish world started copying this position.

What is the symbolism of the hands outstretched upward?

The Jewish people accepted the Torah with the words “na’aseh v’nishma” — “we will do and we will hear.”

Only if we are prepared to lift our hands above our ears; only if we say, “We’ll do it before we hear and understand it”, will we be able to move outside our spiritual comfort zone and become closer to G-d.

The hands above the ears — the “na’aseh” above the “nishma” — is the classic pose of receiving from G-d.

“In your ascending...”

In front of the Menorah there were steps. We learn this from the word that begins this week’s Torah portion, “beha’alotcha”, which literally means “in your ascending”, i.e., “in your going up to kindle the lights.”

The Menorah was three amot high. That’s somewhere between 54 to 72 inches or 1.37 to 1.83 meters. Not enormous. Almost anyone can reach up to that height. Why then was it necessary for the Kohen Gadol to ascend to prepare and light the lamps of the Menorah?

On his forehead, the Kohen Gadol wore the tzitz — a golden plate secured by ribbons. On the plate was engraved the Tetragrammaton, the ineffable four-letter name of G-d. It’s true that the Kohen Gadol could have reached up to perform the service of the Menorah, but that would mean that his hand would be higher than G-d’s Name, and that would be disrespectful.

One of the jobs of the kohanim was to teach Torah to the Jewish People. Once the Jewish People has received the Torah, once the tzitz sits on the head of the Kohen Gadol, our job is to hear what the Torah tells us, and not stretch out our hands above our heads, above the tzitz looking for our own definition of spirituality.

Sources: Malei HaOmer in Mayana shel Torah and others

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Rabbi Weinreb’s Parsha Column

Beha’alotcha: “Candle of God is the Soul of Man”

I no longer remember which Israeli artist colony I was visiting. Perhaps Jaffa. But I will never forget the crude, almost primitive paintings, which were on exhibit. They were all very different in color, style, and size. They varied from somber dark browns and grays to tropical oranges, reds, and yellows. Some were very realistic, some impressionistic, some totally abstract. One was a large mural. But in the corner, there were postcard-sized miniatures. In every painting, a candle predominated.

The artist was obsessed with the image of the candle. A tall, slim candle, wax dripping down its side, the wick erect, the flame flickering. Somehow, each candle evoked the picture of a person.

I made a note of the artist’s name, hoping that one day I would be able to afford one his works, and would then find him, but I lost the scrap of paper with his name and address long ago.

The memory of the candles bedecking his workroom walls has remained with me. As long as I can remember, I have been fascinated by candles and by their human-like quality. In my early teens, I was taught to meditate in front of a burning candle, and to associate my meditation with the biblical phrase, “A candle of God is the soul of man”.

“What are some ways that human beings resemble candles?” This question was assigned to me by the old rabbi who was my first spiritual guide. In my early adolescence I was part of a group of six or seven peers who met with this rabbi once a month in a dark and, you guessed it, candlelit room.

It was our task to gaze at a burning candle and imagine the affinities between candles and men. At the end of the month, we were to report on our findings. I never returned at the end of that month. Without that closure, it is no wonder that I still reflect, fifty years later, on the resemblances between people and candles.

This week’s Torah portion speaks of the candles that Aaron lit in the ancient Tabernacle. The Bible speaks not of the “lighting of” the candles, but of the “raising up” of the candles. The commentaries eagerly point out that it is not sufficient to kindle the candle; one must see to it that the flame will continue to burn on its own.

The candle thus becomes a metaphor for the process of teaching: parent to child, or master to disciple. It is never sufficient to merely touch the child with the flame of knowledge. Rather, one must “raise up” the flame so that it will grow and will nurture the student for a long time. The task of the teacher is to ensure that the flame will continue to burn on its own, that knowledge will be a lifetime process.

There is another traditional Jewish saying which inspires me: “A little bit of light can dispel much darkness”. The little candle teaches us how much good a single person, or even a single act, can accomplish. It is not necessary for one to try to ignite powerful floodlights. If all that one can do is light a match, that paltry act can achieve unforeseen illumination.

Finally, there is a Talmudic dictum, “A candle for one is a candle for a hundred”. There are certain things in life, an item of food for example, which can only meet the needs of one person. There are other things, certain tools for example, which can only meet the needs of one person at a time. But one candle can benefit the single individual who needs illumination, and it can shed equal illumination for many others in the room. A candle for one is a candle for a hundred.

And so it is in the human realm. There are things that we can do which will benefit not only a single particular other but an entire group, an entire community, an entire world. If we teach, for example, lessons that are useful practically and that are spiritually uplifting, those lessons are not limited to who hears them. Rather, they can benefit many unseen others. Intellectual accomplishments and religious achievements are candles not just for one, but for hundreds.

I have listed but three of the infinite number of ways in which the soul of man is the candle of God. Candle lighting symbolizes the teaching process;

the single act can have massive consequences; and we can affect a much wider circle than we think.

The opening verses in this week's Torah portion render the candle image so central to the Tabernacle and Temple service, because the Torah wishes us to think about the candle, to meditate on it, and to discover for ourselves the manifold analogies which lie embedded in the candle image.

"Behold the candle," the Torah exclaims. It is one of the oldest, and certainly one of the simplest, human tools. But it can be a metaphor for the power and the potential of the human soul, which is no less than the candle of God.

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Rabbi Ari Kahn on Parsha

The Seven Books

One God, two Tablets, three patriarchs, four matriarchs, and five books of the Torah; that is how the song from the Haggadah goes, as every Jewish child knows.

The corpus of our Written Law has long been identified as the Five Books of Moshe, the Humash (derived from the Hebrew word hamesh, meaning five) or Pentateuch, which also denotes that it is comprised of five books. This is clear, self-evident and indisputable – or is it?

Rabbinic tradition may be far less unequivocal: For example, Rashi's comments on the verse, "[Wisdom] has hewn out her seven pillars"[1]: Rashi explains that the seven pillars are the "seven books of the Torah,"[2]—despite the fact that the last time any of us looked, there were five books, no fewer and no more. Rashi's cryptic comment reflects an earlier tradition that the book of B'midbar is actually made of 3 separate books: The first begins with Chapter 1, verse 1 and ends at Chapter 10, verse 34. The third book begins with the first verse of Chapter 11 and continues through the last verse of what we know as the book of B'midbar. The material between these two "books" is the second book, to which we will return momentarily; first, let us examine the first and last of these three books.

The contrast between the two is stark: The former is a book of hope and purpose, as the Israelites prepare to take their first steps of departure from Sinai. The latter is a book of missteps, as the Israelites flounder from one debacle to the next, getting no closer to their destination. This might be an exaggeration – at the end of the book the Jews stand at the cusp of the Promised Land – but not much: forty years pass and the Promised Land remains an elusive destination, an unfulfilled promise.

All this leads us back to the second book that comprises B'midbar, which is the strangest one of all. This book consists of only two verses, a mere 85 letters (in Hebrew):[3]

When the Ark traveled, Moshe said, "Arise, God! Scatter Your enemies, and let those who hate You flee before You." And when the Ark rested, he would say, "Return, God, the myriad of thousands of Israel!" (10: 35-36)

How can two verses be considered a book? And why are these two specific verses given this distinction? To make matters even more inscrutable, these verses are actually set apart visually from all other verses in the Torah, enclosed within a unique set of "brackets" or parentheses that are not used anywhere else: a pair of symbols created by what look like the inverted Hebrew letter noon. This book-within-a-book, only two verses long, is distinguished from everything that comes before and after it, alerting us to the fact that here is something quite extraordinary. These are not simply a pair of innocuous verses; they indicate that something monumental happened, or to be more accurate, that something monumental did not happen – and therein lies the key to this unique, truncated book.

What do these two verses actually tell us? The Holy Ark of the Covenant moves, for the first time since its creation, and Moshe calls out to God to scatter His enemies. What enemies are these? Quite simply, the nations occupying the Land of Israel: The time had come for the Israelites to come

home and reclaim their birthright. However, this explanation raises even more questions than it answers: What became of this triumphant march? As we know, Moshe never did spearhead the conquest of the Land of Israel; tragically, he died too soon and was not allowed to cross the Jordan. In a nutshell, this ephemeral second book within B'midbar tells the story of what should have been.

As B'midbar opens, the Jews make the necessary preparations to leave Mount Sinai and march to Israel. The third book recounts their wanderings and rebellions, covering the next 39 years. This middle book leaves a remnant of what should have taken place at that specific juncture. Armed with the Torah, unified as a nation with a glorious mission to fulfill, all that remained was to complete their short victory march. Instead, they make one foolish mistake after another; the vision encapsulated in these two verses does not come to fruition in Moshe's lifetime.

In essence, we may say that the Torah might have ended at this moment in history: The covenant between God and Avraham would be realized as the Ark of the Covenant led them into the land of their fathers. The two strange verses that comprise this second book are a remnant of the book that was not written, the story that is never told, the alternative ending, the road not taken. In a manner that is never repeated, the Torah records what should have happened: First, the glorious march to the Land of Israel led by Moshe and the Ark of the Covenant:

When the Ark traveled, Moshe said, "Arise, God! Scatter Your enemies, and let those who hate You flee before You."

Then, the final chord:

"Return, God, the myriad of thousands of Israel!"

These two short, idyllic statements are the first and last verses of an uncompleted book, an account of events that never happened. The first verse describes the march to Israel led by Moshe – a march that would have been a bloodless conquest, devoid of conflict, as the tribes that had taken up residence in the Land of Israel would have "exited, stage left." The second verse describes the culmination of history, when the Ark finally reaches its permanent resting place.

Tragically, all that remains of this idyllic denouement are the first and last verses, the hint of what should have been – and, perhaps, of what might yet be: When we are able to retake that moment in history, to climb back up to that level of preparedness that will allow us to pick up the narrative of the second book, we will be able to complete the triumphant tale. God will see to it that our enemies are vanquished, and all the Jews lost throughout the millennia of our seemingly aimless wandering will return home. As that final scene begins, a voice will call out:

"Return, God, the myriad of thousands of Israel!"

The ingathering of the Jewish exiles and the return of the Ark to its rightful place in Jerusalem were meant to be – and, one day, will be – the completion of the book of Jewish history, the book hinted at by these two verses in Parashat B'haalotcha. This is the book of our potential, of our as-yet-unfulfilled destiny. May we merit its completion, speedily and in our days.

[1] Mishlei 9:1.

[2] I was first introduced to this concept by my father, who in turn heard it from Rabbi Yosef Soloveitchik. The teaching is based on some comments of the Seforno 10:35,36. Rabbi Soloveitchik's lecture on this topic can be accessed at:

http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/751364/Rabbi_Joseph_B_Soloveitchik/Behaalotcha_%E2%80%93_Nosim_Anachnu

[3] See Mishna Yadayim 3:5, Bereishit Rabbah 64:8, Vayikra Rabbah 11:3, Talmud Bavli Shabbat 115b-116a. For more see my book "Explorations", Parashat Beha'alotcha, The Unfinished Book, page 325ff.

For more in-depth analysis see: <http://arikahn.blogspot.co.il/2014/06/audio-and-essays-parashat-bahaalotcha.html>

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Behaaloscha

Why Should We Be Denied?

Many of us are familiar with the first Rashi in the parsha, which explains the juxtaposition of the section dealing with the Princes (at the end of Parshas Nasso) with the section dealing with the lighting of the Menorah (at the beginning of Parshas Beha'aloscha). Rashi — based on the Medrash Tanchuma -- says that when Aharon witnessed the participation of the Princes in the dedication of the Mishkan, he became depressed (chalsha da'ato). Aharon was disappointed that neither he nor his Tribe (Kohen / Levi) participated in the dedication. HaShem told Aharon, "By your life, your portion is greater than their portion – for you are the one who will light the candles in the Mishkan."

Parshas BeShalach contains another, seemingly unrelated, incident. The Torah says that the Paschal sacrifice was brought on the fourteenth of Nissan, in its proper time. The Torah relates that there were certain people who were impure due to contact with the dead and were therefore unable to bring the Korban Pessach. They came before Moshe and Aharon and asked, "Why should we be deprived of the privilege of bringing the Korban Pessach?" Moshe consulted with the Almighty and was then directed to tell the people about the law of "Pessach Sheni" – which is basically a "make up" opportunity for those who were tameh [impure] (or too far away) on Nissan 14. They were commanded to bring the "make up Korban" on Iyar 14, one month later.

At first glance, these two incidents seem to have nothing to do with each other. However, if we analyze them, we notice that both Aharon's disappointment at not participating in the dedication of the Mishkan and the complaint of the people who were "Tameh Mes" on the fourteenth of Nissan speak to the same theme involving disappointment due to being unable to participate in the bringing of a Korban. The theme is "Why should we be deprived?" (Lamah Neegarah?)

The people were tameh. The Halacha is that one who is tameh on the day the Paschal offering is brought may not bring it. There is not a stigma attached to the matter. The Torah exempts a person who is faced with circumstances beyond his control (Ownes Rachmana patray). What is a person supposed to do? He goes home without his Pessach Korban and that is it! However, they felt deprived. "Lamah Neegarah?" The Sifrei calls them "Bnei Adam Kesheirim, chareidim al haMitzvos" [fit and worthy individuals who tremble over the commandments].

These people were not content to rely on the Torah's exemption and save themselves some trouble. No. They felt that they were missing out on something precious and this pained them. This speaks to a wonderful characteristic that they had – their enthusiasm for doing Mitzvos and their inner urge to cling to the Almighty and His commandments. The fact that they had a legitimate excuse and could have gone home with a clean conscience did not satisfy them. They wanted to know "Why should we be denied?"

I recently read a story of a young Yeshiva student who was learning in Radin (in Poland). One Thursday night, he made a Mishmar [late night study session] and was on his way home from the Beis Medrash [study hall]. The city of Radin is cold in the winter. It was a snowy cold night. The young man was walking home late at night and saw another man walking up and down the street. At first, he was afraid – who is this person? When he came a little closer, he noticed that the person was the Chofetz Chaim (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan). The Chofetz Chaim asked him "What are you doing up so late at night? It is cold. Go to sleep!" The boy returned to the host where he was staying, which happened to be the house of the sister of the Chofetz Chaim. The Yeshiva student woke up Friday morning and told his host – "You know, last night I saw an amazing sight. It was two o'clock in the morning and your brother was running back and forth in the street. What was he doing there?" The sister told the young man, "This is already the third night

in a row he is doing this. He has been trying to say the Blessing over the New Moon (Kiddush Levana) for the last three nights. There was not a clear night during those days of the Polish winter to enable him to see the moon." The Chofetz Chaim was walking the streets at two o'clock in the morning on a cold snowy night. He told the student, "Do not be crazy. Go home already." but he kept walking the streets trying to catch a glimpse of the new moon. Our attitude – in the winter months – is "Nu, this month we will not be able to say Kiddush Levana. There is always next month." It is not our fault. It does not bother us in the slightest. The Chofetz Chaim's attitude was that of the Temei Mes who complained to Moshe. Why should we miss out? This is the same attitude that Aharon has in this week's parsha. A Mishkan had to be erected. The twelve tribes each brought sacrifices. The tribe of Kohen / Levi was not part of these twelve tribes. They were their own grouping. They were counted separately. In many respects, that the Kohanim and the Leviim were not part of the "12 Tribes". Therefore, it is natural that they should not be included in the Mishkan dedication ceremony conducted by the Princes of the 12 Tribes. Was that a reason to become depressed? Winston Churchill once said that the measure of a man is what makes him angry. If a person becomes angry about small things, he is a small person. If only the big things in life upset a person, it shows that he is a bigger person. To paraphrase Churchill, the mark of a man is what depresses him. Aharon was depressed about spiritual matters. It depressed him when he could not participate in the dedication of the Mishkan.

The Almighty responded, "Yours is greater than theirs" – meaning the fact that this depresses you shows an even greater connection to Me than what their offerings showed. The fact that you have such a strong urge to participate in the dedication counts more than the offering of the choicest sacrifices. Therefore, you will have the job to light the Menorah. The commentaries ask why specifically the lighting of the Menorah was Aharon's "consolation prize". The Ramban wonders why the consolation that the Almighty specifies to Aharon is not bringing the Ketores [incense] on the Inner Mizbayach [Altar]? Likewise, the Ramban wonders why the consolation was not that Aharon alone performed the special Yom Kippur Service? The Ramban famously says that the reference is not only to the kindling of the Menorah in the Mishkan but to the kindling of the Menorah in the Second Temple period by the Chashmonaim Priests – descendants of Aharon – an event which is commemorated eternally during the holiday of Chanukah.

The Sefer Shemen HaTov suggests that there is another message in the Menorah, which makes it a very appropriate consolation prize for Aharon. Aharon expressed his strong desire to participate, to be a part of the dedication. Chazal explain that Hashem does not really need the Menorah. The Medrash comments, "You are the Light of the world". Lighting the Menorah is merely a symbolic gesture of participation on our part. Hashem does not need our light, but it is an opportunity for us to light it anyway to provide Him with a bit of extra light symbolically.

We want to show our involvement and our enthusiasm to participate. That is why the Almighty consoled Aharon with the Menorah of all things. Aharon demonstrated his passion to participate in the Avodas Hashem. Therefore, the most appropriate job for him was the lighting of the Menorah, which does not functionally provide the Almighty with light, but which demonstrated our desire to show our devotion to Him and His Service. Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD
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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Psalm 31: Like a Lost Vessel

Hunted by his enemies, David felt betrayed and abandoned:

"נִשְׁכַּחְתִּי כַמֵּת מִלֵּב, הָיִיתִי כְּכֵלִי אֶבֶד."

"Forgotten from the heart like the dead, I have become like a lost vessel."
(Psalms 31:13)

Why did David describe his sense of isolation and loneliness as being like a "lost vessel"? In what way are the dead like lost objects?

Twelve Months to Mourn

The Sages learned from here that, in some aspects, our emotional ties to loved ones are like our ties to possessions. When an object is lost, it takes a full year before one loses all hope of recovering it. So, too, The dead are only forgotten from the heart after twelve months have passed (Berachot 58b).

For this reason, when seeing a friend after a year has passed with no contact, one should recite the blessing which praises God as "Mehaiyei ha-meitim" - "Who revives the dead." For us, it is as if our friend has come back to life. Of course, we remember those whom we love even after a year has passed. The searing pain of loss, however, is experienced primarily during that first year.

What function do these heartrending emotions of grief and mourning serve? Would it not be better if we could immediately reconcile ourselves to the loss, without having to undergo a lengthy process of bereavement?

Hope to Recover

If a certain trait is ingrained in the human soul, it must have some basis in reality. There must be some aspect of the world - if not in its current state, then in a future, repaired state - that is reflected by this characteristic of the soul.

If death were truly a case of irrevocable loss, we would not mourn the passing of those we love for such a long time period. It would serve no purpose. The very fact that these feelings of profound bereavement and loss are a universal aspect of human nature indicates that death is not an immutable state.

The psalmist's comparison of the dead with lost articles reinforces this conclusion. When we lose an object, why do we not immediately give up hope of recovering it? Because we know the lost object still exists; we just don't know its precise location. In fact, it is this very sense of loss that spurs our efforts to search for and recover the object.

Resurrection of the Dead

The lengthy period of mourning after the death of a loved one indicates that, for humanity as a whole, the future promises a remedy for death. But unlike lost objects, this process will be through Divine means. "Then you will know that I am God - when I open up your graves and lead you up out of your graves" (Ezekiel 37:13).

Since this tikkun will ultimately transpire, even now we refuse to accept death as an expected - although tragic - occurrence. Rather, we relate to death like the loss of a highly prized object which we still hope to recover. A lost vessel is not truly gone, just missing with regard to its owner. So too, the soul is eternal; death merely places it outside our reach. The lengthy passage of time during which we long for that which appears unrecoverable is a sign that there is indeed hope. Thus the prophets foretold a future era, when the dead will be resurrected to life:

"Your dead will come to life, My corpses will rise up. Awaken and sing, you who dwell in the dust." (Isaiah 26:19)

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II, p. 304)

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This week's parsha teaches about Miriam speaking loshon hora about her brother, thus providing an opportunity to discuss the questions about Shidduchim and Loshon Hora.

How should one ask and answer shidduch- related questions?

Question #1: "Someone called me inquiring about a neighbor for shidduchim purposes. From years of dealing with this boy, I know that his midos could use some polishing. What should I say?"

Question #2: Yaakov* calls to find out about a neighborhood girl, Rochel. She is one of the most wonderful people walking the face of the earth, and you would love to see her happily married; Yaakov sounds like a real mensch. However, her father, Mr. Weiss, is one of the most dishonest people you have ever met. Do you say anything to Yaakov about Rochel's father?

* All stories in this article are actual situations, but the names have been changed.

Deciding what information to share about shidduchim often requires the wisdom of Solomon and the halachic prowess of Rav Moshe Feinstein. On the one hand, we want to assist people to find their proper zivug, while at the same time, we need to avoid transgressing any laws of speech, and imparting information that harms someone constitutes loshon hora (Rambam, Hilchos Dei'os 7:5). This is true, even if the information does not imply that he/she did anything wrong, such as mentioning that someone is in debt. While there is nothing evil about owing money, it is loshon hora to share this information, since the debtor may now find it difficult to borrow a necessary business loan, or have difficulty finding a partner for a commercial endeavor (Chofetz Chayim, end of Hilchos Rechilus, tziyur 2).

Similarly, telling people that one store tends to be expensive often involves the prohibition of loshon hora (Nesiv Chayim, Hilchos Rechilus, 9:8). A storekeeper is permitted to charge a little more than his competitor does, simply because his overhead costs are greater. Therefore, I may be affecting his halachically-permitted livelihood when I report to others that they can get a better deal elsewhere. Although my motivation to save someone money is noble, it is misplaced to do so at the expense of the other Jew, who needs to make a living. (There are circumstances when I may tell someone that he/she can get a better deal elsewhere, such as when the person I am advising is a family member or close friend, or the overcharge is unreasonable; I will need to discuss this subject at a different time.)

If someone asks me for advice, I am required to advise him/her to the best of my ability (Rambam, Hil. Rotzei'ach 12:14; Shaarei Teshuvah 3:54).

Providing good advice fulfills two different mitzvahs: First, it is a positive implementation of the mitzvah of lifnei iver, not to place a stumbling block before the blind. Just as the Torah prohibits giving bad advice and terms it misleading someone who is "blind" in this matter, providing good advice fulfills this mitzvah, since I am helping someone in a matter in which he lacks clarity (see Sefer Hamitzvos, Lo Saaseh #299). In addition, providing good advice fulfills the mitzvah of ve'ahavta le'rei'acha kamocho, love your neighbor as yourself.

Translating these issues as they relate to shidduchim, someone who shares information inappropriately and nixes a potentially good shidduch could violate the laws of loshon hora, because it causes someone harm. On the other hand, providing accurate and appropriate information about shidduchim fulfills the mitzvahs of giving good advice, and covering up negative information that one should tell may violate lo saamod al dam rei'echa, Do not stand by idly when your neighbor is endangered (Vayikra 19:16). Furthermore, not only is it permitted to investigate a potential shidduch, but one is required to research the background of the potential partner to ascertain that he/she has no issues that could disrupt married life (see Rabbeinu Yonah, Avos 1:7; Chofetz Chayim, Hil. Loshon Hora 4:11, based on Rashi to Shavuos 39b). Thus, I fulfill a third mitzvah by providing halachically appropriate information for a potential shidduch, since I am assisting someone to perform his or her necessary research.

So, when may I provide negative information, and when may I not?

Answering shidduch inquiries is a difficult balancing act. One is responsible

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Shidduchim and Loshon Hora

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to see that someone entertaining making a shidduch has all the information that he or she needs, while, on the other hand, one must be careful not to provide superfluous negative information.

The answers to these questions vary according to circumstances and this article does not substitute for asking a rav a specific shaylah. Nevertheless, it will provide basic guidelines. As a starting point, we need to clarify several important details:

I. Do you know the parties involved? Do you know whether this is an appropriate shidduch for this person?

II. Would everyone consider the negative information to be important, or would it depend on the individual?

III. Do you know the caller? Do you know what his/her standards are?

Let us analyze these possibilities and see how the halacha applies in each situation. Again, the major rule is: Am I supplying information that they will use to decide whether to pursue this shidduch, or am I supplying negative information that has no purpose?

NO TACHLIS

Do you know whether this is an appropriate shidduch?

Consider the following case:

Leah's parents, who are looking for a working man, ask you about Levi, who wants to study in kollel for several years. Before sharing any personal information, first find out whether this shidduch would be considered by both sides. Otherwise, one may be sharing loshon hora without any purpose, since the shidduch is, in any case, out of the question. Instead of giving information, simply point out that their life plans are very different. If the two sides want to consider the shidduch anyway, then proceed by providing important information, even if it is potentially negative, as I will explain.

The same is true if the two families would not be interested in a match because of radically different family backgrounds, styles of Yiddishkeit, or age.

Example: You are called to provide information about a neighbor, a fine family, but with some negatives. Before providing this information, first see if the shidduch makes sense: For example, if the caller is looking only for a litvisha family, and the neighbor is chassidish and would only entertain a chassidish shidduch, then the shidduch would not be considered anyway, and you have told loshon hora without any purpose.

HIGHLY NEGATIVE FACTS

When the negative information will certainly cause the other party to reject this shidduch, it is better to simply convince the caller that the match is inappropriate, without being more specific. This is a situation in which one should perhaps be vague and say that you just do not think the shidduch will work. Many specific cases require further rabbinic guidance to clarify whether or not one is required to reveal the information.

If you cannot derail the shidduch without being specific, and you are aware of negative information that would concern most people, then you must reveal it, because of the halacha of lo saamod al dam rei'echa. Examples of such situations include: knowledge that someone cannot have children (Shu't Tzitz Eliezer 16:4), of a medical condition that would concern most people, or of a history of violent behavior. This information can and should be shared. Similarly, one must reveal information about someone whose observance level is not what it is purported to be (see Sefer Chassidim #507; Shu't Panim Meiros 1:35).

When the halacha requires or permits revealing negative information, several other factors must be kept in mind. One should share only information that one knows first-hand and not repeat what one has heard from others. (If one has strong evidence of a serious problem, one can suggest that they contact someone who has first-hand knowledge of the situation.) In addition, one must be careful not to exaggerate. Furthermore, one's sole purpose in sharing the information must be out of motivation to advise the inquirers and not because one is angry or dislikes the person. In addition, one should only say the negatives if there is no other way to accomplish what one needs to (Chofetz Chayim, Hilchos Loshon Hora 10:2).

WHAT NOT TO TELL

Must one reveal every liability? No! The Chofetz Chayim distinguishes between someone who is ill and someone who is weak; the former being information one should reveal and the latter being information that one should not (Be'er Mayim Chayim, Hilchos Rechilus 9:8). Contemporary authors discuss which medical conditions are concerned "illnesses" or merely "weaknesses." For example, poskim consider diabetes to be an illness, whereas hay fever would usually qualify as a "weakness."

In an article entitled May I Keep my Skeletons in the Closet (available on RabbiKaganoff.com) I noted that someone considering a shidduch is required to reveal his having a serious medical issue, but does not need to do so before the two parties have become well acquainted. He certainly has no requirement to tell a shadchan. A third party being asked may also be governed by the same rules and should discuss this question and its details with a halachic authority.

KNOW NOTHING

At this stage, let us examine the first question I raised above: "Someone called me inquiring about a neighbor for shidduchim purposes. From years of dealing with this boy, I know that his midos could use some polishing. What should I say?"

Let us assume you receive a cold call inquiring about a neighbor about whom you have both positive and negative information and observations. In most instances, the liabilities one knows about a neighbor are relative: Even if you know that he has a temper that makes you uncomfortable, or that he is not particularly reliable or punctual, you have no idea what the standards of the caller or the party for whom he is researching are concerning these issues. Before sharing information, you need to know the standards of the caller. If you do not know the person who is calling, and are unable to quickly ascertain their standards, you should say only positive things about the neighbor.

A neighbor's unbecoming details may be detrimental to one person and advantageous to another. It might indeed be that the caller or the potential bashert would consider your neighbor to be very reliable or would not be concerned about the degree of anger that your neighbor possesses. You might be nixing what could have been a potentially good shidduch. Therefore, if the neighbor does not have an anger problem that would alarm anyone considering a shidduch with him, one should not reveal this information without knowing the calling party. After all, it may be that your neighbor is a very appropriate shidduch choice for the caller.

An example is in order: Zahavah follows an approach to tzniyus that is common in many frum circles, but does not conform to how Sheina thinks one should dress. If someone Sheina does not know asks her about Zahavah, she should refrain from commenting on Zahavah's mode of dress. If the caller asks her directly whether Zahavah dresses tzniyusly, Sheina should answer that she does, since she has no idea what the caller means by that question.

I personally know of a proposed shidduch where the couple did not meet because someone did not know this halacha. Daniella told the caller that she felt her former classmate's standard was not that of a model Beis Yaakov girl. Although the classmate's dress code did not meet Daniella's, it was probably adequate for the family and young man who asked. However, because of the answer they received, the family assumed that the girl's standards were way below theirs and would not consider the shidduch, notwithstanding that the standards on both sides were the same. To the best of my knowledge, both parties are still single, and several people who know both of them feel that their personalities are unusually well suited. However, his family will not consider this girl for their yarei shamayim son, and no one can convince them otherwise. As the expression goes, you do not get a second chance to make a first impression.

In this instance, Daniella violated the laws of both loshon hora and of motzi shem ra, relating disparaging, false information. She violated loshon hora, because she supplied unnecessary information that is harmful to the other

person, and motzi shem ra because they were left with a false, negative impression.

A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE

All of this changes if the caller clarifies what standard of tzniyus she meant in her question, and it is a standard that Zahavah or the classmate does not follow. In this instance, the question should be answered fully and correctly, since one now comprehends clearly what the caller meant.

DOES HE “KNOW HOW TO LEARN?”

Similarly, if someone you do not know asks whether a person you are acquainted with “knows how to learn,” you should answer affirmatively, unless the person has little or no learning background. The rule here is, does he have enough learning background that someone would say that he “knows how to learn”? As long as he meets this minimal standard, one should answer affirmatively, until one knows what the caller’s definition and frame of reference is.

SELF-DEPRECATING

There is one other situation where personal or potentially negative information can be told: one may relate any information that you have heard the person say about himself or herself in public (Rashi, Arachin 16a). Similarly, it is permitted to relate something about a person that he/she does publicly. Thus, one may tell whether someone dresses stylishly or not, or that someone does or does not wear a hat when walking through the street. In all of these instances, one’s motivation should be pure – that is, simply to clarify to the person whether this is an appropriate shidduch or not.

A very common case is someone who is not of an observant background. If the person freely says in public that he/she is a baal teshuvah or of a non-observant family, one may tell a potential shidduch this information.

However, if the information is not readily known, in most situations, one should not reveal this information.

HOW TO ASK

At this point, it is appropriate to explain how to ask about shidduch information when you need to call someone that you do not know. First, tell the other person who you are and for what type of person you are inquiring, before asking them for specific information. This way, the other party has some background to understand the context of the questions. Usually, the more specific your questions, the more accurately the other person will understand your standards and thereby be able to provide the information you seek.

KABBALAS LOSHON HORA

It is important to realize that although one may ask whatever is needed about a potential shidduch, and may decide to pass up a shidduch based on the information received, one should not assume that any negative information received is absolutely true. The halacha of kabbalas loshon hora, accepting loshon hora, requires one to assume that there may have been a misunderstanding, or to interpret some other justification for the person’s actions or attributes.

As mentioned earlier, answering shidduch inquiries is a difficult balancing act. We should all daven for Hashem’s help to fulfill this tremendous mitzvah correctly and to be able to assist those who need shidduchim to swiftly find their bashert.