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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to:
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Parshas Beshalach
Hashem Appreciates Jews Who Put Their Neck Out for
Other Jews

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa
portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah
Tapes on the weekly portion: # 1191 Was Devorah Really
a Dayan? How Did She Learn That Much Torah? Good
Shabbos!

The pasukim at the beginning of Perek 14 say, "Hashem
spoke to Moshe saying, Speak to the Children of Israel
and let them turn back and encamp before Pi-Hachiros,
between Migdol and the sea, before Ba'al-Tzephon; you
shall encamp opposite it, by the sea. Pharaoh will say TO
the Children of Israel, 'They are imprisoned in the land,
the Wilderness has locked them in.'" (Shemos 14:1-3).

Pharaoh's assessment that the fleeing Jews were lost in
the Wilderness prompted him to chase after them with his
army. The question is, what does it mean "and Pharaoh
said TO the Children of Israel (EL Bnei Yisrael)"? There
were not any of Bnei Yisrael left in Mitzrayim (Egypt) to
whom he could speak! The people who deserved to leave
Mitzrayim left already; the ones who were undeserving,
died during the plague of Darkness, but there were no
Jews left in Mitzrayim!

Because of this problem, most Meforshei HaChumash do
not translate the words "El Bnei Yisrael" to mean "TO
Bnei Yisrael" but rather "ABOUT Bnei Yisrael".
However, Targum Yonosan ben Uziel, gives a different
interpretation (as he often does). According to Targum
Yonosan ben Uziel, Pharaoh spoke to Dasan and Aviram
– two Jews who stayed back in Mitzrayim when their
brethren left.

As is well known, Dasan and Aviram were terrible
antagonists of Moshe Rabbeinu. They were wicked
individuals who gave Moshe constant tzores. Apparently,
they stuck around in Mitzrayim, not wanting to leave with
Moshe. Pharaoh was addressing them.

The question is, if they were such wicked people that
they did not even want to leave when Bnei Yisrael were
given permission to leave the country, why were they still
alive? The Torah says that Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim
"Chamushim" (Shemos 13:18). According to some
Medrashim, this means that only one fifth ('chomesh') of
the Jews left Mitzrayim – the righteous Jews. Eighty
percent were found unworthy to witness the Exodus, and
they died during Makkas Choshech! There is no way that
Dasan and Aviram qualified as tzadikim. Not only that,
but even if they survived the Choshech, they did not want
to leave Mitzrayim! How is it that they lived to tell the
tale and survived all the way into the midbar, up to the

rebellion of Korach, more than a year later? What was their merit that granted them this ‘longevity’?

The Maharil Diskin says an amazing thing. Dasan and Aviram had a zechus in that they were the taskmasters (shotrim) in Mitzrayim. Just like in the Concentration Camps, in addition to the German officers, there were also the Jewish Kapos who were given the job of enforcing the labor upon their fellow Jews. They had the same system in Mitzrayim. There were Egyptians who were the overseers, but the people who actually dealt with the Jewish slaves were these shotrim, the taskmasters.

These taskmasters bore the burden of the Egyptian overseers. The overseers did not whip the lower echelon slaves at the bottom of the ladder. They whipped the Jewish taskmasters, whose job it was to ensure maximum productivity from the slaves at the bottom of the ladder. Dasan and Aviram were part of that crew of taskmasters who bore the whippings of the Egyptian overseers.

The Maharil Diskin adds that earlier Bnei Yisrael complained to Moshe Rabbeinu, “You made us smell” (Hiv’ashtem es Rucheinu) (Shemos 5:21). We usually learn this as a figure of speech. The Maharil Diskin interprets it literally – because of their wounds from the whippings that did not heal, their bodies reeked. The Maharil Diskin says that the Ribono shel Olam, as it were, has a soft spot in His heart for a Jew who suffers on behalf of other Jews. Dasan and Aviram were wicked and they reported Moshe Rabbeinu to Pharaoh for killing the Egyptian. They were horrible people. But they had one incredible merit. They literally took it on the chin – if not the back – for other Jews. This is such an enormous zechus that it protected them such that they did not die during Choshech, nor did the fact that they did not want to leave Mitzrayim condemn them, and they lived to tell the tale.

Moshe Was Not Abdicating His Role as Leader

The pasuk says that the Jews complained about the food (or lack thereof) in the Wilderness “” (Shemos 16:3). They incredibly complained to Moshe Rabbeinu that they missed the “good times” they had in Mitzrayim. The Ribono shel Olam then initiated the incredible miracle of the mann – “Lechem min haShamayim.” Every single day for forty years, they would go out in front of their tents and collect a daily ration of mann that was an exact match for the number of people in their households.

Perhaps we became accustomed to the idea of the miracles that occurred during the time of the Exodus. But

if we think about it...bread from Heaven, every single day for forty years, is perhaps the greatest miracle of all! It is almost like finding a check in your mailbox every single day to cover all of your basic expenses. This is the miracle of the mann.

Moshe proclaims that with this miracle, the Jews will realize once and for all that it was the Ribono shel Olam who took them out of Mitzrayim: “In the evening you shall know that Hashem took you out of the land of Egypt. And in the morning, you will see the glory of Hashem, that He has heard your complaints against Heaven...” (Shemos 16:6-7). Then he tells them: “... For what are we that you should incite complaints against us? ...When, in the evening, Hashem gives you meat to eat and bread to satiety in the morning, as Hashem hears your complaints that you complain against Him – for what are we? Not against us are your complaints, but against Hashem!” (Shemos 16:7-8). In other words, “Why blame us? If you have a complaint, go blame Hashem!”

Knowing what we know about Moshe Rabbeinu, does this seem like an appropriate response by the leader of the Jewish people to talk like that to his flock? “You have a problem? It’s not my problem – take up your issues with Hashem!” This does not sound like the Moshe Rabbeinu we know! How callous can someone be? This is Moshe Rabbeinu – the faithful shepherd of Israel here!

The Gemara (Chulin 89a) makes a drasha from this pasuk. “Rava (some say R’ Yochanan) states: ‘Greater is that which is written about Moshe and Aharon than that which is written about Avraham. For by Avraham, it merely states ‘I am but dust and ashes’ while by Moshe and Aharon it says ‘We are nothing’” The humility of Moshe and Aharon thus surpassed that of Avraham. However, the context here is puzzling. This is misplaced humility! This is not the place to say “What do you want from me? I am a nothing!” We see Chazal praise Moshe for this, and yet to us it seems like misplaced anivus.

The Tolner Rebbe, based on a diyuk in Rabbeinu Bachye in this week’s parsha, answers both of these questions. Rabbeinu Bachye notes that the appearance of the word “Zeh” in this parsha of the mann (“Zeh – This is the matter that Hashem commanded...” (Shemos 16:16)) is an allusion to the word “Zeh” in the beginning of the previous chapter (Shemos 15:2) (“Zeh” – This is my G-d and I will glorify Him...) in the Shiras HaYam.

Rabbeinu Bachye explains “For at this moment when they said “Zeh Keli v’Anveyhu,” they were worthy of a

miracle such as the mann, about which it says “Zeh HaDavar.” It sounds like Rabbeinu Bachye is making up an irrational Gezeira Shava. This is not something a post Talmudic commentator can suggest without a source from Chazal! What does Rabbeinu Bachye mean?

The Tolner Rebbe provides insight into the intent of Rabbeinu Bachye: Chazal say that by Kriyas Yam Suf, the humblest handmaid saw prophetic visions that were greater than those of the great prophet Yechezkel. They were actually able to point and say “This is (Zeh) my G-d!” But it is more than an emphasis on the word “ZEH” – “THIS.” The emphasis is “This is MY G-d.” (Zeh KELI!) Klal Yisrael reached such a stature and closeness to Hashem at that moment that they could not only recognize the Hand of G-d but that they could feel a personal closeness and intimacy and say “This is MY G-d” – This is the G-d that takes care of ME. In effect, they were saying “This is my Father”.

Since at that moment, they had the closeness and intimacy of a child to a father, they merited receiving the mann. Who puts breakfast on the table for the children? It is the father! Who buys clothes for the children? It is the father! That is what a father does for his child.

If at that moment, Bnei Yisrael reached that level of intimacy and closeness to the Ribono shel Olam that He was not merely a distant G-d in Heaven, but rather that he was their father who put breakfast on the table for them, then that is why they merited receiving ZEH ha'Mon! When a person feels that close to Hashem, the relationship is reciprocal. Then Hashem treats us as His children and every single morning when we come down for breakfast, there will be cereal on the table and milk in the refrigerator.

So when Klal Yisrael complain to Moshe Rabbeinu – What are we going to eat? – Moshe Rabbeinu answers – You are endangering the relationship! “If you are talking like that and saying ‘Why did you take us out of Mitzrayim?’ you are jeopardizing the entire Father-Child connection! Moshe Rabbeinu says to Klal Yisrael “We didn’t take you out of Mitzrayim. Hashem took you out of Mitzrayim! You have a complaint? Go to Daddy! Don’t come to me, I am not your father.”

At all costs, Moshe Rabbeinu wanted to preserve this closeness and intimacy that Klal Yisrael had established with the Almighty at Yam Suf. Moshe knew that if they fell away from this closeness and did not look at the Ribono shel Olam as literally taking care of them like a

father to a child, then they would lose it. Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu says “V’Anachnu Mah?” – We did not take you out of Mitzrayim! We are nothing! Hashem took you out of Mitzrayim! “You don’t have what to eat? Don’t come to us – go straight to Hashem with your complaints!” When a child approaches a stranger on the street and complains that he has not had breakfast or he does not have shoes, the stranger might say “What do you want from me? Go to your parents. They will take care of you!”

Moshe Rabbeinu was not abdicating his role or passing the buck. Moshe Rabbeinu trying to preserve the level of intimacy that Klal Yisrael had with the Ribono shel Olam at that moment of “This is MY G-d and I will glorify Him.”

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This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas B’Shalach is provided below: A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2020 by Torah.org. Do you have a question or comment? Feel free to contact us on our website. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> to get your own free copy of this mailing or subscribe to the series of your choice. Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350

from: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust
<info@rabbisacks.org> date: Jan 12, 2022, 2:15 PM
subject: The Face of Evil (Beshallah) **The Face of Evil (Beshallah) Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** zt”l

After 9/11, when the horror and trauma had subsided, Americans found themselves asking what had happened and why. Was it a disaster? A tragedy? A crime? An act of war? It did not seem to fit the pre-existing paradigms. And why had it happened? The question most often asked about Al Qaeda was, “Why do they hate us?”

In the wake of those events an American thinker Lee Harris wrote two books, *Civilization and its Enemies* and *The Suicide of Reason*[1] that were among the most thought-provoking responses of the decade. The reason for the questions and the failure to find answers, said Harris, was that we in the West had forgotten the concept of an enemy. Liberal democratic politics and market economics create a certain kind of society, a specific way of thinking and a characteristic type of personality. At their heart is the concept of the rational actor, the person who judges acts by their consequences and chooses the maximal option. Such a person believes that for every problem there is a solution, for every conflict a resolution. The way to achieve it is to sit down, negotiate, and do on balance what is best for all.

In such a world there are no enemies, merely conflicts of interest. An enemy, says Harris, is simply “a friend we haven’t done enough for yet.” In the real world, however, not everyone is a liberal democrat. An enemy is “someone who is willing to die in order to kill you. And while it is true that the enemy always hates us for a reason, it is his reason, not ours.” He sees a different world from ours, and in that world we are the enemy. Why do they hate us? Answers Harris: “They hate us because we are their enemy.”[2]

Whatever the rights and wrongs of Harris’s specifics, the general point is true and profound. We can become mind-blind, thinking that the way we – our society, our culture, our civilisation – see things is the only way, or at least that it is the way everyone would choose if given the chance. Only a complete failure to understand the history of ideas can explain this error, and it is a dangerous one. When Montezuma, ruler of the Aztecs, met Cortes, leader of the Spanish expedition in 1520, he assumed that he was meeting a civilised man from a civilised nation. That mistake cost him his life, and within a year there was no Aztec civilisation anymore. Not everyone sees the world the way we do, and, as Richard Weaver once said: “The trouble with humanity is that it forgets to read the minutes of the last meeting.”[3]

This explains the significance of the unusual command at the end of this week’s parsha. The Israelites had escaped the seemingly inexorable danger of the chariots of the Egyptian army, the military high-tech of its day. Miraculously the sea divided, the Israelites crossed, the Egyptians, their chariot wheels caught in the mud, were unable either to advance or retreat and were caught by the returning tide.

The Israelites sang a song and finally seemed to be free, when something untoward and unexpected happened. They were attacked by a new enemy, the Amalekites, a nomadic group living in the desert. Moses instructed Joshua to lead the people in battle. They fought and won. But the Torah makes it clear that this was no ordinary battle:

Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven.’ Moses built an altar and called it The Lord is my Banner. He said, ‘The hand is on the Lord’s throne. The Lord will be at war with Amalek for all generations.’ (Ex. 17:14-16)

This is a very strange statement, and it stands in marked contrast to the way the Torah speaks about the Egyptians. The Amalekites attacked Israel during the lifetime of Moses just once. The Egyptians oppressed the Israelites over an extended period, oppressing and enslaving them and starting a slow genocide by killing every male Israelite child. The whole thrust of the narrative would suggest that if any nation would become the symbol of evil, it would be Egypt.

But the opposite turns out to be true. In Deuteronomy the Torah states, “Do not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land” (Deut. 23:8). Shortly thereafter, Moses repeats the command about the Amalekites, adding a significant detail:

Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God ... You shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget! (Deut. 25:17-19)

We are commanded not to hate Egypt, but never to forget Amalek. Why the difference? The simplest answer is to recall the Rabbis’ statement in *The Ethics of the Fathers*: “If love depends on a specific cause, when the cause ends, so does the love. If love does not depend on a specific

cause, then it never ends.”[4] The same applies to hate. When hate depends on a specific cause, it ends once the cause disappears. Causeless, baseless hate lasts forever.

The Egyptians oppressed the Israelites because, in Pharaoh’s words, “The Israelites are becoming too numerous and strong for us” (Ex. 1:9). Their hate, in other words, came from fear. It was not irrational. The Egyptians had been attacked and conquered before by a foreign group known as the Hyksos, and the memory of that period was still acute and painful. The Amalekites, however, were not being threatened by the Israelites. They attacked a people who were “weary and worn out,” specifically those who were “lagging behind.” In short: The Egyptians feared the Israelites because they were strong. The Amalekites attacked the Israelites because they were weak.

In today’s terminology, the Egyptians were rational actors, the Amalekites were not. With rational actors there can be negotiated peace. People engaged in conflict eventually realise that they are not only destroying their enemies: they are destroying themselves. That is what Pharaoh’s advisers said to him after seven plagues: “Do you not yet realise that Egypt is ruined?” (Ex. 10:7). There comes a point at which rational actors understand that the pursuit of self-interest has become self-destructive, and they learn to co-operate.

It is not so, however, with non-rational actors. Emil Fackenheim, one of the great post-Holocaust theologians, noted that towards the end of the Second World War the Germans diverted trains carrying supplies to their own army, in order to transport Jews to the extermination camps. So driven were they by hatred that they were prepared to put their own victory at risk in order to carry out the systematic murder of the Jews of Europe. This was, he said, evil for evil’s sake.[5]

The Amalekites function in Jewish memory as “the enemy” in Lee Harris’ sense. Jewish law, however, specifies two completely different forms of action in relation to the Amalekites. First is the physical command to wage war against them. That is what Samuel told Saul to do, a command he failed fully to fulfil. Does this command still apply today?

The unequivocal answer given by Rabbi Nachum Rabinovitch is ‘No’.[6] Maimonides ruled that the command to destroy the Amalekites only applied if they refused to make peace and accept the seven Noahide laws. He further stated that the command was no longer

applicable since Sennacherib, the Assyrian, had transported and resettled the nations he conquered so that it was no longer possible to identify the ethnicity of any of the original nations against whom the Israelites were commanded to fight. He also said, in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, that the command only applied to people of specific biological descent. It is not to be applied in general to enemies or haters of the Jewish people. So the command to wage war against the Amalekites no longer applies.

However, there is a quite different command, to “remember” and “not forget” Amalek, which we fulfil annually by the reading the passage containing the Amalekites command as it appears in Deuteronomy on the Shabbat before Purim, Shabbat Zachor (the connection with Purim is that Haman the “Agagite” is assumed to be a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites). Here Amalek has become a symbol rather than a reality.

By dividing the response in this way, Judaism marks a clear distinction between an ancient enemy who no longer exists, and the evil that enemy embodied, which can break out again at any time in any place. It is easy at times of peace to forget the evil that lies just beneath the surface of the human heart. Never was this truer than in the past three centuries. The birth of Enlightenment, toleration, emancipation, liberalism and human rights persuaded many, Jews among them, that collective evil was as extinct as the Amalekites. Evil was then, not now. That age eventually begat nationalism, fascism, communism, two World Wars, some of the brutal tyrannies ever known, and the worst crime of man against man.

Today, the great danger is terror. Here the words of Princeton political philosopher Michael Walzer are particularly apt:

Wherever we see terrorism, we should look for tyranny and oppression ... The terrorists aim to rule, and murder is their method. They have their own internal police, death squads, disappearances. They begin by killing or intimidating those comrades who stand in their way, and they proceed to do the same, if they can, among the people they claim to represent. If terrorists are successful, they rule tyrannically, and their people bear, without consent, the costs of the terrorists’ rule.[7]

Evil never dies and – like liberty – it demands constant vigilance. We are commanded to remember, not for the sake of the past but for the sake of the future, and not for

revenge but the opposite: a world free of revenge and other forms of violence.

Lee Harris began *Civilization and its Enemies* with the words, “The subject of this book is forgetfulness,”[8] and ends with a question: “Can the West overcome the forgetfulness that is the nemesis of every successful civilisation?”[9] That is why are commanded to remember and never forget Amalek, not because the historic people still exists, but because a society of rational actors can sometimes believe that the world is full of rational actors with whom one can negotiate peace. It is not always so.

Rarely was a biblical message so relevant to the future of the West and of freedom itself. Peace is possible, implies Moses, even with an Egypt that enslaved and tried to destroy us. But peace is not possible with those who attack people they see as weak and who deny their own people the freedom for which they claim to be fighting. Freedom depends on our ability to remember and, whenever necessary, confront “the eternal gang of ruthless men,”[10] the face of Amalek throughout history. Sometimes there may be no alternative but to fight evil and defeat it. This may be the only path to peace.

Footnotes [1] Lee Harris, *Civilization and Its Enemies: The Next Stage of History*, New York: Free Press, 2004. *The Suicide of Reason*, New York: Basic Books, 2008. [2] *Ibid.*, xii–xiii. [3] Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 176. [4] Mishnah Avot 5:16. [5] Emil L. Fackenheim and Michael L. Morgan, *The Jewish Thought of Emil Fackenheim: A Reader*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987, p. 126. [6] Rabbi N L Rabinovitch, *Shu”t Melumdei Milchama* (Maale Adumim: Maaliyot, 1993), pp. 22-25. [7] Michael Walzer, *Arguing About War*, Yale University Press, 2004, 64-65. [8] Harris, *Civilization*, p. xi. [9] *Ibid.*, p. 218. [10] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

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Reb Yeruchem Levovitz

Parshas Beshalach - Illegitimate Prayer?

By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

The people contended with Moshe, and said, “Give us water so that we may drink.” Moshe said to them, “Why do you contend with me? Why are you testing Hashem?”[2]

Testing Hashem? How is that implied in their simple – and not entirely unreasonable – request for water?

On the surface of things, this looks like one of the many places where people say one thing, but the Torah discerns their real intention, whether conscious or not. Behind their request was some sort of testing of Hashem. Rashi explains that they were testing Hashem’s ability to provide water in an arid land where none could humanly be found.

Ramban[3] finds a different nuance in a pasuk in Devarim: “Do not test Hashem your G-d, as you tested Him at Masoh.” Ramban sees them testing “whether Hashem was to be found in their midst.”

Now, tefillah – even petitionary prayer, in which we ask for things we want – is certainly a good thing. It is one of the pillars of our Torah life. A person should always, always pour out his heart to a listening Hashem, and speak to Him about his needs, and the straits he finds himself in. The nature of this conversation changes entirely when a person asks for things, as if informing Hashem that he should really be entitled to a favorable response. Such a person hangs his entitlement on a peg of his record of mitzvah performance. He distorts thereby the legitimate nature of prayer. Moreover, he betrays a weakness in his avodah. It remains – consciously or otherwise – always contingent on Hashem’s performance. If G-d delivers for him, then he remains loyal and steadfast. But if He does not, his commitment will slacken. His service is never unequivocal; his status as an eved Hashem is always revocable and enmeshed in doubt.

To Ramban, the passage in Devarim cannot refer to testing Hashem’s ability to miraculously provide water. The people were well past that. At the Reed Sea, they already saw Hashem’s Great Hand, and fully believed in Him and what He can do. Rather, the test was whether He would always be among them to provide them with what they wanted. The people wanted, on some level, proof that He would give them what they thought they rightfully deserved. Without that, their avodah remained iffy.

There is no place for contingent avodah for Klal Yisrael. (There is a place for it for non-Jews. Shlomo HaMelech in fact davened that Hashem should listen to the prayers that they brought to his new Beis HaMikdosh, and grant their requests whether they deserved them or not![4] He knew that if their prayers were not answered according to their expectations, they would harbor complaints against G-d.[5])

It is not that bakashah/requests are intrinsically illegitimate. The undergirding attitude determines whether it is a positive or negative thing. Jewish prayer is not contingent upon results, and makes no demands. At its core, the Jewish request is a bakashas rachamim, and nothing more. It is pure avodah, the unburdening of a son's feelings to his loving father. It presumes no entitlement. What it asks is that Hashem employ His characteristic of Divine Compassion.

Rashi clearly differs with Ramban. His argument is that there had to be, in fact, an element of disbelief involved. Since their request was not in synch with true tefillah, it should have been unnecessary, following a line of reasoning that plagues many people. If G-d knows of a human need, what purpose is served in telling Him about it? He will either chose to address that need, or He won't. Telling Him is not going to change anything! For them to ask for water despite this implies that they did entertain some doubts about His ability.

This should serve as a reality check to us, reminding us of the proper attitude during davening. We are not demanding or negotiating. Rather, we bring our wounds and deficiencies to Hashem, as children of a Loving Father. It is not about the expectation of the solution for which we wish. It is about sharing our hearts.

Based on Daas Torah by Rav Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l, Shemos, pgs. 148-149 ↑ Shemos 17:2-3 ↑ Devarim 6:17 ↑ Melachim 1 8:43. ↑ See Rashi, Bereishis 27:28 ↑

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<http://rabbifleischmann.blogspot.com/2011/01/rabbi-yaakov-lehrfield-rabbi-of-young.html>

MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2011

Rabbi Yaakov Lehrfield

Rabbi of Young Israel of Staten Island, on **Parshat Beshalach**

"Azi vezimrat kah," according to Rashi, means, "My strength and the vengeance of G-d." (It sounds like it should mean "the song of G-d," but Rashi marshals a grammar based argument for why this is not the case.) (The Arizal makes an interesting use of the fact that zemer can mean to cut/prune or to rhapsodize/sing. He says that Pesukei Dezimrah are a preparatory process of prayer through pruning.)

The words that precede the phrase "Azi vezimrat kah," speak of how G-d proudly fought for us, drowning each and every horse and rider (Ga'oh, ga'ah - sus ve'rachbo ramah bayam.") The words that follow the phrase "Azi vezimrat kah," are generally translated as, "This is my G-d and I will adorn him."

In one of those cases where Unkelus proves to be a commentator, adding insightful words to his compact translation, he says that "Zeh keili ve'anveihu" refers specifically to building a Mikdash/Mishkan for G-d. The question arises; what's the connection between G-d destroying the Egyptian people and us building the Beit HaMikdash?

Dovid HaMelech was told that he was not permitted to fulfill his dream of building the Mishkan. The reason he was blocked from building a holy sanctuary is because his hands had spilled blood. Based on this we can understand the juxtaposition of these seemingly disparate thoughts on Az Yashir. We're told that G-d will do all the fighting for us, then we will be permitted (and expected) to build a Mishkan for Hashem.

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info@jewishdestiny.com subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein **Weekly Parsha B'SHALACH 5782 Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

If a person lights even a small candle in a dark room, the resultant light is instantaneously recognizable. Even the flickering of the smallest of candle shines brightly in an enclosed space that is dark. However, if one is to light even a large candle in a room filled with brilliant sunlight or an excess of artificial illumination, the light of that candle is hardly noticeable.

One can say the same idea regarding miracles. If one views a world full of ever-present miracles, then one individual miracle, no matter how powerful and supernatural it may be, will, at best, cause only a minor, temporary impression. The very definition of miracles is that these are events that do not often occur and are not predictable or subject to rational, scientific analysis.

However, when there is a plethora of miraculous events, miracles themselves, no matter how wondrous they may be, begin to lose their impact and power. A miracle that happens regularly is no longer a miracle at all, but, rather, is part of what people view as being the natural course of

events in the world. Miracles that are repeated often eventually become stale and regular and lose their miraculous status.

Witness today's great wonders of nature, of medicine, of technology, and of all other fields that border on the miraculous. When the first rocket with a human inside was launched, it was considered miraculous. Today, it is a weekly event and nothing special for the spectator. The more an experience becomes regular and expected, the less any special quality is attached to it.

When there is a multiplicity of miracles occurring all at the same time, like the candle lit in a room with floodlights, its brightness is hardly noticeable. The individual miracle has lost its power of influence and is already discounted by human beings.

All of this is a preface to understanding the Jewish people after they experienced the Ten Plagues that delivered them from Egypt. The splitting of the sea that delivered them from the sword of the Pharaoh and his army was followed by the miraculous sweetening of the bitter waters in Marah and then the heavenly bread that was given to them for their sustenance. In that floodlit world of miracles, the flame of an individual miracle and its influence waned greatly.

This helps us understand the behavior of the Jewish people throughout their forty-year sojourn in the desert of Sinai. Everything was so miraculous that nothing was special any longer. What resulted was that the evil instinct of rebellion, arrogance and carnal desires continued to surface over and over throughout the Torah.

In our time, the rejuvenation of the Jewish people, the mass study of Torah, the creation and continued growth of the State of Israel in the land of Israel, are all events that border upon the miraculous and supernatural. Yet they, too, are not treated in that manner, for the recognition of miracles is difficult for human beings to maintain and preserve.

For forty years in the desert, the Lord attempted to protect the Jewish people through heavenly intervention, but they did not understand or appreciate what was happening. They only complained. Our Rabbis teach: "One who is experiencing a miracle does not recognize the miracle that is happening at that moment." And so, it is. Shabbat Shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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A Jarring Experience

Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z"l

The Torah tells us that the Israelites arrived at the wilderness of Sin on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from Egypt. There, the people complained to Moshe and Aharon that they felt they would die of hunger. In response, God told Moshe that He would bring down, for them, bread from heaven, which they would collect each day, except for Shabbos, when it would not fall. Instead, on Friday, a double portion would fall, and suffice for the next two days. Later in the parsha, the Torah describes this bread, which the people called manna, and how it tasted. Then, Moshe tells Aharon that God commanded to take a jar and place one day's measure of manna in it, and place it before God as a keepsake for the generations (Shemos 16:33). Rashi notes that 'before God' means, before the ark, and that this verse was not said until the Tent of Meeting was built, sometime later than the events described in the immediately preceding verses. Still, it was written here in the section dealing with manna. The next verses relate that Aharon did as Moshe told him, and that the nation ate the manna for forty years, until they came to the edge of the land of Canaan. Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Luzzatto, or Shadal, the nineteenth century Italian Bible commentator, writes that this last verse was also written later, by Moshe, at the end of the forty years in the wilderness. Neither Rashi nor Shadal, however, directly discuss why the ark was chosen as the place to put the jar of manna that was to serve as reminder to the nation of what occurred in the wilderness, although comments they, as well as others, make about the manna, can, indirectly, provide us with some answers to this question. Rashi brings the Mechilta which says that when the prophet Yirmiyahu would later rebuke the people for not engaging in Torah study, they would ask, how could they leave aside their work and engage in Torah? How would they be able to earn a livelihood? Yirmiyahu would then bring out the jar of manna, show it to them, and tell them that their ancestors sustained themselves with that manna. God, he added, had many ways by which to provide people with the provisions they need. Based on this midrash, we can understand why the manna was placed

next to the ark. The idea of keeping the manna as a keepsake was, then, according to the midrash, in order to have it on hand to use as a lesson for future generations, to engage in Torah study and not worry about the loss of livelihood involved. The ark, which contains the tablets of the Torah given at Mt. Sinai, as well as a Torah scroll, was therefore the appropriate place to put the jar of manna, to serve as a permanent reminder of the connection between the two. Actually, this approach of the Mechilta is reflected in the words of God Himself, which He said when He first delivered the manna to the people from heaven. He told Moshe, “Behold I shall rain down for you food from heaven ; let the people go out and pick each day’s matter on its day, so that I may test him, whether they will follow My Torah or not” (Shemos 16:4). Rashi himself says that the test God meant was, whether the people would keep the laws regarding the collection of the manna, namely, not to leave over from it on any given day, and not to go out on Shabbos to gather it. This explanation looks at the verse in a circumscribed way, and explains the text within the limited context of the verse itself. However, Rambam, in his Guide for the Perplexed (3:24), offers a broader interpretation. He says that the term used in regard to God’s tests, ‘to know,’ does not mean, for God to know, but, rather, for people to know. In regard to the manna, he notes, the Torah says elsewhere (Devorim 8:2), “That He might afflict you, to test you, to know what is in you heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.” The meaning there, says the Rambam, is, for religious communities, and people throughout the world, to know that those who totally devote themselves to God’s service are provided by Him with food in unthought-of ways. The verse in our parsha, Rambam continues, also means that people in general should consider it and see whether being devoted to God’s service is useful and sufficient or not sufficient. Torah study is, certainly, an important part of one’s service to God, and actually the guiding force behind that service. Thus, by placing the jar of manna next to the ark which contains the Torah, the people are reminded of the lesson of the manna, that those who devote themselves to studying and observing the Torah will not suffer deprivation as a result. Shadal, in his comments to the last verse in the section of manna, which tells us how long the Israelites ate the manna, cites the comments of Rabbeinu Saadia Gaon in his introduction to his work The Book of Beliefs and Opinions (Emunos VeDeos). He writes there

that, to his mind, the miracle of the manna is the most amazing miracle recorded in the Torah, because it endured for forty years. He writes that it is hard to conceive of a scheme through which a nation of about two million people could be nourished for forty years only by food produced for them by God. Had there been such a scheme, he continues, the early philosophers would have used it to sustain their students and teach them wisdom without having to work for a living. It is also not conceivable that the ancestors would have fabricated this story and passed it on to their children without being challenged. Shadal adds that because the manna continued to be provided for forty years, the people had ample time to investigate whether Moshe produced it through some kind of deceit or trickery. The manna is, therefore, concludes Shadal, the foundation of our belief in the fundamental principle of the divine origin of the Torah. Based on this comment, we can further understand why the jar of manna was placed next to the holy ark containing the Torah, since the manna is our best proof that the Torah was given to us by God. The manna, given to us by God, reflected on the Torah which it was next to, which was also given to us by God (We may add parenthetically that the Rambam, in his Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 8:1, writes that belief based on miracles is imperfect and subject to refutation. Our real proof for the divine origin of the Torah, he continues, is the revelation that the entire nation experienced at Mt. Sinai, through which it had a prophetic experience and witnessed Moshe receiving the Torah through prophecy. Some scholars have posited that the Rambam sometimes presents a certain theory in refutation of one propounded by Rav Saddia Gaon. Perhaps this is an example of that practice.). On a related but somewhat different note, Rabbi Hillel Lieberman, Hy”d, in his Ahavas Torah, offers another explanation of why the jar of manna was placed next to the aron, without mentioning the comments of Rashi, Rambam or Shadal. He cites the Talmud as saying that the aron took up more space than was provided for it in the Holy of Holies, and, thus, was beyond the realm of space and time. As such, it was not subject to any form of decay. Thus, it was the appropriate place to put the manna, to assure that it would last for generations, without spoiling. Perhaps this explanation can be seen as an adjunct to the first two we have presented. Since the Torah is of divine origin, as demonstrated by its recording

of the continued granting of the manna over a forty-year period, as Shadal explains, it is not subject to the limitations that mundane objects are given over to. Moreover, adherence to and study of it will not cause one a loss of sustenance as a result, even though studying the Torah and following its commandments demands that one compromise the amount of time and effort he can devote to the pursuit of his personal needs. Just as the manna provided a person with exactly the amount of sustenance he needed to maintain a healthy life style, so, too, will one who lives by the Torah be able to provide for his personal needs, as Rashi and the Rambam taught. I would like to add a further explanation for the placement of the jar of manna next to the aron. The Mishneh in Menachos (12:4), records a dispute between Rabbi Shimon and the Sages concerning the amount of flour that can be mixed properly with a log of oil to use as a meal offering brought in the Temple. He says that sixty tenths of an eipha measure of flour can be placed in one utensil and mixed properly with one log of oil, but sixty-one tenths cannot, and the sixty first tenth must therefore be placed in a separate vessel. In response to the question of the Sages, how it could be that a small amount of flour above can make such a difference, Rabbi Shimon says that all of the measures of the rabbis are given exactly. With sixty tenths a meal offering can be mixed and with sixty-one tenths it cannot be mixed, just as a mikveh of forty seah is kosher, or halachically fit, for one to immerse himself in to become purified, while a mikveh which has a small amount of rain water below the required forty seah is not kosher. When Rabbi Shimon says that the measures given by the rabbis are exact, he really means the measures given by the Torah, because the Talmud tells us that measures used in mitzvos are ‘halacha l’Moshe mi-Sinai,’ meaning that they are of Sinaitic origin. Rabbi Shimon’s statement is reminiscent of what the Torah tells us about the manna. Moshe told the people to gather an omer measure of manna per person. Everyone went out to gather the manna, the Torah records, “... he who took much and he who took little. They measured in an omer and whoever took more had nothing extra and whoever took less was not lacking” (Shemos 16:17-18). God provided each person with an omer portion of the manna. No matter how much a person would gather, he would be left, in the end, with that amount per person in his household, and the rest would spoil. On one level, then, placing the manna next to the ark containing the Torah

serves as an indication that the precepts of the Torah are given in an exact way, just as the manna provided for each person was given in an exact way. On another level, with Rabbi Shimon’s statement in the background, the placement of the manna next to the aron teaches us a further important lesson. Rav Dovid Feinstein has often remarked that whatever money a person makes by pursuing an activity that is in violation of the precepts of the Torah will be lost in some way, and whatever he feels he loses by following the dictates of the Torah will be made up in some way. This, it seems, is the lesson of the manna, which was given to each person in exact accordance to his needs. Placing the manna next to the aron highlighted this lesson, and was meant to act as a spur to Torah commitment. The basic message behind all of these explanations of the reason for placing the jar of the manna next to the aron is the need to trust in God and believe that His Torah, whose origin is beyond time and space, is true in an absolute sense. This being so, the Torah can help us, also, transcend the limitations of time and space, and guide us to a path in life that will provide us with exactly what we need to serve God in this world while still enjoying the legitimate pleasures that life has to offer

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Parshas Beshalach Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week’s Insights is dedicated in loving memory of our father, Gedalia Ben Shalom Halevi. Sponsored by Bobby and Shelley Rosenberg. “May his Neshama have an Aliya!”

Who’s Responsible? And it was when Pharaoh sent the people that God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, because it was near, and God said, “Perhaps the people will reconsider when they see a war, and they will return to Egypt” (13:17). This week’s parsha opens with Hashem deciding not to take Bnei Yisroel into Eretz Yisroel through the most direct route. As the Torah explains, Hashem is concerned that Bnei Yisroel will lose heart when faced with a war upon encountering the hostile Philistines and they will regret having left Egypt. Therefore, Hashem leads them in a circuitous route around the Philistine lands. This is a fairly serious charge that Hashem is leveling at Bnei

Yisroel, and it is difficult to comprehend. After all, here was a nation prepared to follow Hashem into an empty desert, a wasteland without food or water, filled with snakes, scorpions, and other hazards. Obviously, Bnei Yisroel felt that they could rely on Hashem to take care of them. They displayed enormous faith in Hashem, so why would He suspect them of running back to Egypt at the first prospect of war? Perhaps even more difficult: The circuitous route didn't really address this issue. In fact, it may have hastened the very situation that Hashem sought to avoid! One week after leaving Egypt Bnei Yisroel were being pursued by the entire army of the world's superpower, one that enslaved them for centuries. A war with Egypt was potentially far more deadly than any war with the Philistines! Of course, Hashem was correct. Bnei Yisroel, faced with the prospect of the Egyptian army bearing down on them, cried out, "Is it because there are not enough graves in Egypt that you took us out to die in the wilderness? [...] It is better for us to be slaves in Egypt than die in the wilderness" (14:11-12). The answer lies in the difference between the perils of being in the desert versus the perils of a war. Bnei Yisroel unquestionably believed that Hashem could take care of them. After all, they had seen what Hashem had done to Egypt over the previous year and recognized the miracles that Hashem had performed on their behalf. They had complete faith that Hashem could take care of them: He would provide food and water and protect them from the snakes, scorpions, and other hazards of the desert. However, they were not ready to take responsibility for themselves. A war requires participation, and Hashem knew that Bnei Yisroel were not prepared to take up arms and fight. They wanted to be taken care of; they simply weren't ready to bear responsibility for themselves. Perhaps this was a result of centuries of slavery; they preferred a harsh life of slavery to the possibility that some may die in war. This is why when the Egyptian army was bearing down on them Moshe said, "Hashem will battle for you and you shall remain silent" (14:14). In other words, Hashem is telling them that He knows they aren't prepared for war; Hashem will obliterate the Egyptians and Bnei Yisroel won't have to lift a finger. Unfortunately for Bnei Yisroel, wanting to be taken care of also meant that they weren't ready to go directly to Eretz Yisroel. Eretz Yisroel required Bnei Yisroel to take responsibility for themselves, and part of that obligation was a willingness to fight (and suffer losses) in order to

take what was rightfully theirs. Hashem knew that Bnei Yisroel were not yet prepared to take responsibility and therefore were not yet ready for Eretz Yisroel. Thus, He took them in a circuitous route to avoid the Philistines.

Dependence and Independence Then Hashem said to Moshe, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain portion on every day, that I may test them, whether they will follow in my Torah, or not" (16:4). This week's parsha introduces the "monn" or "manna" – the miraculous food that sustained Bnei Yisroel for the following forty years in the desert. Remarkably, Hashem tells Moshe that the rules pertaining to the monn would reveal if Bnei Yisroel were prepared to handle the laws of the Torah or not. In other words, if Bnei Yisroel were able to adhere to the rules surrounding the monn, it would indicate that they were ready to follow the laws of the Torah as well. Rashi (ad loc) commented that the two laws that were being used to test the Jewish people to see if they would follow the Torah were: 1) Whether they would leave monn overnight, which had been prohibited, and 2) whether they would go out to collect monn on Shabbos, which would violate Shabbos. What is it about these two deeds that makes them so revelatory that they are to be used as a litmus test for whether or not Bnei Yisroel will be able to follow the Torah? While it is common knowledge that Hashem sustained Bnei Yisroel for forty years with the monn, it is less well known that Hashem commanded Moshe to keep some monn in a jar as a permanent exhibit by the Aron in the Kodesh HaKedashim ("Holy of Holies"). Rashi (16:32) mentions that the prophet Yirmiyahu, some eight centuries later, rebukes Bnei Yisroel for not spending time studying Torah. Their response to him is that if they would spend time studying, how would they make a living? Yirmiyahu pulls out the jar of monn and tells them that Hashem can provide for them just as he provided for their ancestors in the desert. Yirmiyahu's argument requires some explanation as the simple response to him should be, "As soon as I see monn in the morning I will stop going to work and commit to studying Torah!" While the monn had many miraculous attributes, one of the most telling aspects as to the nature of the monn was in the collection of it. Hashem informs Bnei Yisroel that every person is to collect one omer of monn daily (roughly 3-4 quarts in volume). The Torah goes on to say that no matter how much or how little monn a person collected, when he or

she returned home there was exactly one omer per person. In other words, no matter how hard one worked in the collection it made no difference – everyone got exactly what they were supposed to get. This is the message that Yirmiyahu was trying to convey. Everyone has a set amount that Hashem feels they are entitled to receive, and it makes no difference at the end of the day if they try to get more than they are supposed to receive. Hashem makes sure that everyone gets what they are supposed to. The caveat being that one still has to make the effort to collect it. Some have an easier time collecting and some have a harder time, but in the end Hashem ensures that everyone gets what He wants them to have. Perhaps this is why it is called monn – derived from the word “maneh – portion.” This is directly related to the two laws governing the monn, and it becomes clear why their adherence demonstrates whether or not Bnei Yisroel will follow the Torah. The first law is that one must not leave the monn overnight. An individual who chooses to save monn for the following day is one who is proclaiming, “I am in charge of my own destiny; I am in control.” This person refuses to recognize that there is a creator that runs the world and provides for sustenance. The second law of the monn is that it shall not be collected on Shabbos. This too is a direct repudiation of Hashem’s act of creation of the world, for Shabbos is the time we commune with Hashem and reflect upon all that He has done for us and the world. A person who refuses to keep these basic laws of the monn cannot possibly accept the Torah or be expected to keep the Torah. An integral aspect of the Torah is that it is the covenant between Hashem and mankind and the handbook for man’s participation in the running of the world. Only in safeguarding the laws of the monn can one exhibit an acceptance of Hashem as creator and king of the world.

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Rabbi YY Jacobson

We Never Know the Full Meaning of Our Lives
Small People, Small Acts, Change the World The Power of a single action Wise Old Man

A retired man moves near a junior high school. He spends the first few weeks of retirement in peace and quiet. However, when a new school year begins, three young boys beat on every trash can they encounter every day on their way home from school. The noise and

commotion drive the old man mad. Finally, the man decides to take action and walks out to meet the boys. He says, "You kids are a lot of fun. I'll give you each a dollar if you'll promise to come around every day and do your thing." The kids continue to do a bang-up job on the trashcans. After a few days, the man tells the kids, "This recession's really putting a big dent in my income. From now on, I'll only be able to pay you 50 cents to beat on the cans." The noisemakers are displeased, but they accept his offer. A few days later, the retiree approaches them again. "Look," he says, "I haven't received my Social Security check yet, so I'm not going to be able to pay more than 25 cents. Will that be OK?" "A freakin' quarter?" the drum leader exclaims. "If you think we're going to waste our time beating these cans around for a quarter, you're nuts. We quit." We have here an example of an old clever man who understood how to teach these lads that their acts have value and are worth money.

We Do Not Know Nine plagues have devastated Egypt. Pharaoh finally consents. He offers Moses to leave—the adults together with his children. He just demands that the cattle remain behind in Egypt. Moses responds:

“You too shall give sacrifices and burnt offerings into our hands, and we will make them for the Lord our G-d. And also our cattle will go with us; not a [single] hoof will remain, for we will take from it to worship the Lord our G-d, and we do not know how we will worship G-d until we arrive there. “G-d strengthened Pharaoh's heart, and he was unwilling to let them out.” Moses is making a strange argument. We need all of our cattle with us, he tells Pharaoh, because we are unsure how we will worship G-d until we arrive at our destination of worship. Perhaps G-d will ask for more cattle.[1] What does this mean? Did Moses mean these words literally? And why did Pharaoh not tell him to ask G-d how much cattle they need? And why, after these words of Moses, did Pharaoh suddenly have a change of heart yet again and decided to remain obstinate? Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Altar, the first Rebbe of Ger,[2] known as the Chidushei HaRim, offers an interesting interpretation. Moses’ words "we do not know how we will worship G-d until we arrive there" were meant for Pharaoh, but also for every Jew in every generation until the end of time. “We do not know how we will worship G-d until we arrive there” means that there is no way we can know what our purpose in life is and what serving G-d means for us, “until we arrive there”—until we are privy to see the full picture of history

and the full meaning of our lives here on earth. It is often tempting to define how we think G-d wants us to serve Him. We create an image of what G-d wants from us. But in truth, “we do not know how we will worship G-d until we arrive there.” We never fully know what G-d wants from us; how He wants me to serve Him. Sometimes, our lives situations need to open us to the possibility that G-d expects something very different from each of us. Similarly, we often discredit our small actions and minor victories. We view them as insignificant and “news not fit to print.” We think that a significant action is one publicized on the websites, newspapers, Facebook, and Twitter. We live in a society where greatness is measured by the appreciation and acknowledgments of others, where fame is both glamorous and desirable, and where deeds have to be reported by newspapers to be deemed noble. But that is not always the case: what seems to us as trivial and small, may one day appear as awesome and incredibly impactful. “We do not know how we will worship G-d until we arrive there.” When “we arrive there,” the world to come, or the future world of Moshiach, we may see things very differently. What may have seemed to me as a futile struggle may turn out to be my deepest calling.[3] Service of G-d happens in the intimate chambers of the human heart. When I control myself from cursing or losing my temper and hollering, it may never be reported in the news, but nonetheless, it is a true act of serving G-d. A Jew from Jerusalem, Rabbi Chaim Sholom Deitch, shared that when he was young he remembered Karliner Chassidim from Jerusalem who after walking down the street and controlling their eyes from temptation, would enter into the synagogue and go a little dance to celebrate their moral victory. It is a lost art today. We do not appreciate our minor victories. Either I am a world-hero or a loser. But that is not true. You refine an emotion in your heart, you curtail a negative instinct, you break a bad habit, you subdue your ego, you do a favor to another person, your embrace an aching soul, you do not pursue an addiction, you stay away from a promiscuous relationship, you say a blessing or a chapter of Psalms with mindfulness—these are the stuff of Divine service that captures the dignity and purpose of human existence. Take the story of Joseph. He was a youngster working in an Egyptian home. His master’s wife tried to seduce him but he steadfastly refused her. We may look at the story and say, “OK, we all have such experiences where we must withstand seduction and

temptation. Some of us fail and some of us succeed.” Yet the Torah turns this into a central story in Genesis. As a result, after a long series of events, he becomes the Prime Minister of Egypt and saves Egypt and the Jewish family from famine. In the weltanschauung of Judaism, it is an act like that of Joseph’s which contains extraordinary power, majesty, and historical significance.

Upside-down The Talmud relates the following episode:[4]

יוסף בריה דר' יהושע חלש, אינגיד, א"ל אבוה מאי חזית, א"ל עולם . הפוך ראיתי עליונים למטה ותחתונים למעלה א"ל עולם ברור ראית Yosef the son of Rabbi Yehosua fell ill, lost consciousness, and came very close to death. Today we call it a near-death experience. When he returned to life, his father asked him what did you see “on the other side.” Yosef responded: "I saw an upside-down world: The ones who are prestigious and superior in this world, ended up low in the true world; those who are lowly in this world, are superior in the true world." His father told him: “You have seen a clear world,” not an upside-down world. We are the ones who see an upside-down world. In our world, we often judge what the right way to serve G-d is. we define Divine service in a box. But it is not always that way. The struggling young man or woman may have a different path and calling. The struggling mother or father may need to embrace the truth that their path is unique. And in our world, some things may be extremely important, yet in the other world it turns out not important at all. Conversely, in our world we may look at an act and feel it is valueless, but in that world, it is this act which holds so much importance.

It was Maimonides who wrote:[5] לפיכך צריך כל אדם שיראה עצמו כל השנה כולה כאילו חציו זכאי וחציו חייב. וכן כל העולם חציו זכאי וחציו חייב עשה מצוה אחת הרי הכריע את עצמו והכריע את כל העולם כולו לכף זכות, וגרם להן תשועה והצלה A person must see himself and the world as equally balanced on two ends of the scale; by doing one good deed, he tips the scale and brings for himself and the entire world redemption and salvation. I never know the significance of a single thought, word, or deed. I do not know what consists of real service of G-d till I do not arrive at “the destination.” We too often assume the great are the only ones who make a decisive difference in the world. It takes a Lincoln, a Napoleon, an Alexander, or a Newton, an Einstein, to change the course of human events. But Citizen Drouet was a modest French provincial who, by dragging a cart across an arched

gateway near the bridge at Varennes, foiled the attempt of Louis XVI to flee Paris. One of the frustrations and glories of our lives is that we cannot know the ripple effect of what we do. Exertions for good should never be seen as wasted; causality is complicated and a mitzvah may change the world for better in ways we cannot imagine. Who initiated the corona pandemic? Was it not a simple man in China who gave a sneeze, and a few months later, the world was changed.

World War I The First World War began in July 1914 and lasted till November 1918. The Austria-Hungarian Empire fired its first shots on Serbia; soon Russia, France and Britain joined Serbia, and Germany joined the Austria-Hungarians. Italy, Japan and the United States joined the Allies—Serbia and Russia; while the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria joined the Austria Hungarians. From the time of its occurrence until the approach of World War II in 1939, it was called simply the World War or the Great War, and thereafter the First World War or World War I. More than 15 million soldiers died and 21 million more were wounded, while millions of other people fell victim to the influenza epidemic that the war helped to spread. The war left in its wake three ruined imperial dynasties (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey) and unleashed the revolutionary forces of Bolshevism in another (Russia). In the end, the uneasy peace brokered at Versailles in 1919 kept tensions in check for less than two decades before giving way to the most devastating Second World War and the Holocaust. The Treaty of Versailles, signed in 1919, determined post-war borders from Europe to the Middle East, established the League of Nations as an international peace organization and punished Germany for its aggression with reparations and the loss of territory. Tragically, the instability caused by World War I would help make possible the rise of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and would, only two decades later, lead to a second devastating international conflict, far larger in scope and atrocities. To many people, the Great War—as it was known at the time—seemed to come out of the blue, as the European continent was enjoying a long stretch of unparalleled peace and prosperity. But how did World War I begin? Because of a single act by a single person.[6] Archduke Franz Ferdinand, nephew of Austria-Hungarian Emperor Franz Josef and heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, traveled to Sarajevo in June 1914 to inspect the imperial armed forces in the turbulent Balkan region that was annexed by Austria-Hungary in

1908 to the indignation of Serbian nationalists, who believed it should become part of the newly independent and ambitious Serbian nation. On June 28, 1914, Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were touring Sarajevo in an open car, with surprisingly little security. A Serbian nationalist, one of a group of assassins, a man named Nedeljko Cabrinovic, lobbed a grenade at the motorcade. The problem was he was using a lousy 1914 grenade, so it took 10 seconds to detonate, and by then Franz was out of range. The unlucky ones in the car behind them were hurt instead, and the assassins dispersed in the chaos. Cabrinovic took a cyanide pill that failed to kill him and jumped into a three-foot river to "drown" himself. Franz and his party, it seemed, were safe. But Franz was not yet done putting his life in danger. Against the advice of pretty much everyone, he insisted on going to the hospital to visit the people injured by the grenade. The driver had no idea where he was going. They ended up crisscrossing hilariously through the streets of Sarajevo until they just randomly happened to pass a cafe where a 19-year-old nationalist by the name of Gavrilo Princip was enjoying a post-failed assassination sandwich. Seeing his opportunity, Princip fired into the car, shooting Franz Ferdinand and Sophie at point-blank range. Princip then turned the gun on himself, but was prevented from shooting himself by a bystander who threw himself upon the young assassin. A mob of angry onlookers attacked Princip, who fought back and was subsequently wrestled away by the police. Meanwhile, Franz Ferdinand and Sophie lay fatally wounded in their limousine as it rushed to seek help; they both died within the hour. Austria-Hungary, like many countries around the world, blamed the Serbian government for the attack and hoped to use the incident as justification for settling the question of Slav nationalism once and for all. On July 28, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. World War I broke out. Four years later, millions upon millions were dead. I ask you: when Gavrilo Princip fired his shot on Ferdinand, could he have known what he was really doing? In his mind he was killing an enemy of his nation. In reality, his single act triggered a world war that would transform history forever! Here we have it: Repeatedly the world is changed not by the exertions of genius but by the initiative, good or bad, of an otherwise unknown individual human being.

Batya Let us recall a positive example. This week's portion tells the story of Moses, the greatest leader, who

liberates a nation of slaves, molds them into an eternal people, transmits to them and to the world the Divine blueprint for life, and alters history. But who is responsible for the Moses story? It was one scene, occupying just a few lines in the Torah. It was one person, performing a single act. As the story goes, Pharaoh's daughter (she is given no name in the Torah) spots Moshe's basket among the reeds while bathing in the Nile. She takes pity on him, assuming correctly that he is a Hebrew child. She then hires the infant's real mother to nurse the child, and when he is old enough he goes to live with Pharaoh's daughter, who gives him his name, Moshe. Could she have ever imagined what she was accomplishing by fetching the basket of an infant? Could she have ever imagined that by rescuing that baby—she was transforming history forever? She was raising the boy who would overthrow her father's Empire and his brutal oppression? By displaying compassion for that abandoned child she was giving the world the greatest gift ever—the gift of Torah? By lifting that child, she was, in effect, giving our world the dignity of purpose? So when this little boy grows up, it is he who knows very well that “we do not know how we will worship G-d until we arrive there.” We never know the full meaning and significance of a noble act. Only G-d knows. And that's enough.[7] Oscar Wilde once said: “The nicest feeling in the world is to do a good deed anonymously and have somebody find out.”

Between Moses and Pharaoh In Judaism, life is first and foremost about your own intimate relationship with G-d. And thus each act, word and thought contains profound value and generates deep results. Pharaoh cannot fathom this. For him, fate is blind, dictated by the semi-gods. Humans are inherent slaves who just fit into a predictable cycle. There is no human choice and creativity. We are all enslaved to an eternal routine. Pharaoh can't appreciate the truth articulated by Moses that a small step—and act—by man can constitute a giant leap for mankind. In Moses' world, every sheep counts. Every act of service is meaningful. Life is about the celebration of our intimacy and partnership with G-d—minute by minute, act by act. [1] See Rashi *ibid*. [2] *Chassidic Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Altar (1799-1866), author of Chiddushei Harim (a commentary on the Talmud and Shulchan Aruch), was a disciple of the Maggid of Koshnitz, Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa and the Kotzker Rebbe, and the founder of the "Ger" (Gerer) Chassidic dynasty.* [3] See Tanya ch.

27 [4] *Bava Basra 10b* [5] *Maimonides, Laws of Repentance 3:4.* [6] *Sichas Shabbos Bereishis (2) 5728 (1967).* [7] *The essay is based on Chidushei HaRim Parshas Bo. Sichas Shabbos Bereishis (2) 5728 (1967)*

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison
 <chanan@ravkooktorah.org> to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com subject: [Rav Kook Torah]
Rav Kook Torah Beshalach: Innate and Acquired Holiness Rabbi Chanan Morrison

On the banks of the Red Sea, with Egyptian slavery behind them, the Israelites triumphantly sang Shirat HaYam. This beautiful “Song of the Sea” concludes with a vision of a future crossing into freedom and independence - across the Jordan River, to enter the Land of Israel.

עַד־יַעְבֹּר עִמָּךְ ה' - עַד־יַעְבֹּר עִמָּךְ עַם־זוֹ קָנִיתִי: “Until Your people have crossed, O God; until the people that You acquired have crossed over.” (Exod. 15:16) Why the repetition - “until Your people have crossed,” “until the people... have crossed over”? The Talmud (Berachot 4a) explains that the Jewish people crossed the Jordan River twice. The first crossing occurred in the time of Joshua, as the Israelites conquered the Land of Israel from the Canaanite nations. This event marked the beginning of the First Temple period. The second crossing took place centuries later, when Ezra led the return from Babylonian exile, inaugurating the Second Temple period. The verse then refers to both crossings. In what way does each phrase relate to its specific historical context?

Two Forms of Holiness Rav Kook wrote that the Jewish people possess two aspects of holiness. The first is an inner force that resides naturally in the soul. This trait is a spiritual inheritance passed down from the patriarchs, which Rav Kook referred to as an innate *segulah*-holiness. It is an intrinsic part of the Jewish soul, and is immutable. The second aspect of holiness is based on our efforts and choices. Rav Kook called this *willed*-holiness, as it is acquired consciously, through our actions and Torah study. Innate-holiness is in fact infinitely greater than *willed*-holiness, but it is only revealed to the outside world according to the measure of acquired holiness. It is difficult to perceive an individual's inner sanctity when it is not expressed in external actions or character traits. Each of the two eras in Jewish history, the First and Second Temple periods, exemplified a different type of holiness. The First Temple period commenced with

Joshua leading the people across the Jordan River. The people of Israel at that time were characterized by a high level of intrinsic holiness. The Shechinah, God's Divine Presence, was openly revealed in the Temple, and miracles occurred there on a constant basis. It was an era of prophecy, and books were still being added to Scripture. This period corresponds to the phrase, "until Your people have crossed, O God." The expression "Your people" emphasizes their inherent connection to God, i.e., the aspect of innate-holiness. The return to Zion in the time of Ezra marked the beginning of the Second Temple period. The Second Temple did not benefit from the same miraculous phenomena as the First Temple. Prophecy ceased, and the canonization of Scripture was complete. However, the willed-holiness of that era was very great. The Oral Law flourished, the Mishnah was compiled, and new rabbinical decrees were established. This period corresponds to the second phrase, "until the people that You acquired." The main thrust of their connection to God was willed-holiness, acquired through good deeds and Torah study.

The Generation Preceding the Messiah The Rabbi of Safed, Rabbi Jacob David Willowsky (known by the acronym "Ridbaz"), criticized Rav Kook for his cordial relations with the non-religious (and often anti-religious) pioneers who were settling the Land of Israel. Rav Kook responded to this criticism by noting the distinction between different forms of holiness. "In our generation, there are many souls who are on a very low level with regard to their willed-holiness. Thus, they are afflicted with immoral behavior and dreadful beliefs. But their innate segulah light shines brightly. That is why they so dearly love the Jewish people and the Land of Israel." (Igrot HaRe'iyah vol. II, letter 555 (1913), pp. 187-188) Rav Kook went on to explain that heretics and non-believers usually lose their inner segulah holiness, and separate themselves from the Jewish people. However, we live in special times. The Zohar describes the pre-Messianic generation as being "good on the inside and bad on the outside." That is to say, they have powerful inner holiness, even though their external, acquired holiness is weak and undeveloped. They are the allegorical "donkey of the Messiah" (see Zechariah 9:9), as the donkey bears the external signs of impurity, but nonetheless, contains an inner sanctity, as evidenced by the fact that firstborn donkeys are sanctified as bechorot (Exod. 13:13). (*Gold from the Land of Israel* pp, 124-

126. Adapted from *Olat Re'iyah* vol. I, p. 236)

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com from: Torah in Action /Shema Yisrael <parsha@torahinaction.com> subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum **Shema Yisrael Torah Network Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Beshalach ב' תשפ"ב פרשת בשלח** ותען להם מרים שירו לד' כי גאה גאה סוס ורכבו רמה בים **Miriam (answered) spoke up to them, "Sing to Hashem for He is exalted above the arrogant, having hurled the horse with its rider into the sea." (15:21)** *Va'taan la'hem Miriam*, "Miriam answered them." Every answer is preempted by a question. What question was asked that required Miriam *HaNeviah's* response? Furthermore, if Miriam was speaking to the women, it should have said *la'hen*, in the female form – not *la'hem*, which is masculine. Last, Miriam's choice of miracles to extol Him begs elucidation. *Sus v'rochvo ramah, ba'yam*, "The horse and rider were hurled into the sea." So many other miracles occurred. Why underscore this one? *Horav Y. Chashin* explains that Miriam was, indeed, responding to a fundamental question. Ostensibly, the purpose of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Egyptian exodus, was *Kabbolas HaTorah*, receiving the Torah, and, ultimately, the people's entry into *Eretz Yisrael*. The Exodus served as the precursor for a higher, loftier goal. When Miriam organized the women, encouraging them to pay their respects to Hashem through the medium of *shirah* adopted by the men, the women asked a powerful question. Since the Exodus occurred in order to enable the nation to receive the Torah, how should the women, who do not have a *mitzvah* to learn Torah, react? Furthermore, women are exempt from a number of *mitzvos asei*, positive *mitzvos*. The reason that women are exempt from these time-bound *mitzvos* is that their responsibility to their homes, to raising the next generation of committed Torah Jews, overrides the obligation to perform time-bound *mitzvos*. If this is the case, what was the reason they went out to sing *shirah*? Miriam replied with a question of her own: "The horse with its rider were thrown into the sea." Why hold the horse in contempt, when in fact, the rider was the enemy who pursued the Jews with malicious intent to kill them? Miriam answered them, saying the horse assisted its rider

in carrying out his nefarious mission. Thus, we blame the horse in its role as an accessory. If an accessory to evil is culpable for its master's actions, how much more so should women who assist their husbands and sons in learning Torah, who raise their children to be G-d-fearing, committed Jews, who are the *akeros habayis*, backbone and centerpiece of the Jewish home, deserve their just reward for maintaining and strengthening the vibrant Jewish spirit! This is why Miriam used the masculine form, *lahem*; she was giving the rationale for the women's song: *lahem*, the men. Without the women's continuing support and encouragement, the men would have great difficulty functioning as Torah Jews. *Rebbetzin Vichna Kaplan, a"h*, was the founder of the first full-day Bais Yaakov High School for girls in America. She inspired a generation of young women, infusing them with the spirit of *Yisrael Sabba*. They, in turn, continued to forge ahead with this spirit by marrying men who shared their beliefs: love for Hashem, His Torah and His People. Indeed, no less than the *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah giant of his generation, *Horav Aharon Kotler, zl*, acknowledged this verity when he stated that, if not for Bais Yaakov, the *yeshivos* would be forced to close. It would be counterproductive to nurture *bonei Torah* if they would not have *nashim k'sheiros*, women who act appropriately, who recognize the centrality of Torah in a Jew's life and adhere to the moral and ethics of the Torah.

כִּי אֲנִי ה' רֹפֵאֶךָ For I am Hashem Your healer. (15:26)

We are enjoined to seek medical help when circumstances arise that dictate such action. The Torah, likewise, commands the physician to heal those who are in need of a *refuah*. Nonetheless, one should never lose sight of the fact that the true and only effective Healer is Hashem. The physician and all who participate in the patient's care are merely agents of Hashem who have been Heavenly sent to address his physical concerns by employing conventional therapeutic means. Hashem determines the success of the physician. *Horav Mordechai, zl, m'Neshchiz*, was known for the efficacy of his blessings. The ill and unfortunate would travel from far distances to petition him on their behalf. He never uttered a negative comment about another person, viewing everyone through a positive perspective. One day, a *chassid* who was gravely ill came to the *Rebbe* and supplicated him for a blessing to be healed and live. He had travelled far and wide to medical specialists, to no

avail: "Please, *Rebbe*, I have no one else to whom to turn. What should I do?" *Rav Mordechai* advised the *chassid* to travel to the city of Annipole, which was home to a specialist who had the ability to heal him. When the man heard this, he did not waste a minute, and he immediately left for Annipole. It was quite a distance. Public transportation meant hiring a wagon and driver for a ride that, at best, could be described as difficult, but when the *Rebbe* says, "Go!" – one goes. It took quite some time to reach Annipole, where the man immediately alighted from the wagon and began questioning the city's residents for the address of the famous doctor who resided and practiced in their community. "There is no one in our community who matches that description. We have no medical specialists in our city," they replied. "Is there a doctor in town?" the man asked. "No, we have no doctor in our town." "What does someone do if he becomes ill?" he asked. "It does not happen. No doctors, because no one is ill," was their reply. The man was incredulous: a city without a physician; a city that had no sick people! It was absurd. He was upset over having wasted so much precious time on what he felt was a wild-goose chase. He would return to the saintly *Rebbe* of Neshchiz and inform him of his error. He returned to the *Rebbe* and related what had occurred in Annipole. "So what do the people do when someone becomes ill?" the *Rebbe* asked "Their only option is to pray to and rely on Hashem," the man responded. "They have to hope that He will be generous and forthcoming with His blessing and heal them." When the *Rebbe* (finally) heard the man say this, he said, "This is the medical specialist that I had intended for you. Whoever is healing (protecting) the townspeople of Annipole can effectively do the same for you!" The man, who now understood the message, began to pray to Hashem and was ultimately healed. The message is timeless and applies today as well – to us all.

הִנְנִי מְמַטֵּיר לָכֶם לֶחֶם מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם Behold! I shall rain down for you food from Heaven. (16:4) The underlying motif of being sustained by the daily portion of *manna* that descended from Heaven is faith and trust in the Almighty. I think, in the end, everyone believes in Hashem and even places his trust in Him. The question is when. Do we wait until every last option for salvation has been exhausted before we finally accede to the verity that everything comes from Hashem? The daily gift of *manna* – survival from Heaven – was a lesson in faith. Hashem provides for those who believe in Him. A person of little

faith worries about what tomorrow will bring: will he have enough to eat; will he be able to pay the bills; will he even have a tomorrow? *Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl*, observes that by limiting the Heavenly-sent gift of *manna* to a single daily portion, Hashem taught the nation that, at all times, He is our sole Provider. Furthermore, by providing a double portion of *manna* on Friday, Hashem teaches that *Shabbos* observance does not impede one's livelihood. Hashem will provide for one's *Shabbos* needs, just as He does for his weekday necessities. While some Jews come to faith cognitively, through intelligent questions and answers, the primary and most enduring method is to be raised with it – to see it in one's parent's modeling and to live it at home. The primary teacher of *emunah* in Hashem is the mother, who imparts to her children an emotional rendering of her faith in Hashem. Such faith becomes infused in the child's psyche and remains with him/her for a lifetime. The *Kaliver Rebbe, zl*, related the following story which occurred in the Breslau Camp in Germany. Being identified as a Jew was virtually a death sentence. Every day Jews were shot on sight. Since many gentiles were interred in the camp, Jewish slave laborers would disguise themselves as gentiles just to live another day. Otherwise, just taking a walk was risking one's life. Despite the danger, a little, bedraggled boy – apparently very frightened and unsure of himself and where he was – walked around murmuring something to himself all of the time. He became part of the camp's sorry landscape: a young child walking around murmuring to himself. No one knew what he was saying. It appeared as if he were talking to himself, for all intents and purposes, a frightened little boy who probably, due to all the suffering, had lost his mind. The boy passed the *Rebbe*, and suddenly he burst into tears. He cried hysterically. The *Rebbe* ran over, put his arms around him, and began to talk to him. He asked him his name and his origin, and soon the boy calmed down, because, despite outward appearances, the boy was now aware that he was speaking with a brother – another Jew, “My name is Yitzchak Vinig from the Warsaw Ghetto. My entire family is gone. I am alone in the world. I recently arrived in this camp, unaccompanied, unknown, alone without anyone.” His was one of thousands of sad stories. Some survived the war to rebuild their lives, making sure that, although the beginning was mournful, the conclusion of their life stories had a happy ending. The *Rebbe* asked the boy why he walked around the camp muttering to

himself. His reply shook the *Rebbe* to the very core of his being. He explained that in the Warsaw ghetto, the murderers had separated him from his mother, as he was sent to join a group of children. He was literally dragged away by the Nazis. His mother ran after him and, with bitter tears, cried out, “Yitzchak, my precious child, look at me! Because of the troubling times, we were unable to teach you Torah. But remember this always, wherever you go, when it gets bad for you, when you are frightened, say, ‘*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad!*’ Hashem will save you from harm.” Yitzchak concluded his explanation, “Now you understand what I was doing. I was scared, so I was reciting *Shema Yisrael* all of the time – just as my mother told me to do.” I think anything added to the above would be superfluous.

Dedicated in loving memory of our dear mother and grandmother, Leona Genshaft - נפטרה ט"ז שבט תש"ע
ל'אה בת רפאל הכהן ע"ה by her family Neil and Marie Genshaft, Isaac and Naomi Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, ©All rights reserved prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

from: Naaleh Torah Online <contact@naaleh.com>

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Parshat Beshalach: Flask: Focusing on Faith

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by **Mrs. Shira Smiles**

Adapted by Channie Koplowitz Stein

One of the great miracles that the generation of the exodus experienced was the manna that fell from heaven. On the first day it fell, Moshe tells Bnei Yisroel “the thing/word” that Hashem commanded, to collect an omer of manna lemishmeret/for safekeeping so that future generations will know [and have physical evidence] of this miracle, and place this jar before Hashem [in the Ark]. Moshe then repeats the command to Aharon and then the Torah records its fulfillment.

Interestingly, the Oznaim LaTorah points out that while one usually takes a memento at the end of a journey, here Hashem commanded Moshe to take the manna on the first day of the journey. And if this was to be a reminder, why was it put in the Aron Kodesh where no one would see it? If Hashem commanded Moshe, why then did Aharon actually fulfill this mission?

The Ohr Hachaim asks, why are the instructions that Moshe tells Bnei Yisroel repeated almost verbatim to

Aharon. He explains that Hashem's word to Moshe required interpretation. Moshe, in relaying the command to Aharon, filled in the blanks. From the word *mishmeret*, Moshe understood that this manna must be kept safe both from theft and becoming impure. The place to protect it would be in the Aron Kodesh, alongside the *luchot*. Since this command had been given before the Mishkan was built, Moshe understood that it needed to be performed by Aharon who was destined to be the *kohen gadol*, adds *Oznaim Latorah*. Because the command was first given to Moshe and then relayed to Aharon, "As Hashem commanded Moshe," precedes the fulfillment of the command by Aharon.

The message of the manna is relevant for every generation, notes *Le'ovdecha B'emes*. For those who truly dedicate their lives to Torah study, Hashem will always provide their sustenance, just as he did for the generation in wilderness. All others must use the path of praying fervently for their sustenance. One need not have reached the goal of living a completely spiritual life, continues the *Meshech Chochma*. One can be at the beginning, as *Bnei Yisroel* were upon leaving Egypt, but if one resolves to live a Torah life, Hashem will provide for him. In fact, it is at the beginning of the journey, that enthusiasm is at its highest, It is for this reason, suggests *Vetalmudo Beyodo*, that the manna was to be collected when it first fell, and the wonder of it, awed *Bnei Yisroel*. Further, the manna was placed alongside the *Sefer Torah*, writes Rabbi Pam referring to Rabbi Bachye, to teach us that our job and workplace must also be conducive to living a Torah lifestyle.

Most of the people had to go quite a distance to collect the manna. In effect, they had to work for their sustenance just as most people need to go to work today, writes Rabbi Belsky. However there needs to be a balance between our own effort and our reliance on Hashem, knowing that our effort is the conduit through which Hashem will provide for us. Anyone who understands this and puts his complete trust in Hashem, even though he does major sins, says the *Gr"a*, is better than the Torah scholar whose faith is weak. The manna teaches that relying on Hashem will provide for us through all the generations.

Our connection to Hashem and His to us is a pipeline, says Rav A. Kotler. When the parts are connected properly, the waters flow smoothly. Otherwise, it may be obstructed or spray out uselessly. If you think you are in

control, you are blocking the pipeline from Hashem down to you. The jar of manna was meant to be a concrete reminder of our reliance on Hashem and that He gives each of us according to our will, just as the manna tasted like whatever the taster imagined. Additionally, each got according to his personal needs each day, whether he was able to collect more one day or less the next day.

The students of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai asked, would it not have been more efficient to send the full ration of manna once a month or once a year instead of every day? Rabbi Schlesinger explains, there was no guarantee that there would be food each day. Each night, when the food had been completely consumed, the father would teach the child to have faith that Hashem would provide for them again the next day. Similarly, we also do not know what tomorrow will bring. In this regard, it is harder for someone on a fixed salary to develop full *bitachon* than for someone self-employed who cannot know what he will earn the next day. Hashem wants to connect with us, and therefore He asks us to approach Him in prayer three times a day.

Moshe called the container in which the manna was stored a *tzintzenet*. Rabbi L. Eiger sees in this word the word *tzon/sheep* repeated twice. *Bnei Yisroel* are My sheep, the sheep I shepherded in the wilderness (*Tehillim* 95), for if I look to Hashem as my Shepherd, I will never want/lack [for anything]. (*Tehillim* 23). And we know that it is not by bread alone that we live, but by that [word] which emanates from Hashem's mouth. (*Devarim* 8:3) It would be Aharon who put Hashem's word into the Ark, and so Moshe deduced that it should be Aharon who would put the manna into the Ark alongside Hashem's word, showing that both come directly from Hashem. Not just food, but all our necessities come from Hashem. The manna was such a spiritual entity that it was truly meant to be only in the strict spirituality of the *kodesh kadashim*, writes Rabbi Sternbach. By putting the manna that Hashem fed us in the desert in the *aron kodesh*, Hashem show us that He is always just as concerned with our physical needs as He is with our spiritual needs. This jar of manna was not destroyed, writes the *Ohr Hachaim*. It was saved for generations. Just as the Prophet *Yirmiyahu* took it out to show to the people at that time, so will the Prophet *Eliyahu* show it to *Bnei Yisroel* at the arrival of *Moshiach*.

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from: Rabbi Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> date:
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Tidings

**Brachos on Good Tidings Rabbi Yirmiyohu
Kaganoff**

After the wondrous splitting of the Yam Suf, Bnei
Yisroel recited a brocha of thanks to Hashem.

Question #1: Raining brachos What brocha do we recite
when it rains? Question #2: Grandson? Do we recite a
brocha upon hearing of the birth of a new grandson?

Origin Rashi, in parshas Lech Lecha (Bereishis 12:7),
notes that Avraham Avinu built a mizbei'ach to
commemorate the two wonderful messages he had just
received, that he would have children and that his
descendants would receive Eretz Yisroel. This provides
another source for the brachos that Chazal instituted when
someone hears good news, including, the brachos of
shehecheyanu and hatov vehameitiv. The sources in the
Mishnah and the Gemara for most of these halachos are
in the ninth chapter of Brachos. The Mishnah (Brachos
54a) states, "On the rains and on good news one recites
[Boruch Attah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam] hatov
vehameitiv... Someone who built a new house or
purchased new items recites shehecheyanu vekiyemanu
vehigi'anu lazman hazeh."

Brocha on rain Chazal instituted a brocha to be recited
when it begins to rain heavily (Brachos 59b; Rambam,
Hilchos Brachos 10:5; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim
221). Those of us who live in North America, where rain
is not seasonal, may find the idea of "the beginning of the
rains" to be strange, since, in most of North America, it
rains at all times of the year. However, much, if not most,
of the world has seasonal rainfall. In Eretz Yisroel, for
example, it does not rain in the summer. All rain begins in
the late fall, hopefully, and it rains, occasionally, during
the winter. By mid-spring, it stops raining for the next six
to eight months.

When living in such a climate, it is, quite literally, vitally
important that it rain during the correct season. Chazal
instituted a brocha to be recited when the first significant
rain falls (Brachos 59b). The Shulchan Aruch (Orach
Chayim 221:1) adds a requirement that this brocha be
recited only when the populace has been concerned
regarding the lack of rainfall, a condition to which the
Biur Halacha agrees. The Rema, who lived in Poland,

notes "that the reason we do not recite this brocha is
because in our areas, rain is frequent, and it is rare that
there is a drought." However, those who live in Eretz
Yisroel or other places where droughts are, unfortunately,
not uncommon should recite this brocha (Mishnah
Berurah 221:2). In addition, the Mishnah Berurah notes
that, even in a land in which rain is usually plentiful,
should there be a drought, this brocha is recited when it
finally rains.

What brocha? The Gemara has a discussion as to which
brocha a person should recite when it begins to rain. The
halachic authorities understand that the Gemara's
conclusion which brocha is recited depends on an
individual's circumstances. However, there is a dispute
between the Rif and the Rosh regarding some of the
details of these laws. The Rambam's understanding of the
topic appears to be very similar to the Rif's. According
to the Rif: (1) Someone who owns agricultural land, and
has partners who also benefit from the rain, recites hatov
vehameitiv. (2) Someone who owns agricultural land,
but has no partners who also benefit from the rain, recites
shehecheyanu. (3) Someone who does not have any
agricultural land recites a special brocha established for
the occasion of the rain falling. The Gemara asks what
brocha is recited on the rains and quotes a dispute
between Rav Yehudah and Rabbi Yochanan. Rav
Yehudah cites the following brief text, "[Boruch Attah
Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam] modim anachnu loch
al kol tipah u'tipah shehoradta lanu, we thank You for
each and every drop that you brought us." Rabbi
Yochanan adds to this an extensive passage and then adds
a closing to the brocha. Among the rishonim, we find at
least four different opinions as to how Rabbi Yochanan
rules that this brocha should be concluded. As I
mentioned above in (3), this is the text of the brocha
recited only when someone does not own a piece of
agricultural property. Someone who has a field that
benefits directly from the rain recites hatov vehameitiv
upon witnessing the rain [(1) above]. If he has no partners
in his land, the Rif rules that he recites shehecheyanu (2)
whereas the Rosh rules that he recites hatov vehameitiv. I
will explain shortly why these two authorities dispute this
matter.

Seeing is believing! Are there any other halachic
distinctions between reciting hatov vehameitiv or
shehecheyanu for the new rain and reciting the special
brocha on rain? Indeed, there are. By way of

introduction: The Sefer Chassidim (#844) instructs that, when we hear good news, we should immediately recite the brocha, either hatov vehameitiv or shehecheyanu, in order to make the brocha as close as possible to hearing the welcome news, and then thank the person who told us the good tidings. The Pri Megadim notes that you should recite the brocha only when you know that the source of your information is reliable. In today's world, if your source is not necessarily reliable, you can try to verify the information relatively quickly. All authorities agree that the brachos of hatov vehameitiv and shehecheyanu may be recited, whether you saw the gift that Hashem has now provided, or a reliable source verifies the good news. However, regarding the special brocha recited for rain, the halachic authorities dispute as to whether this brocha is recited only when you actually see it rain, or even if you only heard that it rained. The Magen Avraham contends that you do not recite this brocha if you heard that it rained, but did not see it, whereas the Shitah Mekubetzes rules that you do. The Mishnah Berurah (221:7) concludes that, because of the rule of safek brachos lehakeil, the special brocha is recited only if you actually see it raining.

New house As we mentioned above, the Mishnah instructs someone who built a new house or purchased new items to recite shehecheyanu vekiyemanu vehigi'anu lazman hazeh. If someone's house burnt down, and he is now able to rebuild it, he recites hatov vehameitiv, notwithstanding that he would have preferred to have his original house and avoid all the aggravation and grief that transpired (Pri Chadash; Mishnah Berurah 223:12). If he tore down his house and rebuilt it, he does not make a brocha. However, if he enlarged it in the process, he recites a brocha.

Shehecheyanu or hatov vehameitiv The Gemara (Brachos 59b) asks what criterion determines whether we recite shehecheyanu or hatov vehameitiv. The Gemara concludes that, when the benefits are shared with someone else, we recite hatov vehameitiv, whereas when only one person receives direct benefit, he recites shehecheyanu. Therefore, if a married couple purchases or receives something from which both will benefit, they recite hatov vehameitiv, whereas upon acquiring an item that only one of them uses, such as a garment, the brocha is shehecheyanu (see Brachos 59b). In the first case, one of them may be motzi the other in the brocha, or they may, each, recite the brocha separately. Upon this basis,

the Rosh explains the dispute between himself and the Rif, germane to which brocha is recited for rain by someone who owns agricultural property. The Rif and Rosh agree that if the field owner has partners in the land he owns, he recites hatov vehameitiv. If he does not have partners, the Rif rules that he recites shehecheyanu, whereas the Rosh rules that he recites hatov vehameitiv. The Rif understands that the appropriate brocha is shehecheyanu, since he has no partners who directly benefit from his field receiving rain. The Rosh contends that the determinant is not whether you have partners in your field, but whether you have partners in the chesed that Hashem did, and you were not the only one for whom it rained. Since the entire local population benefits directly from the rain, he has partners in the chesed, and therefore recites hatov vehameitiv. Since the Rambam agrees with the Rif, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 221:2) follows his usual approach of ruling according to the majority opinion among these three luminaries, the Rif, the Rambam and the Rosh.

Friends and family There are many other instances in which you recite shehecheyanu or hatov vehameitiv. The Gemara (Brachos 58b) and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 225:1) rule that seeing a close friend or family member whom you have not seen for thirty days is cause to recite shehecheyanu. The Shulchan Aruch explains that this brocha is recited only upon seeing a friend "who is very dear to him and he is happy to see." The Mishnah Berurah (225:1) explains that a "close family member" means a sibling, spouse, parent or child. The Gemara teaches that hatov vehameitiv is recited upon the birth of a son, and the Shulchan Aruch rules that both parents are equally obligated. The Mishnah Berurah rules that a brocha is also recited on the birth of a daughter.

Grandson? At this point, we have enough background to discuss the second of our opening questions: "Do we recite a brocha upon hearing of the birth of a new grandson?" The Gemara mentions reciting a brocha only on the birth of a son, but does not mention a grandson, although this event certainly generates a huge amount of simcha. For this reason, the Sefer Chassidim (#843) rules that we recite a brocha upon the birth of a grandson. However, not all rishonim agree. The Rashba rallies proof that reciting shehecheyanu or hatov vehameitiv is not only because of the happiness of the event, but also because there is some physical benefit from the event. In the case of a child being born, he contends that only

parents recite the brocha, because of the long-term benefits of having someone who can assist parents in their senior years. This particular benefit is more certain of a child than of a grandchild; therefore, the Rashba contends that, since Chazal never mentioned reciting a brocha upon the birth of a grandchild, there is no brocha on this occasion (Shu't Harashba 4:77). The Biur Halacha (223:1 s.v. yaldah) concludes that since he found no early authority other than the Sefer Chassidim who requires a brocha upon hearing of the birth of a grandchild, he advises refraining.

Correspondent What is the halacha if your correspondence with someone has caused you to form a very close friendship, but you have never met him in person? Do you recite a brocha of shehecheyanu when meeting for the first time? Based on a responsum authored by the Rashba (4:76), the Shulchan Aruch rules that you do not recite shehecheyanu when meeting him for the first time in person (Orach Chayim 225:2). In my opinion, the same thing is true if you have met virtually, via Zoom or Skype, but will now meet in person for the first time.

Twins The Mishnah Berurah (222:2) rules that someone who heard several good tidings at the same time makes only one brocha on all the good news. Therefore, the birth of twins generates only one brocha.

Too much of a good thing The Kaf Hachayim (222:10) points out the following: if the person hearing the good news may become overly excited, and this excitement might endanger his health, tell it to him gradually, just as you would tell him bad news gradually so as not to shock him.

New clothes The Mishnah quoted above says, "Someone who built a new house or purchased new items says shehecheyanu vekiyemanu vehigi'anu lazman hazeh." This halacha is true whether the new item is clothing or anything else that makes this particular individual happy (Mishnah Berurah 223:13). Obviously, this will depend on the personality of the individual and on how wealthy he is. The halacha states that shehecheyanu is recited, even if the item is not brand new, as long as this person has never owned it before. If he is happy to now own this item, there is enough reason to recite shehecheyanu (Shulchan Aruch). This may be true, even if it is a garment and someone else wore it already.

New socks? The rishonim dispute whether we recite shehecheyanu when acquiring new items that most people

consider of less significance. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 223:6) rules not to recite a brocha on an item that people consider less significant, such as a robe, shoes or socks. However, he adds that a poor person, who is happy about the acquisition of the item, does recite shehecheyanu. The Rema disagrees, quoting several sources that even a poor person does not recite shehecheyanu on the acquisition of simple garments, and notes that this is the accepted practice.

New shul When a new shul is built or purchased, the chazzan should recite hatov vehameitiv for everyone in the congregation (Magen Avraham; Mishnah Berurah 223:11).

What about a new sefer? Some acharonim mention that you may recite a brocha of shehecheyanu when acquiring a new sefer (Mor Uketziyah 223; Chayei Adam). Others contend that shehecheyanu on new items is restricted to those from which one gets personal benefit or pleasure, whereas the "benefit" of seforim is categorized as mitzvos lav lehenos nitnu, "mitzvos are not intended for physical benefit." The Mishnah Berurah (223:13) concludes that someone who has been hunting for a specific sefer and has finally succeeded to acquire it should not be rebuked for reciting shehecheyanu for his achievement, but it is clear that the Mishnah Berurah feels it is better not to recite shehecheyanu, even in this instance.

Conclusion According to the Gemara (Bava Kama 30a), someone who desires to become exemplary in his behavior should make certain to fulfill the laws of brachos correctly. By investing energy in understanding the details of how we praise Hashem, we realize the importance of each aspect of that praise and how we must recognize that everything we have is a gift from Hashem.