



BS"D

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

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BESHALACH - 5774

In our 19th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com. A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net>. It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored in memory of
Chaim Yissachar z"l ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov

Sponsored by **Dr. Phil & Leah Kazlow**
in memory of Phil's father
Yosef ben Chaim Zvi - Joseph Kazlow z"l
on the occasion of his **first Yartzeit** - 13 Shvat

To sponsor a parsha sheet (proceeds to tzedaka) contact
cshulman@parsha.net

www.yuhsb.org/student-publications/shema-koleinu/
Shema Koleinu | Yeshiva University High School for Boys
Volume XVII, Issue 4 5772

RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES **Parshas BeShalach: LECHEM MISHNEH**

When Moshe discusses with Bnai Yisrael the procedure for collecting the Manna, he explains that no Manna will fall on Shabbos (Shemos 16:26). The Torah indicates that a two day supply fell on Friday and kept fresh through Shabbos (16:24), and reports that on Friday people indeed collected double the amount of Manna (16:22). The Gemara in Shabbos (117b) derives from here that one is required to begin each Shabbos meal with two whole loaves of bread to commemorate this double portion of Manna; this requirement is known as the Mitzvah of Lechem Mishneh.

There is a dispute, however regarding the nature of this obligation. The Taz, for example (Orach Chaim: Siman 678 Seif Katan 2) holds that it is MideOraisa; the Magen Avraham (Siman 254: Seif Katan 23) writes, though, that it is not such a strict obligation, implying that it is only MideRabbanan, and this seems to be the majority opinion. In ruling that women too are obligated in the Mitzvah of Lechem Mishneh, Rabbeinu Tam (Sefer Hayashar L'Rabbeinu Tam: sh'ut: Siman 70: chelek 4) concurs with the latter view, explaining that since the Mitzvah is only MideRabbanan, the usual exemption of women from time-governed Mitzvos does not apply. But this point is itself subject to dispute. Rashi in Berachos (20b s.v. v'chayvin) holds this way, but Tosafos there (20b s.v. B'tfillah) and others disagree. There is also some question as to the accuracy of the text in this part of Rabbeinu Tam's teshuvah.

Rabbeinu Tam, however, advances another reason for obligating women in Lechem Mishneh despite its being a Mitzvah governed by time: they too benefitted from the double portion of Manna, and they are thus obligated because "Af hein hayu be'oso ha'nes", they too were

beneficiaries of the miracle. This reason is suggested by others as well (Pri Megadim b'mishbitzos zahav laorach chaim Siman 274: Seif Katan 1, in the name of the Avudraham). The Maharam of Rothenburg, however, (Sh'ut Maharam M'rutenberg, hotza'at mosad harav cook Siman 255) objects to this, saying Af hein hayu be'oso ha'nes is a reason to include women only in Mitzvos designed to commemorate a miracle which saved the Jewish people from danger, such as hearing the Megillah on Purim, lighting candles on Chanukah, and drinking the Arba Kosos on Pesach. But a Mitzvah like Lechem Mishneh does not commemorate a miraculous salvation. The Maharam appears, however, to agree in principle that women are obligated in Lechem Mishneh.

Rav Shlomo Kluger (Sh'ut ha'elef lecha Shlomo: Siman 114) attempts to defend the practice of women who do not observe the Mitzvah of Lechem Mishneh by saying that the rule of Af hein hayu be'oso ha'nes is inapplicable here for a different reason. Kerias HaMegillah, Ner Chanukah, and Arba Kosos were all instituted to give thanks to Hashem for a specific miracle. Hence women, who also benefitted from the miracle, must also give thanks. But having Lechem Mishneh does not involve thanking; it is rather a mere commemoration of the fact that a double portion of Manna fell on Fridays. It therefore has the status of a regular Mitzvah which, since it is time-governed, women are exempt from. Rav Ovadyah Yosef, though (Sh'ut Yabia Omer: Chelek 6: Siman 28 Ot 4) finds this logic highly questionable and says that it is against the view of most authorities. It is interesting that the Ran in Shabbos (48a B'dapey ha'rif s.v. uchtav) writes that applying the reason of Af hein hayu be'oso ha'nes is altogether unnecessary; women are obligated in Lechem Mishneh simply because they are included in all positive obligations of Shabbos, as indicated by the Gemara in Berachos (20b). It should be noted that one person at the table may recite HaMotzi over Lechem Mishneh on behalf of everybody else present.

The Shulchan Aruch (Siman 271: Seif 9) notes that a tablecloth should be on the table beneath the bread, and another covering should be placed on top of the bread. Several reasons are suggested for this practice. The Rosh in Pesachim (Perek 10; Siman 3), among others, quotes that this is in order not to "embarrass" the bread. This is based on the fact that ordinarily, the Beracha on bread should precede the Beracha on wine (Ayain Berachot 41a. Shulchan Aruch Siman 211: Seif 4. Saif 5 in the Rama). But because we recite Kiddush over wine and not bread, the Beracha on wine must obviously come first in this case; the bread is thus covered and becomes as if it were not there. Two other explanations are cited by Tosafos in Pesachim (100b. s.v. She'ayn); one is that covering the bread constitutes an act of Kavod Shabbos, as implied by the Gemara there, and the other is that just as the Manna was "sandwiched" between two layers of dew, so too the Lechem Mishneh which commemorates the Manna is "sandwiched" between two cloths. The Mishnah Berurah (Siman 271; Seif Katan 41) points out that the question of whether the bread may be uncovered immediately after Kiddush or must remain covered until HaMotzi will depend on which of the above is the primary reason for covering the bread.

[http://www.rabbiacks.org/beshalach-5774-looking/
Covenant & Conversation](http://www.rabbiacks.org/beshalach-5774-looking/Covenant%20&%20Conversation)

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

Beshalach (5774) – Looking Up

The Israelites had crossed the Red Sea. The impossible had happened. The mightiest army in the ancient world – the Egyptians with their horse-drawn chariots – had been defeated and drowned. The people were now free. But the relief proved short-lived. Almost immediately they faced

attack by the Amalekites, and they had to fight a battle, this time with no apparent miracles from God. They did so and won. This was a decisive turning point in history, not only for the Israelites but for Moses and his leadership of the people.

The contrast between before and after the Red Sea could not be more complete. Before, facing the approaching Egyptians, Moses said to the people: “Stand still and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today ... The Lord will fight for you; you need only be silent” (Ex. 14: 13). In other words: do nothing. God will do it for you. And He did.

In the case of the Amalekites, however, Moses said to Joshua, “Choose men for us, and prepare for battle against Amalek” (Ex. 17: 9). Joshua did so and the people waged war. This was the great transition from a situation in which the leader (with the help of God) does it for the people, to one in which the leader empowers the people to do it for themselves.

As this was happening, the Torah focuses our attention on one detail. As the battle began Moses climbed to the top of a hill overlooking the battlefield, with a staff in his hand:

As long as Moses held his hands up, the Israelites prevailed, but when he let his hands down, the Amalekites prevailed. When Moses’ hands became weary, they took a stone and placed it under him, so that he would be able to sit on it. Aaron and Chur then held his hands, one on each side, and his hands remained steady until sunset. (Ex. 17: 11-12)

What is going on here? The passage could be read in two ways. The staff in Moses hand – with which he had performed miracles in Egypt and at the sea – might be a sign that the Israelites’ victory was a miraculous one. Alternatively, it might simply be a reminder to the Israelites that God was with them, giving them strength.

Very unusually – since the Mishnah in general is a book of law rather than biblical commentary – a Mishnah resolves the question:

Did the hands of Moses make or break [the course of the] war? Rather, the text implies that whenever the Israelites looked up and dedicated their hearts to their father in heaven, they prevailed, but otherwise they fell.[1]

The Mishnah is clear. Neither the staff nor Moses’ upraised hands were performing a miracle. They were simply reminding the Israelites to look up to heaven and remember that God was with them. This gave them the confidence and courage to win.

A fundamental principle of leadership is being taught here. A leader must empower the team. He cannot do the work for them. They must do it for themselves. But he must, at the same time, give them the absolute confidence that they can do it and succeed. He is responsible for their mood and morale. During the battle he must betray no sign of weakness, doubt or fear. That is not always easy. Moses’ hands “became weary.” All leaders have their moments of exhaustion. At such times the leader needs support – even Moses needed the help of Aaron and Hur. In the end, though, his upraised hands were the sign the Israelites needed that God was giving them the strength to prevail, and they did.

In today’s terminology, a leader needs emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman, best known for his work in this field, argues that one of the most important tasks of a leader is to shape and lift the mood of the team:

Great leaders move us. They ignite our passion and inspire the best in us. When we try to explain why they are so effective, we speak of strategy, vision, or powerful ideas. But the reality is much more primal: Great leadership works through the emotions.[2]

Groups have an emotional temperature. As individuals they can be happy or sad, agitated or calm, fearful or confident. But when they come together as a group, a process of attunement – “emotional contagion” – takes place, and they begin to share the same feeling. Scientists have shown experimentally how, within fifteen minutes of starting a conversation, two people begin to converge in the physiological markers of mood, such as pulse rate. “When three strangers sit facing each other

in silence for a minute or two, the one who is most emotionally expressive transmits his or her mood to the other two – without speaking a single word.”[3] The physiological basis of this process, known as mirroring, has been much studied in recent years, and observed even among primates. It is the basis of empathy, through which we enter into and share other people’s feelings.

This is the basis of one of the most important roles of a leader. It is he or she who, more than others, determines the mood of the group. Goleman reports on several scientific studies showing how leaders play a key role in determining the group’s shared emotions:

Leaders typically talked more than anyone else, and what they said was listened to more carefully ... But the impact on emotions goes beyond what a leader says. In these studies, even when leaders were not talking, they were watched more carefully than anyone else in the group. When people raised a question for the group as a whole, they would keep their eyes on the leader to see his or her response. Indeed, group members generally see the leader’s emotional reaction as the most valid response, and so model their own on it – particularly in an ambiguous situation, where various members react differently. In a sense, the leader sets the emotional standard.[4]

When it comes to leadership, even non-verbal cues are important. Leaders, at least in public, must project confidence even if inwardly they are full of doubts and hesitations. If they betray their private fears in word or gesture, they risk demoralizing the group.

There is no more powerful example of this than the episode in which King David’s son Absalom mounts a coup d’etat against his father, proclaiming himself king in his place. David’s troops put down the rebellion, in the course of which Absalom dies, caught by his hair in a tree, and stabbed to death by Joab, David’s commander-in-chief.

When he hears the news, David is heartbroken. His son may have rebelled against him, but he is still his son and he is devastated by his death, covering his face and crying, “O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!” News of David’s grief quickly spreads throughout the army, and they too – by emotional contagion – are overcome by mourning. Joab regards this as disastrous. The army have taken great risks to fight for David against his son. They cannot now start regretting their victory without creating confusion and fatefully undermining their morale:

Then Joab went into the house to the king and said, “Today you have humiliated all your men, who have just saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and the lives of your wives and concubines. You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that the commanders and their men mean nothing to you. I see that you would be pleased if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead. Now go out and encourage your men. I swear by the Lord that if you don’t go out, not a man will be left with you by nightfall. This will be worse for you than all the calamities that have come on you from your youth till now.” (2 Samuel 19: 6-8)

David does as Joab insists. He accepts that there is a time and place for grief, but not now, not here, and above all, not in public. Now is the time to thank the army for their courage in defence of the king.

A leader must sometimes silence his or her private emotions if he is not to demoralize those he or she leads. In the case of the battle against Amalek, the first battle the Israelites had to fight for themselves, Moses had a vital role to perform. He had to give the people confidence by getting them to look up.

In 1875 an amateur archaeologist, Marcelino de Sautuola, began excavating the ground in a cave in Altamira near the north coast of Spain. At first he found little to interest him, but his curiosity was rekindled by a visit to the Paris exhibition of 1878 where a collection of Ice Age implements and art objects was on display. Determined to see whether he could find equally ancient relics, he returned to the cave in 1879.

One day he took his nine-year-old daughter Maria with him. While he was searching through the rubble, she wandered deeper into the cave and to her amazement saw something on the wall above her. "Look, papa, oxen," she said. They were, in fact, bison. She had made one of the great discoveries of prehistoric art of all time. The magnificent Altamira cave paintings, between 25,000 and 35,000 years old, were so unprecedented a finding that it took twenty-two years for their authenticity to be accepted. For four years Sautoula had been within a few feet of a monumental treasure, but he had missed it for one reason. He had forgotten to look up.

One of the ongoing themes of Tanakh is the need to look up. "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things," says Isaiah (Is. 40: 26). "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From there will my help come" said King David in Psalm 121. In Deuteronomy Moses tells the Israelites that the Promised Land will not be like the flat plain of the Nile Delta where water is plentiful and in regular supply. It will be a land of hills and valleys, entirely dependent on unpredictable rain (Deut. 11: 10-11). It will be a landscape that forces its inhabitants to look up. That is what Moses did for the people in their first battle. He taught them to look up.

No political, social or moral achievement is without formidable obstacles. There are vested interests to be confronted, attitudes to be changed, resistances to be overcome. The problems are immediate, the ultimate goal often frustratingly far away. Every collective undertaking is like leading a nation across the wilderness towards a destination that is always more distant than it seems when you look at the map.

Look down at the difficulties and you can give way to despair. The only way to sustain energies, individual or collective, is to turn our gaze up toward the far horizon of hope. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein once said that his aim in philosophy was "to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle". The fly is trapped in the bottle. It searches for a way out. Repeatedly it bangs its head against the glass until at last, exhausted, it dies. Yet the bottle has been open all the time. The one thing the fly forgets to do is to look up. So, sometimes, do we.

It is the task of a leader to empower, but it is also his or her task to inspire. That is what Moses did when, at the top of a hill, in full sight of the people, he raised his hands and his staff to heaven. When they saw this, the people knew they could prevail. "Not by might nor by power, but by My spirit," said the prophet (Zechariah 4: 6). Jewish history is a sustained set of variations on this theme. A small people that, in the face of difficulty, continues to look up will win great victories and achieve great things.

[1] Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 3: 8.

[2] Daniel Goleman, *Primal Leadership*, Harvard Business Review Press, 2002, 3.

[3] *Ibid.*, 7.

[4] *Ibid.*, 8.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks or to subscribe to his mailing list, please visit www.rabbisacks.org.

<http://dafyomi.co.il/erchin/points/er-ps-015.htm>

Beshalach -

Gemara Erchin Daf 15

POINT BY POINT SUMMARY OF DAF

prepared by Rabbi P. Feldman of Kollel Iyun Hadaf, Yerushalayim

THE TEN TRIALS IN THE MIDBAR

(a) (Mishnah): Likewise, the decree...

(b) Question: How do we know that it was due to Lashon ha'Ra alone?

Perhaps this "filled their Se'ah" (completed their guilt to the amount for which they were worthy to be punished)!

1. (Rav Hammuna): "Bi'Melos Sifko Yetzer Lo" - Hash-m does not punish a person until his Se'ah is filled.

(c) Answer (Reish Lakish): "Va'Ynasu Osi Zeh Eser Pe'amim" - they were punished for this sin.

(d) (Beraiisa - R. Eliezer ben Parta): From the Meraglim, we see the magnitude of Lashon ha'Ra:

1. They were punished so severely for speaking about wood and stones (Eretz Yisrael). All the more so, one who speaks about people will be punished severely!

(e) Objection: Perhaps the Meraglim were punished so severely due to R. Chanina bar Papa's teaching!

1. (R. Chanina bar Papa): The Meraglim said a great blasphemy - "Ki Chazak Hu Mimenu" (the people of Eretz Yisrael are stronger than us). We explain "Mimenu" to mean "than Him," as if the Master cannot enter His own house! (Shitah Mekubetzes - we read this "mi'Yemino" (than His right hand).)

(f) (Rava): Rather, we learn from "va'Yamus ha'Anashim Motzi'ei Dibas ha'Aretz" - they died due to Dibas ha'Aretz (Lashon ha'Ra).

(g) (Beraiisa - R. Yehudah): Bnei Yisrael angered Hash-m 10 times in the Midbar -- two at Keri'as Yam Suf, two due to a lack of water, two regarding the Man, two regarding the Slav (special fowl given in response to their complaint for meat), one at the Egel, and one in Paran (with the Meraglim).

(h) Two were at Keri'as Yam Suf. Before the sea split, they complained "ha'Mibli Ein Kevarim b'Mitzrayim." After they left the sea, they sinned again (they doubted Hashem's promise that they would not see the Mitzrim again);

1. (Rav Huna): The generation that left Mitzrayim had little Emunah.

2. (Rabah bar Mari): "Va'Yamru Al Yam b'Yam Suf va'Yoshi'em Lema'an Shemo" teaches that Yisrael rebelled at the time. They said 'just like we came up from the sea, the Mitzriyim will come up from another side.'

3. Hash-m told the Sar (angel) of the sea to spit the Mitzriyim onto the dry land.

4. The Sar: Does a Master give a gift to His slave, and take it back?! (I want the Mitzrim, they will be food for the fish!)

5. Hash-m: I will return to you one and a half times as much (Sisera's army, with 900 chariots. Paro's army had only 600 chariots.)

6. The Sar: A slave is too embarrassed to claim from his Master! (Perhaps You will have mercy on them and not give them to me.)

7. Hash-m: Nachal (the river) Kishon will be My guarantor.

8. The sea spit them up - "va'Yar Yisrael Es Mitzrayim Mes..."

(i) Two (quarrels) were due to a lack of water, in Marah and Refidim;

1. "Va'Yavo'u Marasa v'Lo Yachlu Lishtos... va'Yilonu ha'Am Al Moshe";

2. "Va'Yachanu bi'Refidim v'Ein Mayim Lishtos... va'Yarev ha'Am Im Moshe."

(j) Two were regarding the Man. They were told "Lo Timtzu'ahu ba'Sadeh" (on Shabbos) and "Al Yaser" (perhaps these are the intended verses) yet some (Dasan and Aviram) looked for it on Shabbos and left over (during the week).

(k) Two were regarding the Slav;

1. The first time Bnei Yisrael requested Slav (before they received manna), they complained (that it was better in Mitzrayim) - "b'Shivteinu Al Sir ha'Basar";

2. The second time, they requested out of lust - "veha'Safsuf Asher b'Kirbo (His'avu Ta'avah)."

(l) It is clear that they angered Hash-m through the Egel and in Midbar Paran (the Meraglim).

<http://dafyomi.co.il/erchin/insites/er-dt-015.htm>

INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF

Kollel Iyom Hadaf

daf@dafyomi.co.il, www.dafyomi.co.il

Rosh Kollel: **Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld**

Erchin 15

THE SPLITTING OF "YAM SUF"

QUESTION: The Gemara quotes Rabah bar Mari who relates that the Jewish people demonstrated little faith after they crossed the dry land in the middle of the Yam Suf. They assumed that just as they were saved from drowning in the Yam Suf, the Egyptians also survived.

Why did the Jewish people not realize that, after such a miraculous event occurred to them, the wicked Egyptians could not merit such a similar miracle?

ANSWER: TOSFOS (DH k'Shem) explains that the Jewish people did not cross the Yam Suf and emerge on the other side (entering the Yam Suf from the Egyptian side and exiting on the side of the Sinai Peninsula). Rather, when they arrived at the sea -- at the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez (see Graphics) -- they were surrounded on three sides by the Egyptians and on the fourth side by the sea. Hash-m opened the sea, creating a path for them to bypass the Egyptians and emerge on the same bank of the Yam Suf, but more to the south and east of where they entered the sea. The Jews were concerned that the Egyptians who did not enter the sea would follow them on land along the bank of the Yam Suf and eventually reach them.

Erchin 15

THE SECOND SIN OF THE "SLAV"

QUESTION: The Beraisa relates that the Jewish people complained twice with regard to the Slav (quails). The first time was when the Jewish people reminisced about all of the meat that they had eaten in Mitzrayim and complained that they no longer had any meat to eat in the Midbar (Shemos 16:3). Hash-m responded and sent them Slav. They complained a second time that they wanted Slav (Bamidbar 11:4), and Hash-m granted them Slav for thirty days.

Why did they complain that they wanted Slav a second time, when they already had Slav from Hash-m's response to their first complaint?

ANSWERS:

(a) RASHI (DH b'Slav Rishon) explains that even though Slav was already provided, the Jewish people wanted even more.

(b) TOSFOS (DH His'avu) explains that the original Slav had ceased coming, and therefore the people demanded Slav again.

(c) In his first answer, the RAMBAN (Shemos 16:12) suggests that perhaps the Slav was not provided for everyone the first time, but only for the Tzadikim (in the words of the Ramban, for "Gedolim and Chasidim").

(d) In his second answer, the Ramban suggests that perhaps the Slav (from Hash-m's response to the first complaint) came only occasionally and not on a regular basis.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein

<info@jewishdestiny.com>

reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com

subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The Inequality Of It All

The current spate of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority under the watchful eye and undue pressure of the United States, though shrouded in silence and mystery, apparently is not really going anywhere soon. As is usual in the negotiation pattern of the past twenty years, Israel gives tangible assets away to the Palestinians – land, weapons, financial aid and the release of murderers – and obtains allegedly important benefits, which are intangible and easily reversible. Every red line that Israel ever established regarding its negotiating stance with the Palestinians has been crossed and violated by Israel itself. Israel was not going to release Palestinian prisoners who had blood on their hands. And it now releases the worst murderers in the history of the contest, freely and without much compunction. It always feels sorry for itself because of its “painful concessions” but it is the main author and perpetrator of those painful concessions.

We are supposed to be assuaged by assurances that further building will occur in the “settlements” of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. But this further building, subject to the byzantine and bureaucratic labyrinth of Israeli permits, world diplomatic pressures and unforeseen events that always arise, is years off. And by then, who knows what the situation on the ground will be.

But the murderers are being released now and many of them will undoubtedly return to practicing their chosen profession of terrorism. New heroes are being created for the Palestinian street to exalt and in so doing any meaningful settlement, let alone a lasting peace, is undermined and made even more unlikely.

There are rumors afloat that in return for this Israeli generosity in the release of these approximately one thousand prisoners, Jonathan Pollard, an American citizen who engaged in spying on behalf of Israel will finally be released from prison after almost three decades of incarceration. This is somehow tied in with the revelations that America has itself consistently spied on Israel and the rest of the world over the past half-century.

Pollard's release is also somehow to be connected to the prisoner release that Israel is now engaged in vis-à-vis the Palestinian terrorists that it holds in its jails. I fail to see the connection between the two. Pollard's punishment has been unduly harsh and certainly far too long in its enforcement. Pollard should be freed for the sake of America – its system of justice and commitment to equal fairness to all.

His sentence of life imprisonment is a stain on that system. Yet somehow Pollard is being held hostage to extract further concessions from Israel. This is unfairness and unequal treatment compounded. And we only hear rumors that Pollard may somehow be released. Netanyahu thought that he had obtained Pollard's release from President Clinton decades ago but as we all know words and deeds are two different matters completely.

So believing rumors and even seemingly solemn commitments by diplomats and governments is a very risky business. Only the naïve can still have trust in their words and promises. The Psalmist stated it correctly: “Do not trust in the generous words and goodness of princes, in human beings that cannot bring salvation!” All of our life experience confirms the wisdom and truth of that statement.

I have no idea as to how the current series of negotiations with the Palestinian Authority will turn out. I am an incurable optimist and maybe there will be the necessary change of Palestinian mindset that will enable a breakthrough towards peace. But I am not too hopeful of that.

Again the experience of the past twenty years, of Israeli concessions and Palestinian intransigence does not auger well for a positive result of the current series of negotiations. It has been written in the Israeli press that Israel does not want to be seen as the reason for a breakdown in the talks. And therefore, it continually agrees to unfavorable terms proposed by America, hoping, so far justifiably so, that the Palestinians will turn down any agreement no matter how favorable it is to them.

Whether or not this is a wise negotiating tactic is certainly a matter of debate. It is difficult to appreciate why America is so concerned about

this matter when it ignores much more bloody and dangerous conflicts – read Syria for example – in the Middle East, Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Nevertheless we cannot change the situation as it exists and we can only hope that somehow the security, and indeed the vital survival of Israel itself, will never be compromised. That used to be a red line. I hope it still is.
Shabat shalom

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein
Beshalach**

The centerpiece of this week's parsha is naturally the great song of Moses and of the Jewish people after their moment of deliverance from Pharaoh and the flooding sea. This song of Moses and of Israel is repeated daily throughout the centuries of Jewish life in our morning prayer service.

The exultation of the moment is still retained and felt many generations later in the unmatched prose and poetry written in the Torah. What makes this song unique is that there is no reference to human bravery, to the courage of the Jewish people in plunging into the sea or to the leadership of Moses and Aaron in shepherding the Jewish people through this crisis. Rather the entire poem/song is a paean of praise and appreciation dedicated to the God of Israel.

God operates, so to speak, through human beings and world events. Many times His presence is hidden from our sight. Sometimes it is even willfully ignored. In later victories and triumphs of the Jewish people and of Israel, it is the human element that helps fashion those victories and triumphs that is acknowledged and celebrated.

But here in the song of Moses and Israel we have an acknowledgement of God's great hand without ascribing any credit to human beings and natural and social forces. I think that this is perhaps the one facet that makes this song so unique. Compare it to the song of Deborah, which forms the haftora to this week's parsha. In that song the prophetic assigns a great deal of credit to the armed forces of Israel, to Barack its general, and even to Deborah herself, a fact that does not escape the notice of the rabbis of the Talmud. No such self-aggrandizement appears in the song of Moses and Israel at Yam Suf.

This is completely in line with the character of Moses who is described in the Torah as being the most humble and self-effacing of all human beings. There is no question that without Moses there would not have been an exodus from Egypt nor salvation of Israel on the shores of the Yam Suf. But it would be completely out of character for Moses to assign any of the credit for these enormous and miraculous achievements to himself or his actions and leadership.

Thus the greatest of leaders and the most gifted of prophets attains that championship of leadership and prophecy by downplaying his role. Moses is well aware of his greatness and his unique relationship with the God of Israel. He is not naïve enough to think of himself as a plain ordinary human being. To do so would really be a form of ersatz humility. But he is wise enough to realize that this exalted status that he has attained is little more than a gift that God has bestowed upon him. From the beginning of his leadership career, when he attempted to refuse becoming the leader of Israel till his last days on earth, he retains this innate humility, which in fact allows him to be the strongest of leaders and most courageous of prophets. There is a lesson in this for all later generations and for all of us that aspire to positions of leadership and importance. That is why this song of Moses and Israel is repeated daily in Jewish life.

Shabat shalom

from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
to: weekly@ohr.edu
subject: Torah Weekly
Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Beshalach
For the week ending 11 January 2014 / 10 Shevat 5774
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

Burning Your Bridges

"...G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, because it was near, for G-d said, 'Perhaps the people will reconsider when they see a war, and they will return to Egypt'." (13-17).

Chaim's fingers hovered over his iPhone. He had already blocked ninety per cent of the contacts in his address book, put in place a hermetic filter from his Internet Service Provider, and now he was ready for the ultimate sacrifice. He walked up to a total stranger on the street and said, "Please would you key in a seven character string of letters or numbers or a mixture of both?"

The stranger looked at him a little strangely, but decided he didn't look like a mugger and entered a string of characters.

"Would you please enter it again in the box below that, and then press 'Enter'?"

"Thank you very much," smiled Chaim and briskly walked away. Within a minute Chaim and the stranger were separated by thousands of other rush-hour commuters. That was it. There was no way he could now undo the changes he had made. He had locked his computer with an unknown, virtually unknowable code. Chaim had burned his bridges.

Why did G-d make it well-nigh impossible for the Jewish People to return to Egypt? After all, the reason He took them out in the first place was because they screamed and cried for Him to take them out, so if in the future they might decide to go back, why not let them?

Each of us is trapped in our own little "Egypt". The Egypt of materialism. The Egypt of indulgence. The Egypt of doubt, of depression, of selfishness.

It takes a lot of hard work to get us out of those Egypts. And if we manage to make it out, there will always be a 'good ole friend' who will give a call or send us a text, and say 'Hi, why don't we hang out together tonight!' The only way to make sure that 'good ole friend' can't drag us back to Egypt is to burn our bridges so there's no way back.

G-d knew that the true desire of the Jewish People was – and still is – to be close to Him, but He led us through the sea because He wanted to burn our bridges to make it easier for us to leave Egypt once and for all.

Source: based on an idea heard from Rabbi Yechezkel Weinfeld
© Ohr Somayach International - all rights reserved

from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>
to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>
subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas Beshalach

It happened when Pharaoh sent the nation. (13:17)

In the Talmud Megillah 10b, Chazal state that the word vayehei, "and it was", implies sadness. The Midrash says that Vayehei is a combination of two words: Vay - woe; and v'hi, as in nehi, which means mourning. These two words describe anything but joy. This brings us to ask: What about the Exodus engendered sadness? This was Klal Yisrael's finest moment; surely nothing about it would provoke sadness. Furthermore, the phrase beshalach Pharaoh, "when Pharaoh sent (the people)," raises a question: When did Pharaoh send out the people? He had nothing to do with it! It was Hashem throughout Who manipulated and orchestrated the events of that evening. Pharaoh was a mere spectator. Why should he receive any mention?

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita, suggests that the latter questions actually answer the former. Clearly, it was Hashem Who orchestrated all of the events of that night. Pharaoh, however, thought it was all about him: he was making the decisions; he allowed Bnei Yisrael to leave. Is this true? Absolutely not! Pharaoh fought them every step of the way. Yet, in all reality, we must face it. The next day, the headlines of the local Egyptian newspaper screamed: "Pharaoh allows the Jews to leave!" No mention of Hashem - only Pharaoh. This is the meaning of Vayehei. A seminal event, unparalleled in the history of mankind, whereby an entire nation of slaves leave their masters after being subjected to 210 years of brutal persecution, and the headlines attribute their exodus to Pharaoh's benevolence! How ludicrous! Rav Galinsky takes this bizarre development one step further. Perhaps the degree of lucidity required of a secular Egyptian reporter might be less than expected of a Jew, but regrettably, the facts do not support this premise. The Maggid relates the

following episode: The village of Mir, Poland, was a tiny hamlet situated on the outskirts of Grodno. Every week, the peasants of the surrounding area would travel to the village to sell their wares. An old battered bus that had seen better days was driven by each farm, picking up the peasants and depositing them in Mir. At the end of the day, they returned home with the few rubles which they had earned. One day, the rickety bus carrying a full complement of peasants crossed the bridge. For years, people were warned not to cross the bridge for fear that it might snap - well, it did, and forty peasants plunged to their untimely deaths.

Immediately following the tragedy, the blame game began in earnest. The bridge was faulty; the bus driver was drunk; the bus was overloaded. At the end of the day, they sought everywhere for a sacrificial goat upon whom to lay the blame. Hearing this, the Mirrer Mashgiach, the venerable Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, spoke to his students to give them the Torah's perspective on this incident.

"On Rosh Hashanah we recite the words: 'On Rosh Hashanah it is written and on Yom Kippur it is signed. Who will live; who will die; who according to his predestined time and who not on his predetermined time.' The method of death is also determined whether by water, fire, sword or wild animal. This judgment applies l'chol bnei olam - all members of the world - everyone - Jew and gentile alike.

"This past year, it was decided that forty peasants from different villages were to die by drowning. These were people from all walks of life and various areas of endeavor. How did they all come together? How was this Divine decree to be facilitated? By bus! A bus was sent to pick up the peasants, gather them together, so that the execution could be carried out.

"Now, if we were to make the following test: One group of students would read the popular Mussar sefarim, ethical discourse, before Maariv, while the other group would read a newspaper. Whom do you suppose will pray with greater kavanah, intention/concentration? Certainly, the group which studied Mussar. The other group - the newspaper readers - would invariably focus on, 'It happened that Pharaoh sent out the people' - rather than on, 'G-d took them out of Egypt.'

"This is human nature. We see what we want to see - and it usually is not the Hand of Hashem that enters our limited line of vision. This is the vayehi of our generation, of our lives. It is always the physician, the driver, the illness, the business partner, the husband, the wife. It is never about Divine decree. It is never about Hashem. It should be. What we thought about on Rosh Hashanah should remain in our minds throughout the year."

Hashem will fight for you. And you shall be silent. Hashem said to Moshe, "Why do you cry out to Me?" (14:14,15)

Moshe Rabbeinu told the people that crying was not the correct response to the present situation. Hashem asked Moshe, "Why do you cry out to Me?" Apparently, this was a situation which did not call for prayer (cry out to me). It was a time for action, for an affirmation of one's devotion to Hashem. In other words, when one is up against the Red Sea, with the Egyptian army bringing up the flank, one jumps into the water. Horav Shalom Arush, Shlita, explains that, on a deeper level, Hashem is actually teaching Moshe and Bnei Yisrael: "You do not have to cry out loudly to Me. I can hear a silent scream just as well." Indeed, a silent scream emanating from the depths of one's heart has incredible efficacy. Rav Arush explains that, indeed, when one screams out to Hashem, he should not do so within earshot of his neighbors. Davening to Hashem should reflect an intimate relationship between man and the Almighty. A silent scream does not attract attention, and hence, is devoid of all vanity and externality. One cannot call attention to himself when he is quiet. A silent scream's ascension to Heaven is meteor-like, without the impediments that hold back our regular prayers. In his Sichos Horan, Horav Nachman Breslover, zl, writes, "One can shout loudly in a small, silent voice, without anyone hearing, because he does not emit a sound, but simply screams with a soundless voice. No one hears his scream other than Hashem. Anyone can do this by simply imagining the sound of the scream in his mind. As he depicts the sound with his imagination, he is able to elevate the decibel level until he is literally screaming at the top of his lungs - but no one hears him, only Hashem." Is this not incredible? Can there be a more intimate form of communication? Rav Nachman explains that this is actually a scream and not mere imagination. Rather than the sound being carried from the lungs to the lips, the sound is instead carried by the nerves to the brain, so that one is shouting in his brain. One can picture the sound filling the inside of his brain. Thus, one can stand in a crowded room and scream in such a manner - yet no one will hear him, but Hashem.

The "sound" of the silent prayer is a cogent and effective manner of prayer. One utilizes this opportunity to express his deepest and strongest emotions and trepidations. The silent scream allows one to speak to Hashem and only to Hashem, for no one else hears - even the Angels are not privy to the "sounds" of the silent

scream. This is the meaning of personal prayer, a device through which one expresses his innermost feelings to Hashem. It is just the individual and his Father in Heaven - no one else.

Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael sang this song to Hashem. (15:1)

The verb yashir, he sang [will sing] is written in the future tense, although it is clearly a reference to an event which had already taken place. Rashi explains that the future tense is related to a past occurrence, the time that Moshe Rabbeinu first considered singing. In an alternative exposition, he quotes Chazal, who interpret yashir as referring to an event which will yet take place in the future. This pasuk is a remez, allusion, that the axiom, Techiyas HaMeisim min haTorah, the Resurrection of the Dead, is referenced in the Torah. Indeed, Moshe and all Yisrael sang then, but they will all sing again one day after Techiyas HaMeisim, when the dead will come back to life. We have yet to explain the nature of shirah, a song of praise, after the Resurrection of the Dead. What will be its content? What aspect will we praise?

The Talmud Pesachim 50a, discusses the difference between Olam Habba, the World to Come, and Olam Ha'zeh, this world. Chazal distinguish between the blessings one recites for good and bad news. In this world, when one hears good tidings, he blesses HaTov v'Hameitiv, "Who is good, and Who does good." When one hears bad tidings, he blesses Dayan Ha'Emes, "The truthful Judge." In Olam Habba, everything is (the blessing is always HaTov v'Hameitiv) good. Rashi explains that in the World to Come, there will be no bad tidings. Thus, the only blessing that is recited is HaTov v'Hameitiv.

In his commentary to Meseches Pesachim, the Tzalach raises the following difficulty. Why does the Talmud focus on the blessings for good and bad news? It could simply have said that in this world there are both good and bad tidings, while in the World to Come, everything will be good. The issue should not be concerning the blessings, but rather, regarding the news one receives.

The Tzalach quotes Horav Ephraim Risher, zl, who explains that, indeed, nothing truly bad issues from Hashem - even in this world. The suffering and pain which Hashem, at times, visits upon a person are intended for his own good. By virtue of yissurim, troubles, one's evil inclination is subdued or his soul is purified, so that, when it returns to its Source, it will be as pristine as when it was originally taken to be placed within man. In this world, however, we do not appreciate the benefit derived from experiencing suffering and tragedy. It is only in the next world, the world of pure truth, that we will look in retrospect and see that which we had perceived as bad was actually good - for us. We will then acknowledge its inherent goodness. Armed with this new perspective on the life he lived in this world, he will exult in the blessing of HaTov v'Hameitiv - in regard to all of the suffering that he had previously experienced.

Hashem's Oneness is not fully appreciated, and certainly not acknowledged in this world, since it is difficult for the individual to reconcile pain and tragedy with Hashem's Divine Attributes of Mercy and Kindness. In the next world, the story will be quite different. There, man will experience only good, thereby stimulating acknowledgment and glorification of Hashem's Oneness.

Le'asid lavo, in the future, in Olam Habba, we will see with a clarity of vision unparalleled to anything we have heretofore experienced. All of the tzaros, troubles, pain and suffering, will have transparency through which they will appear as only the true good which they are. In the next world, we will confront the truth which has eluded us in this world. The test of man, however, is not in the next world, but in this world. We must believe b'emunah sheleimah, with complete and unequivocal faith, that everything which transpires in this world does not "just happen." Coincidence is not a word which should be in the observant Jew's lexicon. Everything has a reason. Hashem knows it and, one day, we will also know it. Knowing that there is a reason for everything and that Hashem is behind every occurrence in our lives should provide us with the hope necessary to overcome life's challenges. Without hope, one will find it most difficult to survive. With hope, one can look death in the face and not be afraid. The following episode attests to this verity:

One evening, Horav Aryeh Levine, zl, was seen walking in the Bukharian quarter of the holy city of Yerushalayim. "What brings the Rav to this neighborhood?" he was asked by a prominent member of Yerushalayim's elite.

"Come with me," Rav Aryeh replied, displaying his infectious smile. They continued walking together until they arrived at a wedding hall. The ceremony had yet to begin, as everyone was milling around anticipating the opening music, heralding the beginning of the wedding. The chassan, bridegroom, was sitting at his place of honor at the head of the table. When he saw Rav Aryeh enter the room, the chassan jumped up, ran over and embraced the Rav. The embrace was reciprocated. People were surprised at this display of affection between the Tzaddik of Yerushalayim and the chassan from the Bukharian community. Sensing this, the

chassan put his arm lovingly around Rav Aryeh and called the gathering to attention. "Let me share with you a story which is the background of my unique relationship with the Rav," the chassan began.

"Under the British Mandate, I unfortunately was imprisoned on a trumped-up charge and sentenced to death. I joined the ranks of the 'red-clothed elite' in the British prison in Yerushalayim - those who had been sentenced to death. As I sat in my cell brooding over my fate, I found myself broken in spirit, plunging deeper and deeper into depression. All I saw before me were the hangman's gallows.

"It was the first Shabbos of my incarceration, and the Rav appeared at my cell. We talked long and earnestly. He tried to imbue me with courage and hope. I had none. He was unable to budge me from my melancholic state. Finally, completely out of the blue, he said to me, 'Promise me that you will invite me to your wedding!'

"I looked at the Rav incredulously. This was the very last thing I had expected to hear from him. Married? I did not even know a girl. Yet, the Rav repeated his request once again with utmost confidence, as though it were a fait accompli.

"When I heard these words emanate from the Rav's mouth, it changed my entire outlook. The Rav had given me his promise. How could I go wrong? His hope and good cheer stayed with me, imbuing me with hope until that wonderful day that my sentence was commuted. The end of the Mandate brought my release from prison, after which I met my kallah, bride. Rav Aryeh kept his promise."

A war against Amalek from generation to generation. (17:16)

Hashem will continue the war against Amalek from generation to generation - literally, forever, until the memory of that evil nation will be expunged. The Melitzer Rebbe, Shlita, of Ashdod derives from here the profound difference between the Jewish People and the offspring of Amalek. Dor l'dor yeshabach maasecha, "Generation to generation will praise Your deeds" (Tehillim 145:4). The very essence of the Jewish People is dependent upon their mesorah, tradition transmitted throughout the generations, from father to son. Dor l'dor, generation to generation. The lamed connects the first dor, generation, to the next. There is a filial bond that is essential and intrinsic to their relationship. Judaism, its Torah, halachah, lifestyle and culture are all transmitted from yesterday, to today, to tomorrow, via the vehicle of mesoras av, the transmission from father to son. Regarding Amalek, however, it is written midor dor, without the lamed connecting generation to generation. Concerning our archenemy, every generation stands alone without any relationship to the previous generation. It is brand new evil, brand new hatred. Amalek does not have to look back into history to discover new ways to perform evil, to anger Hashem, to loathe Jews. He is able to devise his own methods, to offer his own originality in creating evil schemes for causing misery and persecution for the Jews. Hatred does not need a mesorah. Amalek has it within him.

With the above principle, I think we are now able to understand the irrational hatred that Amalek harbors for the Jewish People. In the spiritual sphere, Amalek represents the essence of irrational, unwarranted hatred. His indifference to what he is inflicting upon himself is nonsensical. Indeed, in the Midrash, Chazal state: "To what is the incident of Amalek to be compared? To a tub of boiling water which no human being was able to enter. Along came one person and jumped into it. He was severely burned, but he cooled it off for others. Likewise, when Klal Yisrael left Egypt and Hashem split the Red Sea before them, followed by the Egyptians drowning in the waters, the fear of the Jews penetrated the hearts of all nations. When Amalek came upon them and challenged them, he was soundly punished, but, at the end of the day, he cooled the awe with which the nations held forth the Jewish people.

Does this make sense? Is it worth committing suicide over one's hatred of the Jews? Whatever arguments one can muster to paint the Jew in the most anti-Semitic manner, when all is said and done, there is no rhyme or reason for anti-Jewish sentiments. Similarly, the fellow that jumps into scalding water is either slightly insane or his hatred is so implacable that it resists even the truth. Amalek represents the fellow who stands back and witnesses the truth in all of its glory - yet ignores it. There is no rationale to Amalek's actions; but then, Amalek needs no reason for his actions. It is not a legacy of hate; he has his own hatred which renews itself without reason on a regular basis.

Amalek is not necessarily an enemy that exists externally. I think there is an Amalek within each of us, an attitude of indifference to what is right and proper; an attitude whereby we say, "I do not care"; "I could care less"; "I do not have to give a reason for my attitude." We have all heard it, and some of us have even said it. We act irrationally, knowing fully well that what we are doing is inappropriate. We simply do not care. This is the Amalek syndrome. There are times when we neither challenge nor negate the truth as an excuse to absolve our actions. We simply do not care. We act with smug indifference and disregard of the truth. This is the result of apathy, cynicism, and skepticism.

How does one battle such indifference? How does one triumph over apathy and cynicism? How does one conquer the skeptic? In other words, can reason overwhelm one to whom reason has no validity? The Baal HaTanya explains that emunah, faith in Hashem, is not something which one attains; rather, faith in G-d is within everyone. It needs to be revealed. Intrinsic to the neshamah, soul, which Hashem has given each one of us, is a connection with the Creator. This connection, which is called faith, is woven into the very essence of the neshamah. Since its source is spiritual and given to us by Hashem, it is beyond reason. It transcends the rational. Thus, we find Jews throughout the ages who have believed in Hashem and have been willing to die for His Name, at times, when reason did not prevail. Faith relates to the truth which is the essence of Hashem, unlike reason which is limited to what the mind is capable of grasping. We can take this one step further. There are individuals who have lived a life far-removed from the Torah way. Yet, under the duress of Kiddush Hashem, Sanctifying Hashem's Name, their inner-faith which had lain dormant for a lifetime suddenly emerges as truth/faith confronts truth/Hashem. The inner Jew concealed under layers of the mundane, entangled in the morass of life's vicissitudes, bursts forth and transcends the obstacles before him.

What about maintaining faith after the fact - after one has hoped, prayed, and yearned - and the answer was, 'no'? How does one pick himself up, "brush off his jacket," and go on? One must still continue believing. A bitter, unhappy woman once came to the home of the tzaddik of Yerushalayim, Horav Aryeh Levine, zl. "Let me sit in your house," she pleaded, "and cry and weep before you."

"You may surely sit," Rav Aryeh replied, "and even cry and weep - but not before me. Direct your tears to our Holy Father in Heaven Above, Who listens to weeping and hears the cries of His human beings."

The woman took a chair, sat herself down and began to lament without pause. She was unable to desist from crying. In between her tears, she sobbed out her tale of woe concerning her husband, who lay mortally ill.

"Do not cry so," Rav Aryeh said. "Hashem will surely have mercy and grant a cure. Your husband will be fine." Alas, a few days later, the woman returned to tell him that her husband had succumbed to his illness. He had gone to his eternal rest. The woman now began to cry in earnest - once again. The tzaddik made every attempt to comfort her, seeking words that would touch her heart, ease her pain. It was to no avail. Finally, after much weeping, she took a "break" and said, "Rebbe, I will accept your solace and cease my lament - but only if you can tell me what became of the thousands of tears I shed over the Tehillim, when I recited its poignant words in supplicating Hashem for my husband's recovery."

"Let me explain," Rav Aryeh gently replied. "When your life on earth ends and you come before the Heavenly Tribunal, you will discover how many severe and harsh decrees against the Jewish People were rescinded as a result of those precious, holy tears which you shed for your late husband. Remember - not one teardrop goes to waste. Hashem counts each and every one, like pearls, and treasures them." When the woman heard these inspirational words, she immediately burst into tears once again. This time, however, the tears were tears of joy, in the knowledge that all of her suffering and prayer were truly not in vain. Sometime later, she returned to Rav Aryeh's home. "Rebbe, tell me again, those beautiful words concerning what happened to those tears that I wept."

She now understood the value of each tear. Furthermore, she now believed. Her faith had been strengthened. What earlier seemed irrational - now - made all of the sense in the world.

Va'ani Tefillah

The mitzvah of Tefillin and Mezuzah, as well as V'shinantam levanecha, the mitzvah of limud haTorah, are included in the first parsha of Krias Shema. Chazal considered these mitzvos to be absolutely vital to the very existence of our individual and national life. Chazal relate various episodes which depict the mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, the Jewish People were prepared to undergo, in order to observe these mitzvos. The lesson which I personally derive from this is that these mitzvos are vital to us, because each mitzvah protects us in a descending manner. Let me explain: Torah is our life, and, thus, when we are suffused in its profundities, we are sort of concealed behind, and within, a protective barrier. The Tefillin are less of a protector, but no less, give refuge to the Jewish soul. When one wears Tefillin, he is ensconced in Hashem's protection. This might not be as powerful as being suffused in the Torah, but the connection is quite apparent. Last, is the mezuzah, which, although one does not wear it, when he raises his hand and touches it, he indicates his inseparable bond with the mezuzah's message. There is the Jew who lives within the Torah, suffused in its profundities. There is another who is not as involved, but at least he dresses the part and remains within the environment of an observant milieu. Last, is the Jew who is out in the world, whose lifestyle and dress code leaves much to be desired - but his connection to

Yiddishkeit is warm. He keeps his hand on the mezuzah, never forgetting the Source of his existence.
Sponsored l'ilui nishmas Aidel bas R' Yaakov Shimon a"h Keller niftar 13 Shevat 5767- Idu Keller. By Marcia & Hymie Keller & Family Perl & Harry M. Brown & Family

www.matzav.com or www.torah.org/learning/drasha
Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Drasha Parshas Beshalach
by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Out of Bounds

In this week's parsha the B'nai Yisrael are given the manna. It falls every day from Heaven - except on the Sabbath. The Jews may not collect it on the Shabbos and thus a double portion falls from heaven on Friday. "See that Hashem has given you the Sabbath; that is why He gives you on the sixth day a two-day portion of bread." In addition the Torah proscribes the Jews from traveling distances on the Shabbos. "Let every man remain in his place; let no man leave his place on the seventh day" (Exodus 16:29).

Rashi explains that this refers to the t'chum Shabbos, a Shabbos ordinance that confines one's boundaries under certain settings to 2,000 cubits from the initial point of origin. One cannot walk farther than that distance on Shabbos. Though this is not the forum for a discussion of the intricate laws of Sabbath borders, including certain limitations to the restrictions, one basic question arises: There are many intricate laws regarding Shabbos activities. None were yet mentioned. Why discuss the concept of confinement to an approximate one-mile radius before the Jews learned about the most basic prohibitions of the Sabbath such as lighting new fires or carrying in the public domain? In fact, this law of t'chum does not carry the severe penalties associated with other transgression. Why, then, is it the first Shabbos law that is introduced?

Once a religious man came to the Brisker Rav, Rav Yitzchok Zev Soleveitchik, and asked him whether he should join a certain organization comprised of people whose views were antithetical to Torah philosophy. Well intentioned, the man felt that his association would perhaps sway the opinions of the antagonists and create harmony among the factions. He would be able to attend meetings and raise his voice in support of Torah outlook.

The Rav advised him not to get involved. The man unfortunately decided to ignore the advice. Within a few months, he was in a quagmire, because policies and actions of the theologically-skewed organization were being linked to him, and were creating animus toward him throughout the community.

For some reason he could not back out of his commitments to the organization. He was torn. How could he regain his reputation as a Torah observing Jew and ingratiate himself to his former community? He returned to the Brisker Rav and asked him once again for his advice.

The Rav told him the following story. There was a young man who aspired to become a wagon driver. He approached a seasoned wagoner and began his training. After a few weeks, he was ready to be certified.

Before receiving an official certification the veteran decided to pose a few practical applications.

"Let's say," he asked his young charge, "that you decide to take a shortcut and deviate from the main highway. You cut through a forest on a very muddy trail. Your wheels become stuck in the mud and your two passengers become agitated. The horses are struggling to pull out of the mud. They can't seem to get out. What do you do?"

The young driver looked up in thought. "Well," he began, "first I would take some wooden planks and try to get them under the wheels. "Ah!" sighed the old timer, "you made a terrible mistake!" "Why?" retorted the neophyte driver, "I followed procedure in the precise manner! What did I do wrong?"

The old man sighed. "Your mistake was very simple. You don't take shortcuts into muddy forests!"

The activist understood the Brisker Rav's message.

Rav Moshe Feinstein of blessed memory explains that before the Jews were even given the laws of Shabbos they were taught an even more important lesson in life. Before you can embark on life's journeys and even approach the holy Shabbos, you must know your boundaries. So before discussing the details of what you can or can not do on Shabbos, the Torah tells us where we can and cannot go on Shabbos. Sometimes, keeping within a proper environment is more primary than rules of order. Because it is worthless to attempt to venture into greatness when you are walking out of your domain.

In Memory of Reb Yisroel Zisha Ben Reb Hersh Mordechai - Irving Tanzer Of Blessed Memory -- Yahrzeit --11 Shevat

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Toras Chaim at South Shore and the author of the Parsha Parables series.
Questions or comments? Email feedback@torah.org. Project Genesis genesis@torah.org Copyright © 2013 by Torah.org Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 Baltimore, MD 21208

from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org>
reply-to: ryfrand@torah.org,
to: ravfrand@torah.org
subject: Rabbi Frand on Parsha
Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Beshalach

Pharaoh's Big Regret

The sefer Meir Derech cites an incident from the life of HaRav HaGaon Zevulun Groz, a disciple of the Alter from Slabodka who was one of the outstanding Mussar personalities of the last generation, and who for many years was the Av Beis Din of Rechovot.

When Rabbi Groz was a young boy leaving home for Yeshiva the first time, his father sat down and studied a strange Medrash from the beginning of Parshas BeShalach with him.

The Medrash discusses the words "Vayehi, B'Shalach Paroah es ha'Am..." (And when Pharaoh sent out the nation...) The Talmud says that normally the word "Vayehi" connotes woe and misfortune. The word "Vayehi" is related to the word "vye" (as in "oy vye iz mir" -- woe unto me). The Medrash says that Pharaoh too was expressing disappointment at his letting the Jews go and gives the following parable:

A person found a strand of pearls but did not realize what he had in his hand (either he did not realize they were pearls or he did not realize that pearls were valuable) and had no reason in his mind to justify keeping the bundle. He met a stranger and offered it to the stranger. The stranger understood what pearls were. When he arrived at the next town, he took the strand of pearls, separated them, and divided them up by size — small, medium, and large. He then set up a little booth and began selling the individual pearls to interested customers who were crowding around. The fellow who originally gave him the bundle walked by this pearl stand and saw the stranger to whom he gave the pearls interacting with his customers. A customer approached the "pearl merchant" and asked him the price of the small pearls. He was told that they were being sold for 100 rubles. Then he wanted to know the price of the large pearls. He was told that they were selling for 1000 rubles. The medium size pearls were going for 800 rubles. When the original benefactor saw what was happening, he tore his clothes in anguish. "I had this fortune in my fingertips and I gave it all away for nothing! Woe is me for letting such a thing happen!"

The Medrash comments: This poor miserable person represents Pharaoh. The precious jewels he had in his possession and gave away were the Children of Israel. Just a short time before, he had told Moshe to take the people and immediately get out of Egypt. Now, when he saw what he let go, he started crying "Vye Vye" – Woe unto me. That, the Medrash concludes, is why the verse begins — "VaYEhi, when Pharaoh sent out the nation..."

That is the end of the Medrash. Zevulun Groz's father pointed out to his son that the analogy that the Medrash makes is difficult to understand. The person who gave away the pearls did a foolish thing. He did not have to get rid of them and yet he gave them away for nothing. That is why he felt terrible, because really he could have kept them for himself. Pharaoh, however, had no choice. He couldn't keep the Jews. He saw his country being destroyed before his eyes. He saw his own first born being killed. He had a gun to his head. What is the comparison between the person who willingly gave away the pearls and the King of Egypt who let the Jews go against his will when he had no other option?

The father then explained the Medrash to his son: True, Pharaoh had no choice, he had to let the Jews go, but he now realized for the first time what a fool he had been all along. He now realized what the Jews were all about. When he saw how G-d Almighty Himself overturned nature for the sake of these people he understood that the individuals he had in Egypt were precious pearls. He regretted the fact that he enslaved such a special people and subjected them to menial and back-breaking labor. During the time of slavery, let us imagine that a person owned a slave who was a musical genius. The owner could have put him on stage to perform and could have made millions of dollars with him. Instead he had him clean toilets or take out the garbage. What a waste of talent and resources.

This is exactly what Pharaoh was thinking to himself. "I could have more properly employed the talents of these people and become the most successful country in the world." Look at history. Look at what Jews have done for the different countries in which they lived. Spain was at its zenith when the Jews were there. Europe was at its zenith when the Jews were there. Pharaoh in hindsight regretted his terrible misuse of the very valuable resource he had in his country for so many years. That's why he thought he was a fool and mourned "Vye is me".

Young Zevulun's Groz's father told him, "Zevulun, you are going to a Yeshiva. This is a window of opportunity for you. You are not going to be in Yeshiva your whole life. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Make the best of it! Do not waste your years. Do not fritter away your time. If you do not make constructive use of your time now then one day later in life you will look back and say to yourself, 'I had the opportunity of a lifetime and I blew it!'"

This is an idea I constantly try to get across to the students I have the privilege of teaching in Yeshiva. While a person learns in Yeshiva, he thinks he is going to be there forever. A 14 year old who sees himself staying in Yeshiva for the next 8, 10, or 12 years often has the attitude that this time period in his life seems infinite! It is not! It is very finite. It comes to an end. Eventually, people begin their careers. Then, grabbing an hour or two or three to learn becomes an outstanding accomplishment. This is what Zevulun Groz's father told him as he was about to leave home for the first time to study in Yeshiva.

The truth of the matter is that this idea does not only apply to a career in Yeshiva, it applies to life itself. A person has certain windows of opportunity in life, but eventually those windows of opportunity begin to close. We tell ourselves, "I will get to that...tomorrow." Too often, we turn around and there is no tomorrow.

The TOMORROW of The Evil Inclination

At the end of the Parsha, the Torah tells the story "And Amalek came and they fought with Israel in Refidim..." [Shmos 17:8] Amalek is the earthly personification of evil and the evil inclination in this world. The very next pasuk says: "And Moshe said to Yehoshua, choose for us men and go out and fight with Amalek tomorrow (machar) I will stand on the top of the hill and the staff of the L-rd will be in my hand."

The Gemara [Yoma 52] makes an interesting comment. The word "machar" [tomorrow] in the previously cited pasuk is ambiguous. It is unclear if the pasuk is to be read "...fight with Amalek tomorrow (semicolon)" or is it to be read "...fight with Amalek (period). Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill..."

Rav Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld asks rhetorically "What difference does it make how the pasuk is to be punctuated? Who cares?" Rav Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld answers that the word MACHAR is crucial in that sentence. The concept of battling Amalek is all about MACHAR. Amalek = The Yetzer Hara, who is always saying TOMORROW.

In other words, the evil inclination sees a person on his way to do something good, a mitzvah. The Yetzer Hara realizes that the person is so determined to do that mitzvah there is no way it will be able to stop him from doing it. So the Yetzer Hara avoids the direct approach of

trying to stop him outright. Instead, the Yetzer Hara uses the tact: Fine, do it. But don't do it now, do it tomorrow.

"You want to start studying Daf Yomi?" "Great idea", says the Yetzer Hara, "but not now while you are raising your kids; not now while you have to make a living." "Start learning Daf Yomi when you are fifty or sixty years old!" The word MACHAR is the perpetual battle cry of the Yetzer Haraw. It is the metaphor for Amalek – procrastinate. Put off doing the good that can be done today, think about doing it MACHAR, tomorrow.

But tomorrows do not always come. There are finite windows of opportunity in different stages of life. When a person makes goals that he wants to accomplish "eventually", he may find that "eventually" never arrives. The Talmud teaches [Eruvin 22a]: "That which I command you today to do..." [Devorim 6:6] – implies "Today to do, but not to (put off to) do tomorrow; today to do and tomorrow to receive the reward (for having done today)"

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

to: weeklydt@torahweb2.org

subject: TorahWeb

Copyright © 2013 by The TorahWeb Foundation.

Rabbi Hershel Schachter The TorahWeb Foundation *The Institution of Tanach*

In several places the Talmud records[1] discussions and debates amongst the Tanoim regarding the inclusion of various seforim in the canon of the kisvei ha'kodesh. Before deciding which seforim to include, how did the Tanoim know that there was supposed to be an entity of kisvei ha'kodesh at all? The chamisha chumshei Torah were dictated word for word and letter for letter to Moshe Rabbeinu by Hakadosh Boruch Hu, and therefore the gemoroh derives halochos from the fact that a specific word is spelled molei or choseir, from seemingly extra words, awkward expressions, or irregular grammatical constructs. Most assume[2], however, that the seforim in neviim and kesuvim were not dictated min ha'shomayim. How, then, did the chachomim know that they should add neviim and kesuvim on to the body of Torah shebichsav?

Rambam (at the end of Hilchos Purim) understood the Talmud Yerushalmi as having said that in the time of moshiach the neviim and kesuvim will lose their kisvei ha'kodesh status. According to his understanding it would seem as if the inclusion of neviim and kesuvim in the canon of kisvei ha'kodesh is merely a horaos shoah m'drabbonon. (Even though Megillas Esther will remain in the times of moshiach, it seems that it will be a text of Torah shebichsav but will not be part of kisvei ha'kodesh; this is a similar notion to the opinion from the days of the Talmud that the Book of Esther was never incorporated into Tanach and yet one can only fulfill the mitzvah m'drabbonon of reading the Megillah if it is written properly on parchment, etc.) However, according to Ra'avad, who thinks that Tanach will remain even after the coming of moshiach, it appears that the idea of the Tanach is a real halacha min haTorah. From where, then, did the anshei k'nesses ha'gedolah know this halacha min haTorah?

Towards the end of parshas B'shalach Hashem used three expressions when instructing Moshe Rabbeinu to record the story of Amalek into the chumash: zos, zikoron, and ba'sefer. The gemoroh (Megillah 7a) comments that this references the division of Torah shebichsav into the three sections of Torah, neviim, and kesuvim.

The expression "zeh hadovor" introducing a nevuah only appears in the chumash when Moshe rabbeinu was given halochos which will be

binding throughout all generations[3]. Only in these instances did Hashem dictate to him word for word and letter for letter. Perhaps this is the meaning of the gemoroh's comment that the word zos is an illusion to Toras Moshe, since zos has the connotation of direct dictation. Regarding distinction between neviim and kesuvim, the following comment is attributed to Reb Chaim Soloveitchik: both neviim and kesuvim were composed with ruach hakodesh, but whereas the kesuvim were initially intended to be written down, and only then to be read, and therefore are referred as kesuvim (writings), the books of the neviim were initially intended to serve as prophecies to be delivered orally and only later to be written down and therefore are referred to as neviim based on the biblical expression, "niv sifosayim - the produce of the lips", i.e. the spoken word. This is also the meaning of the Talmudic statement (Menachos 30a) that Hakodosh Boruch Hu dictated the entire chumash (except for shiras Ha'azinu)[4] to Moshe, and Moshe would first deliver the nevuah orally to Bnei Yisroel only then write it down. Only after the prophecy was first delivered was it considered nevuas Moshe, and only thereafter could it be written down to obtain the status of Toras Moshe.

[1] Mishna Yodayim end of chapter 3, Shabbos 13b, Megillah 7a

[2] See comment of Netziv to Sheiltos, chapter 8, #10

[3] See Rashi at the beginning of parshas Matos and the interpretation of the Kedushas Levi there. See B'ikvei Ha'tzon page 135

[4] Netziv in his commentary to Devorim 31:19

Copyright © 2013 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

www.gtorah.com/

Parshas Beshalach

R' Netanel Gertner

gTorah | The Dvar Torah Service (ng@gtorah.com)

Faith and Salvation

As the newly liberated Jews flee Egypt, their former captors gave chase:

וּפְרָעָה הִקְרִיב וַיִּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת עֵינֵיהֶם וְהִנֵּה מִצְרַיִם נֹסְעֵי אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּירָאוּ מְאֹד וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה' – Pharaoh drew near, and the children of Israel raised their eyes, and Egyptians were pursuing them. They were terrified, and they cried out to the Lord. (14:10)

Although the Torah clearly intends to mean that he drew near i.e. that he and his army approached, it doesn't actually say that at all. It says הִקְרִיב – a word used for sacrifices, meaning “he brought near”. The Medrash says that Pharaoh was indeed מִקְרִיב – what he “brought near” was the Jews, closer to Hashem.

Why does the Torah attribute such credit Pharaoh and what is it he did which deserved such high recognition?

There is a Midrash that teaches that prior to the Jews leaving Egypt, there was a debate in Heaven as to whether they should be allowed to leave. The prosecution and defense, the Kator and Sanegor, would keep going in circles; “The Egyptians worship idols,” was countered with “So do the Jews!” – no redeeming quality could be found in the Jews favour.

The decisive factor in allowing their departure to occur was the faith placed in Hashem through deciding to follow Moshe.

Egypt recognised that their departure would be a massive loss and pursued them.

Suddenly, the Jews faith evaporated:

וַיִּמְאָרוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה הַמִּגְבִּילִי אֵין קְבָרִים בְּמִצְרַיִם לְקַחְתֵּנוּ לְמוֹת בְּפִנְדָּךְ מִה זֹאת עֲשִׂיתָ לָנוּ לְהוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם – They said to Moshe, “Were there no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the desert? What have you have done by taking us out of Egypt!?” (14:11)

Their attachment to Moshe was severed, their faith gone. They cried out to Hashem but didn't mean it – the entire episode demonstrates a lack of belief in God's providence.

Moshe prays for assistance, and Hashem replies: מַה תִּצְעַק אֵלַי – What are you crying out to me for? Now is a time for action! This is וּפְרָעָה הִקְרִיב – Pharaoh brought the Jews close to Hashem; but to the exclusion of Moshe from the equation. It is no praise at all.

So Hashem responds:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה מַה תִּצְעַק אֵלַי דָּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיֹאמְרוּ אֵלַי – The Lord said to Moshe, “Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel and tell them to go!” (14:15) Their salvation was not going to be based on Moshe's prayers, or theirs, as that wasn't the problem.

Moshe's authority had to be re-established, so Hashem gave him the solution: דָּבַר – their salvation would be as it was on leaving Egypt – through displaying faith their leader.

As the Pasuk says upon their entering the Red Sea: וַיִּאֱמִינוּ בַּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ – They believed in Hashem and His servant Moshe. (14:31).

Appreciating Nature

One of the most incredible miracles of all times occurs, the Splitting of the Sea, and it's conclusion happens the same way it began:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה נְטֵה אֶת יָדְךָ עַל הַיָּם וַיָּשְׁבוּ הַמַּיִם עַל מִצְרַיִם עַל רֶכְבּוֹ וְעַל פָּרְשָׁיו – Hashem said to Moshe; “Stretch your hand over the sea, and the water will crash back onto the Egyptians, their chariots, and their horseriders. (14:26)

R' Shimshon Pinkus wonders why it was necessary for him to lift his hand to “close” the sea, as he did when it came to splitting it. The miracle would be over when the last Jew went ashore, and the sea returning to its normal natural state would seem to be something that just ought to “happen”.

R' Shimshon Pinkus explains that Hashem was trying to teach the Jews an essential lesson about “natural” occurrences. Quite understandably, splitting the sea requires an action of some sort because it was a miracle; but the returning of the sea to its natural state is equally miraculous!

We take the laws of nature and physics for granted – Hashem was expressing that we ought not to. There is no fundamental reason which causes things to happen; it is all Hashem. This was the underlying message of Hashem's command for Moshe to stretch out his hand, in the same way, to both start and conclude the miracle.

They are the same from Hashem's perspective.

A maidservant's prophecy

After experiencing the incredible miracle that was the Red Sea splitting, the people collectively sang Az Yashir:

זֶה קְלִי וְאֵנֹהוּ אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי וְאֵרֹמְמֵנוּ – This is my God, and I will glorify Him – the God of my father – and I will exalt Him. (15:2)

The Mechilta observes how any maidservants at the sea saw things that even Yechezkel ben Buzi, who had the most vivid prophecies, did not.

Who were these maidservants? How were there any servants among the Jews, a newly liberated people?

The commentaries wonder how Chazal derived their statement. The Vilna Gaon, the Maharil Diskin and the Maskil L'David accept essentially the same view. Rashi writes that there are two parts to the passuk. The second half, that of “אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי”, is a reference to Hashem being the God of their fathers, illustrating a relationship begun earlier than those saved at the Sea. The above commentaries explain that the word “זה” refers to both clauses; once for “זה קְלִי וְאֵנֹהוּ” and then for “זה אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי וְאֵרֹמְמֵנוּ”. However, the Jews did not leave Egypt alone. Non-Jewish servants and maidservants, a.k.a. the Eirev Rav, came along in order to convert. Unable to refer to their relationship with Hashem as beginning with their forefathers, substituted “זה קְלִי וְאֵנֹהוּ” instead. Did the Jews say both statements? Maskil L'David says they did, whereas the Eirev Rav said only “זה קְלִי וְאֵנֹהוּ”. The Vilna Gaon and Maharil Diskin teach that this passuk was truly split; with the Jews saying “זה אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי וְאֵרֹמְמֵנוּ”, and the non-Jewish servants and maidservants saying “זה קְלִי וְאֵנֹהוּ”.

The commentaries explain how Chazal understood that the maidservant saw “more” than Yechezkel. The word “זה” – “this here” – was used at the Sea to connote something concrete and direct, as opposed to the general “וְאֵרֹמְמֵנוּ” – “I was shown” – used in the later prophecies. Chazal saw from this that even this maidservant, essentially any non-Jew who was there, was able to point and say “זה קְלִי וְאֵנֹהוּ”; and truly saw a greater revelation than even the greatest of the prophets; the Presence of Hashem was manifest in such a great way that one could simply point and say, “This is my G-d”.

Interestingly, there is discussion amongst the Rishonim regarding the nature of Hashem's “revelation” at the Sea. Rabbeinu Bachaye writes that Chazal do not mean to say that the maidservant had greater ability to grasp such things, nor were they wiser than Yechezkel. Hashem simply “showed” Himself more at the Sea than He ever did to Yechezkel. The Rambam disagrees; in describing the lofty levels reached by the Jews in the generation of the Exodus and the Desert travels, he writes: “The lowest of them was like Yechezkel, as Chazal say. This seems to be a reference to the statement of Chazal under discussion. Apparently Rambam understood this statement to be descriptive of the nation's spiritual heights, which enabled them to have as remarkable a revelation as they did.

According to the Rambam, two insights would appear. Firstly, that even the “lowest” Jew at that time was indeed greater than Yechezkel. Secondly, it appears that we need not understand that the maidservant was at least originally non-Jewish. In context, the Rambam is discussing the great level of the Jewish nation at the time, and yet he uses this statement of Chazal as a proof. This leads one to surmise that the Rambam understood that the maidservant in question was Jewish. If this is

the case, our original question returns; why is there a “maidservant” in this newly liberated nation?

The Gemara in Sota 11b tells the story of how the pregnant Jewish women in Egypt would go out to the fields to give birth, and would leave their newborns there. To take them home would mean their being captured and tossed into the Nile. Hashem took care of these newborns, sending angels to clean, feed and care for them. When the Egyptians found out about these children living in the fields, they came to kill them. A miracle occurred; the earth would swallow these children deep enough to protect them from Egyptian plows. After the Egyptians left, the children sprouted out of the ground like plants. When they grew up, herds of them would return to their homes. And when Hashem revealed Himself at the Sea, these children “recognized” Him first having been raised in His presence and said: “זה קלי ואנדרו”. Clearly this Gemara understands that the Jews too said “זה קלי ואנדרו”. Now according to the Maskil L’David, that “זה קלי ואנדרו” was also said by the Jews, this Gemara can be congruent with the Mechilta. However, according to the Vilna Gaon and the others, this Gemara too needs reconciliation with the word usage of the Mechilta: “maidservant,” and we are left with our question. Food for thought.

from: Yeshiva.org.il <subscribe@yeshiva.org.il>
reply-to: subscribe@yeshiva.org.il
By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

An Eruv Primer **By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

This week’s parsha includes one of the major sources for prohibiting carrying on Shabbos, which provides a good opportunity to study some of the complicated halachos of carrying on Shabbos and the halachos of Eruvin. We cannot do justice to this vast and complicated topic in one short article. However, I will attempt to provide an introduction to some of the issues involved.

The Torah prohibits carrying from an enclosed area, called a “reshus hayachid,” to a public, non-enclosed area, a “reshus harabim,” or vice versa. It also prohibits carrying something for a distance of four amos (about seven feet) or more inside a reshus harabim. For our purposes, we will loosely define reshus hayachid as an area completely enclosed by walls, doors, or a combination of both, and a reshus harabim as an unenclosed area at least sixteen amos wide (about twenty-eight feet) meant for public use or thoroughfare. Many additional technical details define a reshus hayachid and a reshus harabim, some of which will be discussed later in this article.

A non-enclosed area that does not qualify as a reshus harabim is categorized as a “karmelis.” According to Torah law, one may carry inside, into and from a karmelis. However, Chazal ruled that a karmelis must be treated with the stringencies of both a reshus hayachid and a reshus harabim. This means that under most circumstances it is forbidden to carry inside, into, or from any area that is not completely enclosed. This is the way we are familiar with observing Shabbos – one does not carry in any unenclosed area. (I will later point out a significant halachic difference between a reshus harabim and a karmelis.)

Chazal also forbade carrying from one reshus hayachid to another when they are not owned by the same person. Thus, I may not carry on Shabbos from my house to my neighbor’s, even if both properties are completely enclosed. If both areas are owned by the same person, I may carry from one house to the other, as long as I don’t pass through an unenclosed area or an area owned by someone else. I may carry from my house to my neighbor’s if we make an “eruv” which allows the two areas to be treated as if they have common ownership.

BUT I THOUGHT “ERUV” REFERS TO A PHYSICAL STRUCTURE?

The word eruv refers to several different conventions instituted by Chazal. We just mentioned the “eruv chatzeiros” that permits carrying between different areas that are enclosed but have separate ownerships. We create this eruv by making the property owners partners in a loaf of bread or a box of matzohs, which for these purposes is sufficient to consider the properties jointly owned. Once this eruv chatzeiros is made, one may carry from one residence within the eruv to another, since the eruv gives them common ownership. Common practice is to make the eruv with matzohs since they last a long time. Custom is to renew the eruv every Erev Pesach so that it is not forgotten.

One must make sure that the matzohs remain edible. I know of instances where the eruv was forgotten about and long afterwards it was discovered that the matzohs were no longer edible. Who knows how long people were carrying in a prohibited way because no one had bothered to check the matzohs!

WHAT IF THE AREA IS NOT ENCLOSED?

Our discussion until now has been dealing with an area that is already fully enclosed. However, someone interested in carrying in an area that is not fully enclosed must close in the area before making an eruv chatzeiros. The most common usage of the word eruv is in reference to this enclosure.

HOW DOES ONE ENCLOSE AN AREA?

The area must be completely enclosed by halachically acceptable “walls” and “doors.” Walls, buildings, fences, hills, and cliffs can all be used to enclose an area. However, when using structures and land features that already exist, invariably there will still be gaps between the structures that must be filled in to complete the enclosure.

The most common method to bridge the gaps is to make a “tzuras hapesach.” A tzuras hapesach vaguely resembles a doorway, consisting of two sideposts and a lintel that passes over them, which are the basic components of a doorway.

According to halacha, a tzuras hapesach is considered a bona fide enclosure. Thus, if all gaps between the existing “walls” are “closed” with tzuras hapesach, the area is regarded as fully enclosed.

Some opinions allow small gaps to remain within the eruv’s perimeter without a tzuras hapesach. Many eruvim in North America rely upon this leniency, whereas in Eretz Yisrael the accepted practice is not to.

A COMMON PROBLEM

The halacha is that a planted field the size of 5000 square amos (approximately 14,000 square feet) within an enclosed area invalidates the ability to carry within the eruv. Similarly, an area of this size that is so overgrown that one would not walk through it will invalidate an eruv. This is a very common problem that is often overlooked. Although every responsible eruv has mashgichim to check the perimeters of the eruv, there is also a need to check periodically within the eruv to see that no large areas are being planted or have become this overgrown. I know of numerous instances where, unfortunately, this problem existed for a while before it was detected.

OTHER DETAILS OF TZURAS HAPESACH

There are myriad details of how to make a tzuras hapesach, far more than can be detailed here. For example, most authorities accept the use of a wire for the lintel of a tzuras hapesach, although many opinions require it to be extremely taut (see Mishnah Berurah 362:66 and Shaar Hatziyun). Most eruvim use telephone wires as the “lintel” of the tzuras hapesach, although there are poskim who prohibit them (see Shu”t Yeshuos Malko, Orach Chaim #20). When telephone wires are used, posts or boards are placed directly below existing telephone wires, with care taken that the wire passes directly over the post. The lintel must pass directly above the sideposts, although the posts are not required to be tall enough to reach the “lintel” (Eruvin 11b). For example, if the wire used as lintel is twenty feet high and the side posts are only four feet tall, this is perfectly legitimate as long as the wire passes directly above the sideposts and that nothing intervenes between them. To guarantee that the wire remains above the posts, it is a good idea to use fairly wide “posts” and to periodically check that the wire is still directly above the posts. From personal experience I can tell you that as the posts or the telephone polls settle it is not unusual that they shift so that the post is no longer under the wire. This is also something that eruv mashgichim must periodically check but, unfortunately, often do not.

The tzuras hapesach is invalid if something intervenes in the gap between the top post and the side post. Thus, it is invalid to rest a side post against the side of a house and attach the top post to its roof, if any overhang of the roof extends below the lintel and above the side post. Similarly, the eruv is invalid if a sign intervenes between the sidepost and the wire being used as lintel.

I mentioned above that there is a major difference in halacha between a reshus harabim and a karmelis. A tzuras hapesach can only be used to enclose an area that is a karmelis where the prohibition against carrying is only rabbinic. It cannot be used to permit carrying in a reshus harabim where it is forbidden to carry min haTorah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 364:2).

This leads us into our next discussion.

CONTROVERSIAL ERUVIN

A strange phenomenon of hilchos eruvim is that although Chazal created the concept of eruv to facilitate peace among the Jewish people, probably no other mitzvah has been involved in so much controversy. Why is this?

The details of hilchos eruvim are extremely complicated and often subject to dispute. It is not unusual to find a situation where one rav forbids a certain eruv min HaTorah, while another rav rules that it is perfectly kosher. Although both decisions are based on the same Gemara and halacha, one posek condemns as chilul Shabbos what the other considers a mere chumrah or less.

This is not a new phenomenon. Let us share a halachic discussion that is over a thousand years old.

600,000 PEOPLE

There is a very old dispute whether a reshus harabim (min haTorah) only exists if the area is used by at least 600,000 people, just as the reshus harabim of Klal Yisrael in the desert was used by 600,000 people, the members of the Jewish nation. (Indeed, the question is raised that a reshus harabim should require several million people because the 600,000 count only men over twenty and did not include the women and children.)

Rashi (Eruvin 59a) writes that only an area with this number of people constitutes a reshus harabim that cannot be enclosed with a tzuras hapesach. This excludes all the towns and cities inhabited by Jews from the Middle Ages until fairly modern times. They did not have 600,000 people and could therefore be enclosed by a tzuras hapesach. However, many rishonim disagree with Rashi and rule that any street or marketplace sixteen amos wide is a reshus harabim and cannot be enclosed with a tzuras hapesach. This issue is made more confusing since the Shulchan Aruch in Orach Chayim 345:7 rules strictly, whereas in 303:18 he appears to rule leniently. Many major authorities follow the lenient interpretation (Magen Avraham; Taz in 345), and it was upon this basis that most Eastern European communities constructed eruvim. However, according to most authorities this lenience cannot be used as the basis to permit an eruv today since most large Jewish communities are in places with more than 600,000 people.

A FIGHT OVER AN ERUV

In the thirteenth century, Rav Yaakov ben Rav Moshe of Alinsiya wrote a letter to the Rosh explaining why he forbade a tzuras hapesach eruv in his town. In his response, the Rosh replied that Rav Yaakov's concerns were groundless and that he should immediately construct an eruv. Subsequent correspondence reveals that Rav Yaakov did not change his mind and still refused to erect an eruv in his town. The Rosh severely rebuked him for this recalcitrance, insisting that if he (Rav Yaakov) persisted he would be placed in cherem. The Rosh also ruled that Rav Yaakov had the status of a zakein mamrei, a Torah scholar who rules against the decision of the Sanhedrin, which is a capital offense (Shu"t HaRosh 21:8)! All this demonstrates that heated disputes over eruvim are by no means a recent phenomenon.

OVER-RELYING ON AN ERUV

Although there are many obvious advantages to having a kosher eruv, we should always be aware that there are also drawbacks. One major drawback is that people become unprepared if the eruv goes down one week. Suddenly, they cannot take their reading glasses to shul and their plans of pushing the stroller so they can eat the Shabbos meals at someone else's house are disrupted.

Another disadvantage is that people become so used to having an eruv that they no longer pay serious attention to the prohibition against carrying. Children raised in such communities, and even adults who always lived in cities with an eruv, sometimes hardly realize that there is any prohibition against carrying.

In Israel, where virtually every town has an eruv, the assumption that there is always an eruv can be a tremendous disadvantage as the following story illustrates: A moderately-learned frum Israeli moved to an American city with no eruv. He was hired by a yeshiva as cook and was responsible for the everyday kashrus of the yeshiva's kitchen. The first Shabbos on his job, the new cook went for an afternoon stroll with his family, baby carriage and all. This raised a whirlwind in the yeshiva - people were shocked that they had entrusted the yeshiva's kashrus to someone who openly desecrated Shabbos! Only later was it clarified that the cook was unaware that a city might not have an eruv. Living his entire life in cities with an eruv, he had automatically assumed that every city with a Jewish community had such a fixture!

In conclusion, we see that disputes among poskim over eruvim are not recent phenomena. In practice, what should an individual do? The solution proposed by Chazal for any such shaylah is "Aseh lecha rav, vehistalek min hasafek," "Choose someone to be your rav, and remove yourself from doubt." The rav can guide you to decide whether it is appropriate for you to carry within a certain eruv, after weighing factors including what heterim were used in the eruv's construction, care of eruv maintenance and family factors. The psak and advice of one's rav can never be underestimated!
