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date:Jan 28, 2021, 8:56 PM
subject:Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg - Kindness: The Catalyst for Salvation
Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg
Kindness: The Catalyst for Salvation

In the shiras hayam, Klal Yisrael praise Hashem for his kindness and mercy. "Nachisa b'chas'dicha am zu ga'alta - With your kindness, You guided this people that You redeemed" (Shemos 15:13.) What kindness are they referring to?

The Midrash (Tanna D'bei Eliahu 23) states that when Klal Yisrael were in Mitzrayim, they gathered together and made a covenant to act toward each other with compassion and sensitivity. What prompted them to make this special arrangement? The Chofetz Chaim (Shemos ibid.) explains that when the Jewish people saw that Pharaoh's decrees were becoming progressively harsher, and the oppression was unbearable, they realized they needed a salvation. But what could they do to merit a redemption if they did not deserve to be saved? They decided that if they acted toward each other with kindness and compassion, hopefully that would awaken a heavenly kindness, middah k'negged middah, and Hashem would treat them with mercy and hasten their redemption.

This, suggests the Chofetz Chaim, is the kindness that is hinted to in the shirah. Hashem mercifully calculated the end of the slavery in Mitzrayim in a way that hastened the redemption. As it says in the Haggadah shel Pesach, "Hakadosh Boruch Hu chisheiv es ha'keitz." It was only through divine mercy that Klal Yisrael were given an early release from their persecution in Mitzrayim. But according to the Midrash, the catalyst for that early liberation

was the compassion and sensitivity that Klal Yisrael showed toward each other.

The Chofetz Chaim adds that perhaps this is the kindness that Hashem highlights, in the words of Yirmiyahu HaNavi (2:2), "Zacharti lach chessed ne'urayich - I remember the kindness of your youth." Hashem is saying that He will never forget the chessed that Klal Yisrael did with each other in Mitzrayim. And in fact, it was that kindness which tipped the scales and brought about yetzias Mitzrayim.

This idea that human kindness can generate divine mercy is applicable not only to the collective unit of Klal Yisrael, but to individuals as well. Chazal comment in different places that one who acts with compassion is judged more favorably. "One who is merciful with others is shown divine mercy" (Shabbos 151b.) "One who relinquishes his measure of retribution (ma'avir al midosav), the heavenly tribunal overlooks all of his sins" (Yoma 87b.) "Whose transgression does Hashem pardon? One who overlooks sin committed against him" (Rosh Hashana 17a.)

The Ramchal (Mesilas Yesharim 19) explains that by strict legal standards, no one would receive a favorable heavenly judgement. But by acting with kindness and sensitivity toward others, a person can merit a merciful judgement because even if Hashem follows the strict rule of law, one who acts with kindness should be judged with the same measure of kindness. Therefore, the more compassionate a person is with others, the more compassion he will be shown in the heavenly court.

In the tefillah of selichos on fast days and especially on Yom Kippur, we invoke Hashem's thirteen attributes of mercy multiple times. Chazal understood (Rosh Hashana 17b) that Hashem promised Moshe Rabbeinu that these thirteen attributes of mercy will never return empty-handed - einan chozros reikam. Rashi writes that what Hashem meant is that whenever Klal Yisrael mention these attributes of mercy, their tefillah will always be accepted. But this seems difficult because unfortunately there are times that our tefillos are not answered favorably despite the fact that we mention the thirteen attributes of mercy.

Rav Avraham Saba explains in Tzror Hamor (Shemos 34:5) that Hashem did not mean that simply mentioning the attributes of mercy will cause the tefillos of Klal Yisrael to be answered. Rather, if Klal Yisrael exemplify these attributes in their behavior, "to show mercy, to be gracious to the weak, to be slow to anger, to act with kindness one to another, to overlook injustices committed against them", then their tefillos will never be ignored. When Hashem told Moshe, "Ya'asu lefanai k'seder hazeh - Let them perform this order before me," He did not simply mean that they should recite this order of attributes. What He meant is that their behavior should reflect these attributes, and that will ensure that their tefillos will always be answered favorably.

In times of crisis and challenge, we need divine mercy to pull through. The way to earn Hashem's kindness is by acting with compassion and sensitivity toward others. When we incorporate the thirteen attributes of mercy into our behavior, we are assured that middah k'negged middah, Hashem will act toward us with mercy as well.

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from:Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org>
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date:Jan 27, 2021, 2:50 PM
subject:Rav Frand - Wasting Precious Opportunities
Parshas Beshalach

Wasting Precious Opportunities
What Was Pharaoh Crying About?

The parsha begins with the words "Vayehi b'shalach Paroah es ha'Am" (And it was when Pharaoh sent out the nation) [Shemos 13:17]. Chazal say that the word "Vayehi" usually connotes pain or distress—from the word

“vay” (woe). They add that when Pharaoh saw the Jews leaving Egypt, he cried out in pain. (Oy! What did I do!)

The Medrash gives a parable: A person had a string of pearls but he did not know what they were worth. To him, they were just like a string of worthless beans. He met someone and asked him, “Would you like this string of round little balls that I have? I have no use for it!” The fellow took it from him and then went into the city and separated the various pearls by size – large, medium, and small. He proceeded to do a booming business selling the individual pearls to customers who knew their true value. One day the person who gave him the string of pearls came into the store and saw what a fortune this other person was making from his “gift.” Once he saw that (and realized what he had given up), he tore his clothes in mourning. He bemoaned the fact that he had this fortune in his hands and he gave it away. “Woe is me!”

The Medrash says that this was the story with Pharaoh. The Children of Israel were the string of pearls that he had in his possession. When he saw them leaving Egypt, he cried out in pain. Vay(ehi) – Woe is me! Look what I had, and I gave it away!

Rav Zevulun Groz was a great man who lived in Jerusalem. He was the Av Beis Din (Head of the Rabbinical Court) of the city of Rechovot. When he was a young student going away to Yeshiva, his father told him this Medrash. His father asked a question on the Medrash: What is the analogy here? The fellow who gave away the pearls did it voluntarily. No one forced him to give them away. He made a silly decision because he did not know the value of what he had. On the other hand, Pharaoh did not release the Children of Israel willingly. He was forced to let them go because his country was falling apart and everyone was dying as punishment for him not letting them go. When someone has a gun to your head or is twisting your arm, you sometimes have no choice but to comply even against your own wishes.

His father explained to the young Zevulun Groz that the reason Pharaoh was crying when he saw the Jews leaving was not because he sent them away. He had no choice but to send them away. The reason he was crying was that when he saw them leaving and he saw the formation with which they left – the order in which they left and how civilized they were – he said to himself: I am an idiot! I had such a nation under my power and I had them make bricks. They possess the genius to be artisans. They could have been architects. They could have done so much more with their talents. I had such a talented people, and I made them into ditch diggers. That was why he was now so regretful. Retroactively, he realized he had these pearls, these diamonds, and rather than using them for elevated purposes and for building up the economy of his country, he made them brick makers and brick layers. Rabbi Groz senior told his son: You are going away to Yeshiva. It is a golden opportunity. It is not always during a person’s lifetime that he has the opportunity to use even a limited period of years to accomplish that which is possible to accomplish in Yeshiva. Do not look back at the end of this period and say, “Look what I had, and I did not take advantage of it!” His son took this message to heart and indeed became a great person.

If there is one constant message that I try to share with my students in Yeshiva, it is this very message. The limited years a person has available to study in Yeshiva are precious. They are years that will not be duplicated. The rest of our lives are full of the distractions of earning a living and all kinds of family distractions. The ability to be able to sit and to learn in a focused and undisturbed manner during this brief period of our lives is like a string of pearls. They are the easiest years of a person’s life. Do not make the mistake of looking back and saying “Ah! Look what I had and I did not take advantage of it!”

Horse and Rider Were Thrown Into the Sea – Why Punish the Horses?

After the Shirah, the pasuk says, “Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aharon, took the drum in her hand, and all the women went forth after her with drums and with dances. Miriam spoke up to them (va’Taan lahem Miriam), ‘Sing to Hashem for He is exalted above the arrogant, having hurled horse

with its rider into the sea.” [Shemos 15:20-21] The way most of us understand this parsha is that the men did their thing and then the women wanted to do their thing as well – so Miriam led them in an abridged version of the men’s Az Yashir song.

The Tolner Rebbe asks four good questions on these last two pesukim:

- (1) Why does the Torah need to tell us here that Miriam is a prophetess?
- (2) What does “Va’Taan lahem Miriam” mean? Literally Va’Taan means she answered them (rather than she led them [in song]). When leading in singing the appropriate verb is, as it says in this week’s Haftarah, VaTashar Devorah (and Devorah sang) not Va’Taan!
- (3) The word ‘Lahem’ means ‘them’ in masculine. In the context of this narrative, where she is speaking to the women, we would expect to find the feminine pronoun Lahan.
- (4) Out of all the pesukim in the Shirah, why does Miriam choose to repeat the expression “Sus v’Rochvo Rama b’Yam” (having hurled horse with its rider into the sea) to synopsise the entire Shira in this very abbreviated version?

Those are the Tolner Rebbe’s four questions.

The Tolner Rebbe answers his questions by redirecting our entire understanding of this incident. It is not that Miriam took the drum and then all the women followed her and they did the dances that women do at chassunahs. This is not what happened over here.

The explanation is that this was a protest (Hafganah!). How does the Tolner Rebbe see this? The word “the prophetess” gives us a clue. Miriam saw what was happening over here with Divine Vision. The normal human eye would not be able to discern this. But she saw what was happening. It was a demonstration.

What was the demonstration about? “What about us! Are we chopped liver?” Here, our rabbis tell us that in the merit of the righteous women, our ancestors left Egypt [Sotah 11b-12a]. It was the men who had given up hope, and it was the women who kept them going and encouraged them to procreate. Now, during the final celebration of our exodus, is it just the men who are going to sing praises to G-d? What about us? What are we? Miriam saw what was happening. She was not happy with the fact that all the women were following after her with drums and dancing because this was not an innocuous celebration. This was a protest! She heard the women complaining, “It is not fair that the men will have all the glory and be the ones who are the celebrants! What about us?”

The pasuk therefore uses the verb “Va’Taan Lahem Miriam” – Miriam responded to them! There was a question here which needed to be answered. The question was “What about us?” And Miriam answered “Lahem” – “Oh! You want to be like the men? Okay, I will answer you like men.” She is answering a question that we hear until this very day. “Why can’t women do this? Why can’t women do that? It is not fair!”

Therefore, her answer was very specifically “Horse and rider were thrown into the sea.” The cavalry, the guys who were riding the horses had to drown in the sea as punishment for their cruelty to us. That we can understand. But what was the crime of the horses? Why did they also need to perish?

The explanation is that the Almighty gives as much credit or as much blame to the person who facilitates, as He does to the person who actually does whatever was facilitated. G-d considers facilitators just as important as those who act.

This was the essence of the Tolner Rebbe’s lesson: If “all a Kolel wife does is bake and cook and clean and diaper and take care of the children, but as a result, she facilitates her husband to be able to sit and learn, she receives the same reward from Heaven as her husband receives. If someone learns Daf Yomi, and during that time his wife takes care of the children so that he can learn, she receives the same reward.

We see this principle from “the horse and its rider were thrown into the sea.” The Ribono shel Olam punishes the horse because it facilitated the rider. If this is the way it works by punishment, by reward it certainly works like that!

Miriam responded to them: "I know where you ladies are coming from, but that is the way the Ribono shel Olam built Klal Yisrael. Judaism is a role-oriented religion. Kohanim do some things, Leviim do other things, Yisraelim do other things. Men do some things and women do other things. The system will not work unless everybody pulls their weight and does what they are supposed to do. These are the words of Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto in the beginning of his Mesilas Yesharim (Path of the Just). "A person must know what his responsibility is in this world." (Mah chovoso b'Olam).

This is not a popular idea because everybody wants to be the same. Today in "their infinite wisdom" the United States Armed Forces said that women can fight in combat roles just as well as men. I just don't get it! But "it's fair!" Fair is fair! This is not the way Yiddiskeit works. Yiddishkeit works with the principle "I have my role and you have your role!" That is why Miriam told the women "the horse and the rider were thrown into the sea."

The Tolner Rebbe uses this insight to suggest an awesome insight into a pasuk in Shir HaShirim [1:9] "With My mighty steeds who battled Pharaoh's riders I revealed that you are My beloved." Did you ever think about the meaning of this pasuk? It might sound like the Lover is telling his Beloved that she is like a horse! If you go home tonight and tell your wife "I love you like a horse," see where that will get you! The simple interpretation is that the Lover is saying "You are not just an average horse, you are like the best of Pharaoh's steeds, as it were. You are the best of women!" This is the simple interpretation.

The Tolner Rebbe explains differently: "I love you because that is the lesson of the horses of Pharaoh's stables who were thrown into the sea with their riders." You are my facilitator and I owe everything I have accomplished to you!

The Rebbe related an incident of a woman in her nineties who came to him and told him a story involving a conversation she had with Rav Moshe Feinstein several years earlier. This woman was a cleaning lady in a big Yeshiva for forty years. Someone introduced her to Rav Moshe and told him "This woman cleaned the Yeshiva for forty years." Rav Moshe told her: You have the same reward as all the students who learned in that Yeshiva for those forty years. The woman started crying as she related this story to the Tolner Rebbe about what Rav Moshe Feinstein had told her some thirty years earlier!

This is the power of a facilitator. The Almighty grants the same reward (or punishment) to a facilitator as the person being facilitated. Therefore, Miriam told the women (Va'Taan Lahem Miriam) they do not have anything to complain about! You are going to get the same Olam HaBah as the men! Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org

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from: The Office of Rabbi Sacks <info@rabbisacks.org>

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subject: Looking Up (Beshallah 5781)

Rabbi Sacks zt"l had prepared a full year of Covenant & Conversation for 5781, based on his book Lessons in Leadership. The Office of Rabbi Sacks will continue to distribute these weekly essays, so that people all around the world can keep on learning and finding inspiration in his Torah.

Looking Up (Beshallah 5781)

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The Israelites had crossed the Red Sea. The impossible had happened. The mightiest army in the ancient world – the Egyptians with their cutting-edge, horse-drawn chariots – had been defeated and drowned. The children of Israel were now free. But their relief was 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: The Israelites moved from a situation in which the leader (with the help of God) did everything for the people, to one in which the leader empowered the people to act for themselves.

During the battle, the Torah focuses our attention on one detail. Moses climbs 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' raised hand – the very staff which he used to perform mighty 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. Their faith gave them the confidence and courage to win.

A fundamental principle of leadership is being taught here. A leader must empower the team. They cannot always do the work for the group; they must do it for themselves. But the leader must, at the same time, give them the absolute confidence that they can do it and succeed. The leader is responsible for their mood and morale. During battle, a captain must betray no sign of weakness, doubt or fear. That is not always easy, as we see in this week's episode. Moses' upraised hands "became weary." All leaders have their moments of exhaustion and at such times the leader needs support – even Moses needed the help of Aaron and Hur, who then helped him to maintain his position. 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 attuning – "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 their 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 foundation for 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 when they are inwardly full of doubts and hesitations. If they betray their private fears in word or gesture, they risk demoralising the group.

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

When he hears this news, David is heartbroken. His son may have rebelled against him, but he is still his son and his death is devastating. David covers his face 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 lament 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)

King 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 their private emotions to protect the morale of those they lead. 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 Sautoula, 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 instruments 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.

This is one of the enduring themes of Tanach: the importance of looking 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 look up. So, sometimes, do we.

It is the task of a leader to empower, but it is also their 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.

from:Mordechai Tzion <toratravaviner@gmail.com> via gmail.mcsv.net
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date:Jan 24, 2021, 8:08 AM

subject:Short & Sweet - Text Message Q&A #329

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva of Aterest Yerushalayim

Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample: Wedding Hall which also Dialysis

Q: After a dialysis treatment is one required to say Asher Yatzar (the blessing recited after using the restroom)?

A: No. May you have a speedy recovery.

Charedim and Religious Zionists in Corona Hotel

Q: There is a Corona hotel which houses students from Charedi Yeshivot and Religious Zionist Yeshivot. A Charedi Yeshiva student wrote that he discovered a truth which was hidden from him, that the Religious-Zionist Yeshiva students are serious and dedicated Torah learners just like them. Is there any joy greater than this?

A: It is certainly always good to meet, but we need humility and to be truthful. We still have much that we need to improve and to learn from the Charedim. Yeshiva students such as this are rare. We believe that all Klal Yisrael will be uplifted.

Sunshine

Q: Does exposure to the sun's rays promote good health?

A: Definitely, because the sun is a Divine creation. Overexposure is detrimental just as an overdose of anything else that is good. A few minutes a day is enough to provide vitamin D, to strengthen brainpower, to uplift one's spirit and to improve sleep. Caution is required to avoid sunstroke, damage vision and skin cancer. The Divine creation is praiseworthy.

Military Stories

Q: I saw a response in the Mishnah Berurah stating that we should not read stories about wars. Does this include wars of the Israel Defense Forces?

A: No. The Mishnah Berurah refers to wars that are a waste of time, whereas the Israel Defense Forces fulfill a positive commandment.

Netilat Yadayim with Automatic Tap

Q: In the event that one doesn't have access to a vessel used for the specific purpose of Netilat Yadayim, is washing at an automatic tap permissible?

A: No. The tap is operated by an internal mechanism and this doesn't comply with the requirement.

Education for Modesty

Q: What is the most successful way to educate people to be modest?

A: 1. Teach them to be humble and not to strive to draw attention to themselves. 2. Teach by example: your own modest manner influences those around you.

Rubber Bracelets

Q: Are the colorful rubber bracelets considered feminine jewelry (and thus prohibited for males)?

A: This is not a female accessory. It is meant for males and females alike.

Donning a Kerchief as Opposed to a Wig

Q: I prefer that my wife cover her hair with a kerchief but she insists on covering her hair with a wig. Which one of us is right?

A: Your wife has the right to dress in whichever manner suits her. And you may choose whatever style of Kippa that suits you (Ha-Rav Meir Ha-Levi Soloveitchik, who served as the head of the Brisk Yeshiva in Yerushalayim, told the following interesting story related by his father, Ha-Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik: When Rav Itchele Peterburger came on Aliya, he lived in Yerushalayim. A while after his arrival, representatives of the local community approached him and requested that he switch his garb and dress in the same fashion as the residents among him. In addition, they requested that his wife wear a kerchief instead of a wig. To this he immediately replied that he's definitely prepared to oblige, but that he won't suggest that his wife change anything, albeit a serious matter. Rav Itchele added that had he known in advance, he wouldn't have come to join their community and that perhaps since he's already there maybe they could reconsider. Rav Itchele staunchly refused to raise the issue with his wife for the simple reason that he clearly understood that she alone has the right to dress however she pleases (In the book "De-Chazitei Le-Rebbe Meir" Volume 1, p. 196).

Mother's Role

Q: Where in the Torah and in the Oral Law is there a teaching that the education of the children is incumbent upon the mother?

A: 1. It's simply logical and there's no need to elaborate. 2. We are taught to heed and not forsake the Torah of our mothers. 3. The fathers are also bound to educate their children.

Kissing iPhone used for Davening

Q: After praying, people customarily kiss the Siddur. Should one kiss an iPhone used in place of a Siddur?

A: No.

Special thank you to Orly Tzion for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parashah Sheet

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Parshas Beshalach

Interactive Miracles

This week we read in the Torah the final chapter of the liberation of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage and slavery. After centuries of servitude, the children of Jacob are finally freed from their Egyptian taskmasters and embark on their journey of building a civilization. Yet, the Torah goes to great lengths to point out to us that freedom as a concept cannot exist in a vacuum.

The people must have food to eat and water to drink. Though the Jewish people will live for 40 years in an unnatural environment in the desert of Sinai, they do not escape the constant necessities of human life. The Lord will provide these necessities through miracles – bread from heaven and water from the flint rock. These miracles, perhaps like all other miracles, will require human participation – the gathering of the heavenly bread that falls to the earth, and the striking of the rock to force it to give forth waters.

It can be asked that if Lord is performing miracles for the Jewish people anyway, then why aren't the miracles complete, why are they always somehow dependent upon human action as well? The answer to that question lies in the question itself. The adage that God helps those who help themselves is a basic tenet and value in Judaism. Miracles provide opportunities, but these, like all opportunities, must be initiated by humans for them to be beneficial and effective.

It is difficult for the Jewish people over the 40-year sojourn in the desert of Sinai to appreciate their newfound freedom. People become accustomed to almost anything, and this includes slavery and servitude. An independent people create their own society, provide their own needs and continually jostle in a contentious world to retain that freedom.

A people accustomed to slavery will find this to be particularly challenging. Slavery induced in their minds and spirit a false sense of regularity that bordered upon security. The president of the United States once remarked that if one wants to be certain of having three meals a day, then one should volunteer to spend the rest of one's life in prison. He will receive this throughout his incarceration.

In the story of the Jewish people in the desert, when faced with difficult circumstances and upsetting challenges, there was always the murmur that they should return to Egypt and 'go back to prison', for at least then they would be certain of having their three meals a day.

According to many Torah commentaries, this was the fundamental reason why the generation that left Egypt could not be the generation that would enter and conquer the land of Israel and establish Jewish independence in their own state and under their own auspices. Psychologically they were not ready to be a free people with all the burdens that accompany freedom and independence. They could accept the Torah, be intellectually religious, admire Moshe and believe in the Almighty. But they were unable to free themselves from the psychological shackles of Egyptian bondage. And there are no miracles that can do that for human beings. Only human beings can do that for themselves.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

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Parshas Beshalach

Leap of Faith

A defining moment of Jewish faith takes place on the shores of the Yam Suf, the Reed Sea, as the fleeing, fledgling nation is cornered into a quick and fateful decision. Trapped between raging waters and a raging Egyptian army, the nation had but few choices to make. Some froze in fright. Others wanted to run back to Egypt straight into the hands of their former tormentors. Others just prayed. Still others wanted to wage war against the former taskmasters. But one group, led by Nachshon ben Aminadav forged ahead. Replacing fear with faith, he plunged into the sea. Only then did the sea split and the Jews cross. The Egyptians pursued. The waters returned, and the enemy was left bobbing in a sea of futility, totally vanquished under the turbulent waters. In defining that moment of faith, the Torah tells us, "Israel saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt; and the people revered Hashem, and they had faith in Hashem and in Moses, His servant" (Exodus 14:31). The strange connection between faith in Hashem and Moshe His servant needs clarification. What is the minor role of the servant in relationship to the great role of faith in the Almighty?

After hearing a fiery speech about the meaning of faith, a disciple of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter approached him and asked, "Rebbe, are you telling me that if I have perfect faith in Hashem, He will provide me with all my needs?" Rabbi Salanter affirmed. "Yes, my son," he smiled. "If one has perfect faith in the Almighty, He will provide for him." The man mad a quick reposte. "Good, if that is the case I need no longer work. I will sit and study Torah and rely solely on my faith, and the 20,000 rubles that I'll need to survive will come to me in full as if it were manna from Heaven!" The man went home and began to study Torah. But after one week when the money did not appear he returned to the Rabbi to complain. "I have the faith you claimed to need, and so far no money has arrived!"

Rabbi Yisrael was pensive. "I'll tell you what," he said. "I will offer you 8,000 rubles cash today if you would commit yourself to give me the 20,000 rubles that you are sure will come to you because of your faith." The man jumped from his chair. "8,000 rubles! Sure! I'll take it." Rabbi Yisrael Salanter smiled, "who in his right mind would give up 20,000 rubles for a mere 8,000 rubles? Only someone with does not have perfect faith that he will receive 20,000 rubles! If one is positive that he is about to receive 20,000 rules, and is absolutely confident that it is coming, he would not, in his right mind, give it up for a mere 8,000! Obviously you have more faith in my 8,000 rubles then in Hashem's 20,000!"

The Torah tells us that the nation feared God, and it believed in Moshe, His servant. Notice that the first and foremost belief is in the Almighty. That immortal faith is the springboard for faith in all the mortal meesengers, who are only vehicles of His command.

Normally, more or less, man believes in man much faster then he believes in G-d. On a hot tip, people throw thousands at the market. Ominous predictions of economic forecasters send us into panic. On a doctor's dire prognosis, we react with despair. We forget that the source of faith is in the Almighty. Only then can we believe in his messengers.

Rabbi Yeruchom Levovitz, z"l, the Mashgiach of the Mirrer Yeshiva explains that the Jews at the sea reached the highest level of faith. Their following of Moshe was not in any sense due to his charisma or prior leadership. It was due to a total subjugation to a faith in an immortal Hashem. Only then did they follow the lead of a Moshe. That is the faith of those who take the leap. It is a faith they would not trade or deal for any offer in the world.

Dedicated by Michael & Rikki Charnowitz in memory of Ephraim Spinner Liluy Nishmas Ephraim Yitzchok ben R' Avraham — 17 Shevat Copyright © 2001 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc.

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Hamaayan

By Shlomo Katz

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

Parshas Beshalach

What We Take for Granted

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Chaim Eliezer ben Avigdor Moshe Hakohen (Katz) a"h

In this week's Parashah, we are introduced to the food known as "Mahn," and also to the "Well of Miriam," from which Bnei Yisrael drank throughout their years in the desert (17:6). Later in the Torah, we read that Bnei Yisrael sang a song of thanksgiving for the well (Bemidbar 21:17-20). In contrast, the Torah does not mention any thanksgiving for the Mahn. Why?

R' Nachman Yechiel Michel Steinmetz shlita (rabbi in Brooklyn, N.Y.)

writes: "I heard a wondrous answer to this question." He explains: We read in our Parashah (16:35): "Bnei Yisrael ate the Mahn for forty years, . . . until their arrival at the border of the land of Canaan." The Mahn fell every single weekday for almost 40 years. It even fell on the day Bnei Yisrael made the Golden Calf, as we read (Nechemiah 9:18-20), "Even though they made themselves a molten calf and said, 'This is your G-d who brought you out of Egypt,' . . . You did not withhold Your Mahn from their mouth." As a result, Bnei Yisrael took the Mahn for granted, and it did not occur to them to give thanks for it. In contrast, the well disappeared when Miriam died, so (Bemidbar 20:2), "There was no water for the assembly." Bnei Yisrael understood what it meant to be thirsty, so they gave thanks to Hashem when they had water.

In light of this, writes R' Steinmetz, we can understand the Halachah that requires giving thanks for rain, but only in lands that are prone to drought (see Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 221). Because we do not experience drought, we should not give thanks for rain? Yes! One who has never experienced drought will not mean it when he gives thanks for rain, R' Steinmetz explains; it will be a "blessing in vain." Only one who has missed the rain can genuinely feel grateful for it. (Ateret Nevonim p.15)

"Yisrael saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt, and the people revered Hashem, and they had faith in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant." (14:31)

We read in the Pesach Haggadah that Hashem inflicted five times as many plagues on the Egyptians at the Yam Suf / Reed Sea as He did in Egypt. Regarding the plagues in Egypt, we read (8:15), "The sorcerers said to Pharaoh, 'It is a finger of Elokim!'" whereas, at the Yam Suf, Hashem inflicted the Egyptians with a great "hand." Just as a hand has five fingers, so the plagues at the Sea were five-fold those in Egypt.

R' Yosef Zvi Viener z"l (1936-2012; rabbi of Gan Yavneh and Nes Ziona, Israel) writes: From the fact that Bnei Yisrael attained a level of Emunah/ faith from seeing Hashem's "great hand" at the Sea that they had not attained in Egypt, we can be certain that Hashem's revelation at the Yam Suf also was greater than His revelation in Egypt. This explains why the plagues at the Sea are not described in the Torah, R' Viener writes. In Egypt, Hashem was "addressing" a lowly audience: Bnei Yisrael, who were then slaves, and the Egyptians. As such, the lesson had to be one that any person can grasp. At the Sea, in contrast, every member of Bnei Yisrael attained a level of

prophecy higher than that attained by the prophet Yechezkel when he saw Hashem's "throne," say our Sages. Such a revelation cannot be spelled out in the Torah.

R' Viener continues: In Egypt, too, the Plagues are described as Hashem's "hand," not just His "finger." For example, we read (9:3), "Behold, the hand of Hashem is on your livestock." Why, then, does the Haggadah say that the Plagues in Egypt were done with Hashem's "finger"?

He answers: The verse just-quoted is Moshe Rabbeinu's description of a forthcoming plague and is simply a way of saying that Hashem will strike the Egyptians. However, when the Torah describes the impressions that the plagues made on those who viewed them, we find the term "finger" used in Egypt and the term "hand" used at the Yam Suf. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Chayei Ha'bechirah p.84)

"This is my Kel and I will beautify Him." (15:2)

From this verse, we learn that one should spend extra money to beautify his Mitzvah performance—for example, paying a premium for Tefilin or for an Etrog, or placing beautiful decorations in a Sukkah. However, notes R' Yoel Sirkes z"l (Poland; 1561-1640; known as the "Bach" after the initials of his Halachic work Bayit Chadash), the verse says, "Beautify Him!" Be sure that your intention is for Hashem's honor, not for your own. Also, imitate Him! Just as Hashem is compassionate toward those in need, so you should be. (Meishiv Nefesh 2:8)

"Moshe said to Yehoshua, 'Choose people for us and go do battle with Amalek.'" (17:9)

Why did Moshe choose Yehoshua to fight Amalek rather than leading the battle himself? R' Shmuel Mordechai Wollner shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Nesivos Hatalmud in Brooklyn, N.Y.) writes:

There are two ways that forces of impurity challenge us. One is by espousing heresy, represented by Pharaoh who said (5:2), "Who is Hashem that I should heed His voice? I do not know Hashem." The second is by taking advantage of feelings of hopelessness and lethargy, as Amalek did (see Devarim 25:18 — "He struck all the weak ones at your rear, when you were faint and exhausted.").

Moshe was the humblest of all men, continues R' Wollner. Humility is a very admirable trait when practiced properly, as Moshe obviously did, but those who do not understand that trait can easily confuse it with hopelessness or lethargy. Therefore, Moshe did not think he was the right person to lead the fight against Amalek. Yehoshua was a descendant of Yosef, who exuded self-confidence; he was the right person for this challenge. (Kovetz Sichot Hit'alut V p.31)

"Yehoshua did as Moshe said to him, to do battle with Amalek, and Moshe, Aharon, and Chur ascended to the top of the hill." (17:10)

The Gemara (Berachot 34b) relates: Rabban Gamliel's son was ill, so he sent two Torah scholars to Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa to ask him to pray.

R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z"l (1910-2012; Yerushalayim) explains: Rabban Gamliel learned from our verse that prayers are more effective when the one praying is flanked by two other people. Rabban Gamliel was concerned that R' Chanina might not, at that moment, be in the presence of two people worthy of "assisting" his prayer; therefore, Rabban Gamliel sent two Torah scholars to him.

R' Benzion Kook shlita (publisher of R' Elyashiv's Talmud lectures) adds in a footnote: The Tur (14th century Halachic code) cites a Midrash deriving from our verse that the Chazzan should be flanked in this way when he recites Selichot on a public fast day. We would have thought that Aharon and Chur accompanied Moshe to hold up his arms (see verse 12), but the Midrash is teaching that Moshe had another purpose in mind. (Shiurei Maran Ha'Grish Elyashiv)

"It happened that when Moshe raised his hand Yisrael was stronger, and when he lowered his hand Amalek was stronger." (17:11)

The Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 3:8) asks: Did Moshe's hands fight the war? It answers: When Moshe would raise his hands, Bnei Yisrael would look upwards and subjugated their hearts to Heaven, and then they would be victorious.

R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (Belarus; 1749-1821) explains: It is a wonder that we pray that Hashem save us from suffering, for we know suffering cleanses our sins and is for our own good! Praying that we not suffer is like a child covered in mud asking his mother not to bathe him. How, then, do we justify such prayers? Our Sages teach that Hashem, too, "suffers" when we suffer; He wants to do only good for us, but He is "frustrated" when we sin and force Him to punish us. If we "look Heavenward," focusing on Hashem's desire to do good, rather than praying for our own needs, then we are justified in praying. (Ruach Chaim 3:2)

Rav Kook Torah

Beshalach: Two Levels of Love

Chanan Morrison

When the Israelites saw that they had been rescued from Pharaoh's army at the sea, they sang out with gratitude:

יְהוָה לִי וְיִשְׁחַרְצֵנִי וְיִצְרָאֵל וְיִשְׁחַרְצֵנִי וְיִשְׁחַרְצֵנִי וְיִצְרָאֵל וְיִשְׁחַרְצֵנִי

"This is my God, and I will enshrine Him;

My father's God, I will exalt Him." (Exodus 15:2)

Is the repetition in this line from Shirat Hayam - the "Song at the Sea" - merely poetic? Or is there a deeper significance to the two halves of the verse?

Although not apparent in translation, the verse uses two different names of God. The first half of the verse uses the name El, while the second half uses Elokim. What is the significance of each name? How do they specifically relate to the desire to "enshrine" and "exalt" God?

Natural and Contemplative Love

The song, Rav Kook explained, refers to two types of love for God. The first is a natural appreciation for God as our Creator and Provider. God, the Source of all life, sustains us every moment of our lives. All things are inherently drawn to their source, and this love for God comes naturally, like our innate feelings of love and respect for our parents.

This natural love of God corresponds to the Divine name El. The word El is in the singular, reflecting an appreciation for God as the only true power and the ultimate reality of the universe.

A second, higher form of love for God is acquired by reflecting on God's rule of the universe. As we uncover God's guiding hand in history, and we recognize the underlying Divine providence in the world, we experience a higher love of God. This love corresponds to the name Elokim - in the plural - referring to the myriad causes and forces that God utilizes to govern the universe.

Enshrine and Exalt

These two types of love differ in their constancy. Our natural love of God as our Creator should be constant and unwavering, like our love and respect for our parents. But the higher love, the product of contemplation and introspection, is nearly impossible to sustain continually due to life's distractions.

Regarding the innate love of God, the verse speaks of "enshrining" God. With this natural emotion, we can create a permanent place - a shrine of reverence and love for God - in our hearts. "This is my God, and I will enshrine Him."

The higher, contemplative love, on the other hand, does not benefit from this level of constancy. We should always strive for an ever-deeper appreciation and reverence for God. This is a spiritual goal, attained through our intellectual faculties. Regarding this aspect of love, it is appropriate to speak about "exalting" God. This indicates a love that is the product of concentrated effort. "My father's God, I will exalt Him."

(Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 235)

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Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

ויהפך לבב פרעה ועבדיו אל העם

And the heart of Pharaoh and his servants became transformed regarding the people. (14:5)

What possessed Pharaoh to pursue the Jewish People, whom he had just (forced by Hashem) released from bondage? What was running through his mind when he made such an about-face? He had just suffered ten devastating plagues, with the death of the firstborn Egyptians striking very close to home. His people were demoralized, his country in ruin; yet, he was chasing the Jews. Did he require more proof of Hashem's power? He arrived with his soldiers at the banks of the Red Sea and saw that the sea had miraculously split, and the Jews were crossing through on dry land. Did he think that the sea had been split for him? Did he not realize that to enter into the sea was suicidal? Pharaoh's actions bespeak a man who has lost his mind.

Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, explains/rationalizes (if such a term is possible) Pharaoh's actions, based upon a halachah found in the Yerushalmi (Bava Metziah 4:3). Onaah, overreaching, refers to the laws surrounding monetary deception, the act of wrongdoing another by selling him an article for more than its real worth. Chazal distinguish three levels of onaah: when the discrepancy amounts to one-sixth; less than one-sixth; more than one-sixth of the value. When the discrepancy overreaches by one-sixth – the transaction is valid, and he need not repay the difference. If the discrepancy amounts to more than one-sixth, the transaction is void. The injured party, however, may uphold the transaction if he so chooses. The Yerushalmi questions the last halachah, which voids the sale in the event that the discrepancy overreaches one-sixth. Why can the seller not repay the injured party the money and validate the sale? Rabbi Zeira says, "The buyer can say to the seller, 'I am not comfortable having people say that you succeeded in cheating me. (I do not want people on the street conjecturing that I am a pushover, naïve in business – I could be sold anything for any price).'" In other words, it is not about the money. It is about one day the injured party screaming, "He ripped me off," and the next day making a settlement with him. The buyer's reputation is at stake.

Certainly, Pharaoh remembered the travail that he and his country had sustained the last few months, but he could not tolerate being cheated by the Jews. They went from home to home borrowing gold and silver utensils, and now they were leaving town with those utensils. The Egyptian People would not stand idly by as they were being ripped off by the Jews. He could not overlook this infraction, and he was willing to risk death to prevent it. His ego would not allow them to leave with his gold and silver.

Alternatively, I think we can add (along the same lines) "regarding the people," the Torah underscores that Pharaoh could not tolerate this behavior on the part of the "people," since their forebears had been their slaves, chattel to do with them whatever they pleased. Now, they were leaving the country as kings. This was just too much. Pharaoh would put an end to it – at all costs. He definitely paid!

וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ד'

Bnei Yisrael cried out to Hashem. (14:10)

The Midrash Tanchuma (9) teaches that when Klal Yisrael saw that their situation was dire, they grasped the umnos, "profession," of their ancestors/Patriarchs and reached out to Hashem through the vehicle of prayer. The efficacy of prayer cannot be overstated. It should not be our last – but rather, our first – resort. A Jew speaks to Hashem, his Father in Heaven, through the medium of prayer. Chazal are teaching us, however, that the Jewish People turned to Hashem in prayer just because the situation was bleak. How is this to be compared to the prayers of our Patriarchs, who prayed to Hashem on a regular basis? It was their means of communication

with Hashem. The prayers emanating from the Jewish People and those expressed by our Avos, Patriarchs, appear dissimilar on the surface. Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita, cites Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, who posits that our prayers must reflect the attitude that, without Hashem, salvation is hopeless. Our only avenue to redemption, to recovery, to be extricated from the adversity that is gripping our lives, is through prayer to Hashem. Nothing else is effective. Our Avos manifested this attitude when they prayed to Hashem. They knew that it was always crunch time, because only Hashem could pull them through. Thus, every prayer that emanated from them addressed an eis tzarah, dire circumstance. Without Hashem, everything is foreboding.

Regrettably, we do not pray preemptively, waiting instead until we have exhausted all other avenues of relief, so that our backs are against the proverbial wall; then we turn to Hashem as our last resort. We must drum it into our heads that Hashem is not only the first resort – He is the only resort. Everybody/everything else is only His messenger. When we pray, it should be with this attitude – "Hashem, You are my only source of salvation. Without You, I am uncertain of any recovery." This is how we daven on Yom Kippur. Indeed, if we would daven on a regular basis the way we daven when we know it is "crunch time," our davening would obviously have greater efficacy, because every moment is actually "crunch time."

הִתְצַבְרוּ וְרֵאוּ אֶת יְשׁוּעַת ד'

Stand fast and see the salvation of Hashem. (14:13)

Ibn Ezra writes: "You shall not wage war. You will see the salvation that Hashem will make for you." How is it possible for a nation of 600,000 men (over the age of twenty-years old) to just stand there and not fight their aggressors? The answer is that these people knew the Egyptians as their masters who lorded over them. It was impossible for the Jews who knew nothing about warfare to battle their Egyptian masters. Amalek attacked the Jews, and, without Moshe Rabbeinu's prayers, he would have dealt them a weakening blow. Likewise, these Jewish expatriated slaves could not fight the Canaanim in Eretz Yisrael. It was their children, the next generation, who had grown up as free men who conquered Eretz Yisrael. Ibn Ezra explains (Shemos 2:3), "Perhaps Hashem caused Moshe to grow up in Pharaoh's palace so that he would be used to royalty, and not fear entering into the halls of power. As a result, when Moshe observed an injustice, he acted immediately to right it, killing the Egyptian and later saving Yisro's daughters from the Midyanite shepherds who were harassing them."

Rav Mordechai Hominer explains that this concept applies equally in the world of chinuch, Jewish education (both in classroom and at home). A child must be imbued with self-esteem and self-confidence. A child who is belittled, ignored, disciplined to the extreme, will likely not develop a strong sense of self-esteem. When one's parents and/or one's rebbe/morah has little respect for his opinion, he has little hope to cultivate a sense of belief in himself. It is difficult to believe in yourself if no one else believes in you. Horav Yisrael Zev Gustman, zl, was a brilliant talmid chacham, Torah scholar. At the young age of twenty-two, he was invited by the spiritual leader of European Jewry, the Rav of Vilna, Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, zl, to serve on his bais din as a dayan. Following the war, Rav Gustman came to Eretz Yisrael where he visited the Steipler Gaon, zl. The Steipler asked Rav Gustman whether he was a relative of the famous Rav Gustman who had served on Rav Chaim Ozer's bais din. When Rav Gustman replied that he was the one, the Steipler immediately stood up out of reverence for a gadol. A number of yeshivos turned to Rav Gustman in the hope that he would serve as their Rosh Yeshivah. He absolutely demurred from taking a position of leadership in a yeshivah.

These were the premier yeshivos in Eretz Yisrael. Nonetheless, he said, "No. I do not feel qualified to serve as a Rosh Yeshivah after all of the degradation to which I was subjected during the Holocaust." He felt that a Rosh Yeshivah must carry himself with a certain sense of dignity. After all that he had sustained during the war, he felt that he no longer had it in him.

We have no idea the harm that we cause a child: when we put him down; when we demonstrate a lack of respect for him; when we show that his opinion holds no value in our eyes. We wonder why a young person might just turn-off to religion. Quite often, it is the result of the attitude adults manifested towards him as a youth: no respect; even disdain; and, at times, derision – since, after all, he had not been acting in the “prescribed” manner “expected” of him. The little barbs that are meant to motivate serve instead as lasting knives in the child’s heart – knives which eventually destroy his relationship with Yiddishkeit. Our gedolim taught us the awesome respect we should show to each and every child, and the thoughtfulness that must be a constant and vital part of our relationship with them.

One incident has been in my mind since my early youth. I was in cheder with another young boy of similar background and extraction. His parents had also recently survived Hitler’s inferno. Arguably, my friend was a discipline problem, and school was not his cup of tea. After another negative report from the rebbe, the boy’s father lost it and yelled at his son, “Is this why I survived Hitler? To have a son like you?”

Certainly, the father did not mean what he said. He had lost his entire family and was an emotional wreck. His marriage after the war produced two children, a son and a daughter. His daughter married a distinguished ben Torah, and together they raised a beautiful Torahdik family. Sadly, my friend went off the derech, left the fold, and has not been heard from. Why? Who knows? He certainly did not have positive feelings about himself.

Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, remembers that when the Chazon Ish, zl, spent a few weeks in Tzfas, a group of Jews davened with him in his apartment. The Chazon Ish would daven k’vasikin, at sunrise, which required a separate minyan. One morning, the Chazon Ish informed the men that, rather than daven in the apartment (which afforded them considerable room to maneuver), they would daven instead on the mirpesses, balcony, which obviously did not have sufficient room. He explained that a young boy was sleeping in the room where they had normally been conducting services, and, if he would wake up, he would be embarrassed for them to see him in his pajamas. This indicates a sensitivity to a young boy’s feelings evinced by the gadol hador.

Horav Yehudah Adass, Shlita, asked a young boy, “What are you thinking about as we move closer to Yom Kippur?” The boy gave a shocking response. “I am certain that I am the worst person in the world. I am a rasha, wicked, of the lowest level.” “Why do you say such terrible things?” the Rav asked the boy. “This is what my father always tells me!” the boy replied. The Rosh Yeshivah (Porat Yosef) continued, “I was once walking down the street when I heard screams emanating from an apartment. I am embarrassed to repeat the words and maledictions that a woman was hurling at someone. Concerned that it could be a shalom bayis issue, matrimonial dispute, which could lead to serious ramifications, I walked up the stairs and listened by the door. I was shocked to hear the response of a young child, “Imma, I am sorry. I will never do it again.” “You are a rasha! What will ever become of you? You are worthless!” These were the words coming from a mother to her five-year-old son. What positive growth do you think we can expect to see from this child?” Rav Adass asked. There is no question that these words were the result of an overwhelmed, frustrated, challenged mother – but try explaining that to a five-year-old.

I cannot conclude with a story that leaves a negative taste in the reader’s mind. I wrote the following story a few years back, but it is one that is worth repeating. It took place at a sheva brachos, nuptial reception, for a young couple, the husband being a brilliant scholar. The grandfather of the groom arose to say a few words. The grandfather was far from a scholar, and, as this was a gathering of elite scholars, the groom was nervous about what his loving grandfather might say.

The grandfather began, “As you all know, I hail from Europe. I would like to share an incident that took place in Europe. It is about a bright boy whose mischief took a front seat to his learning. He was so busy planning his next shtik that he had no time to learn. He had been warned countless times: ‘One

more time, and you are out!’ The warnings and punishments left no impression on him. The final straw came when the boy took a goat and placed it inside the Aron HaKodesh. The next morning, when the chazzan opened the Ark to remove the Torah – a goat jumped out! The people were outraged. It did not take a master detective to trace the act to the mischievous boy.

“The principal of the cheder told the parents that he could no longer tolerate their son’s insolence. He would have to go. It was not as if the parents were shocked. They had known that this day would come. It was inevitable. Their son, however, was floored, and he demanded to take the cheder’s principal to a din Torah, adjudication, before the town’s rav. Let him decide if he should be thrown out of yeshivah.

“The next day, the boy presented his case before the rav. ‘Rebbe,’ he said, ‘there is only one cheder in town. If I am sent out of school, I have nowhere else to go. Where will I receive my Jewish education? I will have nothing. As a result, I will leave Yiddishkeit – a loss, not only to myself, but to all the generations that would emerge from me. Do you want to have this responsibility on your shoulders? Why should my descendants be sentenced to spiritual ignominy because of my mischief?’ The principal could not help but agree with his recalcitrant student, who eventually turned his life around.”

The grandfather concluded his story – paused for effect – and declared, “I will have you know that I was that mischievous boy. I put the goat in the Aron HaKodesh. Now look at my grandson, who is a brilliant talmid chacham. Can you imagine what would have occurred had I not succeeded in pleading my case?”

The story is powerful and, sadly occurs many a time – only not always with such a positive outcome.

ויסעו מאילם ויבאו כל עדת בני ישראל אל מדבר סין... בהמשה עשר יום לחדש השני לצאתם מארץ מצרים... וילנו כל עדת בני ישראל על משה ועל אהרן

As they journeyed from Eilim, and they came, the whole congregation of Bnei Yisrael, unto the wilderness of Sin... on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. Then the whole congregation of Bnei Yisrael murmured against Moshe and Aharon in the wilderness. (16:1,2)

Kol adas Bnei Yisrael, the whole congregation of Bnei Yisrael, explains Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, refers to the Jewish community in its entirety, in its highest meaning as a community united by its common mission. It is a community which is designated to be the “congregation” of Hashem. Thus, by using such vernacular to describe the Jewish People, the Torah implies from the get-go that the events to be recorded impact the interest of the general mission of the whole Klal Yisrael to the highest degree. It is for this reason that the Torah makes a point of underscoring the date: thirty days after this group left Egypt – where they had been enslaved for 210 years. The whole congregation of Bnei Yisrael “murmured”/complained. It was thirty days after they had been freed from the external chains that had bound them as slaves, persecuted, reviled, murdered – but now they were free! Slavery was no longer an issue. Now the issue was the anxiety of providing for their daily sustenance. This occurred through a national commitment to the institution of Shabbos.

With the gift of sustenance from Heaven, manna, Hashem announced the institution of Shabbos, which stands at the base of all Jewry and all Judaism. Through the daily miracle of the appearance of the manna (for forty uninterrupted years), Hashem introduced Shabbos to the Jews. Pesach transformed the slaves into a free people, committed to Hashem; Shabbos saw to it that they maintained this commitment.

The nation needed to be inculcated with the verity that Hashem provides our sustenance. Thus, He led them to a barren wilderness, desolate of life, a place where none of man’s bare necessities was obtainable, to demonstrate to them that He – and only He – would take care of them. Nonetheless, a mere thirty days after witnessing the greatest miracles witnessed by human eyes,

they murmured/complained. Where was their faith, their trust in the Almighty G-d Who took them out of Egypt?
Horav Mordechai Schwab, zl, explains that perusal of the previous pesukim will show that the nation had experienced many previous nisyonos, trials: from the liberation, to being chased by the Egyptians, to crossing the Red Sea, to a lack of water. It was one thing after another, because this is what Hashem wanted to teach them: life is filled with nisyonos. If it is not one thing, it is another. There will always be nisyonos. The purpose of these trials is to set the stage, to segue to the next phase: yeshuah, salvation. Trial – faith/trust – salvation. It never stops. Even after thirty days of trial – faith – salvation – they had more trials. No water. No food – patience/faith. Rav Schwab derives from here that the only approach to triumphing over nisyonos is patience/shetikah, silence, acceptance, prayer. Change is on the horizon. We must wait patiently for the salvation to arrive, but we must trust that not only is it on the way, it is present, waiting to be introduced. He quotes Rav Hirsch's commentary to Hashem's response to the people's murmuring for food, Hineni mamtir lachem lechem min ha'Shomayim, "Behold, I am about to make bread rain from heaven for you" (Ibid. 16:4). Hineni – behold – not just as a result of this dissatisfaction – but Hineni – "I am already prepared." Hashem was implying that this was all part of His masterplan. The people's complaining did not catalyze the response; it had always been there – prepared and waiting for the appropriate time to be revealed and implemented.

This is how we must view nisyonos. They are a part of our lives. We must sit patiently, and pray with faith as we wait for the yeshuah, which is prepared and waiting for the right moment, but it will come.

Va'ani Tefillah

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם – Sim Shalom. Establish peace.

What takes precedence – size or perfection? Does a large slice of challah precede a small, perfectly whole roll? Someone once complained to Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, the founder and expositor of the mussar, character refinement movement, that if his (Rav Yisrael's) disciple, Horav Yitzchak Blazer, zl (Rav Itzele Petersburger), would spend more time studying Talmud and not immerse himself in mussar, he would be a greater talmid chacham, Torah scholar. Rav Yisrael employed the law concerning precedence in brachos, blessings, to counter his argument. In Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 168:1) it is ruled that if one has before him two pieces of bread, one of which is a large -- but imperfect – slice, and the other a small, perfect roll, the blessing should be made on the perfect roll. Perfect trumps size. The message was simple: Rav Yitzchak Blazer might cover less Talmud, but he will become a more perfect scholar. In an alternative rendering of the incident, Rav Yisrael's retort was: that, by studying mussar, Rav Yitzchak would realize that he really has much more time available for learning Talmud. This would make up for the "lost time" study of mussar. In essence, we see that shalom, peace, is true shleimus, perfection.

Dedicated in loving memory of our dear mother and grandmother, Leona Genshaft

לאה בת רפאל הכהן ע"ה - נפטרה ט"ז שבט תש"ע

by her family - Neil and Marie Genshaft, Isaac and Naomi
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date:Jan 24, 2021, 7:24 AM

subject:Carrying Nitroglycerin on Shabbos

Rabbi Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>

Sun, Jan 24, 7:24 AM (5 days ago)

This week's parsha includes one of the main sources for the prohibition of carrying on Shabbos (Shemos 16:29). I therefore decided to send the following article, the original of which I wrote almost thirty years ago, hence the footnoting style and other writing aspects are different from the way I currently write.

By the way, tonight, in honor of Tu Bishvat, I am giving my weekly "Sunday Night at the Rabbi" shiur on the mitzvah of Orlah, a mitzvah whose halachos are not well known, even among talmidei chachamim. Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87579473464?pwd=MUJCSDdDQUgzckE1OGdVa0FyU3ZmZz09>

Carrying Nitroglycerin on Shabbos

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

The rest of the article is attached.

Carrying Nitroglycerin on Shabbos

Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

The Torah's concern for the protection of life and health is axiomatic. In virtually all instances, Torah restrictions are superseded when a life-threatening emergency exists. If the situation is extenuating, but not life-threatening, then the rule of thumb is that the Torah restriction remains in force. Sometimes, however, mitigating factors allow the overriding of a rabbinic injunction because of extenuating circumstances.

A contemporary halachic question that relates to this issue is as follows: Is there a way whereby a person suffering from angina or other heart disease may carry his medication on Shabbos through a public thoroughfare? In case of a sudden attack, there would indeed be a life-threatening need that permits procurement of such medication through any necessary means. However, there is no medical reason that compels the patient to leave his home where his medicine is kept. Is there halachic basis to allow him to leave his house with his medication, since the possible medical emergency can be completely avoided by staying home? Granted that this would result in a great hardship by making the patient housebound on Shabbos, yet this deprivation would not constitute a life-threatening emergency and would not be grounds for overriding a Torah-proscribed Shabbos prohibition.

The halachic question is two-fold: Can carrying the medicine be considered a rabbinic violation, as opposed to a Torah violation, thus making it more acceptable? Does halachic basis exist to permit overriding a rabbinic prohibition because of hardships? The same principles can be applied to other medical situations. For example, the diabetic who receives insulin injection is usually medically advised to carry with him some food items containing sugar as a precaution against insulin shock; and certain asthmatics and other allergy sufferers are advised never to go anywhere without their medication available. Would these patients be allowed to carry their sugar or medicine on Shabbos in a way that involves violating only a rabbinic decree?

Most contemporary authorities who address this issue base their discussion on a responsum of Rav Shmuel Engel, dated 9 Tammuz 5679 (July 7, 1919).[1] At the time of this question, there was a government regulation in force requiring the carrying of identification papers whenever one walked outside, with serious consequences for those apprehended in violation. Rav Engel was asked if a person could place his identification papers under his hat on Shabbos while walking to shul. Rav Engel's analysis of the halachic issues involved will clarify many aspects of our question.

Shabbos violations fall under two broad headings: those activities that are forbidden min hatorah (Torah-mandated), and those that are forbidden by rabbinic injunction, but do not qualify as melacha (forbidden work) according to the Torah's definition.

Torah law is not violated unless the melacha is performed in a manner in which that activity is usually done. An act performed in a peculiar way, such as carrying something in a way that such an item is not normally carried, constitutes a rabbinic violation, but is permitted under Torah law. This deviation from the norm is called a shinui.[2]

Rav Engel points out that carrying identification papers in one's hat would constitute a shinui, thus allowing a possibility of leniency. He quotes two Talmudic sources that permit melacha with a shinui on Shabbos due to extenuating, but not life-threatening, circumstances.

Rabbi Marinus said, "One who is suffering is allowed to suck milk directly from a goat on Shabbos. Why? [Is not milking an animal on Shabbos a violation of a Torah prohibition?] Sucking is considered milking in an unusual way, and the rabbis permitted it because of the discomfort of the patient." [3]

Tosafos notes that the leniency is allowed only if the suffering is caused by illness and not simply by thirst. The Talmudic text and commentary of Tosafos are quoted as halachic decision by the Shulchan Aruch.[4]

The above-quoted Talmudic text includes another case:

Nachum of Gaul said, "One is allowed on Shabbos to clean a spout that has become clogged by crushing [the clogged matter] with one's foot. Why? [Is it not forbidden to perform repair work on Shabbos?] Since the repair work is done in an unusual manner, the rabbis permitted it in a case of potential damage."

Based on these Talmudic sources, Rav Engel concludes that the rabbis permitted the performance of melacha with a shinui under extenuating circumstances, even though rabbinic prohibitions are not usually waived in these situations. Furthermore, he points out two other mitigating factors to permit carrying identification papers: According to most opinions, the prohibition to carry on Shabbos in our cities (even in the usual

fashion) is rabbinic, because "our public areas do not constitute a public domain according to Torah law." And, carrying identification papers would constitute a melacha done without any need for the result, which would also provide a reason to be lenient, as will be explained.

Melacha She'einah Tzericha Legufah

In several places,[5] the Gemara records a dispute between Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Shimon as to whether a melacha she'einah tzericha legufah, an action done intentionally and in the normal fashion, but without a need for the result of the action, is forbidden by the Torah or if it is a rabbinic injunction. (Note: an article that I will be issuing in a few weeks discusses this topic in greater detail.) For example, carrying a corpse from a private domain into a public domain would not constitute a Torah desecration of Shabbos according to Rabbi Shimon, since one's purpose is to remove the corpse from the private domain and not because he has a need for it in the public domain. Similarly, snaring or killing a predator insect or reptile when one's concern is only to avoid damage is a melacha she'einah tzericha legufah, and therefore constitutes only a rabbinic violation according to Rabbi Shimon. Since one has no need for the caught reptile, Rabbi Shimon considers the violation rabbinic.

Both of these cases violate Torah prohibition according to Rabbi Yehudah, who opines that a melacha she'einah tzericha legufah is a Torah prohibition.

Although the Rambam[6] follows the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah, the majority of halachic authorities follow the opinion of Rabbi Shimon.

Rabbi Engel considers carrying identification papers in one's hat to be a melacha she'einah tzericha legufah, because the carrier has no personal use for the papers and is carrying them merely to avoid injury or loss. He compares this to the killing of a snake, where the intent is to avoid injury. Although his point is arguable, as evidenced by a later responsum,[7] Rabbi Engel reiterates his position that this situation qualifies as a melacha she'einah tzericha legufah.

Furthermore, there is a basis to consider carrying only a rabbinic prohibition, because no public domain according to the Torah definition – reshus harabim – exists today. (It should be noted that notwithstanding Rav Engel's statement on this subject, this position is strongly disputed by many authorities who contend that there is a reshus harabim today.) Because of these two mitigating reasons, Rabbi Engel permitted carrying the identification papers in one's hat, which is an indirect method of carrying, in order to attend synagogue or to perform a different mitzvah.

As we will see shortly, some later authorities quote this responsum as a basis to permit our original question, although certain aspects of our case differ significantly from those of Rav Engel's. Firstly, whereas in Rav Engel's case, the identification papers had no inherent worth to the carrier, the nitroglycerin tablets do have intrinsic value to the patient. This would render them a melacha hatzericha legufah, a melacha performed with interest in the results being done, which constitutes a Torah-forbidden melacha. Thus, one of the reasons for being lenient is nullified.

Secondly, whereas our question includes carrying medication for social or other reasons, Rav Engel permitted the carrying of the identification papers only for the performance of a mitzvah. Would he have allowed a greater leniency for someone who is ill and permitted it even for social reasons? Bearing in mind the case of Rabbi Marinus, where permission is based on medical needs, could leniency be extended to allow carrying with a shinui, even for social or other reasons?

Several later halachic works discuss the question of a patient carrying medication with a shinui as a precaution against a sudden attack. Rav Yekusiel Y. Greenwald[8] suggests that a sugar cube be sewn into the pocket of a diabetic's coat before Shabbos, so that he would not be carrying in the usual manner on Shabbos. Rav Greenwald bases his opinion on the Gemara[9] that allows the carrying of an amulet on Shabbos as a medicinal item, and the responsum of Rav Shmuel Engel quoted above. Unfortunately, the comparison to the law of kemeiya (amulet) seems strained. The halacha clearly states that the kemeiya must be worn in the way that it is normally worn, and that it can be worn only if it is a proven remedy. Under these circumstances, the kemeiya is considered to be like a garment. There does not seem to be a basis in these considerations to allow carrying an item. Furthermore, Rav Greenwald allows the diabetic to go outside with a sugar cube sewn into his garment, even for non-mitzvah-related activities, whereas Rav Engel permitted the carrying of identification papers only when going outside for mitzvah purposes.

Rav Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg[10] cites the responsum of Rav Greenwald, but disputes his conclusions sharply. In addition to the difficulty we have noted, he also disputes two of Rav Greenwald's assumptions.

1. Whereas Rav Greenwald assumes that these circumstances permit sewing a sugar cube or medicine tablet into a garment in order to carry it, Rav Waldenberg does not feel that the circumstances justify carrying an item in this fashion.

2. Rav Waldenberg writes that the only situation in which Rav Engel permitted carrying with a shinui was when the activity would have constituted a melacha she'einah tzericha legufah. This applies to carrying identification papers, where the carrier has no personal

need for the papers and is carrying them only to avoid being apprehended. It does not apply to the case for medication, where the patient wants the medicine available for his own use.

Rav Waldenberg concludes that the leniency proposed by Rav Engel does not apply to the situation at hand, and that this patient would not be allowed to carry his medication outside, even when using a shinui. A mediating position is taken by Rav Yehoshua Neuwirth.[11] Although he equates the situation of the person carrying identification papers to the one carrying medication, and does permit the carrying of medication with a shinui for the propose of performing a mitzvah, Rav recommends other specific guidelines that would reduce the violations. The reader is encouraged to see Rav Neuwirth's entire ruling, and also see Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah, Volume 1 #248, who understands the Gemara's discussion in Kesubos in a way that preempts the basis for Rav Engel's lenient ruling.

A responsum by Rav Menashe Klein[12] concludes that a patient is allowed to carry nitroglycerin tablets with a shinui for the purpose of going to shul or a different mitzvah. He bases himself on the following two rationales:

1. There is currently no public domain according to Torah definitions.

2. He considers this carrying to be a melacha she'einah tzericha legufah, a point that is certainly disputed by the other authorities quoted.

An interesting comment quoted in the name of the Chasam Sofer by the Levushei Mordechai[13] should also shed light on this issue. Levushei Mordechai reports that the Chasam Sofer was in the habit of carrying a handkerchief tied around his wrist outside of the eruv on Shabbos, because he considered this to be carrying with a shinui that is permitted because of the need for the handkerchief. The prohibition of rabbinic origin is overridden by the need for personal dignity (kavod haberiyyos). No stipulation is made by Levushei Mordechai that the walking is done exclusively for the purpose of performing a mitzvah.

One would think that the discomfort of staying home on Shabbos provides greater reason to be lenient than the concept of personal dignity, and that this responsum could therefore be utilized as a basis to allow carrying of nitroglycerin with a shinui. However, few later poskim refer to the comment of the Levushei Mordechai.[14]

Having presented the background and references on this issue, I leave it to an individual who finds himself in these circumstances to discuss the question with his or her individual posek.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (Shemos 20:10) notes that people mistakenly think that work is prohibited on Shabbos in order to provide a day of rest. This is incorrect, he points out, because the Torah does not prohibit doing avodah, which connotes hard work, but melachah, which implies purpose and accomplishment. On Shabbos, we refrain from constructing and altering the world for our own purposes. The goal of Shabbos is to emphasize Hashem's rule as the focus of creation by refraining from our own creative acts (Shemos 20:11)