

**BESHALACH 5785**

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**[CS Late-breaking dvar torah:**

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**Are Our Leaders Scared to Empower their Students?**

Do You Know How to Make Your Disciple Shine? How Chabad Keeps It Together

By Rabbi YY Jacobson

Picture: A young YY Jacobson with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. To the left is his father, Gershon Jacobson

**Three Versions of a Song**

One of the first things we did together as a people was sing.

The nation of Israel was born on the 15th of Nissan in the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE). Seven days later, the Israelites witnessed the Red Sea split, to allow them passage and to drown the pursuing Egyptians. The Torah relates how upon beholding the great miracle, Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to G-d, saying:

I shall sing to G-d for He is most exalted;

Horse and rider He cast in the sea.

G-d is my strength and song; He is my salvation

This is my G-d, and I shall glorify Him

The G-d of my fathers, and I shall exalt Him...

This song, known as Shiras HaYam—Song at the Sea—goes on to describe the great miracles that G-d performed for His people, G-d's promise to bring them to the Holy Land and reveal His presence among them in the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple) in Jerusalem, and Israel's goal to implement G-d's eternal sovereignty in the world. Its forty-four verses express the gist of our relationship with G-d and our mission in life, and thus occupy a most important place in the Torah and in Jewish life.

Our sages focus on the prefatory line to the Song at the Sea. The Torah introduces it as a song sung by "Moses and the children of Israel." Moses was obviously one of the "children of Israel," so the fact that the Torah singles him out implies that Moses took a leading role in the composition and delivery of this song. But the exact nature of Moses' role is a point of much discussion by our sages. How exactly did three million people sing the same song?

The Talmud (Sotah 30b) relates no fewer than three different opinions.

According to Rabbi Akiva, it was Moses who composed and sang the song, while the people of Israel merely responded to each verse with the refrain "I shall sing to G-d" (Ashirah L'Hashem). Moses sang, "For He is most exalted," and the nation answered, "I shall sing to G-d"; Moses sang, "Horse and rider He cast in the sea," and the people answered, "I shall sing to G-d"; and so on with all forty-four verses of the song. After each stanza, they declared "Ashirah LeHashem."

Rabbi Eliezer, however, is of the opinion that the people repeated each verse after Moses: Moses sang, "I shall sing to G-d for He is most exalted," and they repeated "I shall sing to G-d for He is most exalted;" Moses sang "Horse and rider He cast in the sea," and they repeated, "Horse and rider He cast in the sea," and so on.

A third opinion is that of Rabbi Nechemiah: according to him, Moses simply pronounced the opening words of the song, following which the people of Israel all sang the entire song together. Each of them, on their own, composed the entire, and very same, forty-four verses!

**Three Forms of Leadership**

It is a strange debate. Do we have to argue about everything?

What is the logic behind these three opinions? What is the difference if Moses sang the entire song himself and the nation merely shouted out the chorus, or if the people repeated each stanza after Moses; or if Moses merely began the song and the people sang the rest of it on their own?

What is more, this is a story that occurred more than 3,330 years ago. Why argue about something that seems irrelevant today?

The truth is that what seems to be a merely technical argument is a profound meditation on the nature of leadership, and on the ability of a leader to inspire a sense of unity and purpose within a fragmented people.

What is the role of a leader? To inspire loyalty and submission, to create pupils, or to mold leaders? The three versions of how Moses led Israel in song express these three different perspectives on leadership.

Rabbi Akiva describes a situation in which Moses inspires an entire generation to surrender their egos, to transcend their differences, to submit their individuality to the collective identity embodied by the leader. Rabbi Akiva sees Moses as the embodiment of the collective consciousness of Israel, the one in whom each Jew finds their truest and deepest identity as a fragment of the Divine. Moses alone sang the nation's gratitude to G-d. The people had nothing further to say as individuals, except to affirm their unanimous assent to what Moses was expressing.

Moses marched, and the nation declared: "Yes, we are in!" It was a moment of absolute loyalty and unity, as the Torah states right before the song, "and they believed in G-d and in Moses His servant."

Note the critical words: "Moses his servant." Throughout history, many a dictator inspired radical submission and loyalty, through fear, charisma, or genius, but the objective was the worship of an individual. In contrast, Moses, "the humblest man on earth" was completely dedicated to G-d; he could unite and embody the zeitgeist of the nation because of his ego-lessness, seeing himself as nothing but a conduit for an infinite G-d. Thus, he could inspire a few million hearts to melt away in the ecstasy of "we."

Rabbi Eliezer, however, argues that the phenomenon of two million hearts and minds inspired to yield to a single vision and a single leader will not endure. It is electrifying and transformative, but it is short-lived, and not very meaningful in the long run. Have you ever been at a concert or a speech in which thousands congealed into one entity, embodied by a singular figure inspiring magnetic electricity? It is deeply powerful, but short-lived. Sooner or later their intrinsic differences and counter-aims will assert themselves, and the unity will fade. Moments of radical transcendence, when the individual "I" melts into the collective "I," are powerful, but not enduring. When the "I" resurfaces, the unity remains but a memory.

Rabbi Eliezer thus argued that the model employed was very different: Moses inspired students rather than loyalists. The people of Israel repeated each verse after Moses. They did not suffice with an affirmation of his articulation of Israel's song. Rather, they repeated it after him, running it through the sieve of their own understanding and feelings, finding the roots for an identical declaration in their own personality and experience. The very same words assumed two million nuances of meaning, as they were absorbed by two million minds and articulated by two million mouths.

Moses created a generation of pupils and students who listened to his song, and then integrated it into their own lives. His vision became theirs. They did not submit their selves to Moses; they made his vision theirs. For Reb Eliezer, Moses is more like the conductor of a symphony, inspiring each musician to use his or her own instrument to produce the music. They are playing the same song, but each person is using his or her own instrument,

Rabbi Nechemiah, however, felt that this vision of leadership was still lacking. This type of leadership is meaningful as long as the teacher is there to teach and to inspire his or her disciples. When the leader is communicating his passion and song, his students can "repeat it," absorb it and follow it. But what occurs when the captain disappears, when the teacher is silenced, when the conductor is no longer directing the symphony? Now that there is nothing to repeat, and nobody to direct, does the symphony die?

No, argues Rabbi Nechmyah. If Moses truly captured and embodied the quintessence of Israel, rather than his own ego, they would be able to find his song within themselves and would not need to hear their song from his lips before they could sing it themselves. The real leader, argues Reb Nechemyah, creates not followers but leaders. He shows people how to discover the leader within themselves—how to find within their own heart the infinite light and the song of Moses.

The way it happened, argues Rabbi Nechemyah, was that Moses pronounced the opening words of the song, commencing the play, identifying the goal, marking the destination, beginning the march. But following that each and every Jew sang the entire song by himself (or herself). Moses inspired not submission, nor did he create disciples; Moses knew how to kindle the spark within each and every one of his people so that they on their own can continue his song.

This view is suitable for Rabbi "Nechemyah" whose name means comfort and solace (similar to the names Menachem, Tanchuma, or Noach.) For a generation that would not see and hear Moses sing, Rabbi Nechemyah taught that the greatest leaders of Israel lead their people in their absence sometimes even more than during their presence. Their greatest gift is that the people touched by them become ambassadors of love, light, and hope.

To be sure, all three opinions are valid and vital, depending on the circumstances. There are times when leaders inspire the surrender of the individual "I" to the collective "we." Yet the true leader must learn how to mold real disciples, and the greatest of leaders learn how to empower leaders.

#### The Rebbe's Influence

The above marvelous explanation I heard myself from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, during an address on Shabbat Parshas Beshalach, Shevat 11, 5748, January 30, 1988. (It was a few days before the sudden passing of his wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, and a few short years before the Rebbe's own passing in 1994.[1])

The above insight of the Rebbe taught me much about the role of a genuine parent, an authentic pedagogue, and a great leader. It also helped me understand the Rebbe himself.

This coming Shabbos, 10 Shevat 5785 (Feb 8, 2025), the Jewish world celebrates 75 years of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's leadership. People often ask me: In the absence of the Rebbe's physical presence, what inspires Chabad? What holds it together? What motivates it? What keeps it focused and united? How long can it continue?

But the Rebbe's name was "Menachem," and he embodied the vision of Rabbi Nechmyah. The Rebbe did not seek people who will submit to him—even as a person dedicated completely to G-d and His Torah. The Rebbe did not even want to mold followers. The Rebbe aspired to create leaders, persons who will identify within themselves the power and confidence to change the world.

Chabad has sometimes been accused of being a cult. I always find this humorous, because I know of no other Jewish figure who urged his students to be more independent, ambitious, individualistic, creative, revolutionary, and innovative than the Rebbe. He loathed when people squandered their talents and gifts, and truly believed in the infinite power of each individual to compose his or her unique song that will set the world on fire. I still recall a public address of the Rebbe, in the summer of 1988,[2] when he expressed frustration that some of his followers feel they are inept to become the authors of their own biography and are always waiting for orders.

And I know of no other leader who urged all of his students to go live amongst people who will challenge their beliefs on a daily basis, in order to build bridges between all Jews and to introduce every soul to the depth and love of Judaism. This is not how cults operate.

The Rebbe keenly understood that you can't transform a world with followers, only with leaders.

#### The Match

The late Yehudah Avner, a veteran Israeli diplomat, served as an adviser to four Israeli prime ministers: Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, Menachem Begin, and Shimon Peres. He was also Israel's ambassador to Ireland

and Australia. Once, he related, during a conversation with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rebbe spoke of his own work.

"Let me tell you what I try to do. Imagine you're looking at a candle. What you are really seeing is a mere lump of wax with a thread down its middle. When do the thread and wax become a candle? Or, in other words, when do they fulfill the purpose for which they were created? When you put a flame to the thread, then the candle becomes a candle."

"The wax is the body, and the wick the soul. Ignite the soul with the fire of Torah and a person will then fulfill the purpose for which he or she was created. And that is what I try to do – to ignite the soul of our people with the fire of Torah."

"My candle – has the Rebbe lit it?", Yehuda Avner asked.

"No," the Rebbe said, clasping Avner's hand. "I have given you the match. Only you can light your candle." [3]

[1] A few days later, at the farbrengen of 15 Shevat, the Rebbe spoke at length about the fact that he will henceforth minimize giving direct answers to people because after decades of teaching Torah people are empowered to find their own way.

[2] Shabbos Parshas Shlach 5748, June 1988.

[3] My thanks to Rabbi Yanki Tauber for his rendition of the above address by the Rebbe, published on [www.meaningfullife.com](http://www.meaningfullife.com)]

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#### [CS Another late-breaking dvar torah

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**Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky**

#### **The Point of No Return**

As the waters of the Yam Suf are about to split, Moshe assures the Jewish People they will never see Mitzrayim again. Chazal interpret this pasuk not only as a promise but also as a commandment; this is one of the three pesukim that prohibit us from returning to Mitzrayim. In Parshas Shoftim, and again in Parshas Ki Savo, the Torah reiterates that we are not permitted to live in Mitzrayim. For many centuries there were thriving Jewish communities in Mitzrayim and as such many Rishonim dealt with the obvious halachic dilemma in justifying the existence of the communities. One of the approaches taken by some Rishonim, quoted by the Mordechai in Maseches Yevamos, states that the prohibition to reside in Mitzrayim does not refer to mere geographic location but rather to that area which is inhabited by the ancient people of Mitzrayim. Chazal speak about the historical event of the wars of Sancheriv that radically changed the borders of the nations of antiquity. For the purpose of other areas of halacha, Chazal observe that the original inhabitants of the lands of Amon and Moav no longer reside there. Similarly, notes the Mordechai, the people who live in Mitzrayim today are not the biological descendants of the Mitzrim of Yetzias Mitzrayim. As such the prohibition of living in Mitzrayim no longer is relevant.

This particular halachic argument has ramifications in the world of machshava as well. According to this understanding, the Torah wants to distance us from the culture of the ancient Mitzrim, not the physical geography of Mitzrayim. What was the essence of the world view of the ancient Mitzrim that was so alien to the life of Torah that would become the legacy of Klal Yisrael after Yetzias Mitzrayim?

There are three dimensions of the world that Klal Yisrael encountered during their interaction with Mitzrayim that had to be eradicated. Mitzrayim was a society engulfed in idolatry. The Rambam in his introduction to the laws that govern idolatrous practice highlights the degree to which the Jewish People, during their years as slaves in Mitzrayim, had become entrenched in the religious beliefs and practices of their neighbors. If not for Yetzias Mitzrayim occurring when it did, the monotheistic truth that Avraham Avinu had discovered would have been forever lost. The mitzva of taking a sheep and slaughtering it as a korban Pesach symbolized the total nullification of the religious symbol of the sheep that was so prominent in the world of Mitzrayim. The celebration of the first Pesach was the beginning of the transformation of a people that had become almost indistinguishable from its pagan neighbors to becoming the heirs to the monotheism of the Avos.

Along with idolatry, immorality was rampant in the society of Mitzrayim. In the introduction to the mitzvos that govern prohibited relations in Parshas Acharei Mos, the Torah draws our attention to the world of Mitzrayim as the antithesis of everything holy and pure. The sanctity of marriage and family could only be attained by distancing ourselves from the world of impurity that permeated the society of Mitzrayim. Perhaps for this reason there is such emphasis on the celebrating of the first Pesach in family units. The korban Pesach was eaten as a family, thereby symbolizing that it is the kedusha of family that will become the hallmark of the new nation of Klal Yisrael.

The society of Mitzrayim was able to commit murder on a grand scale. Jewish boys could be decreed to death at birth or be subsequently thrown into the river. A world permeated by violence and oppression that accompanied the slavery of the Jewish people is described in detail in the beginning of Sefer Shemos. In such a culture of lack of empathy and compassion, it is not surprising that government edicts were issued requiring murder. Many mitzvos were given to Klal Yisrael to instill in them the traits of kindness and compassion. We are reminded constantly how we suffered from oppression and are therefore obligated to show care and concern specifically for those who need it most.

There are halachos that govern pikuach nefesh when life is in danger. Shabbos, Yom Kippur, and almost all prohibitions are suspended when there is a risk to life. Yet, there are three areas in which one must give up one's life rather than transgress. Idolatry, immorality, and murder can never be violated. To do so undermines the very legacy of the Jewish People. As we stood at the banks of the Yam Suf and were told we will never return to Mitzrayim, we were being charged to never return to the values of Mitzrayim. We would build a society predicated on the belief in Hashem, the sanctity of the family, and kindness and compassion rather than oppression and violence. As we left Mitzrayim, we began the journey to Har Sinai where we would be taught how to live our personal and national lives based on these three eternal truths.

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[CS – Adding this old dvar torah as well:

#### **Chafetz Chaim on the Torah**

#### **Compiled by Rav Shmuel Greineman**

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ויהי בשלח פרעה את־העם ולא־נחם אלקים־ם דרך ארץ פלשתים כי קרוב הוא כי אומר אלקים־ם פנינחם העם בראתם מלחמה ושוב מצרימה.

When Pharaoh sent the people away, the L-rd did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines... (Shemos 13:17)

When the Jews left Egypt, Hakadosh Baruch Hu weighed two possibilities as to which way to lead them towards Eretz Yisrael - by way of the desert or by way of the land of the Philistines. In a manner of speaking, it was a "toss-up," for each possibility had an advantage and a drawback.

The advantage of their going through the land of the Philistines, a settled area, was that food would be readily available. On the other hand, there was a great danger that while among the Philistines, they would become spiritually sullied by them. After having just emerged from the "forty-ninth level of impurity," did it make sense to have them re-enter a domain of impurity? Who could guarantee that they would not mix with the gentiles and decide against going on to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah?

The advantage of going by way of the desert was the absence of spiritual impurity. The Jews would not be exposed to idols or to those who worshipped I hem. On I he other hand, thonah. where they would find enough food? the impurity present in the land of the Philistines because the danger that they might become sullied was too great. They had. after all, just been rescued from descending to the "fiftieth level of impurity" in Egypt. Now the only question was, "What would they eat?" Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "I have no choice. I must provide them manna in the desert - bread from Heaven, against the laws of nature. The only solution is to perform this miracle for them, because I must prevent, at all costs, their descent again to level after level of impurity."

In Hashem's approach here, we see a rebuttal to all who [ feel they must] compromise themselves by doing the kind of work that is foreign to Torah and the Jewish way of life in order to make a living. If it was possible for the Al-mighty to send down bread from Heaven - lechem abirim (Tehillim 78:25) - for over 600,000 people, then it is certainly within His power to

send sustenance to all who are faithful to His Torah and His mitzvos, [lest they contaminate themselves with the world's tumah.]]

#### **Home Weekly Parsha BESHALACH**

#### **Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

The miracle of the manna that fell from heaven and nurtured millions of people for forty years is one of the focal points of this week's parsha. The obvious reason for the miracle's occurrence is that the Jewish people had to have daily nourishment simply to survive. However, the rabbis of the Talmud injected another factor into the miracle of the falling manna. They stated that "the Torah could only have been granted to those that ate manna daily." Thus, the necessity for the manna was directly associated with the granting of the Torah to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai. No manna, no Torah. Why is this so?

Most commentators are of the opinion that only a people freed from the daily concerns of earning a living and feeding a family could devote themselves solely to Torah study and acceptance of the life values that acceptance of the Torah mandates.

The Torah is a demanding discipline. It requires time and effort, concentration and focus to appreciate and understand it. cursory glances and even inspiring sermons will not yield much to those who are unwilling to invest time and effort into its study and analysis. This was certainly true in this first generation of Jewish life, newly freed from Egyptian bondage and lacking heritage, tradition and life mores that would, in later generations, help Jews remain Jewish and appreciate the Torah.

The isolation of the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai coupled with the heavenly provision of daily manna and the miraculous well of Miriam all together created a certain think-tank atmosphere. This atmosphere enabled Torah to take root in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people.

In his final oration to the Jewish people, recorded for us in the book of Devarim, Moshe reviews the story of the manna falling from heaven. But there Moshe places a different emphasis on the matter. He states there that the manna came to teach, "... that humans do not live by bread alone but rather on the utterances of God's mouth."

To appreciate Torah, to truly fathom its depths and understand its values system, one has to accept its Divine origin. Denying that basic premise of Judaism compromises all deeper understanding and analysis of Torah. The manna, the presence of God, so to speak, in the daily life of the Jew, allowed the Torah to sink into the depths of the Jewish soul and become part of the matrix of our very DNA.

The Torah could only find a permanent and respected home within those who tasted God's presence, so to speak, every day within their very beings and bodies. The rabbis also taught us that the manna produced no waste materials within the human body.

When dealing with holiness and holy endeavors there is nothing that goes to waste. No effort is ignored and no thought and attempt is left unrecorded in the heavenly court of judgment. Even good intent is counted meritoriously. Let us feel that we too have tasted the manna.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

#### **Music, Language of the Soul**

#### **Beshallah**

#### **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

For the first time since their departure from Egypt, the Israelites do something together. They sing.

"Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord."

Exodus 15:1

Rashi, explaining the view of Rabbi Nehemiah in the Talmud[1] that they spontaneously sang the song together, says that the Holy Spirit rested on them and miraculously the same words came into their minds at the same time. In recollection of that moment, tradition has named this week Shabbat Shirah, the Sabbath of Song.

What is the place of song in Judaism?

There is an inner connection between music and the spirit. When language aspires to the transcendent and the soul longs to break free of the gravitational pull of the earth, it modulates into song. Music, said Arnold Bennett is "a language which the soul alone understands but which the soul can never translate." It is, in Richter's words "the poetry of the air." Tolstoy called it "the shorthand of emotion." Goethe said,

“Religious worship cannot do without music. It is one of the foremost means to work upon man with an effect of marvel.”

Words are the language of the mind. Music is the language of the soul. So when we seek to express or evoke emotion we turn to melody. Deborah sang after Israel's victory over the forces of Sisera (Judges 5). Hannah sang when she had a child (I Sam. 2). When Saul was depressed, David would play for him and his spirit would be restored (I Sam. 16). David himself was known as the “sweet singer of Israel” (II Sam. 23:1). Elisha called for a harpist to play so that the prophetic spirit could rest upon him (II Kings 3:15). The Levites sang in the Temple. Every day, in Judaism, we preface our morning prayers with Pesukei de-Zimra, the ‘Verses of Song’ with their magnificent crescendo, Psalm 150, in which instruments and the human voice combine to sing God's praises.

Mystics go further and speak of the song of the universe, what Pythagoras called ‘the music of the spheres.’ This is what Psalm means, when it says:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands . . . There is no speech, there are no words, where their voice is not heard. Their music[2] carries throughout the earth, their words to the end of the world.

Psalm 19

Beneath the silence, audible only to the inner ear, creation sings to its Creator.

So, when we pray, we do not read: we sing. When we engage with sacred texts, we do not recite: we chant. Every text and every time has, in Judaism, its own specific melody. There are different tunes for Shacharit, Mincha, and Maariv, the morning, afternoon, and evening prayers. There are different melodies and moods for the prayers for a weekday, Shabbat, the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot (which have much musically in common but also tunes distinctive to each), and for the Yamim Noraim, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

There are different tunes for different texts. There is one kind of cantillation for Torah, another for the Haftara from the prophetic books, and yet another for Ketuvim, the Writings, especially the five Megillot. There is a particular chant for studying the texts of the written Torah, for studying Mishnah and Gemara. So by music alone we can tell what kind of day it is, and what kind of text is being used. There is a map of holy words, and it is written in melodies and songs.

Music has extraordinary power to evoke emotion. The Kol Nidrei prayer with which Yom Kippur begins is not really a prayer at all. It is a dry legal formula for the annulment of vows. There can be little doubt that it is its ancient, haunting melody that has given it its hold over the Jewish imagination. It is hard to hear those notes and not feel that you are in the presence of God on the Day of Judgment, standing in the company of Jews of all places and times as they pleaded with heaven for forgiveness. It is the holy of holies of the Jewish soul. (Lehavdil, Beethoven came close to it in the opening notes of the sixth movement of the C Sharp Minor Quartet op. 131, his most sublime and spiritual work).

Nor can you sit on Tisha b'Av reading Eichah, the Book of Lamentations, with its own unique cantillation, and not feel the tears of Jews through the ages as they suffered for their faith and wept as they remembered what they had lost, the pain as fresh as it was the day the Temple was destroyed. Words without music are like a body without a soul.

For many years I was privileged to be part of a mission of song (together with the Shabbaton Choir and singers Rabbi Lionel Rosenfeld and chazzanim Shimon Cramer and Jonny Turgel) We journeyed to Israel to sing to victims of terror, as well as to people in hospitals, community centres, and food kitchens. We sang for - and with - the injured, the bereaved, the sick and the broken hearted. We danced with people in wheelchairs. One boy who had been blinded and lost half of his family in a suicide bombing, sang a duet with the youngest member of the choir, reducing the nurses and his fellow patients to tears. Such moments are epiphanies, redeeming a fragment of humanity and hope from the random cruelties of fate.

Beethoven wrote over the manuscript of the third movement of his A Minor Quartet the words *Neue Kraft fühlend*, “Feeling new strength.” That is what you can sense in those hospital wards. You understand what King David meant when he sang to God the words: “You turned my grief into dance; You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to You and not be silent.” United in song, you feel the strength of the human spirit no terror can destroy.

In his book, *Musicophilia*, the neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks (no relative, alas) tells the poignant story of Clive Wearing, an eminent musicologist who was struck by a devastating brain infection. The result was acute amnesia. He was unable to remember anything for more than a few seconds. As his wife Deborah put it, ‘It was as if every waking moment was the first waking moment.’

Unable to thread experiences together, he was caught in an endless present that had no connection with anything that had gone before. One day his wife found him holding a chocolate in one hand and repeatedly covering and uncovering it with the other hand, saying each time, ‘Look, it's new.’ ‘It's the same chocolate’, she said. ‘No’, he replied, ‘Look. It's changed.’ He had no ability to hold onto his memories at all. He lost his past. In a moment of self-awareness he said about himself, ‘I haven't heard anything, seen anything, touched anything, smelled anything. It's like being dead.’

Two things broke through his isolation. One was his love for his wife. The other was music. He could still sing, play the organ, and conduct a choir with all his old skill and verve. What was it about music, Oliver Sacks asked, that enabled him, while playing or conducting, to overcome his amnesia? He suggests that when we ‘remember’ a melody, we recall one note at a time, yet each note relates to the whole. He quotes the philosopher of music, Victor Zuckerkandl, who wrote, ‘Hearing a melody is hearing, having heard, and being about to hear, all at once. Every melody declares to us that the past can be there without being remembered, the future without being foreknown.’ Music is a form of sensed continuity that can sometimes break through the most overpowering disconnections in our experience of time.

Faith is more like music than like science. Science analyses, music integrates. And as music connects note to note, so faith connects episode to episode, life to life, age to age in a timeless melody that breaks into time. God is the composer and librettist. We are each called on to be voices in the choir, singers of God's song. Faith teaches us to hear the music beneath the noise.

So music is a signal of transcendence. The philosopher and musician Roger Scruton writes that it is “an encounter with the pure subject, released from the world of objects, and moving in obedience to the laws of freedom alone.” He quotes Rilke:

Words still go softly out towards the unsayable

And music, always new, from palpitating stones

Builds in useless space its godly home.

The history of the Jewish spirit is written in its songs. The words do not change, but each generation needs its own melodies.

Our generation needs new songs so that we too can sing joyously to God as our ancestors did at that moment of transfiguration when they crossed the Red Sea and emerged, the other side, free at last. When the soul sings, the spirit soars.

[1] Sotah 30b

[2] Kavam, literally “their line,” possibly meaning the reverberating string of a musical instrument.

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### **The Exodus from Egypt And Redemption through Natural Means Revivim Rabbi Eliezer Melamed**

God created the world in a way that it operates according to laws known as the laws of nature \* Miracles were intended to reveal and publicize that God is the leader of the entire world \* The two great miracles through which God revealed Himself to the world, and through which the world exists, are: the Exodus from Egypt, and the Giving of the Torah \* From the time the Israelites entered the Land, miracles ceased \* The conquest of the Land was done according to natural laws \* When Israel chooses good, blessing flows through natural means \* Redemption

depends on the fulfillment of the commandment of Settling the Land, which is carried out through natural means

#### Nature and Miracle

Q: Is the world's functioning according to the laws of nature a fallback, but ideally, the world should be sustained through miracles, like the Exodus from Egypt?

A: Initially, God created the world with wisdom, meaning that it operates according to laws called the laws of nature. Through this, a person understands the rules by which the world operates, and knows that every action he takes has an effect on what will happen to him, and those around him. If he chooses to add good, he will bring good to himself and those around him, and if he chooses evil, he will harm himself, and those around him. If he learns a profession, he can find work. If he works honestly and diligently, he will earn a good livelihood. If a man honors, loves, and makes his wife happy, and the woman does likewise with her husband, they will have good and happy lives, and will be able to raise and educate their children properly. If a person is good and loyal to his friends, he will have good and supportive companionship. Moreover, if he learns Torah and observes its commandments, he will best express the image of God within him, and be a partner with God in advancing the world toward its rectification and redemption. Thus, God created nature as the best framework for revealing the power and talents of humanity.

#### The Flaw in the Governance of Nature, and the Need for a Miracle

However, there is a flaw in the governance of nature: it may cause people to forget God's name, and miracles were intended to correct this flaw. The flaw in nature's governance can be described in three ways:

The laws of nature by which the world operates seem solid and unchanging, as if their power is inherent, and there is no one who created them. When these systems collapse, either through miracles that break the laws of nature, or through the eruption of natural forces, such as lightning and thunder, earthquakes, floods, and fires (see Berakhot 59b), the belief that there is someone who created the world returns to people's awareness.

Even when a person remembers that there is a Creator of the world, the wisdom and power within the laws of nature may cause him to think that since creation, nature operates on its own, without God continuing to sustain it, and watch over it. In this case, a person must struggle for survival, trapped within the laws of nature and the coarse instincts that govern him, without the ability to change himself, or the world, for the better. Therefore, God sometimes breaks the boundaries of nature, performs miracles, and teaches humanity that He is the one who sustains the laws of nature, so that through them, He can influence the world with His light and goodness. Through this, a person can understand that his role is to walk in God's ways, reveal the hidden aspects of the laws of nature, and use them for good. The more he reveals them, the more he will be able to transform the world for the better.

Even righteous people who always remember that God created the world and is its leader, and who constantly engage in charity and justice, may forget that the nature in which they live is not perfect. They become accustomed to the fact that God's leadership is hidden from the world, and that often it is bad for the righteous, and good for the wicked. Within this framework, they strive to do the best they can according to the guidance of the Torah. Through the miracles performed by those with prophetic powers, which come from a higher world, we are reminded of our longing for rectification, refusing to accept the flaws and corruption, and striving more intensely for the redemption of the world.

#### The Purpose of Miracles: To Publicize that God Governs the World

It turns out that miracles are meant to reveal and publicize that God is the leader of the entire world, and all human beings should walk in His ways. The meaning of the Hebrew word 'nes' (miracle) is both 'wonder' and also 'a flag raised high'. The miraculous nes, or sign, is like a flag that rises and soars to great heights, so that it can be seen from afar, and by it, people will know that God is the leader of the world, and that all power is in His hands. As it is written: "You gave a banner (nes) to those who fear You, to be displayed because of the truth" (Psalms 60:5),

meaning that God gave a banner to His faithful to affirm and beautify His words. Similarly, the Hebrew word 'ot' (sign) also means a miraculous token, as it is written: "And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall perform the signs (otot)" (Exodus 4:17). The sign is a symbol of God's overall leadership of the world.

#### The Miracles of the Exodus from Egypt, and the Giving of the Torah

Above and beyond all miracles, there are two great miracles by which God revealed Himself to the world, and through which the world exists: the Exodus from Egypt, and the Giving of the Torah. Even if a person tried with all his might to contemplate the divine light hidden in the laws of nature, without the miraculous revelation of the Giving of the Torah, he would not receive clear divine guidance on faith and the way to rectify humanity and the world, and would lose his way in the maze of his troubles and aspirations. Similarly, God's choice of the People of Israel to reveal His word to the world is the foundation for the acceptance of the Torah, and in the Exodus from Egypt, this choice was revealed.

Therefore, the choice of Israel and the Giving of the Torah were accompanied by signs and wonders, so that all would know that their matter takes precedence over all the matters of the world governed by the laws of nature, and through them, God's power and leadership are revealed in the world. This is what our Sages meant when they said that God could have brought Israel out with one stroke, or even through natural means, but to reveal to the world His greatness and might, which no power can withstand, He struck the Egyptians with ten plagues, until they surrendered, and sent Israel out to freedom. As it is written: "And I will multiply My signs and wonders in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 7:3), and it is written: "And in order that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your son's son, how I made a mockery of Egypt and My signs which I placed among them, and you shall know that I am the Lord" (Exodus 10:2). Therefore, we were commanded to remember the Exodus from Egypt every day, during the holidays, and on the mezuzot and tefillin, so that we would recall all the foundational aspects of faith revealed through the miracles God performed in the Exodus from Egypt (Ramban, Exodus 13:16).

Similarly, the Giving of the Torah took place with an extraordinary, miraculous revelation before all of Israel, so that they would believe in God, and accept the Torah, as it is written: "Ask now concerning the days that are past... Did anything so great ever happen, or was anything like it ever heard of? Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the fire, as you have heard, and live?" (Deuteronomy 4:32-33).

#### Transition to Governance through Natural Means

In general, from the time Israel entered the Land, miracles ceased for Israel. The manna stopped falling from the heavens, and Israel was required to obtain their sustenance through natural means: plowing and sowing, planting and pruning, in order to grow the sacred fruits of the Land by their own hands and separate tithes and offerings, and to designate years for the Sabbatical and Jubilee cycles. Through this, they were able to fulfill the commandment of Yishuv Ha'aretz (settling the Land), which is equivalent to all the other commandments in the Torah. Also, the conquest of the Land was, in general, carried out through natural means. At the start of the campaign, God performed great miracles for Israel, to reveal to them, and to all the world, that Israel was entering the Land and conquering it in accordance with God's command. Therefore, He split the Jordan River before them, brought down the walls of Jericho, and made the sun stand still at Gibeon, until Israel had defeated the five kings of the Amorites. However, after this, they were required to strengthen themselves in the commandment, and conquer the Land through natural means. Where they faltered, God did not help them.

#### Like a Person Growing from Childhood to Maturity

Just like a person, who, in his childhood, is cared for by his parents for all his needs, and as he grows, becomes responsible for his own life and needs to take care of his own livelihood, so it is with the People of Israel. In the first stage, God took care of all their needs as a mother cares for her nursing child, and as they grew and matured, the responsibility passed to them, so that they themselves would reveal

God's word to the world, through the course of their lives (Ein Ayah, Berakhot 1:147).

The great miracles were performed to teach God's governance, but the ultimate purpose was that Israel would live in the Land of Israel, and through observing the Torah and commandments, reveal God's word within nature, making it overflow with God's blessing. This was where the Spies sinned, fearing to accept responsibility for conquering the Land through natural means.

#### Miracles in Times of Crisis

When Israel chooses good, blessing flows naturally, as we learn in the Torah that when we walk in God's laws, we receive natural blessings. However, when Israel sins and their strength wanes, they need miracles to remind them that God is the leader of the world, and to give them a respite to return to repentance. This occurred in the Kingdom of Israel when, on the brink of its destruction, the prophets Elijah and Elisha performed great miracles, and gave Israel time to return to repentance. But since they did not repent, the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and the Ten Tribes were exiled. Still, there was value in the appearance of miracles, because even though they did not prevent the destruction, they taught Israel for generations that God governs the world, and out of His love for them, He sent His prophets to try to save them, and when they return in repentance, they will be redeemed.

#### Redemption Depends on Fulfilling the Commandment of Settling the Land

Understanding the value of working through natural means is important for our time, as redemption depends on fulfilling the commandment of Yishuv Ha'aretz (settling the Land), which is carried out through natural means, by Jews who ascend to the Land, settle it, establish a state and an army to protect the people and the Land, and rebuild the Holy Temple. However, our Sages hinted (Sanhedrin 97b) that if Israel does not return to repentance, then, contrary to the natural course, God will raise up a king for us whose decrees will be as harsh as Haman's, so that through the suffering, we will return to repentance, ascend to the Land, and settle it through natural means. The stronger we become in the commandment through natural means, the more successful we will be, and if we do not strengthen ourselves, we will continue to progress through suffering.

#### Objection to Prayer on the Temple Mount

Q: I heard from a certain rabbi... who is an esteemed rabbi, that he opposed those who ascend the Temple Mount to pray there, claiming, among other things, that they are violating the words of the Sages: "Rav Kahana said: It is brazen for someone to pray in an open space" (Berakhot 34b). That is, someone who prays in an open place is considered brazen, because prayer should take place in private.

A: It is surprising that this rabbi did not examine the Tosafot there (ad loc., "chatzif"), which ask why Isaac prayed in the field, and they answer in the first explanation that he prayed on Mount Moriah, which is a holy place. That is, in the holy and special place where there is a connection between Israel and God, one can pray in the open. The words of the Tosafot have been cited in many books.

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

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#### [CS - adding recent dvar torah:

From: **Alan Fisher** <afisherads@yahoo.com>

Potomac Torah Study Center

Vol. 12 #16, February 7-8, 2025; 10 Shevat 5785; Beshalach 5785

Tu B'Shevat is next Thursday, February 13

May Hashem protect Israel and Jews everywhere during 5785. May Hashem's protection shine on all of Israel, the IDF, and Jews throughout the world. May the first phase of the agreement continue with the remaining hostages coming home, hostilities ending, and with a new era of security and rebuilding for both Israel and all who genuinely seek peace.

When B'Nai Yisrael leave Egypt, soon after they are out of sight of the Egyptians, God tells Moshe to have the people turn around and return to Egypt along the Sea of Reeds, at the edge of the desert. The Egyptians see B'Nai Yisrael returning and wish that Paro had not let their slaves leave town. Paro changes his mind, fears that they will join with

Egypt's enemies and attack, and regrets letting the people leave. He takes his chariot, gathers his army, and chases after B'Nai Yisrael. Both camps must cross the Sea of Reeds to leave Egypt and continue toward Canaan.

God places His cloud between B'Nai Yisrael and the Egyptian army. Night falls, and neither side can see what is happening, except Hashem leaves light to guide B'Nai Yisrael. God produces strong winds that separate the sea once B'Nai Yisrael start to cross the sea. After the Jews cross the sea, Hashem raises His cloud so the Egyptians see the dry land path across the sea – but puts the cloud behind B'Nai Yisrael so they cannot watch what happens to the Egyptians. Once the Egyptians are in the dry sea bed, Hashem changes the wind, and the waters rush back to drown the Egyptians and their horses.

In the morning, B'Nai Yisrael see that all the Egyptians and their horses are dead and the chariots are broken. The people sing a joyous song, and Miriam then leads the women in a second song. The people are thirsty and complain to Moshe. He tells them to complain to God. They find bitter water, and Hashem tells Moshe to throw a certain tree into the water. He does, and the water becomes sweet. The people next complain about being hungry. God sends manna and quail. After the people see that Hashem is taking care of their needs, they reach Elim, an oasis with twelve springs and seventy date palms. Amalek encounters the people and attacks, focusing on killing the weakest members of the community. Yehoshua leads an army against Amalek while Moshe goes up a hill to encourage the people. When Moshe has his arms up toward heaven, B'Nai Yisrael gain in the war. When Moshe's arms droop, Amalek gains ground.

B'Nai Yisrael already believe that Hashem is powerful and can defeat any other army. The people, however, do not yet believe that God loves each Jew and wants each of us to develop a close relationship with Him. Hashem continues to test B'Nai Yisrael with water, food, specific orders regarding how and when to collect food and water, and threats from outside the camp to try to convince the people of his love for each of us. For example, Moshe and Hashem keep trying to train the people to complain to God rather than to Moshe or Aharon. Hashem also brings back symbols from before as reminders of His power and love for all the Jews. For example, Hashem tells Moshe to use the same staff that he used to bring plagues to the Egyptians – but now to protect B'Nai Yisrael (for example in bringing water out of a rock).

When B'Nai Yisrael stop at Elim, there are twelve springs and seventy date palms. Why twelve and seventy? Twelve represents a complete family, and seventy stands for all the nations. Esav and Yaakov both have twelve sons who become nations or tribes. Noach has seventy descendants (nations) at Shinar before the flood, and Yaakov has seventy family members when the family goes to Egypt. When Moshe asks Hashem for help leading the people, He tells Moshe to gather seventy elders to help him. During Sukkot, the seventy extra young bull Mincha offerings represent the seventy nations of the world that will eventually recognize Hashem.

One might consider the key lesson of Beshalach to be teaching B'Nai Yisrael to develop faith in Hashem. Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander relates Devorah's song in the Haftorah to our journey today to rebuild Israel with faith and responsibility. Devorah's defeat of Sisera brought forty years of peace to our ancestors, and we hope that the costly wars with our enemies will bring even longer peace for our people in the current century.

Rabbi Marc Angel urges us to understand the truth about the Middle East. Israel is the only country that has given land to the Palestinians since 1948. Indeed, the Ottoman Empire controlled Israel for hundreds of years and never moved to establish a Moslem country in or anywhere near Israel. Jordan controlled Jerusalem from 1948 until June 1967 but never ceded any land to the Palestinians.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z"l, raises the concept of hate. Our enemies hate us because we are their enemies. An enemy is willing to die to kill us. The Torah demands that we seek peace with the Egyptians but destroy Amalek. The difference is that Egypt invited our ancestors to live in Egypt to escape a drought and only turned to slavery once they

feared that Israel might combine with an enemy nation to take over Egypt. Amalek, however, had a pathological hatred for B'Nai Yisrael and sought to kill all our people, starting with the weakest (those unable to defend themselves). Hamas and some of the other modern Arab nations fit the definition of hate – people with whom one cannot negotiate peace. Israel's treaty with Egypt from more than forty years ago and the more recent Abraham Accords show that Israel is able to negotiate and maintain peaceful relations with some Moslem and Arab countries. Hopefully over time, more countries will change from a hated enemy approach to a positive approach in which a negotiated peace is possible.

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at [www.alephbeta.org](http://www.alephbeta.org). Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Moshe Aaron ben Leah Beilah (badly wounded in battle in Gaza but slowly recovering), Daniel Yitzchak Meir HaLevy ben Ruth; Ariah Ben Sarah, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Miriam Bat Leah; Yehudit Leah bas Hannah Feiga; Chana bat Sarah; Raizel bat Rut; Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sarah Feige bat Chaya, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom, Hannah & Alan

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## Drasha

### By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Beshalach

Words of Remembrance

This week's portion begins with the event that merits the title of the book – Exodus. The Jews finally are chased from Egypt. Hastily, they gather their meager possessions and with the gold and silver that the Egyptians miraculously gave them they flee.

But one of them, their leader no less, does not take gold and silver. He takes Joseph's bones. The Torah tells us why. Decades prior, Joseph beseeched his children, "pakod yifkod – G-d will surely remember you and you shall bring my bones up with you out of here" (Genesis 50:25). Slavery can make one forget commitments – especially about old bones. However, despite more than a century of servitude, Moshe kept the promise. What baffles me is the wording of the request and its fulfillment. Why did Yoseph juxtapose the words "pakod yifkod" (G-d shall remember) with the petition to re-inter his bones? It is repeated in this week's portion. "Moshe took the bones because Joseph said that pakod yifkod – G-d will remember you and bring my bones up" (Exodus 13: 19).

It is wonderful that Joseph assured redemption, but is that the reason Moshe took the bones? Didn't he take the bones simply to fulfill a commitment to Joseph? What does pakod yifkod have to do with it? Why is it inserted in both the request and response?

Twelve years ago, our Yeshiva established an audio Torah tape library. I looked in the Yellow Pages and found a company that sold tape labels. A very knowledgeable representative took my call. Clearly Jewish, she had a Brooklyn accent, and spiced her words with some Yiddish expressions. I felt comfortable dealing with someone who I believed, knew about Jewish institutions. I said I would call her back and asked for her name. She answered proudly, "Esther." "Last name?" I inquired. After a brief pause, I received an answer that surprised me. "Scatteregio."

"Scatteregio?" I repeated in amazement. Stepping where perhaps I should not have, I explained my perplexity. "Actually," I offered, "I was expecting Cohen or Goldberg." She paused, "you are right, I am Jewish and my first husband was Goldman." Another pause. "But now I'm remarried, and its "Scatteregio." She took a deep breath. "But I have a Jewish son, Rick, and he really wants to observe. In fact, he wants me to allow him to study in an Israeli Yeshiva."

I knew that this was not destined to be a telephone call only about tape. For half an hour, I talked about the importance of Yeshiva, and how Rick could be her link to her past and connection with her future. I never knew what kind of impact my words made. I remember leaving my name and talking about my namesake's influence on an Esther of yesteryear. I ended the conversation with the words "Esther, es vet zain gut!" (Yiddish for it will be well!)

Ten years later, during the intermediate days of Passover I took my children to a local park. Many Jewish grandparents were there, watching the next generations slide and swing. An older woman wearing pants and smoking a cigarette was holding the hand of a young boy who was wearing a large kippah and had thick payos (sidecurls). As one of my children offered to play with the little boy, I nodded hello and smiled. With tremendous pride, she began talking about her grandchildren. "Do you know my son Reuvain? He was studying in a Far Rockaway yeshiva until now and just took a job in the city." "Wonderful," I said, "but I don't know your son." She told me about the struggles of making a living, and I had no choice but to listen and smile. Instinctively I responded, "Es vet zain gut!" Things will be fine. Her eyes locked on me. She stared in disbelief.

"Mordechai?" "Esther?" We just shook our heads in disbelief, and to my amazement, she told me that Rick did go to Yeshiva, these were his children, and they were truly her nachas (pride and joy).

I never will know if my words helped turn Rick into Reuvain, but I am sure that the words, "es vet zain gut" assuring someone that things will be all right, was a statement not easily forgotten.

When Yoseph made his children promise that they will take his bones with them, he added an assurance. He promised them that G-d would surely remember them. Even Hashem, appearing to Moshe said, "pakod pakadti," "I have remembered" (Exodus 3:16). Yoseph, too, requested to be remembered. Two hundred years of slavery can take an awful toll on people. It can make them give up their pride, it can make them forget about family, it surely it can cause them to forget about bones. But when requests are linked with comforting words, they endure. Moshe took Yoseph's bones because they were linked with words of reassurance that remained an anthem of the Jews in exile, "G-d will remember you." And Moses remembered, too.

Dedicated in loving memory of Aaron Beck by Marilyn and Jules Beck  
Good Shabbos!

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## Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Beshalach

### The Zechus of Suffering on Behalf of Others

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1323 Lechem Mishna: What Exactly Is the Mitzva? Are Women Obligated? Must you Make Your Own Bracha on Your Slice? Good Shabbos!

A few years ago, I shared a great vort (brief Torah commentary) that I will first review, and then add a story and an incredible observation from the Be'er Mayim Chaim that takes the vort to a whole new level.

After Bnei Yisrael (the Children of Israel) left Mitzrayim, the pasuk says, "V'amar Paro L'bnei Yisrael" (And Pharaoh said to Bnei Yisrael) "They are confined in the land, the wilderness has locked them in." (Shemos 14:3) The obvious question – which Rashi and Targum Onkelos address – is what does it mean "And Pharaoh said to Bnei Yisrael?" Bnei Yisrael had already left Mitzrayim. To whom could Pharaoh be speaking? The people who deserved to leave Mitzrayim had already left. Those who were undeserving, died during Makas Choshech (the Plague of Darkness). There were no Jews left in Mitzrayim!

Therefore, Rashi and Targum Onkelos do not translate the words “el Bnei Yisrael” to mean “to Bnei Yisrael” but rather “concerning Bnei Yisrael.”

However, the Targum Yonosan ben Uziel has an incredible interpretation: “And Pharaoh spoke to Dasan and Aviram, who were of Bnei Yisrael and who had remained in Mitzrayim.” Dasan and Aviram were thorns in the side of Moshe Rabbeinu and Bnei Yisrael from the early days of Egyptian slavery all the way until the incident with Korach in Sefer Bamidbar. According to the Targum Yonosan ben Uziel, Dasan and Aviram stayed in Mitzrayim when the rest of the Jews left.

The Maharil Diskin famously asks a simple question: Chazal say that four fifths of the Jews in Mitzrayim died during Makas Choshech. They were deemed wicked and not worthy of experiencing Yetzias Mitzrayim (the Exodus). We would think that if anyone amongst Bnei Yisrael would qualify as wicked and undeserving of Yetzias Mitzrayim, it would be Dasan and Aviram. If they were such wicked people that they did not want to leave Mitzrayim, why were they still alive? Why did they not die during Makas Choshech? How is it that they lived to tell the tale and survived all the way into the midbar, up until the rebellion of Korach, more than a year later? What was their zechus (merit) that granted them this ‘longevity’?

The Maharil Diskin gives an amazing answer to his question: Dasan and Aviram had a special zechus. What was their zechus? Dasan and Aviram were employed by the Egyptians as shotrim (taskmasters). Their job was to ensure that the Jews met their daily quota of brick production. Chazal say that even though they had this terrible job of being the taskmasters and the enforcers, they allowed themselves to be beaten by the Egyptians rather than doing their job of whipping the Jews who were not able to produce the required number of bricks. Dasan and Aviram took the punishment of their brethren on their own backs.

In the Nazi concentration camps, in addition to the German officers, there were Jewish kapos, who were given the job of enforcing the labor upon their fellow Jews. They had the same system in Mitzrayim. There were Egyptians who were the overseers, but the people who actually dealt with the Jewish slaves were these shotrim.

In the zechus of the empathy that Dasan and Aviram had for their fellow Jews, they merited survival during Makas Choshech and they were still around after Yetzias Mitzrayim, such that Pharaoh could speak to them and comment that the Jews who left were lost in the wilderness.

The Maharil Diskin even adds that Bnei Yisrael complained to Moshe Rabbeinu earlier, “hiv’ashtem es rucheinu” (You made us smell) (Shemos 5:21). We usually consider this to be a figure of speech. The Maharil Diskin interprets it literally: Because of their wounds from the whippings that did not heal, their bodies reeked.

The Maharil Diskin says that the Ribono shel Olam, as it were, has a soft spot in His heart for a Jew who suffers on behalf of other Jews. Dasan and Aviram were wicked. They reported Moshe Rabbeinu to Pharaoh for killing the Egyptian. They were horrible people. But they had one incredible zechus. They literally took it on the chin – if not the back – for other Jews. This is such an enormous zechus that it protected them from dying during Makas Choshech and it allowed them to live to tell the tale even though they did not want to leave Mitzrayim.

I once related this Maharil Diskin to an incident involving Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt”l, that was mentioned by his son, Rav Shmuel Auerbach, in his hesped (eulogy) for his father.

There was a gadol in Europe known by the name of his sefer, Baruch Taam (Rav Baruch Frankel-Te’omim (1760-1828)). Baruch Taam’s son became engaged to a girl from a very wealthy and prominent family. At the tenaim, the mechutanim came over and they noticed that Baruch Taam was not really into it. He did not look happy. He looked preoccupied with other matters. The kallah’s mother came over to him and asked why he did not look happy on this joyous occasion. “Are you not pleased with this shidduch?”

Baruch Taam responded that he had no problem with the shidduch. “But the water carrier of the town is very sick and I am worried about him.” (In Europe, in the shtetl, before indoor plumbing and running water, there was someone whose job it was to be the water carrier. A water

carrier would go down to the river and fill up buckets and then carry the buckets on his shoulders to deliver the water to the town’s residences.) In European Jewish society, the water carrier was the low-man on the totem pole. The only requirement for the job was a strong back. Brains were not needed. The mother of the kallah was shocked: “Because the water carrier is sick, you allow that to dampen your simcha? You let the water carrier effect your mood? I can’t understand that!”

Baruch Taam stood up and announced “The shidduch is off! I will not let my son marry into a family that has such a cavalier attitude, which shows no empathy for the misfortune of another Jew.”

This was one of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach’s favorite stories because throughout his life, Rav Shlomo Zalman – among all of his other prodigious character attributes – exemplified the midah of feeling the pain of his fellow Jews.

To return to our topic – the Maharil Diskin says that this was the zechus of Dasan and Aviram.

I want to add an incredible observation to the Maharil Diskin’s vort. The Be’er Mayim Chaim (a very famous Chassidische sefer, written by Rav Chaim Tyrer (1760-1816), the Rav of Czernowitz) asks as follows: If in fact Dasan and Aviram stayed in Mitzrayim and had a conversation with Pharaoh following Yetzias Mitzrayim, when and how did they leave Mitzrayim? We know that they certainly wound up with the rest of the Jews by the time of Korach’s rebellion and according to the Medrash, they were also the people who left over their portion of mann until the next morning, in violation of Moshe’s instructions (Shemos 16:20). This is the question of the Beer Mayim Chaim.

The Be’er Mayim Chaim answers with a very novel idea. The pasuk in Shiras Az Yashir writes: “When Pharaoh’s horse came with his chariots and horsemen into the sea and Hashem turned back the waters of the sea upon them, the Children of Israel walked on the dry land amid the sea.” (Shemos 15:19) The Beer Mayim Chaim writes that this pasuk is chronologically incorrect. The pasuk should first state that Bnei Yisrael went through the Yam Suf and then then Pharaoh came into the midst of the Yam....” The pasuk records the events backwards!

Because of this observation, the Be’er Mayim Chaim explains as follows: When Klal Yisrael left Mitzrayim, Dasan and Aviram stayed behind. Dasan and Aviram then realized that they “bet on the wrong horse” because Pharaoh and Mitzrayim were destroyed. So, then they also left. However, when they reached the Yam Suf (Red Sea) to rejoin Bnei Yisrael, they saw that it was impassable.

The Beer Mayim Chaim says that there was actually a second Krias Yam Suf (splitting of the Red Sea)! Not only does “And Pharaoh said to Bnei Yisrael” refer to Dasan and Aviram, but also “And Bnei Yisrael walked on the dry land in the midst of the sea” refers to Dasan and Aviram.

These two perennial trouble makers were zoche to their own personal Krias Yam Suf. I wish the Be’er Mayim Chaim would buttress this explanation with a Medrash or a teaching of Chazal, but he seems to present it as his own inference. This, however, only magnifies the question: We asked why Dasan and Aviram didn’t die during Makas Choshech. The answer was that they had a zechus. But the way it comes out now, not only did they have a zechus that spared them the fate of the wicked during Makas Choshech, but their zechus even allowed them to merit their own Krias Yam Suf!!

With this insight, the Beer Mayim Chaim explains another idea in Parshas Korach. Korach challenged Moshe Rabbeinu. Who else took on Moshe Rabbeinu? Ohn ben Peles and Dasan and Aviram. Why would anyone start up with Moshe Rabbeinu? Isn’t it obvious that they are going to lose their battle? The answer is that Dasan and Aviram were overconfident in their personal merit. They felt that they were gedolei yisrael. They even merited their own Krias Yam Suf! That previous personal miracle gave them the impetus and the courage to start up with Moshe Rabbeinu. They felt that they were taking on an equal of theirs and that they could win the battle!

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**Rav Kook Torah**  
**Beshalach: This is My God!**

The Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 23:15) makes a startling claim about the Israelites who witnessed the splitting of the Red Sea:

“Come and see how great were those who crossed the Sea. Moses pleaded and beseeched before God that he should merit seeing God’s Divine Image, ‘Please, show me Your glory!’ (Exod. 33:19). Yet God told him, ‘You may not see My face....’ But every Israelite who descended into the Sea pointed with his finger and said, ‘This is my God and I will glorify Him’” (Exod. 15:2).

Could it be that those who crossed the Red Sea saw more than Moses, about whom the Torah testifies, “No other prophet like Moses has arisen in Israel” (Deut. 34:10)? Furthermore, Moses was also there when they crossed the sea — he certainly saw what everyone else experienced!

#### Total Suspension of Nature

Clearly, the Midrash cannot be referring to the level of prophecy, for it is a fundamental article of faith that Moses’ prophecy was unparalleled. Rather, the Midrash must be referring to some aspect of prophetic vision that was only experienced by those who participated in this miraculous crossing.

What was so special about the splitting of the Red Sea? God performed other miracles for Israel, but those miracles did not entail the complete abrogation of the laws of nature. Nature as a whole continued on its usual path; God only temporarily changed one aspect for the benefit of His people.

But with the miraculous splitting of the Sea, God suspended the entire system of natural law. The Sages wrote that this miracle did not occur solely in the Red Sea. On that night, bodies of water all over the world were split. According to the Maharal, Rabbi Yehudah Loew of Prague, water symbolizes the physical world, so that this miracle affected the entire physical realm of creation (Gevurot Hashem, chap. 42). The entire rule of nature was breached.

#### Immediate Awareness of God’s Rule

Our world is governed by the framework of cause and effect. When the underlying rule of nature was suspended during the splitting of the Red Sea, the entire system of causality was arrested. During that time, the universe lost its cloak of natural law, and revealed itself as a pure expression of divine will.

What is the essence of prophecy? This unique gift is the ability to look at God’s works and recognize in them His greatness.

As long as nature’s causal structure is functioning, a prophet may attain sublime and even esoteric knowledge, but he will never achieve immediate awareness of God’s directing hand. Through his physical senses and powers of reasoning, the prophet will initially recognize the natural system of cause and effect. Only afterwards does the prophet become aware that the entire universe is created and directed by an ultimate Cause.

At Mount Sinai, God told Moses, “You will only see My back.” What is God’s ‘back’? Maimonides explained that this is a metaphor for the system of natural law by which God governs the universe. God granted Moses an awareness of the inner connectivity within creation. This understanding of God’s true nature exceeded that of any other prophet.

When God split the Sea, all laws of nature were temporarily suspended. God took “direct control” of the universe. Those witnessing this miracle were instantly aware of God’s intervention and providence, each according to his spiritual level. Certainly none reached the prophetic level of Moses. But whatever enlightenment they attained, it was perceived immediately. They did not need to first examine the natural system of causality, and from this, recognize the prime Cause of creation.

Therefore, those experiencing the miracle of the Red Sea called out spontaneously, “THIS is my God.” Their comprehension was not obscured by the logical system of cause and effect; they witnessed God’s revealed rule directly, without the cloak of causality.

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### Don’t Withdraw, Draw Closer

#### By Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General warned the country that we collectively are suffering from an “epidemic of loneliness.” He claimed that the negative health effects of loneliness are on par with those of tobacco use and obesity. According to one recent survey, 20% of American adults report feeling loneliness “a lot of the day.” A growing number of public-health officials see loneliness as the world’s next critical public-health issue.

There are many factors contributing to the rise in loneliness. Technology brings people together online, yet paradoxically, it

increasingly makes people feel lonely offline. Many feel overworked and too tired or busy to find time with others. Mental health challenges have driven people to isolate and be alone.

Some are alone by choice, but many are struggling with a loneliness brought on because of others. I was recently speaking to someone who is the caregiver for their spouse who has been experiencing a decline with her health and faculties. He described the pain and anguish of living with and watching his loved one struggle while attempting to navigating her care and support. That pain, he said, is truly compounded by the feelings of loneliness and abandonment from friends, neighbors, and even some family.

People are generally wonderful. At the moment of a diagnosis, crisis, or loss, we know how to rally, show up, offer meals, support and love. But then we tend to settle in, and too often move on. Nobody forgets about or neglects people they know or love on purpose or intentionally. Nobody thinks about something they could say that would be hurtful or insensitive. These situations are complicated, uncomfortable, and sometimes awkward. Sometimes people disappear because a situation hits too close to home. Sometimes it is because they subconsciously think the situation is contagious and could affect them next. Most often, because it is hard to know what to do or say, people simply withdraw.

In speaking to a few people who are caregivers to their loved ones, and with input from a therapist specializing in support, here are a few recommendations and directions emerged that can guide us all to be better:

**REACH OUT** – If isolation hurts, then contact and connection comfort and soothe. Don’t just ask how the person struggling is doing, ask the caregiver how they themselves are holding up.

**LISTEN & VALIDATE** – One of the simplest and most profound ways to help a caregiver is not by doing anything active at all, just by simply listening. Be a friend, a compassionate listener, someone who will give full attention, someone who will provide comfort and not be judgmental.

**DON’T** – Our friends and family are not looking for us to have the answers or solutions. Don’t offer platitudes or unsolicited advice. Avoid sharing stories about other caregivers or asking why they don’t make certain decisions or place a loved one in a facility or choose another path of care.

**CONSISTENCY** – Don’t reach out just once. Don’t pledge or promise how you will always be there, and definitely don’t say, “Don’t hesitate to reach out if there is anything I can do to help.” Consistency is key. Check in, follow up, show up, be available.

**INVITE & INCLUDE** – Don’t assume someone’s condition means they and their caregiver can’t participate in a Shabbos meal or social event. Invite and include when possible and practical. If the caregiver has coverage or help, invite him or her to go out, to get together. Give them social contact that is “normal” and ordinary. Invite them to join at a shiur, shul program, community event, or anything else that lets the caregiver know you are thinking of them and want to spend time with them.

**PRACTICAL HELP** – The family caregiver has essentially begun taking on the responsibilities of two. Don’t ask if you can help—just help. When you are heading to the supermarket, call or text and say, “I’m going out for groceries, what can I get you.” Offer to take in or pick up their dry cleaners while taking care of your own. Drop off fruits and vegetables for no reason, just because you care. Whichever errand you choose, set expectations before you start. If you are planning to visit that is helpful and meaningful, but make sure to let the caregiver know when to expect you and how long you may stay.

The Torah describes that originally, man was created alone. However, Hashem quickly amends creation: “Lo tov heyos ha’Adom l’vado - It is not good for man to be alone.” (Bereishis 2:18) Aloneness leads to loneliness, and that, says Hashem, is not good.

Pirkei Avos (6:6) teaches that one of the 48 ways that Torah is acquired and lived is with dibuk chaverim, friends who cling to one another. To be a friend is to not bail, or disappear, to not abandon or desert. True friendship includes dibuk, to cling which is the same word as devek,

glue. Friends stick together and are glued to one another. Camaraderie is caring.

We can't necessarily resolve the health challenges and conditions of people we know and love. But we can inoculate our friends against the epidemic of loneliness. Show you care, stay connected, offer help when you can with specific tasks, and be consistent.

## Carrying in Public and the Use of an Eruv

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

In this week's parsha, the Torah recounts the story of the manna, also including the unbecoming episode where some people attempted to gather it on Shabbos. In the words of the Torah:

And Moshe said, "Eat it (the manna that remained from Friday) today, for today is Shabbos to Hashem. Today you will not find it (the manna) in the field. Six days you shall gather it, and the Seventh Day is Shabbos –there will be none." And it was on the Seventh Day. Some of the people went out to gather, and they did not find.

And Hashem said to Moshe: "For how long will you refuse to observe My commandments and My teachings. See, Hashem gave you the Shabbos. For this reason He provides you with two-day's supply of bread on the sixth day. On the Seventh Day each person should remain where he is and not leave his place" (Shemos 16:25-29).

Although the Torah's words each person should remain where he is and not leave his place imply that even leaving one's home is forbidden, the context implies that one may not leave one's home while carrying the tools needed to gather manna (Tosafos, Eruvin 17b). The main prohibition taught here is to refrain from carrying from one's house or any other enclosed area (halachically called *reshus hayachid*) to an area available for the entire *Benei Yisroel* in the Desert to traverse, a *reshus harabim*. Chazal further explain that moving an item in any way from a *reshus hayachid* to a *reshus harabim* is a Torah violation, whether one throws it, places it, hands it to someone else, or transports it in any other way (Shabbos 2a, 96). Furthermore, we derive from other sources that one may also not transport an item from a *reshus harabim* to a *reshus hayachid*, nor may one transport it four amos (about seven feet) or more within a *reshus harabim* (Gemara Shabbos 96b; Tosafos, Shabbos 2a s.v. *pashat*). Thus, carrying into, out of, or within a *reshus harabim* incurs a severe Torah prohibition. For convenience sake, I will refer to portage of an item from one *reshus* to another or within a *reshus harabim* as carrying, regardless of the method of conveyance.

One should note that with reference to the *melacha* of carrying on Shabbos, the terms *reshus hayachid* and *reshus harabim* do not relate to the ownership of the respective areas, but are determined by the extent that the areas are enclosed and how they are used. A *reshus hayachid* could certainly be public property and there are ways whereby an individual could own a *reshus harabim*.

Notwithstanding the Torah's clear prohibition against carrying into, from, or within a *reshus harabim*, we are all familiar with the concept of an *eruv* that permits carrying in areas that are otherwise prohibited. You might ask, how can poles and wires permit that which is otherwise prohibited *min haTorah*? As we will soon see, it indeed cannot, and the basis for permitting use of an *eruv* is far more complicated.

We are also aware of controversies in which one respected authority certifies a particular *eruv*, while others contend that it is invalid. This is by no means a recent phenomenon. We find extensive disputes among early authorities whether one may construct an *eruv* in certain areas; some considering it a *mitzvah* to construct the *eruv*, whereas others contend that the very same "eruv" is causing people to sin.

### AN OLD MACHLOKES

Here is an instance. In the thirteenth century, Rav Yaakov ben Rav Moshe of Alisiya wrote a letter to the Rosh explaining why he forbade constructing an *eruv* in his town. In his response, the Rosh contended 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 Rav Yaakov for this recalcitrance, insisting that if Rav Yaakov persisted, he, the Rosh, would place Rav Yaakov in *cherem*! The Rosh further contended that Rav Yaakov had the status of a *zakein mamrei*, a Torah scholar who rules against a decision of the Sanhedrin, which, in the time of the Beis HaMikdash, constitutes a capital offense (Shu"t HaRosh 21:8). This episode demonstrates that heated disputes over *eruv* are by no means recent phenomena.

The goal of this article is to explain what allows the construction of an *eruv*, and present some circumstances in which one authority permits carrying within a specific *eruv* while another forbids it.

### IS IT A MITZVAH?

Before I present the arguments for and against *eruv* construction in the modern world, we should note that all accept that it is a *mitzvah* to erect a kosher *eruv*

when this is halachically and practically possible, as the following anecdote indicates.

Rabbah the son of Rav Chanan asked Abaye: "How can it be that an area in which reside two such great scholars (Abaye and Abaye's Rebbe) is without an *eruv*?" Abaye answered: "What should we do? It is not respectful for my master to be involved. I am too busy with my studies, and the rest of the people are not concerned" (Eruvin 68a).

The commentaries note that Abaye accepted the position presented by Rabbah that one should assemble an *eruv*. Abaye merely deflected the inquiry by pointing out that no one was readily available to attend to the *eruv*, and that its construction did not preempt other factors, specifically Abaye's commitment to Torah study and the inappropriateness for Abaye's Rebbe to be involved in the project. Indeed, halachic authorities derive from this Talmudic passage that it is a *mitzvah* to erect an *eruv* whenever halachically permitted (Tashbeitz 2:37, quoted verbatim by the Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 363:2). These rulings are echoed by such luminaries as the Chasam Sofer (Shu"t Orach Chayim #99), the Avnei Nezer (Orach Chayim #266:4), the Levush Mordechai (Orach Chayim #4) and Rav Moshe Feinstein (Shu"t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 1:139:5 s.v. *vilichora*).

I mentioned before that the construction of an *eruv* with poles and wires cannot permit carrying that is prohibited *min haTorah*. If this is true, upon what basis do we permit the construction of an *eruv*? To answer this question, we need to understand that not every open area is a *reshus harabim* – quite the contrary, a *reshus harabim* must meet very specific and complex requirements, including:

(A) It must be unroofed (Shabbos 5a).

(B) It must be meant for public use or thoroughfare (Shabbos 6a).

(C) It must be at least sixteen amos (about twenty-eight feet) wide (Shabbos 99a).

(D) According to most authorities, it cannot be inside an enclosed area (cf., however, Be'er Heiteiv 345:7, quoting Rashba, and Baal HaMaor, Eruvin 22a, quoting Rabbeinu Efrayim). Exactly what is the definition of an "enclosed area" is the subject of a major dispute that I will discuss.

(E) According to many authorities, it must be used by at least 600,000 people daily (Rashi, Eruvin 59a, but see Rashi ad loc. 6a where he only requires that the city has this many residents.). This is derived from the Torah's description of carrying into the encampment in the Desert, which we know was populated by 600,000 people.

(F) Many authorities require that it be a through street, or a gathering area that connects to a through street (Rashi, Eruvin 6a).

(G) Some authorities add still other requirements.

Any area that does not meet the Torah's definition of a *reshus harabim*, and yet is not enclosed, is called a *karmelis*. One may not carry into, from, or within a *karmelis* following the same basic rules that prohibit carrying into a *reshus harabim*. However, since the prohibition not to carry in a *karmelis* is only rabbinic in origin, Chazal allowed a more lenient method of "enclosing" it.

### CAN ONE "ENCLOSE" A RESHUS HARABIM?

As I mentioned earlier, carrying within a true *reshus harabim* is prohibited *min haTorah* – for this reason, the use of a standard *eruv* does not permit carrying in such an area (Eruvin 6b). Nevertheless, the construction of large doors that restrict public traffic transforms the *reshus harabim* into an area that one can now enclose with an *eruv*. According to some authorities, the existence of these doors and occasionally closing them is sufficient for the area to lose its *reshus harabim* status. (Rashi, Eruvin 6b; However, cf. Rabbeinu Efrayim, quoted by Baal HaMaor, Eruvin 22a).

### PLEASE CLOSE THE DOOR!

There are some from neighborhoods in Eretz Yisroel where a thoroughfare to a neighborhood or town is closed on Shabbos with a door, in order to allow an *eruv* to be constructed around the area. However, this approach is not practical in most places where people desire to construct an *eruv*.

So what does one do if one cannot close the area with doors?

This depends on the following issue: Does the area that one wants to enclose meet the requirements of a *reshus harabim min haTorah* or is it only a *karmelis*? If the area is a *reshus harabim min haTorah* and one cannot occasionally close the area with doors, then there is no way to permit carrying in this area. One should abandon the idea of constructing an *eruv* around the entire city or neighborhood (see Gemara Eruvin 6a; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 364:2). Depending on the circumstances, one may still be able to enclose smaller areas within the city.

### TZURAS HAPESACH

However, if the area one wants to enclose does not qualify as a *reshus harabim*, then most authorities rule that one may enclose the area by using a *tzuras hapesach* (plural, *tzuros hapesach*), literally, the form of a doorway. (However, note that Shu"t Mishkenos Yaakov #120 s.v. *annom* and Shu"t Mishnas Rav Aharon #6 s.v. *Kunrus Be'Inyanei Eruvin* paragraph #2 forbid this.) A *tzuras hapesach* consists of two vertical side posts and a horizontal "lintel" that passes directly over them, thus resembling a doorway. According to halacha, a *tzuras hapesach* successfully encloses a *karmelis* area, but it cannot permit carrying in a true *reshus harabim* (Eruvin 6a). Using *tzuros hapesach* is the least expensive and most discreet way to construct an *eruv*. In a future article, I hope to explain some

common problems that can happen while constructing tzuros hapesach and how to avoid them, and some important disputes relative to their construction. Let us review. One can permit carrying in a karmelis, but not a reshus harabim, by enclosing the area with tzuros hapesach. Therefore, a decisive factor in planning whether one can construct an eruv is whether the area is halachically a karmelis or a reshus harabim. If the area qualifies as a karmelis, then an eruv consisting of tzuros hapesach permits one to carry; if it is a reshus harabim, then tzuros hapesach do not permit carrying. The issues concerning the definition of a reshus harabim form the basis of most controversies as to whether a specific eruv is kosher or not.

#### 600,000 PEOPLE

An early dispute among Rishonim was whether one of the requirements of a reshus harabim is that it be accessible to 600,000 people, the number of male Jews over twenty that the Torah tells us exited Egypt (see Tosafos, Eruvin 6a s.v. Keitzad). According to Rashi and the others who follow this approach, one may enclose any metropolis with a population smaller than 600,000 with tzuros hapesach to permit carrying. (Rashi in some places describes that the city has 600,000 residents, and in others describes that 600,000 people use the area constantly. The exact definition to be used is the subject of much literature, see Shu"t Mishkenos Yaakov #120 s.v. hinei harishon; and Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 1:139:5.)

However, other early authorities contend that an area with less than 600,000 people still qualifies as a reshus harabim, providing that it fulfills the other requirements that I listed above. In their opinion, such an area cannot be enclosed with tzuros hapesach. Although many authorities hold this way, the accepted practice in Ashkenazic communities was to follow the lenient interpretation and construct eruvim around an area with less than 600,000 people.

Nevertheless, the Mishnah Berurah discourages carrying in such an eruv since many Rishonim do not accept it (364:8; Bi'ur Halacha to 345:7 and to 364:2). There are different opinions whether Sephardim are at liberty to follow this lenience, although the prevalent practice today is for them to be lenient.

#### MODERN CITY

Most large metropolitan areas today are populated by more than 600,000 people. Some authorities still define many of our metropolitan areas as a karmelis based on the following definition: Any area less concentrated than was the Jews' encampment in the Desert is considered a karmelis. Since this encampment approximated 50 square miles, these authorities permit an eruv anywhere that the population density is less than 600,000 people per 50 square miles (Shu"t Igros Moshe 4:87). However, other authorities consider any metropolitan area or megalopolis containing 600,000 people to be a reshus harabim, regardless of its population density. Does this mean that there is no heter with which to construct an eruv in a large city? Indeed, many authorities contend this way (Shu"t Mishnas Rav Aharon 1:2).

#### A LARGE BREACH

The Chazon Ish, however, presented a different approach to permit construction of an eruv in a contemporary large city. His approach requires an introduction.

In general, an area enclosed by three or four full walls cannot be a reshus harabim (Eruvin 22a). What is the halacha if each of the three sides of an area is enclosed for most of its length – however, there are large gaps in the middle of the enclosure. For example, walls or buildings enclose most of an area, but there are gaps in the middle of the area between the buildings where streets cross the city blocks. Does the area in the middle, surrounded on both sides by buildings and other structures, still qualify as a reshus harabim, or has it lost this status because it is mostly “enclosed”?

The basis for the question is the following: There is a general halachic principle that an area that is mostly enclosed is considered enclosed even in its breached areas (Eruvin 5b et al.). For example, a yard enclosed by hedges tall enough to qualify as halachic walls may be considered enclosed notwithstanding that there are open areas between the hedges, since each side is predominantly enclosed either by the hedges or by the house.

On the other hand, a breach wider than ten amos (about 17 feet) invalidates the area from being considered enclosed. Therefore, one may not carry within a fenced-in area that has a 20-foot opening without enclosing the opening in some way.

The issue that affects the modern city is the following: Granted that a large breach needs to be enclosed to permit carrying within the area, but is this required min

haTorah or only rabbinically? Let us assume that one encloses a reshus harabim area with walls that run for miles, but the walls have large gaps in the middle. Is this area considered enclosed min haTorah because it is mostly surrounded by walls, or is it considered open because of the gaps?

This question was debated by two great nineteenth-century authorities, Rav Efrayim Zalman Margolios, the Beis Efrayim and the Rav of Brody, and Rav Yaakov of Karlin, the Mishkenos Yaakov. The Beis Efrayim contended that a breach is only a rabbinic concern, and that the area is considered enclosed min haTorah, whereas the Mishkenos Yaakov held that a breach qualifies the area as a reshus harabim min haTorah. The lengthy correspondence between the two of them covers also a host of other eruv related issues (Shu"t Beis Efrayim, Orach Chayim # 25, 26; Shu"t Mishkenos Yaakov, Orach Chayim, #120-122). What difference does it make whether this area is considered open min haTorah or miderabbanan, since either way one cannot carry without enclosing the area?

The difference is highly significant. If we follow the lenient approach of the Beis Efrayim, then even if the area in the middle meets all the other requirements of a reshus harabim, the area loses its status as a reshus harabim because of the walls surrounding it, notwithstanding the large gaps in the walls. In this case, it may be possible to construct an eruv in such a place.

On the other hand, the Mishkenos Yaakov would contend that this area is considered a reshus harabim because of the gaps, and we ignore the walls. According to him it will be impossible to construct an eruv.

How one rules in the dispute between these two gedolim affects the issue of constructing an eruv in a contemporary city. Most modern cities contain city blocks that consist predominantly of large buildings with small areas between the buildings, and streets that are much narrower than the blocks. If we view these buildings as enclosures, then one can easily envision that both sides of the street are considered enclosed min haTorah according to the Beis Efrayim's analysis. This itself does not sufficiently enclose our area because of the streets that run parallel to the buildings. However, at certain points of the city, the parallel streets dead end into a street that is predominantly enclosed with either buildings, fences, walls, or some other way. The result is that this section of the city can now be considered min haTorah as enclosed on three sides by virtue of the buildings paralleling both sides of the street and those on its dead end. Since this area now qualifies as an enclosed area min haTorah, the entire area is considered a reshus hayachid min haTorah.

The Chazon Ish now notes the following: Once you have established that this part of the city qualifies as a reshus hayachid min haTorah, this area is now considered completely enclosed halachically. For this reason, other city blocks that are predominantly enclosed on both sides of the street that intersect with this first area are also now considered to be enclosed areas min haTorah. According to his calculation, a large section of most cities is considered min haTorah enclosed on at least three sides, according to his calculation. Although one cannot carry in these areas miderabbanan because of the “breaches” in their “enclosures,” they are no longer reshus harabim min haTorah and one can therefore enclose the entire area with tzuros hapesach (Chazon Ish, Orach Chayim 107:5). The Chazon Ish concludes that many large cities today qualify as a karmelis and therefore one may construct tzuros hapesach to permit carrying there.

However, other authorities reject this calculation for a variety of reasons, some contending that the gaps between the buildings invalidate the enclosure, thus leaving the area to be considered a reshus harabim, which cannot be enclosed (Shu"t Mishkenos Yaakov; Shu"t Mishnas Rav Aharon).

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 all such issues is “Aseh lecha rav, vehistaleik min hasafek,” “Choose someone to be your rav, and remove doubt from yourself.” He can guide you whether it is appropriate to carry within a certain eruv, after considering the halachic basis for the specific eruv's construction, the level of eruv maintenance, and family factors. Never underestimate the psak and advice of your rav!

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