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**Rav Soloveitchik** ZTL Notes ( Volume 3)

[Thanks to David Isaac for typing these notes]

Lecture delivered by Rabbi Soloveitchik on Saturday night, January 19, 1979

Sedra Vohayroh We will start with the first two or three P'sukim of today's sedra and Rashi's interpretation. "And G-d spoke unto Moses and said to him: I am the L-rd. And I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as G-d Alm-ghty, 'Kal Shaddai' but by My name Yud Kay Vov Kay (Havaya) I made Me not known to them."

It is difficult to understand the continuity. Rashi poses the problem: "The Avoth (patriarchs) knew "Havaya" as well as Moshe. When you study Bereshis you are left with the impression that they knew "Havaya" as well as Kal Shaddai. "They knew of Me as 'Havaya' but it was not an intimate knowledge. They knew Me better as 'Kal Shaddai'. We were not on the friendly basis of 'Havaya'. I did not befriend them as 'Havaya'." Abraham was not only a servant of G-d but a friend. Man must be obedient but also is a friend of G-d. "G-d was my shepherd since my youth" means He was my friend, my playmate from youth. Rambam declares, "let us walk together holding arms." This experience of friendship was related to Kal Shaddai -- not Havaya. G-d's name as Kal Shaddai comes always when G-d makes a promise. Rashi says that it is exclusively connected with promise. (It must be kept in mind that whenever the name Kal Shaddai is used in Torah, it indicates a promise but not necessarily fulfillment. The word Hashem or Havaya means: "I am faithful to fulfill my promise whether for reward or punishment.") "To them, the Patriarchs, I promised but did not fulfill. You, Moshe, are fortunate to be selected to become acquainted on both levels. Abraham was my friend with whom I walked but not as 'Havaya'. He had limited knowledge. "To you I reveal the very essence. I established my covenant -- I have heard the cry, etc. I have reminded myself!" The Alm-ghty declares "Gam Hakimosi Brisi" - I am about to fulfill my covenant. It is difficult to understand! What find of a promise did G-d make to the patriarchs which He didn't fulfill? When Moshe failed at his first encounter with Pharaoh, he came back with the complaint to G-d: "The situation is more difficult; You haven't saved!" These were strong words for man to use to G-d. He answered, "The old men had more faith than you. Then the three examples are cited. A) When Abraham needed a burial plot for Sarah, he paid a high price (400 pieces of silver) and yet never complained, although the entire land had been promised to him. B) When Isaac's servants dug wells and they were repeatedly filled with sand by the inhabitants, he never lost faith and complained. C) When Jacob wanted to build a home upon his return from Laban, he paid 100 "ksita" (monetary denomination) and didn't complain. All this was despite the promise "All the land will I give you." They never complained. "You, Moshe,

complained at once." "What is your name that I shall tell them? They won't believe me!" Apparently, Rashi interprets, "They experienced me on the level of Kal Shaddai - promise only. Friendship as "Havaya" was granted to Moses and this in turn to the Covenantal Community. But the "Avoth" - the patriarchs - did not have this share. Theirs was absolute faith. There is not a single mention that G-d had to convince Abraham. Abraham never asked, "Why not give me the land?" But this is minor. How about the "Akedah"? Why didn't he ask a single question when G-d requested that Abraham bring his son up for a sacrifice? The question he asked was only after G-d had already directed, "Don't touch the lad!" Abraham is the knight, the greatest man of faith to the last iota. Therefore, G-d tested him many times. There was the "moving away from the land of his ancestors," the circumcision, etc. But why is Akedah so frightening? What is frightening is that the whole world would have said, "Abraham is a liar! He has done the opposite of what he constantly preached against (human sacrifice) and Abraham preached to countless thousands. "This man of the Middle East who preached against hurting people, took his child for whom he waited 100 years. Fully realizing this, what did Abraham say? Nothing! This is the great act of "Emunah" - faith. Basically, Abraham was tested quite often. Sometimes the tests contradicted all that which he tried to teach the people. Yet Abraham never said a word. Take another example! When Lot was snatched away by the kings, Abraham became involved in a war where he didn't belong. It is as the final was which will take place on the hills of Judea (the war of Gog and Magog in the messianic era as prophesized by the Prophet). Who will have invited them? Therefore, Abraham's friendship with G-d was not based on success or riches but rooted in faith. Yet sometimes, G-d reveals Himself in two ways. There is "Chessed V'Rachamim" - kindness and mercy, in which whatever man does results in success. Then the answers come immediately. Sometimes the answer is not so simple. Eventually all prayers of man will be fulfilled. It means G-d befriends man through "midas Harachamim" - the attribute of mercy. Sometimes, it is both, to some people and to some antions. He bestows unlimited riches, etc., as we believe will be B'mos Hamoshichach - in the messianic era. (I believe this is as G-d has bestowed on the United States.) If man feels "G-d befriended" him, it means "B'shmi Hashem" through the "Havaya".

"My friendship to the Avoth was not based on bestowing My grace, in fact, not at all; it came very slowly!" Abraham had to wait a long time (G-d did not reveal Himself to him until he was 75 years old). Yitzchak, Yaakov -- all had to wait. This is what Abraham represented - "Bitochin" - faith. But as for Moshe, there was no waiting. At the most it was a year. This is not considered waiting in terms of human history. What is "shaddai"? Man is in a state of waiting while G-d is not ready to fulfill. "Shaddai" is "limited". G-d who created the universe says "Stop! It is finite." What can man learn from this? It is the capability or the ability of self-contraction, self-restriction. He taught Abraham the ability to say, "I must not cross the boundary! I must stop." What is observing Torah and Mitzvos? It is rooted in one idea: Man must learn to say, "Enough". He must control temptation! If he doesn't, he doesn't observe the Law. It is man's capability to say to his own intellect, "Enough". Not everything can be resolved! It is my ability to contradict my own intellect. When Abraham took the "Akedah" he contradicted his own intellect. The intellect tries to convince man that what he does is absurd. In most cases, man should be guided by intellect. But in some instances, it must be faith. The intellect sometimes has no say. The greater the paradox, the stronger is the faith.

Even concerning the land which G-d promised to one individual, Abraham, how is it intellectually possible for one man to get the land of seven nations (Canaan, Hittite, Amorites, etc.)? One should reason the possibility thusly: "You will train your son in warfare and strength and he in turn will train his sons." The educational system will revolve around a plan of strength. The seven nations are primitive while you will advance. In the course of years, you will be ready to overtake, to conquer. How did the

European countries overtake so many nations of the world (Orient, Africa, etc). The Europeans were sophisticated and trained!

Now, had G-d such a promise, He should have said to Abraham, "Don't move! Train your army and you'll be able to conquer. So the first command should have been: "Stay here! You'll develop a military nation for the future!" But, this is not how the promise was made at all. "How can I defeat them?" "You have to leave the land; do not leave a single soul. If you do you won't get the land. Leave, go to Eretz Mitzraim, become slaves for 400 years. When you come back, you'll get it. The land will be yours. If Jacob had remained in Canaan it never would have been implemented. Strange? Yet Abraham didn't ask a question! The greater the paradox, the greater the faith. "V'Gam Hakimosi" -- And I'll establish my covenant. "I established my covenant and insisted that they leave - desert it." "Come back in 400 years and it's yours!" Abraham believed and accepted. Why did G-d emphasize "Brisi" - covenant? Because it was a great paradox and Abraham accepted. It is not coincidental with logic. This is B'kal Shaddai. They defied their own personality.

For Moshe, it was already simple -- no paradox. So the question is, "Who was actually greater, Abraham or Moshe?" In Shmono Esrei, we only say, "Elokay Avrohom, Elokay Yitzchok, Elokay Yaakov," not Elokay Moshe. Yet, we have a posek in Torah in which Miriam was critical of Moshe and G-d punished her. G-d admonished her: "Moshe is a greater prophet than you. You are not the same!" When did Moshe achieve this exalted position? It was the second time that he went up the mountain for 40 days. The first time that Moshe received the "luchos" the Tablets, Torah doesn't describe him. After he received the "luchos" the second time, Torah already describes him: "He didn't perceive that the skin of his face shone." At that moment, he was elevated to the title, "Rav Lan' viim" (the chief of all prophets). Therefore, the answer is that until this moment, Abraham was greater than Moshe and that included even Moshe's accomplishments in Egypt and the Exodus. At this moment, Moshe rose above Abraham. His uniqueness lay in the fact that the "Taryag Mitzvoth" the entire commandments were entrusted only to Moshe. Only after the second "luchos" did he become the teacher. Why did G-d direct Moshe to prepare the second set of "luchos" and that He (G-d) will inscribe them? Why not give it to him? Why make him prepare it? What is the difference between the original ones of G-d and those prepared by Moshe? What does it indicate? It indicates that the luchos are owned both by G-d and by Moshe. It is called "Toras Hashem and Toras Moshe". Interestingly, we have two Brochos recited at the reading of the Torah. In the first one, we say "Asher Nosun Lonu Es Toroso" - He gave us His Torah. After the reading, the Torah becomes ours. In other words, the second "Luchos" are representative of the Torah Sh'Bal Peh -- the Oral Law. The written Torah (Biksav) is characterized by the first Luchos which is prepared by G-d and given to man. "Bal Peh" the Oral Law, is man's effort. It is the Mishna, the Talmud worked at by man. It belongs to man. "You prepare; I'll write." It becomes a partnership. Now Moshe becomes "Rav Han' viim". The entire Torah, Oral and Written, is entrusted to Moshe. But if Moshe is so great, why "Elokay Avraham" and not "Elokay Moshe"? Reason: Abraham searched for G-d for many, many years and G-d did not react by responding for a long time until Abraham was 75. Abraham was the searcher! Moshe didn't search. G-d found Moshe. Therefore, it is very simple! G-d came to the "Avos" after they searched a long time. Therefore, they are worthy of the title "Elokay Abraham, Yitchok, Yaakov."

Important question: Today we read "Vohayroh". What are the tenets regarding "geulah" - (salvation) and faith? First, we are all duty bound to believe that the people will be redeemed. As far as our relationship with G-d is concerned, it is rooted in Kal Shaddai - the promise. The promises have not yet been fulfilled. How long could the experience of 'Havaya' be related to the people? (This is the fulfillment which did occur vis a vis the geulah from Mitzraim.) We are still Shaddai - still suffering. No other nation on the face of the world has so suffered throughout the centuries. It would not be bragging but we have survived because we have experience it as Kal

Shaddai. "What are you waiting for? It will not be implemented!", have been the taunts of the nations. The Jewish people have shown great perseverance, overcome great temptations -- a very difficult existence. But we are still here. The "midah" or creed of Abraham is true of the Jewish people: "Af Al Pih Shehishamaya" -- Even though the redeemer tarries, I will have perfect faith (from the principles of Maimonides).

The second is the following "Geulah" - redemption or salvation. "Hakodosh Boruch Hu" sends a human being. There was no need to send Moshe! If He wanted to redeem, He could have accomplished it in seconds. Why the lengthy debate of seven days. Of course, G-d is the redeemer. But for the physical aspect, He sends a human. Hillel says: "There will be no person anointed as moschiach! G-d will bring it alone!" Gemorah answers: "Forgive Hillel. He doesn't deny it but says that G-d will perform. When the time will come, G-d will appoint. In Egypt, G-d had to beg Moshe. Rambam says that moschiach will be more brilliant than Shlomo but that Moshe as a prophet will be greater.

Interestingly, though Moshe had a share in the "Geulas Mitzraim" he is not recognized -- not even mentioned on Pesach night. G-d would not have performed the Geulah without Moshe. Yet there is not mention. Not even a "Yarshakoach". In "shir Hashirim" it reads "Bikashiti - V'lo Motzosi." (I sought him but did not find him.) Medrash says that it refers to the fact that Moshe disappeared just at the moment of the redemption. Where was he? He was searching for the coffin containing the remains of Joseph. Serach Bas Osher a very aged woman showed Moshe where to find it.

My opinion is different. "I am searching for Moshe's name. It is not mentioned." There is no trace of Moshe on Pesach night. G-d didn't want Moshe to appear as the redeemer. But He was extremely generous when He gave the Torah to Moshe. Therefore, in Shir Hashirim, "I found him and I wouldn't let him go." This is at "Shavouoth", the time of giving the Torah. The "Goayl", the redeemer, is only G-d. But as far as Torah it belongs only to Moshe. Melech Hamoshiach will also be the teacher as described by Isaiah. The redeemer will be G-d (therefore, we can understand what Hillel meant). This is what G-d told Moshe when he was reluctant to accept the mission. "Who am I to approach Pharaoh? There are better ones! I am not a proper leader!" He was convinced that he had shortcomings. G-d answered, "Don't worry. A "Sheliach" (messenger) has the right to do whatever he wants when the 'm'shalach' (sender) is not there. But I, the m'shalach, will go with you, the sheliach. So the sheliach should not worry about failure because the m'shalach will be there too. Rambam says the sheliach tzibur (chazon) stands in the center. One ark is at mizrach - the east; the other or bimah, is in the center. Why is the sheliach in the middle? Because if he stands outside, away from the congregants near the mizrach, the sheliach is alone and can err. But if he is surrounded by the people, they are the m'shelochim. They back him up. If congregants appoint a sheliach and they depart, then it is not a sheliach. They must stand and answer "Amen" - in his very presence.

Each novi - prophet - is a sheliach - so in every instance, G-d accompanies him. Thus, in Tefilah, the sheliach is the novi. "It is true that I selected you! Aaron is more of a speaker. He was raised in the ghetto." Moshe was there but a short time. This was Moshe's objection. "I don't belong there; I wasn't in ghetto." This was his argument.

G-d answered, "You are right! If I needed a great speaker, organizer, leader, I'd choose Aaron or other persons. But this is not what I need. I need a "M'lamed" -- a teacher, who will take the slaves and in seven weeks will convert them to "mamleches Kohanim" a priestly nation. For this, you are best. The rest leave to me.

This is also to be for Melech Hamoshiach. He will be able to teach. "This is what you, Moshe, can accomplish -- no one else!"

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<http://www.yutorah.org/>

**Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman**  
Vaeyra 5761

The Vilna Gaon, as you might imagine, was a prodigy even in his earliest youth. And there are many stories told about the brilliance that he showed even as a boy. There is one story that is told in this regard that I'd like to share with you this morning, since it relates to our parsha.

We read in the book of Daniel of how Nevuchadnezar set up a gigantic idol in the valley of Dura, and commanded that – on a given signal – all the assembled people should prostrate themselves before it, on pain of death. And so it was – as the signal was sounded, that all the people, young and old, men and women, gentile and even Jews, all bowed down before the idol, except for three men, who refused to bow; Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah. And so Nevuchadnezar ordered that they be thrown into a fiery furnace; but miraculously, they were not burned, and emerged unscathed.

The Gemara in Pesachim makes the following comment regarding this episode: From where did Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah learn to prefer to be thrown into the furnace rather than bow down to the idol? They learned it, says the Gemara, from the frogs in Egypt who filled the homes of the Egyptians and entered even into their ovens, as the Torah says. For they reasoned that if the frogs, who were not commanded to sanctify Hashem's name, were willing to enter into the ovens of Egypt to fulfill Hashem's will, then we, who are commanded in the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem, certainly ought to be willing to let ourselves be thrown into the furnace rather than desecrate Hashem's name by bowing to the idol.

There is a problem in understanding this Gemara. And this problem was raised by the Shaagas Aryeh, one of the great Torah giants of the 18th century. Because the Gemara implies that the frogs were not commanded to jump into the Egyptian ovens. But that's not true, said the Shaagas Aryeh! After all, Moshe Rabeinu, relating the word of Hashem, had told Pharaoh explicitly:

ובבית עבדיך ובעמך ובתנורריך ובמשארתריך ועלו ובאו בביתך ובהדר משכבך ועל מטתך  
“...and they will go up into your home and your bedroom and upon your bed and the into the homes of your servants and people, and into your ovens and dough”. So it seems that G-d had required the frogs to go into the ovens! How can the Gemara, then, say that the frogs were not commanded?

Among those present when the Shaagas Aryeh asked the question was the seven-year-old prodigy Eliyahu, the future Gaon of Vilna. And without hesitation he spoke up and answered the question, as follows: True, he said, the frogs were commanded to enter, among other places, the ovens of the Egyptians. But each individual frog was not given a specific mission. The frogs as a whole were commanded to go into Pharaoh's home, into his bedroom, into his bed, into the houses of his slaves and of his people, and into the ovens and into the dough. But there was nothing to stop any particular frog from choosing to go into Pharaoh's bedroom or bed, and letting some other frog go jump in an oven

And therefore those frogs that jumped into the hot ovens – if we can say such a thing about frogs – did so voluntarily. And it is from them that Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah took their cue.

When the Shaagas Aryeh heard the young genius' answer, he picked him up, kissed him on the forehead, and foretold a great future for him.

I would like to suggest that this comment of the Vilna Gaon does more than simply answer the Shaagas Aryeh's question. In fact, it gives us an important insight into the real point that the Gemara is making.

After all, the Gemara – at face value – seems absurd. Why should Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah have needed to learn a lesson from the frogs in Egypt? After all, everyone knows that idolatry is one of the three cardinal sins regarding which a Jew must give up his life rather than transgress them; and countless Jews throughout the centuries have done just that. Nowhere else - in the long history of Jewish martyrdom - do we find that anyone ever needed to draw inspiration from the frogs in Egypt!

And there is another difficulty: The Gemara seems to imply that the frogs' entering the ovens was somehow an act of self-sacrifice for the sake of Kiddush Hashem. But we're talking, after all, about frogs! It hardly seems

likely that the frogs, when they entered the ovens, knew what they were getting into.

I believe that what the Gemara is really saying is this: Of course, Jews have often suffered martyrdom for their faith. And that was heroic. But they rarely did so alone. Rather, families and whole communities stood together and – in those times of supreme trial – drew strength from each other. But Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah were willing to sacrifice themselves at a moment when the whole world – including the Jews, including everyone whom they knew and respected – were not ready to do so. And therefore they had a right, we might have thought, to ask: Why us? Why should we three be the only ones in the whole world to stand up to Nevuchadnezar? All right, we know it's wrong to worship an idol, even under duress; but everyone else is doing it! Why should we be the only heroes?

And the Gemara therefore asks: From where did Chananiah Mishael and Azariah get the strength to stand up for kiddush Hashem when no one else was willing to do so? From where did they learn that “why me” is not an excuse?

And the answer is – from the frogs. Of course, frogs are not intelligent creatures. But the Gemara is asking us to use our imagination and conduct what Albert Einstein used to call a “thought experiment”. Let us imagine that one of those frogs had been an unusually intelligent frog. And so we might imagine that frog hopping up to an oven and saying: “Hold on! I'm not going in there! I'll take my station in the kitchen cupboard, let some of those other, stupid frogs go in here”.

Well, if only one frog had been so gifted it wouldn't have mattered. Another frog would have taken his place. But let us imagine further that all of the frogs were of this same unusually intelligent variety. And that each one of them said to himself: “Why should I go into an oven? Let some other frog do that duty.” And the end result would have been that not one frog would have gone into an oven, and Moshe's prophecy that the frogs would fill, among other places, the ovens of Egypt, would have gone unfulfilled. Which would have been, of course, a Chillul Hashem.

Of course, in the case of frogs the whole scenario is absurd. But that is exactly what happened in the valley of Dura. Each one of the assembled Jews knew as well as Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah that he or she ought to give up his life rather than worship an idol. But each one looked around and said: “Why me? Everyone else is going along and bowing down. Why should I be the one to take a stand?” And so the end result was a Chillul Hashem of colossal proportions.

Because Chillul Hashem begins with the words: “Why me?” And that was the insight of Chananiah Mishael and Azariah. And so they said, instead: “Kiddush Hashem has to begin with someone. And it may as well be – and what a merit that it should be – with us.” And with that they earned themselves an eternal place in the annals of our people.

By learning the lesson of the frogs.

It's fascinating to note that this “lesson of the frogs” corresponds almost exactly a comment that the Rambam makes about the culpability of the Egyptians themselves. It seems that the Rambam was bothered by a question that perplexed many commentators: Why were the Egyptians punished for enslaving the Jews when, after all, G-d had told Avraham Avinu, hundreds of years before, that:

שנה גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם ועבדום וענו אותם ארבע מאות

Since the slavery had been foretold, it would seem that the Egyptians had no choice; they had to enslave the Jews. Why, then, should they have been punished for it?

And the Rambam answers that although it was foretold that the Egyptians, as a whole, would enslave the Jews, yet no particular individual Egyptian was mentioned in that prophecy. And therefore each individual Egyptian had a choice; he could also choose not to go along, and not to be a party to the persecution. But instead each Egyptian looked around and said: “Everyone else is doing it. Why should I be different?” And because they all chose to hide behind the crowd, they were culpable and ultimately were punished.

The Egyptians needed to learn the lesson of the frogs.

This lesson is also relevant to us. For while we are not, thank G-d, called upon to demonstrate the self-sacrifice of Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah, yet there are often times when we look around ourselves and see that everyone seems to be doing something that we know is wrong – and that they, too, probably know is wrong. And the temptation at such times is to say: “OK, its wrong; but everyone else is doing it; why should I be the hero? Why me?”

At such times we have to remember the lesson of the frogs; the lesson that Chillul Hashem begins with the words: “Why me”. And Kiddush Hashem begins when we begin to say: “Someone must begin to take a stand; and what greater merit than that it be we.”

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Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vaeyra

**Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> 5768

#### Treating Torah Like An Heirloom

The following passage appears at the beginning of the parsha:

"Therefore, say to the Children of Israel, I am Hashem and I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from their service; I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I shall take you to Me for a people and I shall be a G-d to you; and you shall know that I am Hashem your G-d. Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt. I shall bring you to the Land about which I raised My hand to give it to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and I shall give it to you as a heritage – I am Hashem." [Shmos 6:6-8]

The Talmud [Bava Basra 119] raises the question as to whether the Land of Israel was originally given to those who exited Egypt (and divided up among their heirs) or was it given directly to those who entered the Land. The Talmud infers from use of the word "morasha" [heritage] as opposed to the word "yerusha" [inheritance] in the above pasuk [verse] that it was given to those who came into the Land.

A morasha is like an heirloom, as opposed to an inheritance. A yerusha has the connotation that the one who possesses it actually owns it. The connotation of morasha is that I do not necessarily possess an object; it is only mine in terms of being able to pass it on to the next generation. The Talmud states that those who left Egypt played the role of "morishim" – they were the ones who gave the inheritance to the next generation, but they were not "yorshim". They themselves did not own it.

The Baal HaTurim points out that the word "morasha" appears in two places in the Torah. The other location is the pasuk "Moshe commanded us the Torah, a 'morasha' for the congregation of Israel." [Devorim 33:4].

The Shemen HaTov elaborates on the connection between the "morasha" of Eretz Yisrael and the "morasha" of Torah: As explained above, the connection between those who left Egypt and Eretz Yisrael was only at the level of "morasha". They did not possess it, but they did possess it enough to give over to their children, the next generation.

This is the same relationship with the Torah that exists in many families between parents, children, and grandchildren. Torah can sometimes be a "morasha" in the sense that one generation doesn't really possess it. They do not possess Torah in the sense of full ownership or even understand it in any significant fashion. They possess it only in so much as to allow their children or their children's children to acquire it and to become the proud possessors of Torah in the fullest sense of the word.

We see this with our own eyes. Today we can look around and find Heads of Yeshivas, Rabbinic scholars, Gedolim who have mastered Torah discipline and knowledge. These are people who have gained authoritative familiarity and ownership of Torah law. Many times their parents happen to be very simple and unsophisticated Jews, not Torah scholars by any stretch of the imagination. How did such a thing happen?

The answer is that Torah is a "morasha" to the congregation of Yaakov. Sometimes the job of the "previous generation" is to cherish Torah, to

believe in it and treat it like one treats an heirloom and then to give it over to the next generation. That is the nature of Torah. This is probably the meaning of the Gemara in Tractate Nedarim, which says "be careful of the children of the poor, for from them Torah emerges" [Nedarim 81a]. The Talmud is not just speaking of people who are economically poor. It also includes people whose parents are "poor" in their knowledge of Torah. Even from such people, may come children who excel in Torah study.

A person who has been in Yeshivos for any amount of time often sees this. Often, children of wealthy people -- monetarily wealthy or even wealthy in Torah knowledge -- do not achieve great promise in their learning. But on the contrary, we often see children of people who are poor -- monetarily or even in Torah knowledge -- but who cherish Torah, who do become great Torah scholars.

#### Get Rid Of The Frogs – Tomorrow

The plague of Frogs greatly troubled Pharaoh and the Egyptians. They were oppressed to such an extent that Pharaoh summoned Moshe and Aharon and said "Entreat Hashem that He remove the frogs from me and my people, and I shall send out the people that they may bring offerings to Hashem". Moshe Rabbeinu told Pharaoh to name the moment when he desired for the frogs to leave. Pharaoh chose to let them leave the next day. [Shmos 8:4-6]

This is striking. Wherever he turned there were Frogs. They were destroying the country and making life unbearable for the Egyptians. And yet when given the choice by Moshe, Pharaoh asked that they be removed TOMORROW!

Why Tomorrow? If we found roaches in our house and called the exterminator and he asked us when we would like to have the roaches removed, we would naturally say "Immediately!"

The answer is that Pharaoh suspected that the Frogs were going to leave today anyway. He did not want to give Moshe credence in the eyes of the people. He was trying to set a trap for Moshe and have Moshe agree to have the Frogs leave the next day, and then they would be gone before the agreed upon timeline.

Even though he could have gotten rid of them 'today', getting rid of them 'today' would perhaps be giving into Moshe Rabbeinu. It might appear as a confession to the power of the Almighty if he told Moshe to get rid of them 'today'. That was the last thing Pharaoh wanted to do.

Normal people would swallow their pride, forget the philosophy, forget the theology and ask for immediate relief from their suffering. Not Pharaoh. About this it is written: "The wicked even at the gates of Gehinnom do not repent." [Eiruvim 19a] A wicked person would rather suffer than admit that Hashem is the L-rd.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Va'eyra are provided below:

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #577, Davening For Non-Jews. Good Shabbos!

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From: owner-weeklydt@torahweb2.org [mailto:owner-weeklydt@torahweb2.org] On Behalf Of TorahWeb.org Sent: Thursday, January 26, 2006 10:30 PM To: weeklydt@torahweb2.org Subject:

**Rabbi Yonasan Sacks -**

**Modim Anachnu Lach . Perspectives on Giving Thanks**

the HTML version of this dvar Torah can be found at:

<http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

Rabbi Yonasan Sacks Modim Anachnu Lach - Perspectives on Giving Thanks

The Ramban (Shemos 17:16) beautifully highlights the importance of *hoda'a*, properly giving thanks: "V'ein Kel Elyon chafetz b'tachtonim milvad she'yeida ha'adam v'yode l'Elokav she'b'rao - Hashem has no demand of man, except that he should know to be thankful to G-d for having created him."

Rav Yitzchok Hutner explains that the term *hoda'a* has a dual meaning. In addition to thanksgiving, *hoda'a* is an act of admission: "Hoda'as ba'al din k'meah eidim dami - a litigant's admission is equivalent to the testimony of one hundred witnesses." Only when one who acknowledges that he is not self sufficient, but inherently dependent, can he begin to appreciate the goodness of others.

We often measure our thankfulness from the perspective of the one who performs an act of chessed - we ask ourselves, will he appreciate my gesture of thanks? To what extent did he go out of his way to help me?

Parshas Vaera provides profound insight into proper thankfulness and appreciation. The Medrash Rabba explains that Moshe Rabbeinu, who was saved by water and protected by the dust of the land, was unable to perform the initial makos himself. Yet how do we understand this sense of *hakoras hatov*? Surely the water and dust of the land did not go out of their way to aid Moshe Rabbeinu. Inanimate objects do not need and cannot appreciate our gratitude.

The inability of Moshe Rabbeinu to participate in these makos teaches us that *hoda'a* and *hakoras hatov* must also be viewed from the perspective of the beneficiary; the mere fact that Moshe Rabbeinu benefited from these inanimate objects elicited an abundant sense of *hoda'a*.

Accordingly, the gemara (Berachos 58a) contrasts the *oreach tov*, the appreciative guest, with the *oreach ra*, the ungrateful guest. Whereas the *oreach ra* minimizes his needs to express gratitude, claiming, "kol torach she'tarach ba'al habayis ze lo torach ela bishvil ishto u'banav - all the effort of the host was surely for his wife and children", the appreciative guest feels, "lo tarach ela bishvili - all the efforts of the host were exclusively for me."

The Vilna Gaon observes that each of us is a guest in the world. One could selfishly feel that Hashem creates little exclusively for me. True *hakoras hatov* and *hoda'a*, however, demand that as an *oreach tov* we view all *chasdei Hashem* as though *bishvili nivra ha'olam* - the world was created for me.

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

**Sir Jonathan Sacks**

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago - 5766]

<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Va'era

It is one of the classic philosophical conundrums. In this week's sedra, before even the first plague has struck Egypt, G-d tells Moses:

"But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt. He will not listen to you. Then I will lay My hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out My troops, My people the Israelites. And the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I stretch out My hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it."

(Ex.7:3-5) The problem is obvious. If it was G-d who hardened Pharaoh's heart, where then was his freedom? Either the Egyptian ruler had a genuine choice, or he did not. If he did, it was Pharaoh, not G-d, who was responsible for the hardness of heart. If he did not - if it was G-d acting on him, controlling his responses, determining his reactions - then how could Pharaoh be guilty and worthy of punishment? As Moses Maimonides puts it: If there were no freewill -

What room what would there be for the whole of the Torah? By what right or justice could G-d punish the wicked or reward the righteous? "Shall not the judge of all the earth act justly?" (Genesis 18: 25; Laws of Repentance 5: 6) Punishing Pharaoh for something he could not help doing is, simply, unjust.

The general outline of an answer - however we construe its details - is already implicit in the precise wording of the biblical narrative. After each of the first five plagues, the Torah tells us that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. It is only from the sixth plague onward that his hard-heartedness is attributed to G-d:

Plague 6, Boils: But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said to Moses. (Ex. 9: 12)

Plague 7 Hail: Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform My miraculous signs among them." (10:1) Plague 8 Locusts: But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go. (10: 20)

Plague 9 Darkness But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was not willing to let them go. (10: 26) Plague 10 Firstborn Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country. (11:20) Rashi understands the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in the last five plagues as a form of punishment for first five, when it was Pharaoh's own obstinacy that led him to refuse to let the people go.

Maimonides (Laws of Repentance 6: 3) interprets G-d's hardening of Pharaoh's heart as meaning that "repentance was withheld from him, and the liberty to turn from his wickedness was not accorded to him."

Albo and Sforno offer the opposite interpretation. G-d hardened Pharaoh's heart precisely to restore his free will. After the succession of plagues that had devastated the land, Pharaoh was under overwhelming pressure to let the people go. Had he done so, it would not have been out of free choice, but rather under force majeure. G-d therefore toughened, strengthened, Pharaoh's heart so that even after the first five plagues he was genuinely free to say Yes or No.

Simplest and most profound are the words of the Talmudic sages about yetser ha-ra, the evil impulse:

Rav Assi said: At first the evil impulse is as thin as a spider's gossamer, but in the end it is as thick as a cart-rope. (Sukkah 52a)

Rava said: At first the evil impulse is call a "wayfarer", then a "guest", then finally a "master". (Sukkah 52b) Evil has two faces. The first - turned to the outside world - is what it does to its victim. The second - turned within - is what it does to its perpetrator. Evil traps the evildoer in its mesh. Slowly but surely he or she loses freedom and becomes not evil's master but its slave.

Pharaoh is in fact (and this is rare in Tanakh) a tragic figure like Lady Macbeth, or like Captain Ahab in Melville's *Moby Dick*, trapped in an obsession which may have had rational beginnings, right or wrong, but which has taken hold of him, bringing not only him but those around him to their ruin. This is signaled, simply but deftly, early in next week's sedra when Pharaoh's own advisors say to him: "Let the people go so that they

may worship the Lord their G-d. Do you not yet realize that Egypt is ruined?" (10: 7). But Pharaoh has left rationality behind. He can no longer hear them.

It is a compelling narrative, and helps us understand not only Pharaoh but Hitler, Stalin and other tyrants in modern times. It also contains a hint - and this really is fundamental to understanding what makes the Torah unique in religious literature - of why the Torah teaches its moral truths through narrative, rather than through philosophical or quasi-scientific discourse on the one hand, myth or parable on the other.

Compare the Torah's treatment of freewill with that of the great philosophical or scientific theories. For these other systems, freedom is almost invariably an either/or: either we are always free or we never are. Some systems assert the first. Many - those who believe in social, economic or genetic determinism, or historical inevitability - claim the second. Both are too crude to portray the inner life as it really is.

The belief that freedom is an all or nothing phenomenon - that we have it either all the time or none of the time - blinds us to the fact that there are degrees of freedom. It can be won and lost, and its loss is gradual. Unless the will is constantly exercised, it atrophies and dies. We then become objects not subjects, swept along by tides of fashion, or the caprice of desire, or the passion that becomes an obsession. Only narrative can portray the subtlety of Pharaoh's slow descent into a self-destructive madness. That, I believe, is what makes Torah truer to the human condition than its philosophical or scientific counterparts.

Pharaoh is everyman writ large. The ruler of the ancient world's greatest empire, he ruled everyone except himself. It was not the Hebrews but he who was the real slave: to his obstinate insistence that he, not G-d, ruled history. Hence the profound insight of Ben Zoma (Avot 4: 1): "Who is mighty?" Not one who can conquer his enemies but "One who can conquer himself."

Many things influence us - our genes, our parents, our early childhood, our race, creed, culture, class, and the persuasions and pressures of our environment. But influence is not control. Causes do not compel. It was a survivor of Auschwitz, the late Viktor Frankl, who discovered in that nightmare kingdom the truth to which he subsequently devoted his life. He said: The Nazis tried to rob us of every vestige of our humanity, but there was one freedom they could not take away from us: the freedom to decide how to respond. At the heart of Judaism is faith in freedom: our faith in G-d's freedom, and G-d's faith in ours.

Judaism is, among other things, a sustained tutorial in freedom: in the ability to say No; to conquer instinct by conscience; to resist the madness of crowds and their idols. That needs discipline, and the ability to stand a little apart from society, even while contributing to it. To be a Jew is to know that though we are here, we are also elsewhere. We live in time, but we are addressed by the voice of One who is beyond time.

Pharaoh was born free but became his own slave. Moses was born into a nation of slaves but led them to freedom. Easily lost, hard to sustain, freedom is our most precious gift. But it must be exercised if it is to be retained. Its greatest discipline is to let G-d's will challenge ours. That is the path to freedom and the cure for hardness of heart.

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**Rabbi Goldwicht** <rgoldwicht@yutorah.org> to me show details 7:48 pm (4 hours ago)

Parashat Vaaira

Our parasha deals with seven out of the ten makkot dealt to Pharaoh and Mitzrayim. When we look at the structure of the makkot, a very interesting pattern is revealed. In preparation for the makkah of dam, HaKadosh Baruch Hu commands Moshe to wait for Pharaoh early in the morning on the bank of the Nile, where Pharaoh would go every morning. In preparation for the makkah of tzfarde'a, HaKadosh Baruch Hu commands Moshe to approach Pharaoh in his palace to alert him to the next makkah. For the third makkah, kinnim, HaKadosh Baruch Hu commands Moshe to

carry out the makkah without even warning Pharaoh. The Maharal explains that this pattern is meant to show how Moshe gained control over Pharaoh. First, he treated Pharaoh with respect, arising early in the morning to wait for him on the bank of the Nile. For the next makkah, he approached Pharaoh rather than waiting for him. For the third makkah, he struck without warning.

The difficulty with the Maharal's explanation is that it does not explain why the pattern repeats itself for the next two sets of makkot: 1) in preparation for the makkah of arov, Hashem again commands Moshe to wait for Pharaoh early in the morning on the bank of the Nile; in preparation for the makkah of dever, Hashem commands Moshe to again approach Pharaoh in the palace; and for the makkah of sh'chin, the third in the set, there is again no warning. 2) In preparation for the makkah of barad, Hashem commands Moshe to wait for Pharaoh on the bank of the Nile early in the morning; in preparation for the makkah of arbeh, Hashem commands Moshe to go to the palace; and for the makkah of choshech, Moshe again strikes without warning. What exactly is the message underlying the clear pattern and its repetition?

The explanation is that HaKadosh Baruch Hu essentially wished to respond to Pharaoh's statement to Moshe and Aharon, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to Him?" (Shemot 5:2). The first set of makkot demonstrate that there is a Creator. Dam's significance is that eliminates Pharaoh's belief that he is a G-d by preventing him from seeing his reflection in the Nile every morning as he used to and holding the impression that he stands above the Nile, a G-d of Mitzrayim. By tzfarde'a, an interesting conversation transpires. Pharaoh, in tremendous pain, calls Moshe to remove the tzfarde'a. Moshe responds with a very strange question: "When?" Obviously Pharaoh would want to end the pain immediately, or he would have waited to call you in! Pharaoh's response is even stranger: "Tomorrow." What is the real meaning behind this conversation?

Moshe says to Pharaoh: "You can talk to Hashem today and ask Him to influence tomorrow, unlike the other gods/forces that can influence nature today only, with no influence on the future. Do you want to see this in action?" Pharaoh, despite his pain, does not believe it and demands to see it in action, so he asks Moshe to pray now for the removal of the makkah tomorrow. This is what we say in davening: "Shiru lashem kol ha'aretz, basru miyom l'yom yeshuato (you can daven to Hashem today to bring redemption tomorrow)." For the rest of the world, this is a chiddush. But for Am Yisrael, this is no chiddush. Therefore we ask that "hamelech ya'aneinu b'yom kor'einu," on the very day we ask.

Kinnim's significance demonstrates the gradual progression that leads to Pharaoh's acceptance of Hashem's existence: dam shows Pharaoh is not god, tzfardea shows the real G-d can influence tomorrow even though we pray today, and kinnim, which the chartumim could not replicate, leads them to say "etzba Elokim hee."

The second set of makkot teaches Pharaoh that Hashem is not just Creator, but also watches over His creation. Only the Egyptians were afflicted by the makkah of arov, not the Jews. Only the Egyptians' animals were afflicted by the makkah of dever, not the Jews'. Only the Egyptians were afflicted by the makkah of sh'chin (including the chartumim).

The final set of makkot teaches Pharaoh that not only does Hashem watch over the world, but that He rewards and punishes those who obey and disobey Him, respectively. There is no simple discrimination between Jew and Egyptian, but between believer and non-believer. Therefore, by the makkah of barad, those Egyptians who demonstrated belief in Hashem by bringing their animals and servants inside were not harmed by the barad. Those Egyptians who did not believe, were harmed. By the makkah of choshech, Hashem punished even the non-believing Jews, removing 80% of the Jewish population. This was followed by makkat bechorot and the yetziat Mitzrayim.

The ten makkot come to strengthen our belief in a Creator Who watches over us and Who rewards and punishes those who obey and disobey him,

respectively. In the merit of this emunah taught by the ten makkot, we merit the Aseret HaDibrot and the entire Torah.

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from Daf Hashavua <daf\_hashavua@unitedsynagogue.org.uk> to internetparshasheet@gmail.com date Jan 2, 2008 11:02 AM subject Daf Hashavua

### The G-d Who Cares

by Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

One way of making prayer a truly spiritual experience is to take a single sentence or paragraph and meditate on it, sensing its power and letting the words take hold of your imagination.

One passage had a powerful effect on me. It is a sequence of three verses from a Psalm we read every day: Psalm 147. The first is 'The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem. He gathers the scattered exiles of Israel.' This is G-d as He acts in history, shaping the destiny of our people. The last is 'He counts the number of the stars, calling each by name'. This is G-d creator of the cosmos, unimaginably vast, encompassing, yet standing outside, the entire universe with its billions of galaxies, each with more than a billion stars.

What is surprising is the verse between these two. What could be equal to G-d, the hand of history, and G-d the architect of all that is? The utterly unexpected answer is: 'He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.' Ministering to the pains, physical or emotional, of human beings, is as important to G-d as the destiny of nations and the infinite spaces of the cosmos.

G-d is larger than the universe, yet He cares about us, giving us strength when we are weak, lifting us when we fall, forgiving us when we sin, giving us hope when we are on the brink of despair.

There is an echo of this Psalm in another deeply moving part of our prayers, a passage taken from the Talmud that we read on

Motzei Shabbat: 'Rabbi Yochanan said, Wherever you find the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, there you find His humility.' Rabbi Yochanan brings proofs of this from all three sections of the Bible. Here is his example from the Torah. 'It is written in the Torah: "For the Lord your G-d is G-d of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty and awe-inspiring G-d, who shows no favoritism and accepts no bribe." Immediately afterwards it is written, "He upholds the cause of the orphan and widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing."'

The Greeks – indeed philosophers generally – could not make sense of this at all. They believed that G-d did the big things. He was the First Cause, the Unmoved Mover, the Ultimate Being, the source of all that exists. But He did not know particulars at all: you, me, the hopes and fears of individual people. They were beneath His radar, too small for Him to notice. G-d knew the concept of humanity, but not actual human beings in our almost infinite diversity.

We believe otherwise: that G-d is closer to us than we are to ourselves. He listens to us, loves us, has faith in us. There are times when He speaks to us in the silence of the soul. Greatness is humility: that is what we learn from G-d. Though He is creator of the cosmos and co-author of history, He also 'heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds'. That is the G-d of the prophets, the G-d who cares.

Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to Peninim

### Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

PARSHAS VA'ERA I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I shall take you to Me for a people and I shall be a G-d to you, and you shall know that I am Hashem, your G-d. (6:6, 7) The Torah uses four expressions of geulah, redemption, to convey the four progressive stages of redemption. These four expressions form the foundation of the requirement to drink four cups of wine during the Pesach Seder. The first three stages of geulah refer to the Jews becoming free men and leaving the country. The last one, "And I shall take you to Me," seems to be a bit superfluous in context to the redemption. It means that Hashem will give us the Torah, and then we will be His People. It does not seem to add anything intrinsic to the redemption process. Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, describes to us what we would be like had Hashem not taken us to Him. The word, v'lakachti, is an integral component of the redemption without which we might have physically left Egypt, but Egypt would still be a part of our lives. The expungement of Egypt from the Jewish psyche could only take place once we made a commitment to Hashem, His Torah, and the way of life that a Torah Jew must live.

Rav Sholom relates that when he was a young yeshivah student, he and a group of other students would walk through the market on Friday afternoons to "remind" the storekeepers that Shabbos was rapidly approaching. It was time to close their shops. One barber consistently kvetched, taking his sweet time closing up. Usually, it was already after shekiah, sunset, when he finally locked his shop. He was a nice, sincere individual who either did not care or did not understand. He would shave his customers with a razor, transgressing a serious prohibition. Did he know better? Perhaps. Did he care? Perhaps. Did he listen? No. Yet, when he left his shop, he made a point to kiss the Mezuzah-- no less than three times!

Once, six weeks elapsed, and the barbershop remained closed. No one knew why this had occurred, but, as suddenly as it closed, it re-opened and the barber returned to his shop. Of course, the bachurim, yeshivah students, inquired as to what had taken place. Had he been ill? Had there been a death in the family?

"Yes, I was gravely ill," he replied. "Hashem miraculously saved me from certain death. Let me tell you something. When I lay there on my bed, I made an oath to the Almighty that if He would allow me to live, I would travel to Meron, to the gravesite of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and I would shave off my beard there" - with a razor, no less! Rav Sholom continues, "This is the attitude of one who does not comprehend the meaning of v'lakachti eschem li I'am. Without Torah, he has no perception concerning right and wrong. The individual who does not have Torah has not really been liberated from Egypt. The influence of that g-dless society continues to pervade his psyche."

Chazal teach us that the shifchah al ha'yam, simple maidservant at the Red Sea, was privy to a much greater revelation of Hashem than even the Navi Yechezkel. Yet, as Horav Chaim Shmuelewitz, zl, was wont to add, "But she nevertheless remained a shifchah!" Despite observing so much, perceiving Hashem on an unprecedented level of clarity, she did not change into a more spiritually correct human being. She remained a maidservant. Why? One would think that such a revelation would transform a person forever.

Rav Sholom explains that without the Torah's powerful impact on our lives, all of the miracles and spiritual revelations to which we might be exposed would not leave a lasting impression. Yes, one can experience Hashem's manifestation during the splitting of the Red Sea and still remain a maidservant. The essential ingredient required to distill and preserve this remarkable event is Torah. Without it, one cannot interpret the events of his own life.

Chazal tell us that one may drink wine between the four Kossos, cups, that are a part of the Pesach Seder ritual. This applies between the first, second and third cups. Between the third and fourth cup, however, one may not drink. The Talmud Yerushalmi explains that if one drinks between the first and second cup, or the second and third cup, he will not become inebriated, because he will eat shortly thereafter, and the food will absorb the alcoholic effects of the wine. Participants of a seder drink the third cup, however, after the meal. Since the individual will no longer be eating, it is possible that, if he drinks more wine, he will not remain in control of his faculties.

Rav Sholom explains this homiletically. The four cups of wine are symbolic of the Egyptian liberation. Hashem redeemed us from the Egyptian center of immorality and perversion, from the slavery and continual persecution. He did so with wondrous miracles and an incredible revelation of his power and strength. The experience of liberation, with its ensuing supernatural events, can go to a person's head. Indeed, he might become "drunk" with the experience. One might become so out of control that he might speculate, "I have made it! I am there! I have been liberated from Egypt. I am walking with Moshe and Aharon, surrounded by the Pillars of Cloud: The Manna is delivered to my home everyday! What more is there?"

Hashem responds: "Do not become drunk. You are not there yet. The ultimate, complete geulah, redemption, is still before you. V'lokachti eschem li I'am, 'I will take you to Me for a nation.'" That is the conclusion of redemption. That is the fourth cup. Until one reaches the finish line, the redemption has not fully taken place. Only after the purpose of redemption has occurred, after Klal Yisrael has received the Torah, is he truly free. Without the Torah, Egypt is still within him. Freedom comes when one connects with Hashem, which can only be experienced through committing himself to His Torah.

But they did not heed Moshe, because of shortness of breath and hard work. (6:9) In the previous parsha (Shemos 4: 29-31), we find that when Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen had originally presented their case for freedom to the Jewish People, their response was positive: "Aharon spoke all the words that Hashem had spoken to Moshe; and he performed the signs in sight of the people. And the people believed, and they heard that Hashem had remembered Bnei Yisrael and that He saw their affliction." Yet, here when Moshe approached them again, their reaction was negative - almost no reaction. What was the difference? Moshe was essentially saying the same thing.

Horav Sholom Yosef Elyashiv, Shlita, explains that before Moshe's second encounter, he presented the consequences of their liberation. "I am Hashem: and I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; and I shall rescue you from their service; I shall redeem you, I shall take you to Me for a People and I shall be a G-d to you" (Ibid 6:6,7) The promise of redemption was lined with a demand, a responsibility that would be imposed on them. Hashem would become their G-d, and they would be His People. They would accept the Torah and become His Nation - not just any nation - but a mamleches Kohanim v'goi kadosh, a kingdom of Priests and a holy nation. When they heard the demands that would be placed upon them, they no longer wanted to listen. Why? Because they were depressed by the hard work to which they had been subjected. They could not think rationally.

Rav Elyashiv derives from here an important principle in Jewish human nature. When a Jew does not listen, there is an explanation for it. A Jew does not just ignore someone who speaks to him about the positive aspects of observance and serving Hashem. A specific reason, an impediment, prevents him from listening properly. In this case, it was kotzer ruach, shortness of breath, and avodah kashah, hard work. Depression, dejection, indifference, low self-esteem, hopelessness: these are just some of the possibilities that come to mind. One who has fallen prey to these maladies will not listen. He has no interest in listening. Only an astute, caring and loving teacher realizes that a Jew who does not listen has a reason.

Stress comes in many shapes and forms. For some it is parnessah, earning a livelihood; for others, it is a low self-esteem resulting from various sources. After all is said and done, people are confronted with issues, both legitimate and imagined. These issues are sufficient cause to impede one's ability to "hear" properly. We are living in a period during which the spiritual climate is very intense. Baruch Hashem, Klal Yisrael is rebuilding. The Jewish outreach movement is moving ahead at full throttle. Yet, we find many disenchanted young people who, despite having been raised in observant and even yeshivish homes, have absolutely no interest in frumkeit. They are indifferent, almost apathetic, to anything frum. Why?

V'lo sham'u el Moshe, mi'kotzer ruach u'mei'avodah kashah. Some of us just do not thrive under the same pressure that others seem to find riveting and stimulating. Children who grow up in a home where their parents present the paradox of hypocrisy by playing the Orthodox role, while ignoring many of the simple ethics expounded by our Chazal in Pirkei Avos, are distressed about what they see. Instead of viewing the latest chumros, stringencies in Halachah, as an indication of Klal Yisrael's spiritual fortitude and exceptional growth, they see them as bogging them down and restricting them even more. They perceive the prohibitive mitzvos as the defining factor of Yiddishkeit - negativity and "do nots." In addition, certain disputes and machlokes "Tshem Shomayim" have crept into the Orthodox camp, with all of the "newly-found, permissible" ways to slander and undermine Yiddishkeit. All of this leads to kotzer ruach. It destroys a young person's self-esteem, because it enables him to question authority and view his heritage from a negative perspective. This is compounded when he is greeted in shul or at home with cynicism or outright hatred-greetings that only stoke his depression even more.

Rav Elyashiv teaches us that when a Jew does not listen, he has an explanation. Perhaps, instead of laying blame, we should take the time to search for that reason. It might make a world of difference. The Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, was known for his boundless love for each and every Jew. After the war, when depression was, sadly, a way of life, he nurtured and held the hand of many a brokenhearted Jew, bringing them back to spiritual life. One incident that was recorded in these pages a number of years ago is worth repeating for its timeless message.

The emotional and mental condition of the newly-liberated survivors was, at best, fragile. They were broken and shattered in body and soul. During the war, they concealed their bottled-up emotions. After liberation, they were forced to confront these feelings, considering the destruction and personal loss that each one had sustained. Adding to their tragedy was the knowledge that the world had, for the

most part, stood idly by, indifferent to their pain and persecution. The spiritual crisis that resulted from these factors affected virtually every survivor. It was precisely during this time of darkness and depression that the light of the Klausenberger Rebbe shone brightly, illuminating the path back to spirituality and emotional health. He was one of them, who suffered like they did, but remained unbroken in spirit, resolute in his commitment to rebuild and reclaim the spiritual legacy of the Jewish nation.

Many stories occurred connected with him. One incident particularly comes to mind, which I feel is indicative of the underlying idea expressed in this thesis. After the war, the Rebbe turned his attention to convincing the surviving Jews to follow him to the Displaced Persons camp which served as the center for the Jews who had survived the war. Many went because here they would receive food and support from the Americans. The Rebbe made every attempt to persuade these Jews to return body and soul to the Jewish People. Some said openly that they had no desire to live as Jews. The Rebbe was patient. He did not badger; he listened with love, interjecting with a word here and there. Many were moved by the way he listened to them, and they came back.

There was a young man who had lost everything, having experienced the cruelty of watching his wife and children die before his eyes. He really had no desire to continue living. Every day that went by, he persevered and pushed himself to the next day. Religious observance, however, was the furthest thing from his mind. One day, as this young man was walking through the camp, he noticed the Rebbe walking with a group of students. He tried to turn away, but it was too late; the Rebbe had already noticed him.

Motioning him aside, the Rebbe asked to speak with him - alone. At first, the young man demurred, claiming that he was busy. He really had no interest in speaking with the Rebbe about frumkeit. He was not buying what the Rebbe was selling. Nonetheless, the Rebbe was a difficult person to refuse, so he relented, and they walked off to a side. "My child," the Rebbe began, "I know why you do not want to talk. You are upset after having gone through so much. Your personal losses are staggering. I know. I lost my wife and ten children." Suddenly, the Rebbe began to cry - and cry. Observing this, the young man finally allowed himself to release the pent-up pressures that had been driving him insane. The two just stood there, arms embracing each other, weeping uncontrollably on one another's shoulder.

A few minutes went by, and the Rebbe composed himself. He looked into the eyes of the young man, who no longer seemed so bitter and said, "I do not blame you for the way you feel, but I ask you to remember one thing - who you are! Always remember to be yourself." With these words, the Rebbe ignited a spark that continues to burn to this very day, as the young man, now a grandfather many times over, reflects on the carefully worded message of the Rebbe, and how it saved his spiritual life.

The Rebbe understood that the bitterness that had been bottled up within this young man prevented him from listening. He told him something that we should all remember. "Be yourself." All too often, parents expect their children to be someone else, someone they are not. Let them be who they are, and you will see the nachas you deserve.

For this time I shall send all My plagues against your heart. (9:14)

The ten makos, plagues, that struck Egypt took their toll on the populace. Each one touched a specific nerve. Makas barad, the plague of hail, however, seems to have had a compelling effect on Pharaoh, more so than the other plagues. Indeed, the Torah emphasizes this with Moshe Rabbeinu's introduction of the plague. "For this time I shall send all My plagues against your heart." Why is barad considered "all My plagues"? It was only one of ten. Furthermore, the reaction to the hail was also exceptional. The Egyptian who prepared himself and his animals for this plague is referred to as "G-d-fearing." This is the overwhelming effect that the hail had on them.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that barad is referred to as kol mageifosai, "all My plagues," because through the barad, the Egyptians came to realize that all the plagues originated from Hashem. Until that point, Pharaoh had tried to convince himself that the power of magic or some other form of mysticism had been empowering Moshe to effect the plagues. Barad taught Pharaoh that this was no simple act of magic. This was the real thing. Now Pharaoh realized that he was dealing with a super power, a Supreme Being. No longer did he think that the previous plagues were the work of some mystic. They were also authentic. What traits of the plague of hail engendered such a reaction from Pharaoh?

Rabbeinu Bachya explains that the uniqueness of barad lies in the fact that neither the hail nor the fire had any effect on the other: the hail did not weaken the heat of the fire; the fire did not melt the hail. In other words, the hail was comprised of ice and fire synthesized together, each retaining its unique properties without having any adverse effect on the other. This is similar to a king who was served by two dukes who were sworn enemies of each other. When the king went to war and needed the

services of both of his dukes, they made peace with each other in order to serve their master, the king.

Witchcraft/sorcery is a spiritual entity that functions within the sphere of creation, receiving its power from the forces of tumah, spiritual contamination. Egypt was the center of witchcraft. Indeed, the Christian godhead studied witchcraft there. Any product of the forces of tumah, which is in its own right disjointed from the source of holiness, cannot by its very nature ever unite with anything else. Blood, frogs, lice, pestilence, and boils are all natural creations which carry out Hashem's command. The forces of impurity have the ability to create such natural entities. This is why Pharaoh was unimpressed by the first six plagues. It was only with the advent of the seventh plague that he became nervous. This plague had two opposing creations working together. This was impossible in Pharaoh's world of spiritual impurity. This could not have been the result of the forces of evil. It had to be the work of the Creator - as similarly evidenced by the previous plagues. To put it simply, it is highly unlikely that peace can be affected between two warring dukes unless they are both subservient to one king. Thus, if there is such a king that rules over opposing factions, then he must be the Supreme Ruler over the entire world. This idea frightened Pharaoh, because he now knew that he had met his match.

Alternatively, I recently heard an insight concerning another aspect of makas barad that left an indelible impression on Pharaoh. In the natural order of events, the nation that triumphs in war does not act with compassion to the defeated nation. On the contrary, it collects its spoils and usually leaves the loser with nothing more than bitter memories of its defeat. Here we find Moshe instructing Pharaoh to "send, gather in your livestock and everything you have in the field" (ibid 9:19). When the victor demonstrates his nobility by showing sensitivity to the vanquished, it indicates that we are dealing with a different sort of conqueror. In fact, 'champion' would be a better word to describe this individual. In any event, Pharaoh was stunned to the point that he proclaimed, Hashem ha'tzaddik, "Hashem is the Righteous One" (ibid 9:27), something he was not accustomed to saying.

The seventh plague created a mahapeichah, metamorphosis, within the Egyptian psyche and culture. Into their world of cold, desolate darkness, malevolence and bigotry a tiny ray of light crept. Regrettably, it was too late.

Va'ani Tefillah Ivdu es Hashem b'simcha - Serve Hashem with joy.

The following narrative will give us some idea of the meaning of serving Hashem with joy. The story took place a few hundred years ago in the small town of Telz in Lithuania. The Russian army was traveling through the city of Telz.

Naturally, all of the Jews made themselves scarce. Whenever an army traveled through a city, they took it over, subjecting its inhabitants to doing their every whim. This time, they were in need of directions. After seeing that the town appeared desolate, they stopped by the bais hamedrash and found one Jew engrossed in Torah study. It was the saintly Rav Leib m'Telz, a well-known tzaddik about whom the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna remarked, "He is a neshamah without a body, he is so spiritual." Rav Leib was attired in his Tallis and Tefillin, bent over a folio of Talmud. He did not notice the soldiers who had entered the shul. They approached him and asked him to lead them through the forest to the next town.

Rav Leib left the shul with the Talmud in his hands. He did not remove his Tallis and Tefillin, nor did he cease to utter the words of Torah. When the time for Tefillah Minchah approached, Rav Leib went off the path in the forest, stopped by a spring, immersed his hands, and stood next to the tree and began to daven Minchah. This enraged the soldiers, who were on a schedule. How dare this insolent Jew stop to pray! The captain in charge prevented them from disturbing Rav Leib. There was something about the way he prayed that was awe-inspiring. He stood there and stared in amazement and veneration, watching the sheer joy that emanated from Rav Leib as he entreated the Almighty. His prayer was a scene of devotion, passion, enthusiasm and utter joy. It was something to behold.

When Rav Leib concluded Minchah, they continued on to the next town, where they were "greeted" by the populace. When the members of the Jewish community noticed who was leading the group of soldiers, they accorded great reverence to Rav Leib.

The captain commented to those assembled, "I envy this holy man. I cannot ever expect to accumulate or be worthy of his portion in Paradise. He is simply too holy for me. What I envy is his portion in This World. When I see his expansive jubilation, his rapture and ecstasy when he communes with G-d through prayer, I am profoundly jealous. Perchance, if once in seventy years, I could experience such success in my work that could warrant such joy, I would be quite pleased. This man, however, experiences such elation three times a day! Do you now understand why I am jealous of him?"

I'zechar nishmas Yaakov Shimon ben Yisrael Tzvi z"l Mrs. Helen Pollack Mrs. Patti Pollack Rivki & Yossi Kornfeld Mendy & Raizy Pollack Yoni & Bumie Goldstein, Avi & Estee Pollack Pnina & Stephen Glassman Motti & Evy Pollack

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From: webmaster@koltorah.org on behalf of Kol Torah  
[koltorah@koltorah.org] Sent: Friday, December 08, 2006 11:35 AM To:  
Kol Torah Subject: Kol Torah Parshat VaYishlach Health Care Proxies  
and Living Wills KOL TORAH A Student Publication of the Torah  
Academy of Bergen County Parshat VaYishlach 29 Kislev 5767  
December 9, 2006 Vol.16 No.12

### **Estate Planning-- Health Care Proxies and Living Wills by Rabbi Chaim Jachter**

(assisted by Martin M. Shenkman, Esq.)

Introduction Last week, we began discussing health care proxies and living wills from a Halachic perspective. We noted that this perspective on end of life issues differs dramatically from the accepted norms of contemporary American society. For example, we never condone active euthanasia, such as removing a ventilator from a patient in a permanent vegetative state. We also rarely condone passive euthanasia. Rav Moshe Feinstein and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in certain circumstances permit withholding extraordinary measures from a gravely ill patient who is suffering greatly and has no hope of cure. This week, we shall conclude our discussion of this matter and emphasize the importance of signing a health care proxy and possibly a Halachically approved living will in order to insure that one's Halachic rights will be honored. As this is the last installment of our series on estate planning, I express a final word of gratitude to attorney Martin Shenkman for his assistance in the preparation of this series.

Challenges to the Rulings of Rav Moshe and Rav Shlomo Zalman Not all authorities agree with Rav Moshe and Rav Shlomo Zalman's ruling. Some believe that one must prolong life under all circumstances (see Teshuvot Tzitz Eliezer 14:80 and Rav J. David Bleich's Judaism and Healing, pages 134-145). They believe that Halacha forbids withholding any medical treatment from any patient (see, though, Tzitz Eliezer 13:89:11). They argue that the Rama (cited in our previous issue) only permits removing a non-medical impediment, such as the woodchopper in the specific situation he addressed. Rav Feivel Cohen agrees with this approach, arguing that just as Halacha requires us to violate Shabbat in order to save even a few moments of life (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 329:4 and Beirur Halacha ad. loc. s.v. Ela), so too we are obligated to save someone's life even if he will live only a few minutes more. Rav Cohen adds that the Shulchan Aruch describes a case in which a building collapsed on someone who would most likely be experiencing great pain at that moment, yet we are required to save him. Rav Cohen derives from this that we must act heroically to save someone's life even if that person is experiencing great pain and little "quality of life". Rav Cohen argues that despite the fact the Gemara and Ran (cited last week) permit one to Daven for the death of one who is suffering greatly from an incurable illness, Halacha (paradoxically) obligates one to undertake all measures to help save such an individual. Rav Moshe and Rav Shlomo would likely respond that it is impossible for Halacha to permit one to pray for the death of someone whom we are obligated to make all efforts to prolong his life. We should note that Rav Shlomo Zalman cites Rav Cohen's argument but rejects it (although he does not explain the basis for his rejection in his brief responsum that we cited in our previous issue). Perhaps Rav Shlomo Zalman and Rav Moshe would say that that the Shulchan Aruch addresses a situation in which either the victim expressed his desire that his life be extended despite the pain he is experiencing or removal of the debris would alleviate his suffering as well as briefly extend his life. Rav Mordechai Willig told me that one may follow the opinion of Rav Moshe and Rav Shlomo Zalman in this regard, as Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg agrees with their approach. Rav Cohen noted that even Rav Moshe and Rav Shlomo Zalman would agree that in many circumstances it would be

forbidden for a patient to sign a DNR (do not resuscitate) order. Indeed, one should exercise great care and consult with one's Rav before signing a DNR, as some hospitals and doctors encourage (and sometimes even apply great pressure) the signing of such orders when there is absolutely no Halachic justification for doing so. Rav Cohen also stated that Rav Moshe's ruling applies only if the patient is suffering greatly to the extent that he would prefer to die rather than experience such pain. Others major Rabbanim disagree, and have told me that Rav Moshe's ruling may apply even if the patient is not suffering. For example, they would consider permitting the family of a patient in a permanent vegetative state (where the cognitive component of the brain no longer functions) to sign a DNR order.

should note that last week we stated that experience teaches that one be certain that he has an expert medical evaluation before signing a DNR order. This might necessitate seeking a second expert opinion. One should not allow himself to be intimidated by medical personnel who might be offended and discourage seeking a second opinion. Rav Feivel Cohen stated that Halacha obligates family members of gravely ill patients to insure that health care providers are following hospital protocols in the care of their loved one. Unfortunately, some health care providers tend to neglect the needs of gravely ill patients who are close to death. Accordingly, it is vital that one complete a health care proxy and/or living will which clearly chooses and empowers a Rav to render an appropriate decision should the situation (God forbid) arise. Otherwise, it will be difficult to assert one's rights to hospital administrators and health insurance providers. Moreover, a statement indicating one's attitude regarding heroic measures administered to deathly ill individuals will sometimes constitute an important component of a Halachic authority's decision in this area.

**Narcotics and Other Pain Relief in Near Death Patients** Narcotics or other pain relievers are commonly administered to relieve pain and suffering. This is especially true when doctors have given up hope of curing the patient, and the patient is near death. The question arises whether Halacha permits the administration of pain relief in circumstances in which the medication may hasten death. Rav Eliezer Waldenburg (Teshuvot Tzitz Eliezer 13:87) permits the administration of pain medication in such circumstances. He presents two reasons for this ruling. First, he notes that relieving pain is a legitimate medical objective. Hence, since Halacha permits caregivers to take risks in the attempt to heal a patient (see Ramban, Torat HaAdam: Shaar HaSakanah), one may risk the life of the patient in the attempt to eliminate his pain. Second, the serious pain endured by the patient may itself cause harm or even death if left untreated. Thus, in some circumstances, pain relief may actually extend the life of the patient. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in the Nishmat Avraham Y.D. 339:4; also see Teshuvot Igrot Moshe C.M. 2:73:1) essentially agrees with this ruling save for one circumstance. Rav Shlomo Zalman forbids administering morphine when a particular injection entails the risk of causing the patient to stop breathing. He agrees with Rav Waldenberg only when the aggregate pain relief entails this risk. Rav Auerbach also insists that the morphine be administered solely for the purpose of pain relief (and not a backhanded form of euthanasia). The risk in many situations is minimal, so pain relief may be permitted. But the benefits and risks can vary considerably depending on the patient's condition and the procedures to be followed. Thus, it is vitally important to designate, in the health care proxy and/or living will, a Halachic authority who will consult with the attending physician and help decide which of these opinions should be followed in the particular circumstances.

**Practical Considerations** There are also a number of practical considerations related to planning a living will to assure that his intent to follow Halacha is respected. Separate documents should be signed as one's living will and health care proxy (appointing one's health care agent). The health care proxy alone, while effective to a certain extent, does not allow the patient to express whether he wishes to have extraordinary measures taken to prolong even minimal life in case of great suffering. Recall from last week that according to Rav Shlomo Zalman, patient input is critical in

determining the Halachic course of action in many cases. One might also consider the option of merely filling out a health care proxy and subsequently writing a document that is addressed to the proxy and one's Rav in which one would express his feelings regarding the extension of life in case of enormous suffering and no hope for cure. One must be exceedingly careful in regards to the writing of a living will to insure that it does not create the potential to prevent one from receiving proper medical care. Each document should specify that health care decisions are to be applied in a manner consistent with Orthodox Jewish law (Halacha). One should clarify that a particular Rabbi, a Rabbi selected by his agent, or a Rabbi appointed by an organization is authorized to resolve any Halachic issues. Be practical. If the Rabbi one names cannot be reached, who will address Halachic issues? List several alternates and include several telephone numbers for each (home, office, and cellular) in the document. Sign several original documents and give one to one's doctor, Rav, and agent. One should also endeavor, although it is obviously difficult, to discuss these issues in advance with family, the persons named as agents, and one's Rav. These discussions will enable those involved to better implement a person's wishes within the guidelines of Halacha. It will help them better anticipate how different circumstances may affect the person. Most importantly, these discussions, however difficult, will make the decision process less traumatic for the family if (God forbid) such a situation arises. One might also consider carrying a card identifying one's health care proxy at all times. This helps assure that medical personnel will be able to contact the health care proxy in the event of an emergency.

**Organ Donation** A proper living will specifies which organs, if any, one wishes to donate. There are many areas of debate among Halachic authorities regarding organ donation, foremost of which over whether Halacha recognizes brain death as a definition of death. One can contemplate the permissibility of donating a heart, lung, or liver only if brain death is considered Halachic death, because currently, doctors can only harvest certain organs from donors whose hearts are still functioning. In order to avoid family fights that have the potential for great acrimony, one should designate a Rav who will resolve such issues. Otherwise, family members are likely to become embroiled in a fight regarding which Rav should be consulted. In other issues of Kol Torah, we will (B"N) discuss this highly controversial issue.

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Parashas Va'eira: Stop and Think from Rabbi Frand On the Parashah Insights, stories and observations by Rabbi Yissocher Frand on the weekly Torah reading

By **Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

Other Available Chapters Parashas Ki Seitzei: Mother Birds

Parashas Va'eira: Stop and Think

The one among Pharaoh's servants that feared the word of Hashem whisked his servants and livestock indoors (Exodus 9:20).

Moshe very graciously gave the Egyptians ample warning that they were about to be stricken by barad, the seventh plague. Hailstones would rain down from the heavens and destroy everything in the field. If they wanted to save their livestock, they should bring them indoors quickly. What did the Egyptians do? The Torah tells us (9:20-21), "The one among Pharaoh's servants that feared the word of Hashem whisked his servants

and livestock indoors. But the one that paid no heed to Hashem's word left his slaves and livestock in the field."

Statistics are usually quite reliable, especially when the percentages are very high. So far, Moshe was "six for six" in his predictions about the upcoming plagues. He had not yet made a single mistake. One would think the probability of his being right again regarding the seventh plague was pretty high. So why didn't all the Egyptians pull their slaves and livestock indoors until the danger passed, at least on the off chance that Moshe was right? Wasn't it stupid of them to leave everything outside where there was a good chance it would be destroyed?

The Midrash identifies "the one that feared the word of Hashem" as Iyov and "the one that paid no heed to Hashem's word" as Bilam, both of whom were advisers to Pharaoh.

Bilam was an interesting fellow. In some ways, he was intelligent, even brilliant, but in other he was quite obtuse, a person so focused on himself that that he "pays no heed" to what is going on around him.

Many years later, when Balak hired Bilam to curse the Jews, he mounted his trusted donkey and began the journey. Then his donkey saw a sword-wielding angel in the middle of the road and he came to a sudden stop, refusing to budge an inch no matter how much Bilam prodded and cursed him. Finally, miraculously, the donkey spoke to Bilam, "Is this my normal pattern of behavior? Have I not been your trusted donkey for all these years? Have I ever stalled on you once or given you a moment of trouble? So why are you beating up on me?" In other words, can't you see that something extraordinary is happening here? Why don't you pay attention to what's going on, Bilam? Wake up!

The Chafetz Chaim points out that the entire episode of Bilam in the Torah appears as one long uninterrupted narrative, no stumms, no psuchos, no breaks whatsoever. Why? Because Bilam never stopped to think about what he was doing. He never stopped to take stock and consider the wisdom of his actions.

This was Bilam. When Moshe issued his warning about the impending hailstorm, Bilam could not be bothered to "pay heed" to it. He was thinking about his own plans, his own agenda. His mind was made up.

We think this sort of behavior is bizarre. We laugh at Bilam's foolishness. But are we that much better ourselves? Consider just a small thing, the pace of life. It used to be that we had to spend inordinate amounts of time on tasks that are accomplished easily and quickly by modern appliances. We have automobiles, self-defrosting refrigerators, washing machines and dryers, fax machines. The list is practically limitless. So have we had a net gain in time? Have we managed to catch our breaths because of all these labor-saving devices? Do we have more time to learn, to spend with the family, to reflect, to rest?

In fact, just the opposite is true. We are more rushed than ever. The pace of life is so rapid that we can barely breathe. Something is wrong. But do we "pay heed"? Do we stop and think about what is going on around us? Do we stop to assess our lives to see if we may perhaps have gone a little off the track? It is not only Bilam that fails to stop and think.