

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

Shemini Aseret. Simchat Torah and Bereshit

September 25-28 2013 - 21-24 Tishrei 5774

DEDICATIONS: In Memory of Phillip Deutsch 22 Tishrei

**Wednesday September 25, 2013 – Succot 7 – Hosha'ana Rabba
Erub Tabshilin – To be done at home prior to Candle Lighting**

Candle Lighting 6:29 PM

Minha 6:30 PM

Arbit 6:50PM

Thursday September 26, 2013 – Shemini Asseret

Shahrit - 9:00 AM

Children's Program: 5:30PM

Class with Rabbi Aharon at 6:00 PM

Minha 6:30 PM

Arbit 6:50 PM followed by Hakafof with Maaza – Middle Eastern Hors d'oeuvres by Seudah – come enjoy ... We have wine with - Kibbeh, lahamagine, bourekas, empenadas, sesmee chicken and more. When we're done you can proceed to the Bach for sushi and if you still have an appetite, end the night at Young Israel for Barbecue.

Candle Lighting 7:23 PM

Friday September 27, 2013 – Simhat Torah

Shahrit - 9:00 AM

Hakafof 12:00 PM followed by Kiddush in honor of Chatanim

Thanks to Penny for arranging and

Rabbi Aharon Siegle Chatan Torah

Rabbi Yosef Colish Chatan Bereshit

And (Future Rabbi) Ari Waldman Chatan Meonah

Children's Program: 5:30PM

Candle Lighting for Shabbat 6:26 PM

Class with Rabbi Aharon at 6:00 PM

Minha 6:30 PM

Shir HaShirim 6:50 PM

Kabbalat Shabbat & Arbit 7:05 PM

Saturday, September 28, 2013 – Shabbat Bereshit

Class with Rabbi Colish at 8:30

Shahrit - 9:00 AM

Need Kidush Sponsor

Children's Program: 5:30PM

Minha 6:00 PM

Seuda Shelishit 6:30 PM with Rabbi Aharon

Arbit 7:20 PM

Habdalah – Shabbat Ends 7:25 PM

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

Daily Hebrew language class follows afterward in the Rabbi's Study

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Daily 6:00 AM class – Honest Business Practices

Monday Night at 7PM with Rabbi Yenay

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Editors Notes

Bereshit 5774 and the lessons of the wizard of oz.

The blessings of the New Year extending through her first twenty three days are meant to energize us through the entire year. As the holiday season comes to an end, as we leave the sukkah and complete the last hakafah or dance with the Torah, what can we take with us as we begin again Bereshit in 5774?

On the morning of sukkot as I stood at the bimah with the Torah opened in front of me, I turned to Rabbi Colish and told him that I would probably pause at the seventh verse where the Torah describes the bringing of the Omer. The word there is vahavetem, but I would probably say vehevetem as is the more usual pronunciation. Rabbi Colish who has become our regular Baal Koreh - Torah reader - told me, "just think va ha ha ha ha ha".

That worked. I responded that the laugh reminded me of a munchkin in the Wizard of Oz. in fact the entire holiday reminded me of the Wizard of Oz.

The holiday of sukkot is the holiday of joy. We refer to it as zeman simchateynu - the time of our happiness. We leave our homes, our cars, our offices and our fast paced lives and step into the sukkah with its flimsy walls and partially covered roof and there we find true joy. In the sukkah with family and friends, with good food and conversation, with lessons and songs, we celebrate.

Rabbi Abittan would tell us a story to stress the point.

In the city of Krakow there was a magnificent synagogue until the second world war called Reb Isaac Yeikel's shul, after the man who built. Isaac was a very poor man who lived in Krakow so one would naturally wonder how such a poor man could build a beautiful synagogue.

One night Isaac had a dream in which he was shown that there was a very large treasure buried near a big bridge in the city of Vienna opposite the royal palace. He was shown all the surroundings so that he could recognize it. When it was morning, he decided to ignore the dream, since after-all most dreams are just foolishness. But he had it again the next night, and continued to have it. He finally could not hold himself back, and he set out to Vienna to see if there was any truth in the dream.

Today the 289 mile trip from Krakow to Vienna takes about five hours by car. Then for a poor man on foot with a need to beg for funds on the way it might take a month or more. But after a difficult journey Isaac finally arrived in the Austrian Capitol.

He saw the bridge exactly as it had been in his dream, and he could even recognize where the treasure was buried. But there was a problem. The bridge being near the palace was surrounded by guards; royal guards, who didn't look like they would be so accommodating to a poor Polish Jew digging beneath the bridge. So everyday Isaac went out to scout the bridge, hoping some idea would come to him as to how he could get the treasure that was there.

After a few days, his loitering became obvious. The guards began to suspect him. After all what purpose is there for a Jew to come and look around the palace everyday? So the head of the guards came over to him and asked, 'Jew, what do you want here?'

With little choice, Isaac told him his dream and the reason why he journeyed so far from Poland. After hearing the story the guard broke out in bellowing laughter. 'You stupid Jews', said the guard. 'If I was as foolish as you, following my dreams after buried treasure, you know what I would have done? I would have gone to Krakow and dug under the oven of some Jew named Isaac the son of Yeikel. Why half the Jews are called Isaac and the other half Yeikel. How stupid you Jews are.'

On hearing the words of the guard he replied, 'Yes, I suppose you are correct. Please accept my apologies for disturbing you. Thank you for setting me straight. I shall now return home.' So he journeyed another month until he finally returned home, and dug under his oven and found a huge treasure. With part of it in appreciation to G-d, he built that Synagogue.

The advertising industry is built on leading us to believe that the next thing that we buy will bring us true happiness. Once I have that car, I will be happy.

Once I have that house, I will be happy. Once I have that phone, I will be happy. Our kids grow up with commercials promising that this next toy will be everything and they relay those messages to us. And we buy the car, the phone or the toy and a short time later the novelty wears off and we see something new and again believe that with this new thing I will be happy.

How many of us bought the four hundred million dollar lotto ticket and heard the little voice tell us that if I win, I'll truly be happy. Look it might be nice to win, but a Lotto winners happiness is usually fleeting.

Someday I'll wish upon a star
And wake up where the clouds are far behind me.
Where troubles melt like lemon drops,
High above the chimney tops,
That's where you'll find me.

We dream that somewhere over the rain bow is that pot of gold. Somewhere over the rainbow is that house, that spouse, that car, that toy that will bring me happiness.

But the sukkah comes to remind us that all those are illusions. We leave the trappings and for a week we go camping with G-d, we go home to the simple pleasures in life. We step out of the rat race and into the sukkah accompanied by our ancestors. We dance with the Torah and recall the lessons they taught us. We return to the Source and find the true treasure.

And when it all ends, we click our shoes three times saying, there's no place like home, there's no place like home, there's no place like home.

As the holiday ends, and as we step out into a world with a media attacking us with their rendition of joy, let's remember. Let's bring the sukkah with us. Let's keep the dance with the Torah in mind. Let's hear the echo of the shofar. And let us not forget that, there's no place like home.

Chag Sameyach and Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

This Is My Torah Scroll"
By Ruth Benjamin Courtesy of Daniel Keren

Henryk was very young in 1945, when the War ended and solitary survivors tried frantically to trace their relatives. He had spent what seemed to be most of his life with his nanny, who had hidden him away from the Nazis at his father's request. There was great personal risk involved, but the woman had readily taken it, as she loved the boy.

All the Jews were being killed, and Henryk's nanny did not think for a moment that the father, Joseph Foxman, would survive the infamous destruction of the Vilna Ghetto. He would surely have been transferred to Auschwitz — and everyone knew that nobody ever came back from Auschwitz. She therefore had no scruples about adopting the boy, having him baptized into the Catholic Church and taught catechism by the local priest.

It was Simchat Torah when his father came to take him. The heartbroken nanny had packed all his clothing and his small catechism book, stressing to the father that the boy had become a good Catholic. Joseph Foxman took his son by the hand and led him directly to the Great Synagogue of Vilna. On the way, he told his son that he was a Jew and that his name was Avraham.

Not far from the house, they passed the church and the boy reverently crossed himself, causing his father great anguish. Just then, a priest emerged who knew the boy, and when Henryk rushed over to kiss his hand, the priest spoke to him, reminding him of his Catholic faith.

Everything inside of Joseph wanted to drag his son away from the priest and from the church. But he knew that this was not the way to do things. He nodded to the priest, holding his son more closely. After all, these people had harbored his child and saved the child's life. He had to show his son Judaism, living Judaism, and in this way all these foreign beliefs would be naturally abandoned and forgotten.

They entered the Great Synagogue of Vilna, now a remnant of a past, vibrant Jewish era. There they found some Jewish survivors from Auschwitz who had made their way back to Vilna and were now rebuilding their lives and their Jewish spirits. Amid the stark reality of their suffering and terrible loss, in much diminished numbers, they were singing and dancing with real joy while celebrating Simchat Torah.

Avraham stared wide-eyed around him and picked up a tattered prayer book with a touch of affection. Something deep inside of him responded to the atmosphere, and he was happy to be there with the father he barely knew. He held back, though, from joining the dancing.

A Jewish man wearing a Soviet Army uniform could not take his eyes off the boy, and he came over to Joseph. "Is this child... Jewish?" he asked, a touch of awe in his voice.

The father answered that the boy was Jewish and introduced his son. As the soldier stared at Henryk-Avraham, he fought to hold back tears. "Over these four terrible years, I have traveled thousands of

miles, and this is the first live Jewish child I have come across in all this time. Would you like to dance with me on my shoulders?" he asked the boy, who was staring back at him, fascinated.

The father nodded permission, and the soldier hoisted the boy high onto his shoulders. With tears now coursing down his cheeks and a heart full of real joy, the soldier joined in the dancing.

"This is my Torah scroll," he cried.

Abe Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League -- the Avraham in our story -- remembers this as his first conscious feeling of a connection with Judaism and of being a Jew.

Reprinted from the Chabad.Org website. The article was originally published in Kosher Spirit magazine.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

In the beginning G-d created separate and different creations. Each of these separate and different creations has its own assigned purpose in being created, and it is the universal responsibility of all creations to protect each others divinely ordained right to accomplish their individualized missions. If a creation hinders or interferes with another creation's purpose for being created, the interfering creation is opposing the established order of the Creator and His purpose in creating that specific creation.

The Creator provides all the necessary qualities and tools for each separate and different creation to exist and attain its reason for being created. Individual talents, rights, and ownership are the tools for accomplishing the Creator's purpose in creating separate and different creations. The need to protect these individual rights and qualities is as evident in the proper functioning of the complex ecosystem of our world as it is in the proper functioning of any human society. We must therefore conserve the natural resources of our world and cherish the right of all people to have what is theirs and be who they can be.

This mandate of "Intentionally Created Speciation" is a universal truth as stated throughout Parshas Breishis. It began with the six days during which Hashem created all things as separate and different, and concluded with the creation of man, woman, and Shabbos as the most different and the most glorious of all creation. It is our responsibility to embrace the reality of "Speciation" and acknowledge through our actions the Creator and His purpose for creation.

1st Aliya: The creation of the universe is detailed day by day concluding with the creation of Shabbos. Note

the emphasis on Speciation throughout the six day account.

2nd and 3rd Aliya: The creation of Adam and Chava and the story of Gan Eden is detailed.

4th Aliya: Adam and Chava are expelled from Gan Eden and the story of Kayin and Hevel is related.

5th, 6th, and 7th Aliyot: Chronologically, the time covered in Parshas Breishis is from year 1 (the creation of humankind) through the birth of Noach's three sons in 1556. The final three Aliyot list the 10 generations from Adam through Noach that lived during that time, as well as the degeneration of man's relationship with Hashem. It is important to note that Noach's generation was the first generation not to have personally known Adam.

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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There is No World Without Torah

The first Pasuk of the Torah tells us that God created the heavens and earth "Bereshit," which is commonly understood to mean "in the beginning." Rashi, however, comments that the letter "Bet" can sometimes mean "because of" or "for the sake of." The word "Bereshit," then, may be read to mean, "because of Reshit." The term "Reshit," Rashi proceeds to explain, can refer either to Am Yisrael, or to the Torah. And thus right at the very beginning, we are told that the world was created for the sake of the study of Torah. The earth exists to facilitate the study of God's wisdom, and thus theoretically, if Torah study would cease to occur throughout the world, the world would cease to exist. And it thus follows that through our study of Torah, we help sustain the world and ensure its ongoing survival.

Rashi returns to this theme later in the Parasha, toward the end of the creation story. After describing the events of the first day of creation, the Torah concludes the section by saying, "It was evening and it was morning of the first day." After the events of the second day, the Torah concludes, "It was evening and it was morning of the second day," and then again after each of the subsequent days of creation. Rashi notes that after the sixth and final day of creation, rather than concluding with the phrase, "Yom Shishi" ("the sixth day"), the Torah instead writes, "Yom Ha'shishi," adding the seemingly superfluous letter "Heh," which means "the." The word "Ha'shishi," Rashi explains, should be understood as referring to the "the sixth day," the sixth day of Sivan, when we received the Torah at

Sinai. The Torah is alluding to us that although it appears that the process of creation ended after the sixth day of creation, this is not the case. Creation was completed only some 2,500 years later, when Beneh Yisrael stood at Mount Sinai and received the Torah. Even after the natural world was in place, it wasn't until the Torah was given that the purpose of creation was realized and thus the world could be said to have reached completion.

This also explains the Talmud's famous remark that when Beneh Yisrael stood at Mount Sinai, God lifted the mountain over their heads and said that if they would not accept the Torah, "Your grave shall be there." If Beneh Yisrael had not accepted the Torah, quite simply, the world would not have continued to exist. Since the entire purpose of creation was for us to observe the Torah, there would be no purpose for the world if Beneh Yisrael had chosen not to accept it.

The question, however, arises, why did God wait nearly 2,500 years before giving the Torah? If Torah is the purpose of creation, why did He not give mankind the Torah immediately at the time of creation?

As we all know, Torah observance is not easy. Even nowadays, when many of the Torah's commands do not apply due to the absence of the Bet Hamikdash, properly fulfilling the Torah's obligations is an immense responsibility. It's a responsibility we are happy to accept, but there is no denying that it is a formidable challenge. Given the difficulty entailed in observing the Torah, a foundation had to be laid before the Torah could be given. The lives of our righteous ancestors, of the patriarchs and matriarchs and Yaakov's twelve sons, provided the "infrastructure" that we need to properly observe the Torah. Abraham Abinu, for example, embedded within our nation a natural sensitivity to Hesed and to selfless, unquestioning devotion to God. Yishak implanted within us the notion of sacrifice. Rahel and Leah, who remained righteous despite being raised in the house of Laban, bequeathed to us the ability to remain firmly committed even in the face of negative influences. These great figures built the backbone that we need to observe the Torah and live lives of genuine religious commitment.

Indeed, although there have been periods in our history when our nation failed to live up to its obligations, and its commitment to God was shaky, the spark kindled by our righteous forebears remained. The solid foundation they built for us has always remained and will always remain firmly intact. We see this phenomenon even in our times. Many of

our parents or grandparents, who were raised in the early years of the Orthodox Jewish community in America, were forced to attend public school. Outwardly, it seemed that Jewish tradition would not survive on these shores, that the Jewish schoolchildren of that time would grow up to be indistinguishable from their gentile neighbors. And yet, lo and behold, their grandchildren and great-grandchildren now attend outstanding yeshivot and are receiving a thorough, comprehensive Torah education. This survival of Torah commitment against all odds is a function of, and testament to, the foundation built by our righteous ancestors. God waited before giving us the Torah to ensure that this foundation would be in place, thereby ensuring the survival of Torah even amid the upheavals and turmoil that we would endure throughout the centuries.

Building upon that foundation, our job is to continue sustaining the world through our unwavering commitment to Torah education and Torah study. Without it, there is no Jewish people, and there is no world. This is our duty, the responsibility that is charged upon us right at the very beginning of the Torah, which teaches "Bereshit" – that the very purpose of the world's creation is for us to involve ourselves in Torah study.

Rabbi Wein

Because of the intricacies of the Jewish calendar, the end of the Torah – Zot Habracha – and the beginning of the Torah – Bereshith – follow each other in rapid succession this week. This is a timely reminder to us of the seamlessness of Torah – an understanding that will help us appreciate all of the Torah portions that we will hear and study in this new and blessed year.

The rabbis of the Talmud have taught us that words of Torah which seem poor and unimportant in one Torah text contain rich and meaningful information and insight when viewed in the perspective of another text. Thus the Torah has to be viewed in its totality and not only in analysis of individual and particular words and phrases.

The immortal greatness of Rashi's commentary to Torah lies in its ability to present both the trees and the forest at one and the same time to its readers and students. Without knowing Bereshith, Zot Habracha descends into poetry and narrative devoid of its ultimate spiritual content and purpose. And without knowing Zot Habracha, Bereshith itself remains an unfathomable mystery of creation and primordial life

without apparent purpose and relevance to later human generations.

That is what Rashi is driving at in his initial comment to the Torah. Creation had a purpose; God is not a random force in human existence, and Torah – the Torah of Moshe – and the continued existence of the people of Israel are integral parts of the purpose of creation and human life. Thus, these two parshiyot of the Torah, the last one and the first one, are intimately joined in the great seamless Torah that is our inheritance. Each one accurately describes the other.

The rabbis teach us that each individual person must always believe and say to one's self that this entire wondrous universe was created only for me. By this they meant to reinforce the idea of the purposefulness of creation itself and of the role that each and every human being can play in determining the destiny of that process of creation. By fulfilling our role as devoted Jews, with a moral understanding of life and good behavior patterns, we inherit the blessings of our teacher and leader Moshe as well as becoming partners, so to speak in God's handiwork of creation.

Nothing in life is wasted and even acts that we may deem to be somehow insignificant are important in God's cosmic scheme of human existence. The blessings of Moshe are individual and particular. No two of them are alike. So too are human beings – no two of them alike. It is one of the many wonders of creation. Since the blessings are individual and human beings are unique, it is obvious that each of us has a role in the human story - each one of us individually. Thus our own individual lives take on greater purpose, influence and meaning. And that is the true blessing of creation itself.

Sir Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

If leadership is the solution, what is the problem? On this, the Torah could not be more specific. It is a failure of responsibility. The early chapters of Genesis focus on two stories: Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel. Both are about a specific kind of failure.

First Adam and Eve. As we know, they sin. Embarrassed and ashamed, they hide, only to discover that you cannot hide from God:

The Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten

from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Gen. 3: 9-12)

Both insist that it was not their fault. Adam blames the woman. The woman blames the serpent. The result is that they are both punished and exiled from Eden. Adam and Eve deny personal responsibility. They say, in effect, "It wasn't me."

The second story is more tragic. The first instance of sibling rivalry in the Torah leads to the first murder:

Cain said to his brother Abel ... While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." (Gen. 4: 8-10)

Cain does not deny personal responsibility. He does not say, "It was not me," or "It was not my fault." He denies moral responsibility. In effect he asks why he should be concerned with the welfare of anyone but himself. Why should we not do what we want and have the power to do? In Plato's Republic, Glaucon argues that justice is whatever is in the interest of the stronger party. Might makes right. If life is a Darwinian struggle to survive, why should we restrain ourselves for the sake of others if we are more powerful than they are? If there is no morality in nature then I am responsible only to myself. That is the voice of Cain throughout the ages.

These two stories are not just stories. They are an account, at the beginning of the Torah's narrative history of humankind, of a failure, first personal then moral, to take responsibility – and it is this to which leadership is the answer.

There is a fascinating phrase in the story of Moses' early years. He grows up, goes out to his people, the Israelites, and sees them labouring as slaves. He witnesses an Egyptian officer beating one of them. The text then says: "He looked this way and that and saw no one (Ex. 2: 12, *vayar ki ein ish*, literally, 'he saw that there was no man')."

It is difficult to read this literally. A building site is not a closed location. There must have been many people present. A mere two verses later we discover that there were Israelites who knew exactly what he had done. The phrase almost certainly means, "He

looked this way and that and saw that there was no one else willing to intervene.”

If this is so then we have here the first instance of what came to be known as the Genovese syndrome, or “the bystander effect,” (For a discussion, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Kitty_Genovese) so-called after a case in which a woman was attacked in New York in the presence of a large number of people who knew that she was being assaulted but failed to come to her rescue.

Social scientists have undertaken many experiments to try to determine what happens in situations like this. Some argue that the presence of other bystanders affects an individual’s interpretation of what is happening. Since no one else is coming to the rescue, they conclude that what is happening is not an emergency.

Others, though, argue that the key factor is diffusion of responsibility. People assume that since there are many people present someone else will step forward and act. That seems to be the correct interpretation of what was happening in the case of Moses. No one else was prepared to come to the rescue. Who, in any case, was likely to do so? The Egyptians were slave-masters. Why should they bother to take a risk to save an Israelite? The Israelites were slaves. Why should they come to the aid of one of their fellows if, by doing so, they were putting their own life at risk?

It took a Moses to act. But that is what makes a leader. A leader is one who takes responsibility. Leadership is born when we become active not passive, when we don’t wait for someone else to act because perhaps there is no one else, at least not here, not now. When bad things happen, some avert their eyes. Some wait for others to act. Some blame others for failing to act. Some simply complain. But there are some who say, “If something is wrong let me be among the first to put it right.” They are the leaders. They are the ones who make a difference in their lifetimes. They are the ones who make ours a better world.

Many of the great religions and civilizations are based on acceptance. If there is violence, suffering, poverty and pain in the world, that is the way the world is. Or, that is the will of God. Or, that is the nature of nature itself. All will be well in the world to come.

Judaism was and remains the world’s great religion of protest. The heroes of faith did not accept; they protested. They were willing to confront God himself. Abraham said, “Shall the Judge of all the earth not do

justice?” (Gen. 18: 25). Moses said, “Why have you done evil to this people?” (Ex. 5: 22). Jeremiah said, “Why are the wicked at ease?” (Jer. 12: 1). That is how God wants us to respond. Judaism is God’s call to human responsibility. The highest achievement is to become God’s partner in the work of creation.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God called out “Where are you?” As Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, pointed out, this call was not directed only to the first humans. It echoes in every generation. God gave us freedom, but with freedom comes responsibility. God teaches us what we ought to do but he does not do it for us. With rare exceptions, God does not intervene in history. He acts through us, not to us. His is the voice that tells us, as He told Cain before he committed his crime, that we can resist the evil within us as well as the evil that surrounds us.

The responsible life is a life that responds. The Hebrew for responsibility, *achrayut*, comes from the word *acher*, meaning an “other.” Our great Other is God himself, calling us to use the freedom He gave us, to make the world that is more like the world that ought to be. The great question, to which the life we lead is the answer, is, which voice will we listen to? The voice of desire, as in the case of Adam and Eve? The voice of anger as in the case of Cain? Or the voice of God calling on us to make this a more just and gracious world?

Reflections, Dissections and Connections **Rabbi Naftali Reich**

I’m sure the question has occurred to many of you: Haven’t we been through the ritual of concluding the Torah and beginning again from Breishis many times before? Doesn’t it seem as if our excitement and inspiration tends to wane rather quickly? This year it occurred to me that rather than work to preserve the Yom Tov’s emotional and spiritual high, we might do better attempting to implement the festival’s core message.

Over the course of the year, our level of interpretation and understanding of the Torah and its Divine laws are expected to expand as we gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Torah’s message through our learning. Perhaps the message that we need to take from the Chag is that we must try to shed the superficial, materialist way with which we tend to interpret the world around us. We need to expand or reshape the prism with which we view the events of our lives and reach for a deeper and truer grasp of their meaning.

A recent incident concerning a painting by a young student at the Yeshiva, who is an unusually gifted artist, brought this concept graphically to life. A couple of months ago, I commissioned this student, Binyomin Allen, to draw a painting of my beloved Rebbe, the Nesivos Shalom ztl, surrounded by the great personalities and Hassidic rebbes of yesteryear that molded his life values. Binyomin produced a spectacular work of art, masterfully incorporating the various institutions that the Rebbe founded and led during his lifetime.

The picture now hangs in my dining room, unfailingly eliciting gasps of admiration from our guests. Over the Chag, a legacy graduate who is now a beginner student in the Yeshiva, joined us for a meal and was transfixed by the painting. I asked him what aspect of it moved him so. He was gazing at the frame of Rav Mottel of Slonim, a saintly man whose rather gaunt features and large hat created a striking image on the canvas. "Rabbi, it's that 'Clint Eastwood guy' on the left," he exclaimed. "He is some cool dude. I really like that guy."

Well, Clint Eastwood and I'havdil the heiliger Rav Mottel are, of course, so drastically different, they almost can't be said to inhabit the same universe! But the comment made me more fully aware that we can only interpret what we see with the values and outlook that form the template of our minds. Our home is a reflection of the finite world that encompasses us. We are limited by that finite world and have difficulty stepping outside of it. We interpret events, relationships and Hashem in a manner that that doesn't threaten our sense of security, and will not force us to step outside our comfort zone physically or spiritually.

Our challenge is to open up our minds to a far more honest and objective grasp of ourselves and the world around us.

A story my dad once related to me highlights a person's tendency to superimpose his mindset-and frequently, his tunnel vision - on whatever confronts him. My dad, born and raised in Manchester, England, recalled that when he was eight or nine years old, a saintly Chabad chasid, Rav Yitzchok Masmid, came from Russia for a visit. He was raising funds for Chabad activities behind the Iron Curtain. This tzaddik barely ate more than a bit of dry bread with drink . He learned all day and avoided even sitting on a chair, so as not to benefit too much from this world. He would sit on the edge of a chair and get up every ten seconds, afterwards sitting back down! My grandfather and father accompanied him

on Shabbos to the central synagogue where he was scheduled to make an appeal. This was in 1928 when the public's favorite recreation was to attend the Sunday horse races and bet on their favorite horse.

Rav Yitzchok sat during the services next to the president at the front of the shul. After he made his appeal, my Dad heard the president asking a fellow nearby, "Jake, what did you think of that Rabbi's sermon"? The man replied, "Tell you the truth, Sam, I didn't understand a word, but Blimey -he'd sure make a good jockey"!

The nimshal is pretty clear. We can only absorb from a 'spiritual exposure' as much as the vessels are equipped to receive. It's amazing how we can witness things that are so elevated and yet perceive so little!

Due to my weakness for Jewish art, our home has quite a varied collection of contemporary and Renaissance-style paintings, as well as lithographs in various rooms. In the children's room hangs a colorful depiction of Noah's ark replete with many different animals positioned on deck. The giraffe's head sticks out, and Noach's Zaidy- like image is rather amusing. It reflects the childlike vision that we had in first grade of this Biblical drama. But do we ever graduate from that vision?

Stepping out of our homes into the Sukkah allows us to do just that; to leave behind the limited vision to which we've been conditioned, and to realign our mindset directly with our Neshama's source. The culmination of the Chag is our spirited dancing with the Torah when we commit ourselves to gaining a truer appreciation of the Torah's teachings. Let's attempt to expand our spiritual horizons with a deeper, more Torah-aligned analysis and interpretation of Hashem's message to us.

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