

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VA'ETHANAN

AUGUST 8-9, 2014

13 AB 5774

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH

Candle lighting Friday evening 7:44 p.m. Shir Hashirim 7:15 Mincha at 7:30 SHARP

SHABBAT Class at 8:30, Relevant Daily Halachot based upon the teaching of HaRav Ovadia Yosef Hashem Melech at 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:42 AM
We will endeavor to keep it to the 7 aliyot, somech, samuch and maftir each week.

Kiddush this Shabbat is sponsored by
Leon and Karen Sutton in memory of Mordechai ben Avraham v"Bolissa and by
Herman, Ernie and Rebecca in memory of our dear friend Jeffrey Oberman's

Please sponsor a Kiddush or Seudah Shelishi or breakfast in memory or in honor of a loved one
Anyone wishing to do a Dairy Kiddush with hot food must speak with Rabbi Colish in advance.

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30
Ages 0-5 - in the Playroom/ Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories,
Prayers and Fun!

Children's afternoon program with the Bach at Benai Asher from 5:30 to 6:30
We are doing this program with the Bach and the program will be held at
The Sephardic Congregation for remainder of the summer

Pirkei Avot with Rav Aharon at 6:15
Mincha at 7:00 – Followed by Seudah Shelishi at 7:30
Seudah Shelishi Class
Birkat HaMazon at 8:25 Arbit at 8:30 - Shabbat Ends – 8:43

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00AM, Mon and Thurs at 6:55, Tues, Weds and Fri at 7:00

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE - Men and Women are Invited
Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai 7:30

Daily class with Rabbi Colish - Weekday 6:30 AM (ADDITIONAL NEW TIME Sunday Mornings 7:30)
Kaballah as a Guide to Spiritual Growth based upon the teachings of Likutei Moharan

Thursday Nights 8:30-9:30 Virtual* Class facilitated by Rabbi Yosef Colish.
Practical Laws of Shabbat for Sephardim

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Editors Notes

Answered Prayers

Va'ethanan – And I pleaded with Hashem. One might wonder why Moses even recounts this story of how he pleaded with G-d to allow him entry into Israel and how G-d refused this request. Rabbi Abittan z'sl, explained that the story is there to tell us that prayer works.

In the midst of this crazy week where we kept running to check the news and to see what information our friends in Israel were sending us, we got to experience a baby miracle and a miracle that came about through prayer.

Last Shabbat my dear friend Dr. Hal was not in the Synagogue in the morning. When I saw his wife Penny preparing for our Seuda Shelishi as she does each week, I asked how he was feeling. It seems he was in the hospital where they found two kidney stones. One might come out, but the other would need to be blasted or more likely he would need surgery. And if one preceded the other, chas veShalom, he would need emergency surgery. Penny was wondering if she would be cancelling her trip to Israel scheduled a few days later where she would take her son to meet her daughter. I asked where Dr. Hal was and she told me he was in the Synagogue where the class was just beginning.

Following Rav Aharon's class we started mincha. We all knew that Rabbi Yosef's wife was already experiencing pre-labor and the baby would be coming every day. We were looking for him to open the ark but he was nowhere to be found. You see the Chida – Rabbi Chaim Joseph David Azulai mentions in his book, Avodat Hakodesh that it has been the local custom [in Livorno] that husbands of expectant mother are particular to perform the mitzvah of peticha – of opening the ark - during the ninth month. "This is a beautiful custom and has support in

Kabalistic works." Rabbi Yaakov Hillel in his commentary Amudei Hora'ah explains the custom further.

And at that moment a thought struck me. I considered what the rabbis write as the basis for this custom and supposed that if this could help for childbirth, why not for a kidney stone? So we asked Dr. Hal to open the ark and we all said a special prayer for his refuah and that just as he was opening the ark for the Torah, Hashem should open the path to release the stones. And that was that!

But a few minutes after Dr. Hal returned home, he called me. Miracle of miracles, both stones passed. And they told him it was impossible. You can't imagine the smile that crossed my lips. I offered a prayer of thanksgiving and chalked it up to all of us praying together.

The rabbi would remind us that setting aside the miracles hidden in coincidence, prayer requires persistence. How persistent must one be? We should take our example from Moses. The Yalkut Shimoni brings the Midrash that Moshe Rabbenu prayed 515 prayers, the numerical value of the opening word of the parashah, "Va'ethanan."

And it's so interesting that we always read this Perasha following Tisha BeAb and usually before the 15th day of the month of Ab – this coming Monday (which will be my secular birthday – Happy Birthday to me!).

The 15th day of Ab is a joyous day. My brother Ruby and Ruthie got engaged that day. We recall that the Sin of the spies and the people crying the night the spies made their report fell on the 9th of Ab. It was decreed that the entire generation of the Midbar would die in the desert. And year by year, the people prepared their graves and some were taken and some were spared. During the final year in the Midbar, on the 9th of Ab, preparations were again made. But nobody died. They figured they might have calculated the day wrong and prepared again the next night, but nobody died, and again the next night. Until they came to the full moon of the 15th day of the month when the people realized they could not have miscalculated. Those remaining were granted a reprieve and the day became a great holiday.

So where does the 15th day of Ab come into view in this week's Perasha? The Penei Yehoshua (Berachot 32a) offers a beautiful explanation of the significance of this number 515. The Midrash says that after Hashem informed Moshe of Benei Yisrael's imminent victory over Sihon and Og, Moshe thought that once

he had remained alive for this battle he has been granted permission to continue into Eress Yisrael. Now Moshe received this prophecy of the battle against Sihon and Og on the fifteenth of Av, the same day on which the people celebrated the reprieve. The death of the previous generation came to an end. With that reprieve for the people, there might come another reprieve for Moses.

With the joy surrounding the end of that decree, the high level of prophecy returned to Moshe Rabbenu (see Baba Batra 121a). We are taught that from the time of the spies until all that generation passed on the prophecy of Moses was at a somewhat lower level. Some suggest that this period of punishment caused intense sadness to Moses and we know that sadness impedes prophecy.

So on the morning of the fifteenth of Av, Moshe began praying three times a day, from that day until the day of Moshe's passing, the seventh of Adar. This is a total of two hundred days. However, this 200-day period contained twenty-eight Shabbatot, and, as we know, one may not offer private prayers for personal needs on Shabbat. Therefore, we must deduct these days from the total. He thus prayed on 171 and 2/3 days, which amounts to 515 prayers. Remember he started on the morning of the 15th of Av, so Moshe prayed only twice on that day and that's where we get the 2/3.

On the one hand, it's a bit depressing. I would ask, "if Moshe who is called the servant of Hashem, the most faithful of Hashem's household, if that Moshe prayed for 6 months straight, three times a day, with perfect Kavanah and a static free direct connection, and still the answer was 'no', what chance have I got?"

The Torah comes to teach, that the Al-mighty answered Moshe: "Enough - do not speak to Me anymore about this matter." Hazal explain that were Moshe to have prayed one more time, the decree would have been annulled. This serves as an example of what the Gemara (Berachot 32b) says, "If a person sees that he prayed but was not answered, he should pray again, as it says, 'Wait for Hashem, strengthen and embolden your heart, and wait for Hashem.'" Realize that one tefilah after another, day after day, month after month adds something and has an effect.

We have all heard many stories of people who prayed with their hearts day after day and miracles occurred.

I have heard stories of many people who went to Jerusalem and prayed every day at the Kotel for 40

days straight - not missing a single day - and their prayers were answered.

And if this is true, that asking again and again of Hashem, has a miraculous effect regarding tefilot of an individual, how much more so does it apply to those of the community at large.

As we mentioned last week, I think Moshe should have been a bit upset with the nation. They should have been praying on his behalf. And imagine if they did. What effect would they have had on World History?

We have all been offering special prayers for the last months. Many synagogues added Avinu Malkeynu and each day we read tehilim and offered prayers for our soldiers. We pray that our prayers will be answered. But let's not forget to keep at it, to be persistent. Because if we are then we can rest assured that all of our prayers will be answered.

Ten years ago following a discussion with rabbi Abittan on this week's portion I wrote: Do we really want something from Hashem? Well if it's in our best interest Hashem wants to give it to us. But he wants us to ask for it. Praying makes us better people. We strive to be like Moses, now Moses in this week's Perasha gives us another example to follow. We can't just want something, we can't just hope. We've got to be persistent! We have got to pray.

May we be zocheh to have our prayers answered and to see miracles together.

PS Please take a moment to read the following from Mr. Judah Hartman – I was speaking with Judah over the past few weeks as Judah's son was fighting in Gaza along with the sons of many of his friends. Judah was instrumental in connecting us with soldiers in need.

And then there is an article from JNS on Anti-Israel celebrities and their brands, they want America and the world to Boycott Israel, why not turn the tables on them

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

As 9 Av came and went, things have not changed, our hopes and dreams that this would be the last one came and went. We suffered the loss of 64 of our precious soldiers, 64 families will never be the same; some Chayalim will never meet their children, while newborns will never be held by their fathers.

Engaged young ladies will not marry their true love. Many were wounded and their lives-and lives of their families- will need to focus on the long path of rehabilitation (with G-d's help, they should all have a speedy recovery,). As a friend of mine put it, we had our Tisha B Av already, it is a time for change.

A few years back, a Satmer Chasid said to me before 9 Av "tomorrow we are going to share in the big celebration in Yerushalayim". He stopped me in my tracks; while everyone else's response was, have a easy fast or have a meaningful fast, he responded to me with a view of hope a view of things can be different. Every year we say L'Shana Haba B'Yerushalayim' - seriously- do we really mean it? Do we feel it are we living it? Our times are different. The Gemara says reason we don't say Tachanun on 9 Av, because it will become a day of joy. Do we really think this will come true?

From that point on, I would greet people before 9 Av by saying ' I hope to see you in Yerushalayim for a Barbecue'. People would stop and smile; a sense of hope was put in their hearts. I may have differences of opinions with my Chasidic friend, but we both agree that we live in unique times, a time of hope, a time of change and that the pains we have are part of the process.

9 Av, what are we really mourning? 9 av night to mid day we sit on the floor in a sense of avalut, mourning, From mid-day onward, the Gemara describes as "atz v avanim, wood and stones". When G-d takes his anger out on the Bait HaMikdash the temple was set ablaze we get up from avalut and we go in to Nechama. Are we mourning the temple? Or we are really mourning the destruction of the Jewish people. Buildings don't define who we are, they can be rebuilt, but life can't be replaced. We are Am Yisrael, no matter where we reside, no matter what differences we have, we are Am Echad, one nation. The Avot and the shivatim - as we say in modern day terms - seem like dysfunctional families , (not they were any less of great people, i think it it makes them look greater) Was G-d trying to tell us something by showing their faults? Maybe He is saying we are not perfect- in someway we are all dysfunctional - but that we have the potential to be great like our forefathers. Maybe it's our dysfunctionality that created our nation- a process and a journey that we must take. Is G-d is looking for perfection or he is looking for us to develop strength from each other? We may appear dysfunctional as a people, but remember we are still family and family pull together. Can it be our strength comes from the destruction of the temple and the hope that it gives us? Rabbi Akiva

viewed the fox going out of the temple ruins not only as a sign of destruction but a sign of hope.

A Visniz Chasid said a wonderful thing to me on the difference between Jews " We Jews are like a symphony of an orchestra- no two people play alike, everyone plays a different instrument.... that is how music is created, by the different sounds. As long as we play the same tune, we have a symphony. G-d wants different types of people, but we need to play the same tune".

Yes, it looks like this 9 Av was no different from last, but it was

The summer started with the kidnapping of 3 very special boys from very special families. They achieved something all of us have not seen in years, the coming together of a jewish nation, almost every jew from every corner of the world was affected. Once again we became one. The parents of these boy, by example- showed us and gave us strength to move forward, in a unique way. They showed their gratitude to G-d, to the Prime Minister, to his staff, to the army, and to every person who felt their pain. They did not doubt-, there was no anger, just thankfulness, hakarat hatov and tremendous love to everyone. To these parents and the boys we owe you a tremendous amount of gratitude. Sadly, it did not turn out the way we had prayed for, G-d had other plans from the beginning.

When I was in the states there was a rabbi from Israel that spoke about education. He made an analogy, to Moshe hitting the rock when G-d commanded him to speak. Moshe got angered and frustrated with Am Yisrael, he did not understand that these people were not the same people that left Egypt and that they needed to be spoken to differently, Moshe viewed them as the same, from the old generation, instead of addressing them as the next generation who understand things in its own way.

Over 100,000 people attended the funerals of the three boys, most of them between the ages of 13 to 20. The impact that these 3 boy had- which continued into Mivza Zuk Eitan is remarkable. They impacted on these 13 to 20 year olds who are the leaders of the next generation. They impacted on soldiers who felt the nation coming together. They saw the hand of G-d. They saw people come together and rise up against all. What we saw in them is the hope of the future.

Perhaps the Torah highlights Moshe's mistake, so we can learn from it that these kids are our future. Let

them grow- for they will lead us to the future. They have the strength and hope.

Although this 9 av came and went, this 9 Av WAS different.

May it be the last. Shabbat Shalom, Judah Hartman

Anti-Israel celebrities and their brands ... JNS

During the current conflict in Gaza a number of celebrities have voiced their opinions in support of either the Israeli or Palestinian positions. But others—be it during Operation Protective Edge or at other times—have gone further than simply supporting the Palestinians by actively supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel, making false accusations about the Jewish state, ignoring Israel's position on the conflict, or justifying the actions of the terrorist group Hamas. Many of these celebrities also endorse popular brands and products.

The following is a list of such celebrities and some of the brands they have endorsed:

Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem: On July 28, actors Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem, who are married, signed an open letter along with dozens of other Spanish film stars, directors, musicians, and writers, including renowned director Pedro Almodovar, denouncing Israel's Operation Protective Edge in Gaza as "genocide." Cruz has endorsed products such as Lancôme, L'Oréal, Mango, Ralph Lauren, and Agent Provocateur. Bardem, who made a cameo appearance in Cruz's Agent Provocateur ad, also appeared in a campaign for Doctors Without Borders.

Roger Waters of Pink Floyd: Roger Waters, front man for the band Pink Floyd, has long been an outspoken supporter of the BDS movement. In addition to refusing to perform in Israel and calling on other musicians to cancel their planned concerts there, Waters featured a giant pig-shaped balloon emblazoned with a Star of David in a 2013 concert, prompting accusations of anti-Semitism. He has also compared Israelis to Nazis. In the 1990s, Volkswagen sponsored the tours of several bands, including Pink Floyd, and issued a special edition Golf car named after the band.

Russell Brand: In the midst of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, British comedian Russell Brand posted a YouTube videocriticizing Fox News host Sean Hannity's interview with Palestinian-

American guest Yousef Munayyer. In the video, Brand said Hamas terrorists might use "what we would perceive or term as acts of terror" to defend themselves against Israel. In 2011, Brand appeared in a commercial for the HP TouchPad.

Zayn Malik of One Direction: Singer Zayn Malik of the British band One Direction posted the hashtag #FreePalestine on his Twitter amid the current conflict between Israel and Hamas. Unlike singer Rihanna, who also posted the hashtag and then deleted it, Malik kept his post online, garnering nearly 200,000 retweets. One Direction recently appeared in a Super Bowl advertisement for Macy's and released its own campaign for the Our Moment fragrance.

Danny Glover: Actor Danny Glover has also supported the BDS movement. In 2009, he signed on to a declaration condemning Israel as an "apartheid regime" and dismissing the work of the Tel Aviv filmmakers featured in the Toronto International Film Festival as "Israeli propaganda." In 2014, Glover joined others featured in "American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs" in a statement lamenting the documentary film's screening at the DocAviv festival in Tel Aviv on May 13 and 15. "We stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine, and support their call for cultural and academic boycott of Israel," stated Glover and the other signatories. In 2010, Glover became a brand ambassador for the nutrition company Eiro.

Emma Thompson: In January 2014, British actress Emma Thompson participated in a call with other actors to boycott the Israeli Habima Theatre's performance at the Globe Theatre in London. In a letter published by The Guardian, Thompson and her co-signers berated Habima for its "shameful record of involvement with illegal Israeli settlements in Occupied Palestinian Territory." Thompson is currently a member of the lineup of "Leading Ladies" representing Marks & Spencer.

Dustin Hoffman: Hollywood star Dustin Hoffman had canceled plans to attend the Jerusalem Film Festival following the IDF's raid of the 2010 flotilla that sought to break the blockade on Gaza. Hoffman, who is Jewish, was scheduled to appear at the Muslim Public Affairs Council's (MPAC) 22nd Annual Media Awards to present an award to an anti-Israel film. MPAC is run by Salam al-Marayati, a radical leader who has called for Israel's destruction. Hoffman pulled out at the last minute due to "a very serious virus." Hoffman has appeared in advertisements for Sky Atlantic, Telstra, Audi, and Caffè Vergnano.

Stevie Wonder: Singer Stevie Wonder backed out of a performance at a Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (FIDF) gala in Los Angeles in 2012 due to "a recommendation from the United Nations to withdraw." Prior to Wonder's decision to cancel his performance, BDS activists posted a petition on change.org urging the singer to pull out. That petition garnered more than 4,600 signatures. In 2013, Wonder appeared in a Super Bowl commercial for Bud Light

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

Sefer Devarim is called "Mishneh Torah - The Review of the Torah" because it repeats over 100 mitzvos already mandated in the previous 4 Books. Rav S.R. Hirsch explains that of the 199 Mitzvos commanded in this book, more than 70 are new. The repeated mitzvos focus on areas that will be of greater immediate concern as they encounter the 7 Nations. For example, the prohibition against idol worship. Although already taught, it needed to be reiterated as the Jews would confront the inhabitants of Canaan, who were idolatrous. Those mitzvos whose application was the same, whether in the desert or in the Land, are not reviewed. In Parshas Vaeschanan Moshe continues his final instructions to the Bnai Yisroel.

1st & 2nd Aliyot: Moshe beseeched Hashem to enter the Land. However, he seemingly blamed the nation when his request was turned down. Moshe explained the foundation of our divine mission, which will be recognized by the other nations. Moshe stressed allegiance to Hashem and the consequences to ourselves and our children if we do not keep the law.

3rd & 4th Aliyot: Moshe designated the Cities of Refuge, and reviewed the entire experience of Revelation.

4th, 5th & 6th Aliyot: Moshe stressed the reaction of the nation after the giving of the Torah, and forewarned them not deviate from the Torah, either to the right or the to the left. The first paragraph of Shema is recorded. (6:10-15) Moshe warned the people about the dangers of prosperity, and directed them to keep the commandments and remember the Exodus. Moshe forewarned them about the dangers of assimilation and told them to always remember that they are the Chosen People.

THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"Who safeguards the covenant and the kindness for those who love Him." (Debarim 7:9)

Hashem is the faithful G-d, Who will always remember the kindness done by those who serve Him with love. Rabbi Yitzchak Silberstein has a great story of a sadik who serves Hashem with love and how Hashem paid him back.

The story is about Rabbi Aharon Fafyofer z"l, the Rabbi of Johannesburg. One day a young woman came to his yeshivah saying she needed to speak to him for a few minutes. As soon as she began telling her story, she broke out in tears. She was supposed to get engaged to be married the next night. As is traditional, she was supposed to give him a gold watch, but she didn't have a penny and couldn't buy him a gold watch. The Rabbi's response was amazing. He was wearing an almost new gold watch. He took it off and gave it to her, telling her to give it to her fiancé. If the story ended here it would be enough, because it shows the greatness of our leaders. But it doesn't stop there.

The Rabbi realized that he must replace the watch. His wife recently bought him this new watch, and he knew that she would notice that it was missing. He knew he would have difficulty explaining that he gave it away, so he had to buy one that looked like the one he gave away. He went to a large jewelry store in the middle of town, and asked the salesman to show him some gold watches. He was shown a nice selection and he picked out one that was very similar to his own watch. He approached the salesman and started counting out the money to pay for the watch. Suddenly the salesman said, "Please wait a moment. I will return shortly." The salesman went into the office and shortly thereafter a well-dressed man approached and introduced himself as the store manager. He offered the Rabbi a warm handshake and gave him a big mazal tov. "For what?" wondered the Rabbi. "You don't have to pay for the watch. You are our one millionth customer. I'm sure you heard about the big giveaway. You keep the purchase you wanted for free!"

Here you have Hashem watching over His servants, rewarding them for their wonderful deeds. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"And you shall love Hashem..." (Debarim 6:5)

In this modern age of ours, the word love has been used and abused to encompass all kinds of things, including those which are an abomination. When we are told to love Hashem, is it the same kind of love that we are familiar with, just directed to G-d,

rather than other subjects? If we stop and think, we will see how this is not so.

When a person says he loves fish, does he really love the fish? If so, why would he kill it, cook it and then eat it? The obvious answer is that when one says he loves fish or other things, he really loves himself and how the fish or other items give him pleasure. That is a selfish love. When we love Hashem, we do so not because of the benefit we will derive, but because He is so great and so kind and so merciful and because He loves us more than anything in the world. We are therefore commanded to love Hashem with all our hearts and souls and might. That way, we become attached to G-d and that brings down more Divine blessing from Heaven. May we merit to truly love Hashem and become blessed with His Heavenly love, Amen. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Rabbi Wein THIS ONE FEELS DIFFERENT

I have been present in Israel for a number of wars that this small, grave country has been forced to endure. Even before I made Aliyah, I was present here during the first Gulf War when Saddam Hussein rained SCUDs on a then defenseless population here in Israel. Since then I have lived here as an Israeli resident and citizen during the first and second intifada, the second Lebanon war, the reassertion of Israeli security in the West Bank, and the two previous Gaza conflicts.

Coming as I do from an American background where, during my years in the United States, I never experienced an air raid siren or any other overt acts of war, dealing with war here in Israel took some adjustment – physical, emotional and intellectual. But over the years and through the experiences of having to deal with actual wars, I felt that I adequately adjusted to this situation fairly well.

No one enjoys hearing the wail of the air raid siren but I, like all other Israelis, have accepted that this still is unfortunately part of our experience in attempting to live in our homeland and in fulfilling our destiny as a people. So, to me, the events and the feelings and emotions of the past wars became a unit – there was a certain likeness about them that almost made for familiarity and sameness. One almost knew what to expect from our side and from the enemy. There was a predictability to the dance of death and destruction that was taking place. It almost made these past wars ordinary in spite of their tragic costs and disturbing consequences.

However, this Gaza war feels far different to me. I don't know why that is and I cannot even define or explain how it feels. But take my word for it, it feels very different. It was and is full of surprises and twists and turns. A war that began with the kidnapping and murders of three young Israeli yeshiva students and has since escalated into a large number of deaths and untold property destruction, seemed to have a magnetic force all its own.

No massive deterrent force was able to prevent the arrival and escalation of the war. Cease-fires were proclaimed a number of times only to collapse in the rubble of hate and indiscriminate rocket fire. Hamas infiltrated Israel a number of times using a labyrinth of tunnels that it had developed under Gaza and Israeli territory over the years.

Thousands of rockets have been fired from Gaza at Israel. Almost all of them were either shot down by Israel's Iron Dome defense system or fell relatively harmlessly in open areas. In the Second Lebanon War, Hezbollah fired hundreds of rockets to the Israeli north with apparently far greater effect on the Israeli population than the thousands of rockets that Hamas has fired at Israel in this last war.

We have suffered many dead and wounded amongst the forces of the Israel Defense Force. The bravery of the soldiers themselves has been matched by the tragic stoicism and inspirational demeanor of the families of the dead and wounded soldiers. Almost everyone seems to realize that this time we really had or have no other choice but to fight for our survival and security.

There are very few illusions left in Israeli society about the world that we live in and the surrounding neighborhood where we exist. Only the very hard Left, the radical nihilists that somehow always seem to exist in a democratic society and really work to destroy it, still demand that Israel commit national suicide so that the rest of the world will finally be rid of "the Jewish problem."

Though there are still differing opinions regarding the conduct and eventual outcome of the war – and certainly about "the day after" – I have never experienced a sense of common purpose and the will to deal with the consequences of this war, whatever that may be, as exists today in Israeli society.

It may be a sad commentary that it took the murder of three innocents and a bloody war to achieve this common feeling that we are all in this to the end. But, this is the case now. Our fortitude and grim determination, which is clearly present in today's

Israeli society, will see us through to better days and greater achievements. It is never easy to recover from a war, not for the soldiers, civilians and nations involved. But out of the wreckage of this war perhaps the destruction of the Gazan tunnels will be the light at the end of our own tunnel that can lead to a better time of security and calm.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

Buried inconspicuously in this week's parsha is a short sentence with explosive potential, causing us to think again about the nature of Jewish history and the Jewish task in the present.

Moses had been reminding the new generation, the children of those who left Egypt, of the extraordinary story of which they are the heirs:

Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? (Deut. 4: 32-34)

The Israelites had not yet crossed the Jordan. They had not yet begun their life as a sovereign nation in their own land. Yet Moses was sure, with a certainty that could only be prophetic, that they were a people like no other. What has happened to them was unique. They were and are a nation summoned to greatness.

Moses reminds them of the great revelation at Mount Sinai. He recalls the Ten Commandments. He delivers the most famous of all summaries of Jewish faith: "Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." He issues the most majestic of all commands: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Twice he tells the people to teach these things to their children. He gives them their eternal mission statement as a nation: "You are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession." (Deut. 7: 6)

Then he says this: The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more

numerous than other peoples, for you are the fewest of all peoples. (Deut. 7: 7)

The fewest of all peoples? What has happened to all the promises of Bereishit, that Abraham's children would be numerous, uncountable, as many as the stars of the sky, the dust of the earth, and the grains of sand on a seashore? What of Moses' own statement at the beginning of Devarim: "The Lord your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as numerous as the stars in the sky" (Deut. 1: 10)?

The simple answer is this. The Israelites were indeed numerous compared to what they once were. Moses himself puts it this way in next week's parsha: "Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky" (Deut. 10: 22). They were once a single family, Abraham, Sarah and their descendants, and now they have become a nation of twelve tribes.

But – and this is Moses' point here – compared to other nations, they were still small. "When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you ..." (7:1). In other words, not only were the Israelites smaller than the great empires of the ancient world. They were smaller even than the other nations in the region. Compared to their origins they had grown, but compared to their neighbours they remained tiny.

Moses then tells them what this means: You may say to yourselves, "These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?" But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. (Deut. 7: 17-18)

Israel would be the smallest of the nations for a reason that goes to the very heart of its existence as a nation. They will show the world that a people does not have to be large in order to be great. It does not have to be numerous to defeat its enemies. Israel's unique history will show that, in the words of the prophet Zechariah (4:6), "'Not by might nor by power, but by My spirit,' says the Lord Almighty."

In itself, Israel would be witness to something greater than itself. As former Marxist philosopher Nicolay Berdyayev put it:

I remember how the materialist interpretation of history, when I attempted in my youth to verify it by

applying it to the destinies of peoples, broke down in the case of the Jews, where destiny seemed absolutely inexplicable from the materialistic standpoint . . . Its survival is a mysterious and wonderful phenomenon demonstrating that the life of this people is governed by a special predetermination, transcending the processes of adaptation expounded by the materialistic interpretation of history. The survival of the Jews, their resistance to destruction, their endurance under absolutely peculiar conditions and the fateful role played by them in history: all these point to the particular and mysterious foundations of their destiny.[1]

Moses' statement has immense implications for Jewish identity. The proposition implicit throughout this year's Covenant and Conversation is that Jews have had an influence out of all proportion to their numbers because we are all called on to be leaders, to take responsibility, to contribute, to make a difference to the lives of others, to bring the Divine presence into the world. Precisely because we are small, we are each summoned to greatness.

S. Y. Agnon, the great Hebrew writer, composed a prayer to accompany the Mourner's Kaddish. He noted that the children of Israel have always been few in number compared to other nations. He then said that when a king rules over a large population, he does not notice when one dies, for there are others to take his or her place. "But our King, the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He ... chose us, and not because we are a large nation, for we are one of the smallest of nations. We are few, and owing to the love with which He loves us, each one of us is, for Him, an entire legion. He does not have many replacements for us. If one of us is missing, Heaven forbid, then the King's forces are diminished, with the consequence that His kingdom is weakened, as it were. One of His legions is gone and His greatness is lessened. For this reason it is our custom to recite the Kaddish when a Jew dies." [2]

Margaret Mead once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Gandhi said: "A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history." That must be our faith as Jews. We may be the fewest of all peoples but when we heed God's call, we have the ability, proven many times in our past, to mend and transform the world.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

One of the chief functions of a person's life is to gain 'Daat'. Daat is defined as: True knowledge , Awareness of Hashem, Sensory perception, A Torah mind. "How great is Dea (Daat) since it was placed in between two names of Hashem. Kel Deot Hashem." (Berachot 33A).

Acquiring 'Daat' is such a primary objective that it is mentioned by the Prophet (Samuel 1:2) while nestled between two names of G-d.

Our minds are Divinely given. In fact, Hashem created us in the image of G-d through the Neshama (soul) that He 'blew' into us. Our minds are infinitely capable and how we utilize this great opportunity will determine our level of success in this world and the next.

One way we can access the depths of our minds is through formulating pictures/sensory perception which activate deep impressions in our conscious and sub-conscious. It is one thing to read about how fire burns as compared to feeling the heat of fire thereby gaining real sensory perception.

Shelomo Hamelech writes in Mishle (6:6). "Go to the ant you lazy fellow and see its ways and gain wisdom..." Shelomo didn't say to read about the ant but advises to Go and look at its ways. This is in order to teach us the importance of gaining Daat through our senses.

With this we can understand another reason for mourning the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash. Not only for Hashem's Glory which is in exile and because of G-d's Nation which was slaughtered and the loss of the Holy Service in the Temple including the gathering of the Jewish People to Jerusalem which produced a Santification of Hashem's Name.

But we are also mourning for the loss of that great opportunity to gain physical Daat through seeing the Bet Hamikdash, G-d's House, and witnessing all of the daily miracles and basking in their splendor.

[1] Nicolay Berdyayev, The Meaning of History, Transaction Publishers, 2005, 86.

[2] Quoted in Leon Wieseltier, Kaddish, London : Picador, 1998, 22-23.