

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

Mazal Tov to Boris and Ilana Safaniev on the birth of a baby boy
Brit Milah Wednesday Morning Dec 25th – Shahrith at 8 followed by the Brit Milah at 9AM

PARASHAT VA'ERA

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 66:1-24 and for Ashkenazim Yechezkel 28:25

DECEMBER 28, 2013 25 TEBET 5774

Rosh Hodesh Shebat will be celebrated on Thursday, January 2.

DEDICATIONS: In memory of SARAH BAT ESTHER, Sarah Cain and of
ROSE NIZHA BAT SALCHA Rose Dwek'
R' Yitzchak Ben Tufacha –29 Tevet - Rabbi Kaduri AH

Candle lighting this Friday evening is at 4:16 p.m. Mincha at 4:15
SHABBAT 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:53

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

KIDDUSH: Details to follow
Mincha follows Kiddush with amidah not before 12:19 PM

Shabbat Ends – 5:16PM
Return for Arbit – 5:30 PM followed by a short class

Please Join us this Saturday night for Kid's Night –
6:15 - 7:45 -There will be pizza, raffles music, Torah and fun!

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE
Shahrith Sunday8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE
Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai – 7PM –
Daily class with Rabbi Colish at 6:30AM

Please join us for our monthly movie night featuring:
“The Other Son” a moving and provocative tale of two young men--one Israeli, the other Palestinian--who discover they
were accidentally switched at birth, and the complex repercussions facing them and their families.

Discussion and Refreshments to follow
Where: Lido Synagogue
When: Saturday evening, January 3rd, 7:30
Suggested Donation: \$5

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Editors Notes

Be Happy Say Thank You

If you ask almost anyone what they want more than anything in life, the response will be usually be, "happiness". When asked, what you want for your children, inevitably it's the same. Happiness is the reply.

Happiness is the dream. Yet happiness is often fleeting. Madison Avenue has brainwashed us to believe that happiness is always around the next corner. It's within our grasp. It will come with the next purchase, the next accomplishment, and the next million. But as quickly as it arrives, it disappears. The goal posts are moved forward, again with the same promise. Metaphorically, we've become a society of donkeys chasing the ever-elusive carrot. Each time the donkey moves forward, the carrot moves with him and always remains slightly out of reach. The difference is that we are given a taste of the carrot and then convinced that the apple is sweeter. We get a taste of the apple and dream of the peach. We get hold of the peach and a watermelon is set before us. It never changes because there is always something better.

Psychologist today tell us that a sure fire method towards happiness is pausing a number of times each day to acknowledge and express gratitude. Science has shown that being thankful and showing appreciation will actually make us happier people. Giving thanks makes individuals more resilient, it strengthens relationships, it improves health, and it reduces stress. An oft heard pitgam is Eyzeh Hu Ashir HaSameyach BeChelko – who is truly rich, he is happy with what he has. The rabbis teach us that happiness lies in being able to exist now with who I am and what I have: to be happy within my Chelek my share, within my daled amot – my space.

How does being thankful get us there? Gratitude means counting our blessings, noticing simple

pleasures, and acknowledging everything that we receive.

People who remember Rabbi Abittan's smile and joie de vivre, ask what was his secret? How come he was always smiling? How come he never complained? How come he seemed always happy? I think one of his secrets was the fact that he appreciated everything and everyone. He would speak of the miracle of sight, the miracle of being able to use our hands, and even the miracle of running water. He would teach us to live our lives as if everything were a miracle, and being aware on a continuous basis of how much we've been given. He would recall every kindness and every favor and even the smallest, would be returned with a gracious thank you. He was a living lesson in Hakarat Hatov.

He would explain that gratitude shifts our focus from what our life lacks to the abundance that is already present.

The lesson on being a person who has Hakarat HaTov – who recognizes the good is clearly brought in this week's portion. G-d tells Moses, 'Say to Aaron, take your staff and stretch out your hand'" (Exodus 7:19).

Hashem instructs Moses to direct Aaron to initiate the first three plagues by striking the Nile River or the ground. It is Aaron's action which leads to transformation of the water in Egypt to blood. It is Aaron and not Moses, who strikes the water to bring up the swarm of frogs. And it is Aaron who initiates the third plague of lice by striking the Egyptian soil.

The rabbis ask why was it Aaron who was directed to take the staff of Moses and strike the Nile and the earth? They answer that it was due to the fact that both the river and the earth protected Moses. As an infant, Moses was placed by the river to be hidden from the Egyptians and the river brought him into the hands of Pharaoh's daughter Batya. The river not only saved his life, it also led him into the king's palace to grow up in the lap of luxury.

We also read last week that after Moses grew up, he ventured out among the people. He saw an Egyptian taskmaster whipping a Jewish slave. He rose up to defend the Jew, killed the Egyptian, and buried him in the sand. The ground was used to cover and hide the body of the Egyptian.

The rabbis explain that as Moses benefited from two inanimate objects; he must show gratitude. But one must ask, is it necessary to show gratitude to an inanimate object? After all, the water or earth do not

have feelings and are not sensitive to a lack of gratitude. Here, Hashem himself is directing Moses and Aaron and teaching us that if Moses is to demonstrate his sense of gratitude, even to an inanimate object, how much more so must we show our appreciation to human beings and Hashem himself, the source of all good.

We demonstrate this lesson in our own homes every Friday night. Before we recite kiddush over wine, we cover the loaves of bread. This is done because, traditionally, bread has a higher status than wine does. However, the wine or grape juice is raised to a higher level by using it for kiddush, to sanctify the holiness of the day. Nevertheless, we are instructed to cover the loaves in order not to "embarrass" them. Once again, the loaves are inanimate objects that do not have feelings and cannot be embarrassed, so why do we cover them? The idea is not that we must be concerned about the loaves, rather it is to teach and sensitize us to the concept of appreciating others.

The Ramban commenting on Parashat Bo which we will read B'H next week states that we have no other purpose in creation other than knowing and giving thanks to G-d who created us. The Talmud states that someone who doesn't bow at Modim (the prayer of thanks in the Amidah) will not merit to go to Olam Haba. Chovot Halevovot suggestss that the basis of our entire avodat Hashem is Hakarat Hatov.

Here we are commanded to do something that will yield something we are always searching for. Its right in front of us.

We have unlimited opportunities every day to stop and appreciate. The rabbis teach us that each beracha or blessing that we make affords us the opportunity to expand the blessings in our life. Do we remember to say a blessing? Do we think about what we are doing or saying? Too often even the saying of a blessing becomes rote. We mention the words with little thought. There's little appreciation. Often we don't even stop. The key is to stop to recognize and to appreciate. It's a moment to pause and to consider the food we are about to eat, the water we are about to drink or simply the fact that I was able to use the restroom. We must pause to consider the gifts of the clothes we wear, the gift of nature and a universe we can experience and most importantly the special bond we have with God through the Commandments he gives us. Each of these is an opportunity to appreciate, to have Hakarat Hatov.

Endless opportunities are there for us to make our life happier, to bring joy and satisfaction and to reduce

stress. We just need to stop and smell the roses. We need to remember to recognize the good in the world, recognize the gifts that we receive, recognize that somebody cares for us and somebody loves us. When we do that it changes who we are down to the core and with that change it's impossible not to become a better and happier person.

From the moment we wake up, we thank God for restoring our souls. We thank him for the gift of sight. We appreciate that we can stand up. We acknowledge our clothing and our shoes. We are thankful that we are free and not slaves. We recognize the gift of the Torah, of light and of darkness. Blessings are meant for us to stop and take notice. And their lesson for us to appreciate not only what God does for us but what our fellow man does for us as well.

The last few weeks have been tip time. Everyone has their hand out from the postman, to the paper boy, from the doorman to the bus driver. On the one hand we can say, that they should appreciate they have a job and are getting paid. Most of us take everything for granted. We assume that we deserve every little thing that we get and therefore we don't feel that we are in any way obligated to show our appreciation. But it helps to say thanks and to appreciate and when you do tip, make sure the tip comes with some nice words. It makes all the difference.

Let's make a commitment to look at our day each evening and think of three things we need to be thankful for and the next day to get back to someone and say thank you. Lets pause when we say a blessing and appreciate what G-d has giving us. Saying thank you benefits one person more than anyone else. Saying thank you benefits us.

Phil Rosen sent me the following story today: Rabbi Berel Wein was once invited to a meeting with the editor of the Detroit Free Press. After introductions had been made, the editor told him the following story.

Christmas Tree

His mother, Mary, had immigrated to America from Ireland as an uneducated, 18-year-old peasant girl. She was hired as a domestic maid by an observant family. The head of the house was the president of the neighboring Orthodox shul.

Mary knew nothing about Judaism and had probably never met a Jew before arriving in America. The family went on vacation Mary's first December in

America, leaving Mary alone in the house. They were scheduled to return on the night of December 24, and Mary realized that there would be no Christmas tree to greet them when they did. This bothered her greatly, and using the money the family had left her, she went out and purchased not only a Christmas tree but all kinds of festive decorations to hang on the front of the house.

When the family returned from vacation, they saw the Christmas tree through the living room window and the rest of the house festooned with holiday lights. They assumed that they had somehow pulled into the wrong driveway and drove around the block. But alas, it was their address.

The head of the family entered the house contemplating how to explain the Christmas tree and lights to the members of the shul, most of whom walked right past his house on their way to shul. Meanwhile, Mary was eagerly anticipating the family's excitement when they realized that they would not be without a Christmas tree.

After entering the house, the head of the family called Mary into his study. He told her, "In my whole life no one has ever done such a beautiful thing for me as you did." Then he took out a \$100 bill -- a very large sum in the middle of the Depression -- and gave it to her. Only after that did he explain that Jews do not have Christmas trees.

When he had finished telling the story, the editor told Rabbi Wein, "And that is why, there has never been an editorial critical of Israel in the Detroit Free Press since I became editor, and never will be as long as I am the editor."

The shul president's reaction to Mary's mistake -- sympathy instead of anger -- was not because he dreamed that one day her son would be the editor of a major metropolitan paper, and thus in a position to aid Israel. (Israel was not yet born.) He acted as he did because it was the right thing to do.

That's what it means to be a Kiddush Hashem, to sanctify God's Name. It is a goal to which we can all strive.

Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: The year is 2448 and Moshe had unsuccessfully confronted Pharaoh. The situation

had gotten worse, not better, and Hashem (G-d) reassured Moshe that in fact the redemption was about to begin. The 4 statements of redemption are stated for which we have the 4 cups of wine at the Passover Seder.

2nd & 3rd Aliyot: Moshe's Yichus (lineage) is established. He is 80 years old and Aharon is 83.

4th Aliya: Moshe performed the miracle of the "staff turning to a serpent" and performed the first and second plagues.

5th Aliya: Moshe performed the third plague and forewarned Pharaoh about the fourth.

6th Aliya: The fourth, fifth, and sixth plagues were performed, and Moshe forewarned Pharaoh regarding the seventh.

7th Aliya: The seventh plague was performed and Pharaoh "hardens his heart" and refused to let the Jews go.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"It is the Finger of G-d." (Shemot 8:15)

When Moshe Rabenu brought about the plague of lice, the magicians of Pharaoh couldn't duplicate it. They were forced to admit that it was the Hand of Hashem. Let's tell a true story of another holy hand.

It was a well-known fact that when people would come to kiss the hand of the great gaon Rabbi Ben Zion Abba Shaul zt"l, he would tell them, "Go kiss the hands of Hacham Obadiah Yosef, because his hands are very holy because his hands are writing down words of Torah all the time!"

The Kaf Hahayim writes (Orah Hayim chapter 262 paragraph 17), "One will get great benefit by kissing the hands of the gedolim (great Torah scholars) because they have great holiness. The great Rabbis write every day with their right hand and the left hand helps the right hand. Their fingers have the holiness of Torah that is (the Torah) written with the finger of Hashem." Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"[Hashem] commanded Moshe and Aharon regarding Pharaoh, the king of Egypt." (Shemot 6:13)

Rashi says that Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon to speak respectfully to Pharaoh because he was the king of Egypt. Indeed, later on, when Moshe threatened and warned Pharaoh that "Egypt will come down to me and beg me to take out

the Jews," he didn't say "you will come down to me" (even though that's what really happened) because it wouldn't be respectful.

We learn an amazing lesson from here. Even though Pharaoh and his people were being punished in all kinds of extreme ways, to the point of their country being almost destroyed, since the punishment of being spoken to disparagingly was not due to him, he didn't get it. Hashem decrees what is due to a person to the most exact detail; even the wicked Pharaoh had to get exactly what was coming to him and no more.

This should strengthen our emunah (belief) in the Divine Providence and make us realize that whatever we get is suited especially for us down to the last detail. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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In the beginning of Parashat Vaera, G-d speaks to Moshe and commands him to convey to Beneh Yisrael His promises of redemption. The first promise is "Ve'hoseti Etchem Mi'tahat Siblot Misrayim," which is commonly translated as, "I shall take you from under the suffering of Egypt."

The word "Siblot," which is generally understood here to mean "suffering," also has another meaning – "tolerance." One Rabbi thus explained that G-d here promises to remove Beneh Yisrael from their "tolerance," from their acceptance of their situation. It is natural after many years of suffering adverse conditions to accept the situation and no longer feel a need to change it. That this occurred to Beneh Yisrael is evidenced by the fact that later, during the nation's travels in the desert, there were times when they cried to Moshe and nostalgically recalled their experiences in Egypt. As miserable as their conditions were, with time they resigned themselves to the situation and accepted it the way it was, without seeking to change it. This is a very common and natural tendency, but it needed to be reversed before Beneh Yisrael could be freed from Egypt. In order for Beneh Yisrael to be worthy of redemption, they needed to find their situation intolerable. And thus the first step in the process of Yesi'at Misrayim was the people's release from "Siblot Misrayim" – from their ability to tolerate their conditions of bondage. The process of redemption could not begin unless the people wanted it. G-d therefore had to help extricate them from their acceptance of slavery as a tolerable condition before the Exodus could unfold.

If this was true under conditions of slavery and persecution, when Beneh Yisrael were denied civil rights and forced to endure hardship and humiliation, it is certainly relevant to us, and all the more so. We are blessed with the privilege of living in what is likely the most comfortable exile our nation has known in its 2000 years of dispersion. Our civil rights, including the right to freely practice our religion, are guaranteed and protected by law. We are able to pursue a comfortable livelihood and build religious institutions. We can observe Shabbat without losing our jobs, and kosher food is readily available. Somebody who did not know what the concept of "exile" means to a Jew would probably never imagine that we are in exile.

This is indeed a blessing, but also poses a difficult challenge. It is all too easy for us – much more so than for our ancestors in Egypt – to fall into the trap of "Siblot Misrayim," to tolerate and accept our situation without wanting it to change. We have, Baruch Hashem, our homes, our businesses, our cars, our yeshivot and our synagogues. It is only natural for people to begin thinking, "Who needs redemption? Who needs Mashiah? Who needs the Bet Ha'mikdash? We have everything we need here in New York!"

The first stage of the process of redemption is removing ourselves from this "tolerance," to understand that for a Jew, life in exile is intolerable and a condition we can never accept, no matter how many comforts and freedoms we enjoy on these shores.

When we look around at the Jewish community here in America, it is impossible to not notice that so many families are beset by crisis and hardship. It seems that everywhere we turn, there are, Heaven forbid, families dealing with a serious illness, terrible accidents, financial hardships, broken homes, youths engaged in dangerous activities, and so many other crises. Perhaps this Hashem's way of removing us from "Siblot Misrayim," of ensuring that we do not grow complacent and comfortable with our situation. Maybe we need to be inflicted with these crises so that we remember how desperately we need G-d's redemption, and that despite the comforts and freedoms with which we have been blessed, we are still in exile and exposed to all types of dangers.

And so as we pray to Hashem to heal all ill patients and bless all of us with peace, health and happiness, we must also remember to pray for our imminent redemption, for the time when we will live peacefully

and securely in our land, under G-d's direct protection, and enjoy unbridled blessing and prosperity, speedily and in our days, Amen.

Rabbi Wein

I recently read an article published in Commentary magazine about what was dubbed "Jeremiah journalism." Though I feel that this title and description was eminently unfair to one of the great prophets of Israel, it has become accepted in the general world. Jeremiah foretold the coming destruction of the First Temple and of the kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem, and somehow he has become the template for pessimistic and depressing news and predictions.

We are all certainly aware that in our current media crazed world it is bad news, tawdry events and dire predictions that sell newspapers and journals. One can read through any of the daily newspapers here in Israel and scarcely find any encouraging word.

They are filled with vituperative if not even vicious criticism of everything and everyone that is a public figure here in our lovely little country. I am reminded of Menachem Begin's quip that the last government in Israel that Haaretz had a good word to say about it was the British Mandate.

Now as I gaze out my window at the snow still piled up at my gate and the fallen trees and branches that block the sidewalks throughout Rechavia one week after the end of the storm, I am also hard pressed to think positively about the municipal government's services to the citizens of Jerusalem. But this is an extraordinary circumstance and my annoyance at the powers that be is bound to be short lived and not a chronic case of depression and foreboding about the future of the Holy City.

The tendency to always see the glass as being half empty is a staple of current journalism. There apparently is no end to books and articles written by experts and savants predicting the decline of the West, the impending economic implosion, the destruction of our very planet because of climate change - in short, according to them, we are entering an apocalypse of unprecedented proportions.

In reviewing the newspapers and magazines as well as the books of learned experts published between 1950 and 1980 it is obvious that the Soviet Union would triumph in the Cold War and that we should adjust ourselves to living in that brave new world of

Marxist paradise. But the experts were wrong, as they oftentimes are.

The glass then was half full and not half empty but the media found that viewpoint too bland and naïve to be worthy of publicity or acceptance. Bad news is news; good news and optimism is not worthy of concentrated journalistic attention. We read about dysfunctional families, deranged people, the families of terrorists and the trauma that they suffer. But, almost nary a word is devoted to the stable family, the volunteer helpers, the honest and hard-working civil servants, the true religious leaders, and to hopes for a brighter future for all of us.

Good tidings are to be ignored or given short shrift by our media experts. The only cheerful news on the radio are the commercial advertisements that guarantee us eternal joy if we will only purchase their advertised products.

And when it comes to the State of Israel the news must always be uniformly bad and the predictions regarding its future consistently dire. If Israel doesn't capitulate to European demands, to Palestinian requests, to UN resolutions, etc. it will somehow be diminished if not even destroyed.

Who says so? Why is this narrative never refuted? Great people predicted that the state would not survive fifteen years. Others gave it fifty years. Their predictions were given wide publicity and wide circulation. But the Lord, so to speak, has obviously thought otherwise. Yet the dire predictions of these scholars are still repeated and held to be true in certain sections of Israeli and world Jewish societies.

The Israeli shekel is stronger, again so to speak, than the American dollar. Yet this is always interpreted negatively and not positively. The Jewish population is expanding in Israel yet it is only the demographic threat of the Arabs that is emphasized, this in spite of the decline in the rate of Arab births in the Land of Israel. It is very often here that ideology drives news reporting and not the facts themselves.

The Left has never come to terms with its failures and wrongheaded, if well-meaning, ideas and programs. The media therefore prefers to frighten rather than encourage, deny rather than admit error and bias. The spate of negative books just recently published by former Israeli officials about the impending doom facing Israel if their recommendations and advice is not followed is Jeremiah journalism at its worst. The Bible and Jewish tradition is much more optimistic about our future.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

At first, Moses' mission seemed to be successful. He had feared that the people would not believe in him, but God had given him signs to perform, and his brother Aaron to speak on his behalf. Moses "performed the signs before the people, and they believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped." (Ex. 4: 30-31?)

But then things start to go wrong, and continue going wrong. Moses' first appearance before Pharaoh is disastrous. Pharaoh refuses to recognise God. He rejects Moses' request to let the people travel into the wilderness. He makes life worse for the Israelites. They must still make the same quota of bricks, but now they must also gather their own straw. The people turn against Moses and Aaron: "May the Lord look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us" (Ex. 5: 21).

Moses and Aaron return to Pharaoh to renew their request. They perform a sign – they turn a staff into a snake – but Pharaoh is unimpressed. His own magicians can do likewise. Next they bring the first of the plagues, but again Pharaoh is unmoved. He will not let the Israelites go. And so it goes, nine times. Moses does everything in his power and finds that nothing makes a difference. The Israelites are still slaves.

We sense the pressure Moses is under. After his first setback, at the end of last week's parsha, he turns to God and bitterly complains: "Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all" (Ex. 5: 22-23).

In this week's parsha, even though God has reassured him that he will eventually succeed, he replies, "If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?" (Ex. 6: 12).

There is an enduring message here. Leadership, even of the very highest order, is often marked by failure. The first Impressionists had to arrange their own exhibition because their work was rejected by the Paris salons. The first performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* caused a riot, with the audience booing throughout. Van Gogh sold only one painting in his lifetime despite the fact that his brother Theo was an art dealer.

So it is with leaders. Lincoln faced countless setbacks during the civil war. He was a deeply divisive figure, hated by many in his lifetime. Gandhi failed in his dream of uniting Muslims and Hindus together in a single nation. Nelson Mandela spent twenty-seven years in prison, accused of treason and regarded as a violent agitator. Churchill was regarded as a spent force in politics by the 1930s, and even after his heroic leadership during the Second World War was voted out of office at the first General Election after the war was over. Only in retrospect do heroes seem heroic and the many setbacks they faced reveal themselves as stepping stones on the road to victory.

In every field, high, low, sacred or secular, leaders are tested not by their successes but by their failures. It can sometimes be easy to succeed. The conditions may be favourable. The economic, political or personal climate is good. When there is an economic boom, most businesses flourish. In the first months after a general election, the successful leader carries with him or her the charisma of victory. In the first year, most marriages are happy. It takes no special skill to succeed in good times.

But then the climate changes. Eventually it always does. That is when many businesses, and politicians, and marriages fail. There are times when even the greatest people stumble. At such moments, character is tested. The great human beings are not those who never fail. They are those who survive failure, who keep on going, who refuse to be defeated, who never give up or give in. They keep trying. They learn from every mistake. They treat failure as a learning experience. And from every refusal to be defeated, they become stronger, wiser and more determined. That is the story of Moses' life in last week's parsha and in this.

Jim Collins, one of the great writers on leadership, puts it well:

The signature of the truly great versus the merely successful is not the absence of difficulty, but the ability to come back from setbacks, even cataclysmic catastrophes, stronger than before ... The path out of darkness begins with those exasperatingly persistent individuals who are constitutionally incapable of capitulation. It's one thing to suffer a staggering defeat... and entirely another to give up on the values and aspirations that make the protracted struggle worthwhile. Failure is not so much a physical state as a state of mind; success is falling down, and getting up one more time, without end.[1]

Rabbi Yitzhak Hutner once wrote a powerful letter to a disciple who had become discouraged by his repeated failure to master Talmudic learning:

A failing many of us suffer is that when we focus on the high attainments of great people, we discuss how they are complete in this or that area, while omitting mention of the inner struggles that had previously raged within them. A listener would get the impression that these individuals sprang from the hand of their creator in a state of perfection . . .

The result of this feeling is that when an ambitious young man of spirit and enthusiasm meets obstacles, falls and slumps, he imagines himself as unworthy of being "planted in the house of God" . . .

Know, however, my dear friend, that your soul is rooted not in the tranquillity of the good inclination, but in the battle of the good inclination . . . The English expression, "Lose a battle and win the war," applies. Certainly you have stumbled and will stumble again, and in many battles you will fall lame. I promise you, though, that after those losing campaigns you will emerge from the war with laurels of victory on your head . . . The wisest of men said, "A righteous man falls seven times, but rises again" (Proverbs 24:16). Fools believe the intent of the verse is to teach us that the righteous man falls seven times and, despite this, he rises. But the knowledgeable are aware that the essence of the righteous man's rising again is because of his seven falls.[2]

Rabbi Hutner's point is that greatness cannot be achieved without failure. There are heights you cannot climb without first having fallen.

For many years, I kept on my desk a quote from Calvin Coolidge, sent by a friend who knew how easy it is to be discouraged. It said, "Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not: the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent." I would only add, "And seyata diShmaya, the help of Heaven." God never loses faith in us even if we sometimes lose faith in ourselves.

The supreme role model is Moses who, despite all the setbacks chronicled in last week's parsha and this, eventually became the man of whom it was said that he was "a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were undimmed and his energy unabated" (Deut. 34: 7).

Defeats, delays and disappointments hurt. They hurt even for Moses. So if there are times when we too feel discouraged and demoralised, it is important to remember that even the greatest people failed. What made them great is that they kept going. The road to success passes through many valleys of failure. There is no other way.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"In order that you should know that I Hashem am in the midst of the world". 'Bekerev Haaretz'. (8:18)

Here we learn the purpose of all of the miracles, not only in Egypt but throughout history. The open demonstrations of Hashem's presence come to teach that even when not openly visible, yet it is Hashem's presence that constantly fills the world and maintains the existence of the world and manages all the events of the world.

Just as these miracles were wondrous demonstrations of Hashem's deeds, so are all the "natural" processes and all the events and even all objects are demonstrations of Hashem's deeds. Every process or object or event is a wondrous miracle, and it is solely due to the blindness of habit that men fail to recognize the miracles that constantly fill the world around us.

Seeing is a miracle, hearing is a miracle, thinking is a miracle, eating and digesting are miracles, the birth of a child is a miracle, an enzyme is a miracle, DNA is a miracle, a chromosome is a miracle and an atom is a miracle.

Thus every miracle is intended for the purpose to demonstrate that "I HASHEM AM (ALWAYS) IN THE MIDST OF THE WORLD" and that every phenomenon should be studied to discern in it the miracles of Hashem's wisdom and power and kindness.

The Rav taught that the Ten Plagues were especially brought by Hashem for Israel to gain Yirat Samayim. As it states, "He is Hashem Our G-d, in all of the world are His judgments" (Tehillim). That all of the happenings in the world are only being brought by Hashem in His capacity of 'Hashem Our G-d'.

The Makot were ten vitamin pills of Emunah for our Jewish Nation in order for us to gain a sensory perception and a heightened Awareness of Hashem The G-d of Yisrael, the only One we can depend on.

Adapted from "A NATION IS BORN" by Rabbi Avigdor Miller