

**SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE****BESHALAH****Haftarah: Shoftim 5:1-31****FEBRUARY 10-11, 2017 15 SHEBAT 5777****Tu B'Shebat will be celebrated on Shabbat, February 11.****DEDICATION: By Dr. Martin Goldman in memory of his sister - Robin Goldman, MD—1st yartzheit shevat 10****And in memory of Steven Esses, Shelomo David Ben Penina****And in memory of Eliyah ben Esther and Hava Bat Esther – Ely Bibi and Evelyn Tawil – Shevat 21**

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**Editors Notes****All about Joseph – BeShalach 5777**

This week is Shabbat Shira because the Perasha we read, Beshalach contains the song sung by Israel after the splitting of the Red Sea. How great was this miracle? The Torah compares all the plagues of Egypt to a finger and splitting the sea to a hand and as we mention at the Passover Seder, for every miracle preformed in Egypt, five were performed at the sea.

The Rabbis ask a question. In whose merit did the sea split? Although the rabbis bring a number of answers, the two most popular are that the sea split in the merit of Nachshon Ben Amindav and/or in the merit of Joseph.

Who was Nachshon? He was a fifth-generation descendant of Judah. We see that Aaron marries his sister specifically stating that "Aaron took for a wife Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon." The rabbis explain that before marrying Elisheva, Aaron had inquired about Nachshon, his future brother-in-law based on the saying of the sages that one's children will often resemble their mother's brother. Seven days after leaving Egypt, the Israelites found themselves trapped between a raging

sea and the vengeful Egyptian army. Then Hashem gave Moses a command that seemed impossible to fulfill: "Speak to the people of Israel; they shall travel." The order was given to go forward, sea or no sea. But who would make the first move? At that moment, Nachshon's devotion and bravery came to the fore. The Midrash and Talmud share the following account: When Israel stood facing the Sea of Reeds, and the command was given to move forward, each of the tribes hesitated, saying, "We do not want to be the first to jump into the sea."

Nachshon, leader of the tribe of Judah, saw what was happening—and jumped into the sea. At that moment Moses was standing and praying. Hashem said to him, "My beloved ones are drowning in the stormy seas, and you are standing and praying?" Moses replied, "Master of the world, what am I to do?" Hashem replied, "Lift your staff and spread your hand over the seas, which will split, and Israel will come into the sea upon dry land." And so it was. Following Nachshon's lead, the Israelites entered the sea and were saved. Nachshon echoes into eternity as the father of courageous leadership in difficult situations. And it is his descendants, David, Solomon and the Mashiach who will lead the Jewish people.

At the same time, the Midrash quotes Shimon of Kitron who says: "In the merit of the bones of Joseph, I will split the sea for them".

The rabbis explain, while the rest of the Israelites were collecting gold and silver from the Egyptians – perhaps as back pay for the last century at hard labor – although under the pretext of borrowing, Moses was keeping a promise made to our father Joseph - Yosef Hatzaddik made many centuries ago. The Torah tells us that Vayikach Moshe Et Azmot Yosef Imo – that Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.

The Medrash Tanhuma explains why it was because of Joseph's bones that the Yam Suf split. We read the words of King David in Hallel, Hayam Ra'ah VeYanos - the sea saw and fled. What did the sea see that caused it to flee and split? She saw the bones of Joseph who also fled from the wife of Potiphar who was trying to seduce him as it says

Vayanos Veyeseh HaChusah – and he fled and ran outside. In both cases, the word used is Vayanos. Just as the 17 year old Joseph when seduced, overcame a young man's nature, in his merit, the sea overcame its own nature and split.

So was it Joseph or Nachshon?

Rabbi Abittan, z'sl would tell a story of a king who brought his entourage to see his new nature preserve and his lagoon with a dozen man eating alligators floating across. Suddenly his young daughter climbs the low fence and falls in. The king panics and announces that whoever goes in and saves her would have any wish granted. Not a second passes and a man is in the water. He grabs the little princess, hands her to someone and reaches up to be pulled out. The king grabs him and thanks him for risking his life to save his child. In front of all he asks the man what his wish is and whatever he requests will be granted.

The man visibly shaken, wet and panting tells the king, "Your majesty, I want just one thing".

All lean forward wondering what his wish will be.

"Your majesty, just one thing .... Please get me the name of the person who pushed me in!"

The rabbi would explain that when leaving the slavery and oppression of Egypt, it was important to know what got us there in the first place. Hashem reminds us by commanding the people last week to take a goat and use the blood on the door posts. In addition when we ate the first Pascal lamb, we wore our shoes. It was the sale of Joseph which brought us to Egypt. We dipped his coat in the blood of a goat and presented it to Jacob. We did applied the blood to the door posts and lintel as a sign in Egypt. The brothers took the money from the sales of Joseph and bought shoes. We were commanded to wear shoes when eating that goat or lamb.

It was Levi and Shimon who first suggested to kill Joseph. Perhaps as a tikun for his own ancestor, it is Moses the grandson (and great grandson) of Levi who must make amends with Joseph and bring his bones out of Egypt.

Of all the brothers, the one who could have stopped the sale, the one who could have changed the minds of his brothers was Judah. We know they blamed him as immediately after the sale, Judah goes down to another place and in the eyes of his disappointed brothers. It's not so easy to step up. We put ourselves at risk. Perhaps it is Judah's great, great grandson who by sticking his own neck out to the

point where the water was about to cover his head was also making amends,

Perhaps the lesson is that the sale of Joseph sent us to Egypt and without making amends to Joseph we could never get out because the situation would have never changed. Perhaps it is the amends made by Moses who was a descendant of Levi but who also represented the entire Jewish people and made by Nachshon, the leader of Judah and ancestor of the Mashiach. And perhaps with that, Joseph indicated his acceptance of the apology by being instrumental in the salvation of the people.

My dad would remind us that when we face problems in life, we need to examine how we got there in the first place. We need to retrace our steps. We need to see what we did wrong. We need to face up, admit and then have a plan to climb out which often means apologizing and hoping for forgiveness. It's never easy. It's risky, but that what we need to do if we hope to clean it up.

We ended up in Egypt because we messed up with Joseph. In order to get out of the Egyptian pit we had to admit our failure and make amends. We are reminded of the cause at the first Passover dinner. Then through Moses and Nachshon, we make amends. And in finally forgiving us, the sea split for Joseph, Nachshon and Moses together.

In memory of my dad and the lessons he taught us, Yosef Ben Esther – 14 Shevat.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

**In Memory of Steven Esses  
By Jack Doueck**

**Speech for Steven Esses Arayat**  
2/5/17 - Beth Torah

*"Mi Ha'ish Ha'hafess Hayim? Oheb Yamim Lir'ot tob?"*  
On Wednesday night I lost a part of my soul, my lifelong friend Shelomo Daveed Ben Penina – Steven Esses.  
**I don't think I will ever be the same.**

Like many of you here today, Steven and I have been friends since childhood. We grew up together, went to elementary and high school together, then Israel after high school. We double dated together; got married the same year, had our kids at about the same time, volunteered in many of the same charities, learned Torah together, – we even worked together for a few years.

But let me start at the beginning:

Steven was the coolest kid in elementary school. He was the best-looking one with his great hair who would never be afraid to talk to all the girls.

We would all just be in awe of his self-confidence, his charm, his easy smile.

I remember always feeling that I wanted to be his best friend.

Then his dad – Maury – built him a car from some kind of car kit!

**How cool is THAT?**

If Steven was anything – he was always upbeat. He had this **LOVE FOR LIFE** – from such a young age. I remember him riding on his MOPED in Bradley Beach, taking us out on his **boat** in Deal and driving one of his new cars.

Steven was always the one to cheer me up when I was down.

He was always so patient, so tolerant of everyone else, so compassionate and so calm.

He was generous and humble and so much fun to be around.

He loved to give advice, to help people and he touched everyone who knew him.

I remember once we went out and at the end of the night I told him

“Steve, I think I owe you \$40.”

He says **“Good. This way I can never go bankrupt.”**

Steven was a man of high values: Family, Yishuv Eretz Yisrael; Dedication to Torah and misvot.

His dream was to move to Israel, build a family in our homeland, build a big house and a business and thrive there.

He accomplished all his goals and more.

He became a pillar of the community in Efrat, dedicating Sifrei Torah and helping them build a Sephardic Synagogue.

Steven and Naomi’s magnificent home in Efrat is always filled with friends, his five beautiful kids, his two amazing sons-in-law, and his three adorable grandchildren.

September 13<sup>th</sup> 1992 he and Naomi moved to Israel.

I drove them to the airport that night and I came home and broke down.

I just couldn’t stop crying.

So, I wrote Steven a long letter telling him how much I loved him and how I was afraid our friendship would be over.

He comforted me and told me that would be impossible.

And he was right.

We stayed the best of friends ever since.

On my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday Steven wrote me a beautiful email.

**“I am so proud to call you MY BEST FRIEND,”** he wrote.

**“No matter the distance or time – I feel you are always there for me and that means the world to me.”**

**“So many times of sharing, laughing, crying, working, learning, and semahot together.”**

Those feelings were mutual of course.

When Steven told me that his son **Moshe** was going to have his Bar Misvah last March, Jamie and I flew to Israel to take part in the 4 days of festivities.

I felt so honored when Steven introduced me to everyone as

**“This is my best friend – Jackie Doueck.”**

I knew that Steven was having stomach pains and that he had done a scan the week before.

During the celebrations, Steven was doubled-over in pain, showing me, but hiding it from his family – not to ruin their good time.

The doctors knew it was Pancreatic Cancer, but they chose not to tell Steven and Naomi until after the Bar Misvah was over. (Only in Israel).

When Steven found out it was cancer – he wasn’t depressed.

He was so determined to beat it and so focused, he didn’t have time to be sad.

He was going to try every conceivable medicine, no matter the cost or the discomfort.

He came into the States to take a special kind of aggressive Chemo.

Our friend Victor Bibi and I had the privilege of picking him up from the airport and driving him to chemo many times.

Steven was very open with us.

I would spend hours by his side and we talked about everything with soft rock music in the background.

He let me give him a foot massage and a back massage as he was hooked up to the chemo pump.

In the beginning the chemo was working, but the goal was to do an operation to remove his pancreas.

When they tried to do this operation, it was deemed impossible.

The doctors were **not** optimistic.

**But they didn’t know who they were dealing with.**

Steven would **NEVER GIVE UP.**

He **loved life** too much to give in or get down or quit.

We researched all kinds of experimental drugs and alternative therapies and he always had hope.

In September I went to Israel to stay with him, help out and take him to Chemo in Netanya.

We spent more quality time together there.

He outlined for me what he wanted to do with the rest of his life once he beat the cancer.

First, he said, he wanted to devote less time to work and more time to Torah.

**“I want to work on my middot,”** he said.

I didn’t know what to say to that.

Then he said he had 4 other goals:

1) He wanted to create an alternative therapy center in Gush Etzion and involve his wife and his talented kids.

He would subsidize it with fund-raising.

We talked about how much we would need to raise annually – and I told him **“I’m IN!”**

2) He said he wanted to publish a book on **Tehilim** with all new interpretations which would include Rabbi Ralph Tawil and others.

3) Steven bought land up north overlooking the **kineret**. He walked me through the detailed plans for the house. He said he wanted to build this vacation home and turn it into a kind of "**retreat center**" for families with sick or disabled children.

4) Steven said he wanted to raise a few million dollars and build out the **Techelet factory** so that Techelet becomes mainstream.

He was always "The Man with the Plan" regardless of the immense pain he had every day. It didn't matter that some of his doctors lost hope. He told me over and over "**Jackie, I'm going to beat this thing.**"

He didn't just have a will to live. He truly **loved life** more than anyone I have ever known and he was determined to get better for his family. As the Pasook says: "*Mi Ha'ish Ha'hafess Hayim? Oheb Yamim Lir'ot tob?*"

Who is the man that loves life; loves days to see only goodness? And it goes on to list attributes – all of which Steven exemplified:

*Ne'sor le'shon'chah Me'ra, us'fatecha mi'daber mirmah. Soor Me'ra va'aseh tob. Bakesh Shalom, Ve'rodfehu. Stay away from evil speech, avoid negatives, do good Seek out peace pursue it.*

As the months and the treatments went on, Steven was in terrible pain. He suffered – but never complained. When he couldn't bring himself to eat, he lost a lot of weight – way too much. He was starving.

On this last visit I had with him just two weeks ago, I was privileged to be able spend a week by his side 24 hours a day.

When I first got there, I sat by his bed and while I was sitting with him he texted me:  
**"Jack,**  
**Tonight, I will need your help - maybe I will have the strength myself but maybe not...**  
**But most important - is just spend time with me. Just be there for me.**  
**I'm sorry I can't answer all your questions, but slowly, hopefully, with your help – I will get my strength back. "**

I set up a weekly rotation of close friends to come to Israel and be with him. They wanted to know how we was doing. So, I wrote to them:  
*"Steven is very weak but he has internal strength.*

*"He can't talk above a whisper - but his words are laced with optimism and Emunah.*

*"His muscles are shrinking but he desperately wants to survive.*

*"He wants to beat this so I believe he will try anything.*

*"Today his father in-law Dr. Shamah said something to us about the new drug being effective and under his breathe I heard Steven whisper **"Please God".**"*

I met with him and his doctors, and he just would **not** hear the words "give up".

He defied them all by fighting the horrible disease and he chose to subject himself to all kinds of pain.

As I said – he simply loved life and he was NOT ready to leave us.

He was simply a "*Hafess Hayim*", and an "*Oheb Yamim*"

Watching him doubled over in pain, made me think of a soldier in a fierce battle.

It made me feel like anything I've been complaining about or worrying about was complete nonsense.

I want all the people here to know that your Tefilot, Tehilim, texts, videos were important. He really appreciated all of your good wishes.

You absolutely made a difference in his life and in the lives of his family.

Your prayers and acts of kindness made him laugh and cry. They touched him.

Tizku Le'Misvot.

On Sunday night, the last night I was there, he kicked everyone out of the room and said to me "**Sit Down. Let's talk**".

It took us about an hour to say goodbye.

We apologized to each other.

And then we talked about our lives – starting from childhood through today.

He made me promise a few things to him (that's private).

He repeated his future goals and gave me some good advice.

Then, it was getting late and I had to catch my flight back to the States.

He said "**You have to go, Jackie.**"

Then he said. "**Wait. I want to get up.**"

It took every ounce of energy he had left for him to sit up in his bed.

Then he mustered all the rest of his strength and stood up and said

**"Now give me a hug."**

We hugged and I said "**Goodbye Steven.**"

As I was driving to the airport with tears in my eyes - I received a text from him.

**"I forgot to say Mabrouk for our daughter!"** He wrote. **So Mabrouk and Mazal Tov – you should have much nachat from them.**

**Enjoy every moment under the Hupah.**

**May we be blessed to share many semahot together. Love ya."**

Then two hours later as I waited for my plane to take off he texted me again

***"I love you and I miss you already."***

**Steven:**

You accomplished more in your short 53 years than most people do in 100.

You built an amazing family and home in the State of Israel.

I will miss you every day and I will never ever forget you. Our souls are connected and I will always have a little bit of emptiness in my heart – it is your place – where you will always reside.

**As I said, I will never be the same.**

Thank you for enriching my life.

Thank you for teaching me what it means to fight.

Thank you for teaching me the meaning of courage, of faith, of optimism.

Thank you for teaching me the meaning of tolerance, of patience, of love for Israel, of dedication to principals bigger than all of us.

Thank you for showing me what it means to **LOVE LIFE**.

**You were truly ad Hafess Hayim.**

When someone loses a parent, he is called an **orphan**.

When he loses a spouse, he is called a **widower** or **widow**.

**But there is no term in any language** to describe the immense sadness of losing a friend.

A true friend is the greatest of all blessings.

**Steven: Thank you for blessing my life with your friendship and your love.**

Hashem Natan; Hashem Lakach – yehi shem Adonai meborach me'ata ve'ad olam.

Tehe Nishmato Seruyah Bs'rour hahayim.

Amen.

**Stop American Aid to the Palestinians Until the Terror Ceases - Trump halted an 11th-hour transfer of \$221 million. But more can be done to end pensions for killers.**

**David Aufhauser and Sander Gerber**

In the twilight hours of the Obama administration, Secretary of State John Kerry authorized the transfer of \$221 million to the Palestinian Authority—in violation of an informal agreement with Congress not to do so. Fortunately, President Trump stopped the transfer before the money left America's shores. Now he has the opportunity—and the responsibility—to do more.

Lawmakers had good reason to oppose the transfer. Much like with the \$400 million cash ransom paid to Iran last year, no meaningful effort was made to

account for how the money was to be spent or to prevent it from being used to kill innocents.

Since 9/11, it has been accepted wisdom that stopping funds flowing to terrorism is a vital way to diminish its reach and incidence. In the fight against Islamic State, much of the success—albeit too little and too late—can be traced to efforts to target some of its principal sources of money: oil, trafficking in antiquities, and regional money exchangers that provide the commerce necessary for the killing.

A second operating principle growing out of 9/11 is that people who underwrite terrorism bear culpability equal to those who commit it. Much of the antiterrorism framework established in the Bush administration focused on imposing responsibilities on the international financial community to identify and prevent the transfer of terrorist funds. It is a difficult task because money intended to kill bears few DNA markers, whether transferred by ancient means (gold) or modern ones (digital). Notwithstanding those challenges, financial institutions that have turned a blind eye have faced punishing billion-dollar consequences.

Not so, however, the U.S. government. Over the past 10 years, Washington has provided more than \$4 billion in foreign aid to the Palestinian Authority. The goal has been to promote a government in the Palestinian territories capable of assuming the responsibilities of a sovereign state, including the recognition of the state of Israel as a legitimate member of the community of nations. The aid has focused principally on security and criminal-justice programs, U.S. Agency for International Development sponsored assistance for schools, health clinics, water and economic development, and generalized support for the Palestinian Authority's budget. But unlike the many nongovernmental organizations that contribute charitable funds to the region, American assistance programs, while obliged to vet how the money is spent, have yet to ensure effectively that taxpayer dollars are not diverted to support acts of terror.

Yet there is no question that this is happening. First, the State Department has acknowledged the diversion in reports to Congress, as documented most recently in a Dec. 16, 2016, Congressional Research Service report. As a remedy, Washington simply reduced its aggregate aid by an amount that is classified but is reported to be pegged to intelligence estimates of what the Palestinian Authority spends to sponsor acts of terrorism. But money is fungible, and it is sophistry to argue that funds provided for good deeds do not enable the bad deeds of the same

political entity, particularly given the scarcity of resources.

Second, the Palestinian Authority's support for killing—such as the stabbing rampage that took the life of Taylor Force, a West Point graduate, in Jaffa, Israel, last March—is indisputable because it is codified in law. Statutes pledge to “martyr” families triple the income for life of the average salary in the West Bank, free tuition, health insurance and clothing allowances. So popular is the program of pensions for the maiming and killing of civilians that, according to its own 2016 budget, the Palestinian Authority dedicates more than 500 full-time civil servants to its administration, at a cost of around \$315 million, or roughly 8% of the budget of the would-be Palestinian state.

In the face of this widely advertised bureaucracy of terror, the Trump administration should suspend all further aid to the Palestinian Authority. Not another dollar should flow until measures are adopted to assure that no more people are slain because American aid enabled the Palestinian Authority to confidently promise compensation for killing. Congress has already introduced the vehicle to do this, a bill in the name of Taylor Force. If passed into law, it would condition aid on the secretary of state's certification that the Palestinian Authority has ended its legal sanction of terrorist financing. Without such a commitment, and strong due diligence by the State Department to ensure that it is honored, American funding of the Palestinian Authority should cease.

That such a straightforward proposition has escaped the Washington establishment for over a decade is perhaps one reason the country has a new president. Mr. Trump should at last enforce the 9/11 orthodoxy that if you stop the money, you stop the killing.

**Saudi Journalist to Palestinians: Armed Resistance to Israel is Futile, Arab World Has Lost Interest in Your Cause by Barney Breen-Portnoy**

The Palestinian cause is “no longer a top priority” for the Arab world, a Saudi journalist declared earlier this month.

In an article published by the Saudi daily Al Jazirah newspaper — and translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) — Muhammad Aal Al-Sheikh wrote that the reliance of radical Palestinian groups on armed resistance “constitutes a kind of political suicide that only political ignoramuses [can] condone.”

According to Al-Sheikh, a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the sole option “that can be demanded and which enjoys the support of most of the international community.”

What the Palestinians, Al-Sheikh went on to say, “need to understand is that the Arabs of today are not the Arabs of yesterday, and that the Palestinian cause has lost ground among Arabs. This cause is no longer a top priority for them, because civil wars are literally pulverizing four Arab countries, and because fighting the ‘Islamic’ terrorism is the foremost concern that causes all Arabs, without exception, to lose sleep. It is folly to ask someone to sacrifice [tending to] his own problems and national interests in order to help [you solve] your own problems.”

“All I can say to my Palestinian brethren is that stubbornness, contrariness, and betting on the [support of] the Arab masses are a hopeless effort, and that ultimately you are the only ones who will pay the price of this stubbornness and contrariness,” he concluded.

In recent years, Israel has been quietly developing ties with the Sunni-Arab axis in the Middle East – including Saudi Arabia. In his September address to the UN General Assembly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that in addition to Egypt and Jordan, which already have signed peace treaties with the Jewish state, “Many other states in the region recognize that Israel is not their enemy. They recognize that Israel is their ally. Our common enemies are ISIS and Iran. Our common goals are security, prosperity and peace. I believe that in the years ahead we will work together to achieve these goals.”

**Summary of the Perasha**

**Beshalach - Keriyat yam suf, water, manna, Amalek**

- 1- Benei Israel leave Mitsrayim travelling in a roundabout way
- 2- Paroah regrets letting Benei Israel leave and chases after them toward yam suf
- 3- The sea splits. Benei Israel travels through
- 4- The sea crashes on the Mitsrim. Benei Israel sing Az Yashir. Benei Israel complain about the lack of water. Moshe makes the bitter water sweet in Mara.
- 5- Benei Israel travel to Midbar Sin and complain about the lack of meat and other food
- 6- Hashem sends slav and manna
- 7- Benei Israel again have no water and complain. Moshe draws water from a rock. Amalek attacks Benei Israel and is defeated.

## FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

**“On the first of Shebat is the New Year for the tree according to Bet Shammai, Bet Hillel says the fifteenth (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:1)**

This Shabbat will be Tu B'Shvat. We celebrate this day by enjoying the fruits of the trees, and thereby appreciating Hashem's kindness. Hashem made a beautiful world full of pleasure and we must pause and make note of it and thank Him. Rosh Hashanah La'llanot impacts upon us on a symbolic level as on a practical one. It is closely linked to our spirituality.

For one thing, man is likened to a tree. The Gemara (Taanit 5b) talks about a blessing given to a beautiful tree “that all of your saplings should be just like you.” In the same manner, the Jew is blessed, as per the blessing that Rav Yitzhak offered to Rav Nahman, that his children shall resemble him. Rashi explains, “in Torah, wealth and honor.”

There is a single pasuk in the Torah in which man is directly compared to a tree of the field: “Is, then, the tree of field a man...” (Debarim 20:19). In this context, the Torah urges us to maintain the vitality of the fruit tree. On the symbolic level, we must do all we can to protect the transmission of Torah from one generation to the next, to ensure its vibrancy, for Torah is our greatest fruit.

Let us consider a basic scientific fact that we all remember having learned in our youth. The three components that are necessary for the growth of trees are: soil, water, and sun. A tree that lacks any one of these will not flourish. Rabbi Shmuel Yaakov Klein learns that the things that are crucial for the proper development of the spirituality of our children are analogous to soil, water, and sun.

Water, of course, represents Torah itself, as Yeshayahu Hanabi said, “Ho, he who is thirsty go to the water,” and the Gemara derives that there is “no meaning of water other than Torah.” Hence, the first message of Tu B'Shvat is that just as a tree requires water, so too a Jew requires Torah.

In a like fashion we can explain that the significance of soil is the idea of environment, the medium in which growth occurs, and its importance to the upbringing of our children. The appropriate environment is necessary for the spiritual growth of our children. Vegetation stands little or no chance of growth in a soil that is toxic. Similarly, cultural toxicity imperils the growth of our children. As we find with Sarah Imenu, she noted Yishmael toying with idols and concluded that this was not an environment for her son Yitzhak. By the same token, young Jews will flourish better if their environment is devoid of the technological and informational trappings. Although

they might be the source of much good, they are the source of much that is detrimental.

The third component is sun. The light and the warmth provided by the sun represents warmth that is needed for today's Jewish child to develop. Positive orientation, an upbeat mood, and the building of self-esteem are all crucial.

These three ingredients will enable the production of beautiful fruit. Rabbi Reuven Semah

**The Midrash in this week's perashah compares the Jewish people to a young woman who was in mortal danger, crying out for help.** A king happened to be nearby, heard her cries and saved her from her tormentors. She was so grateful to him that eventually they got married, and she became the queen. One day the king realized that his wife was no longer close to him and speaking to him. He devised a plot where she could again think that that she is in danger, and she began to call out for help, whereupon he saved her again and their relationship was restored.

So, too, says the Midrash, the Jewish people cried out to Hashem and He saved them from Egypt. But when they stopped calling out to Him after they left Egypt, He devised a way that they should be up against the Sea of Reeds with the Egyptians behind them and nowhere else to turn but to Hashem. That's when they cried out to Him and He split the sea, and they sang the song of “Az Yashir”

The Rabbis point out from this Midrash a very important lesson. We think that if everything is OK, we don't need to call out to Hashem, but if there's a problem, then we cry out to Him. This is called a fire engine mentality; we don't call the fire engines unless, G-d forbid, there's a fire. But in reality, it's the other way around. Hashem wants us to call out to Him at all times, and when we don't, that's when he brings the problems which force us to turn to Him. Hashem is not a fire engine! He is our Father, our King, Who wants us to be in touch always. When things are going good, that's all the more reason to pray to Him that everything should continue, and our relationship must become stronger. That way, we won't need any “plots” to wake us up to turn to Him! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

### Small Pieces

Most people want to work on themselves and reach new heights in knowledge and spirituality. The problem they often face, however, is not what to do, but when to do it. The job of changing a character trait or mastering a complete topic of Jewish law takes a great deal of time, and free time is a rare commodity. Maybe people lived simpler lives in days of old, but today, all of our modern, “time-saving” devices have resulted in a life that is fast and furious

and over-scheduled. What is a well-intentioned person to do to achieve spiritual success?

The answer is to take "small pieces." You probably will not find huge blocks of free time in your busy lifestyle. Grabbing a minute here and a minute there is the best way to be efficient with time management.

The time spent waiting for a train is valuable time, and so are the minutes of standing on line. Waiting for your spouse can be used for learning rather than getting impatient. Waiting for others to arrive for a lunch or dinner engagement or business meeting can also be productive. All you have to do is be prepared. Carry one of the great classics of Jewish thought or one of the new self-help books now available in light, small pocket sizes. Then, when the opportunity arises, don't get nervous. Pull out your book and work on yourself.

Train yourself to think when you encounter "gaps" in your day. Then, if you don't have a book, you can use the time for reflection.

You may only find a minute at a time, but minutes make up hours, and hours turn into days. The sum total of all your little acts will be a number large enough to call success. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

#### **RABBI ELI MANSOUR**

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#### **The Lesson of the Yam Suf**

Parashat Beshalach tells the famous story of Keri'at Yam Suf, the splitting of the Sea of Reeds. We read that as a result of this miracle, Benei Yisrael reached a level of faith in God that they had not previously achieved: "Va'ya'aminu B'Hashem" ("They believed in God" – 14:31). In fact, the Sages tell us that even the maidservants among the nation beheld a revelation that in some ways surpassed even the prophetic visions of Yechezkel, one of the greatest prophets who ever lived. What specific aspect of this event, the splitting of the Yam Suf, had such an impact upon the people? Why was this miracle capable of inspiring them far more powerfully than the ten supernatural plagues they witnessed in Egypt?

The answer can perhaps be understood by considering Benei Yisrael's situation as they stood at the banks of the Yam Suf. They found themselves trapped between the sea in front of them, the pursuing Egyptian army behind them, and the desert on either side. They had nowhere to turn, no realistic means of escape. Moshe, however, guaranteed them

that God would intervene and save them. If we would venture a guess what went through Benei Yisrael's minds after they heard Moshe's reassurances, we would probably speculate that they envisioned an "eleventh plague" of sorts that would now strike the Egyptians. Perhaps God would bring another hailstorm upon the pursuing Egyptian army; or, maybe He would bring some deadly disease that would kill or incapacitate their pursuers. The last thing they could have possibly expected was that the waters in front of them would split and they would cross to safety. This was not an option they considered; many different possibilities likely crossed through their minds at those moments, but the splitting of the sea most certainly was not one of them.

This miracle thus demonstrated to Benei Yisrael more clearly than any other the limitless nature of divine power, the fact that God can intervene in any manner, even in ways that one could not possibly have imagined.

In a very famous pair of verses in Tehillim (121:1-2), King David exclaims, "I raise my eyes to the mountains; from where does My assistance come? My assistance comes from God, Maker of the heavens and earth." Some commentators explain that King David drew inspiration during times of crisis from the mountains. He looked to the mountains and contemplated the fact that God brought forth the mountains from sheer nothingness. Before creation, nothing at all existed; God produced everything from a vacuum. Thus, David exclaims, "I raise my eyes to the mountains – My assistance comes 'Mei'ayin!'" Although "Mei'ayin" is generally understood to mean "from where," it could also mean "from nothingness." David came to the realization that divine assistance can surface "from nothingness," even in dilemmas with no foreseeable solution. Just as the mountains emerged from nothingness, so does God's assistance come in ways that could never have been anticipated.

The Rabbis comment that two areas of life are as "difficult" as the splitting of the Yam Suf: securing a livelihood, and finding a spouse. Particularly in these two areas, a person's "salvation" so often comes in ways and from sources that he could never have previously imagined. Just as God saved Benei Yisrael at Yam Suf in a manner that could not have been foreseen, so does He provide us with our livelihood and bring young men and women together in ways that we would least expect.

For this reason, the Rabbis established the daily recitation of "Az Yashir," the song of praise that Benei



Yisrael sung after witnessing the miracle of the Yam Suf. The Zohar comments that this daily recitation is of such importance that one who ensures to recite "Az Yashir" each day is guaranteed that it will continue to be sung even in the World to Come. Each day, we must remind ourselves of this most critical lesson, the lesson of the Yam Suf. We each have difficult areas in our lives, problems and dilemmas for which we can see no realistic solution. We can find considerable comfort and reassurance in the daily recitation of "Az Yashir," by bringing to mind the story of Yam Suf and the lesson of God's unlimited power. By reminding ourselves of God's ability to provide assistance through the most unforeseeable means, we can feel confident in His ability to find solutions to even life's most unsolvable dilemmas, and help us surmount even the most insurmountable obstacles

**VICTOR BIBI  
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein  
SHABBAT FOOD**

One of the many distinctive features about the holy day of Shabbat is its full menu. This naturally varies among the different ethnic groups that comprise the Jewish people. As a descendant of Lithuanian Eastern European Jews, I actually associate Shabbat with gefilte fish, chicken soup and hot cholent. Now that may not have been the menu for Jews in Yemen or in Iraq, and I readily acknowledge that fact, nevertheless to me these foods are inextricably bound to the holy day of Shabbat.

Much of life and memory is composed of physical associations. Special and unique foods have always marked the commemoration of Shabbat in the Jewish world and throughout Jewish history. The Talmud records for us that a certain rabbi served cholent or some other form of that food on Shabbat to his Roman guest. The Roman was so impressed by this dish of hot food that he took the recipe and requested his own court prepare this for him on a Tuesday.

Naturally, the dish did not taste the same and was not nearly as good. When he complained to the rabbi, the rabbi told him that one ingredient was missing in the recipe that the Romans were using. And he told him, the missing ingredient was Shabbat. So it is not only that food influences and makes Shabbat for us, but it is equally true that Shabbat influences and

enhances the food that we prepare and eat on that holy day.

Shabbat is, in itself, one of the ingredients that make up the food that we serve at our Shabbat meals.

The Talmud makes a special point about the necessity for hot food and/or drink to be consumed on Shabbat. Since there were sects of Jews who mistakenly denied the authenticity of the Oral Law and did not allow for any fire whatsoever to be present in their homes on Shabbat, these Jews necessarily ate only cold food on the holy day.

In order to reinforce the belief of the Jewish people in the interpretations of the Oral Law and in the traditions of Rabbinic Judaism, the rabbis of the Talmud insisted that Jews must eat/drink hot foods or hot beverages on the Shabbat. Differing ethnic groupings located in the widely scattered countries of the Jewish diaspora fulfilled this obligation with differing types of food.

In the Eastern European Ashkenazic world, a pot roast of potatoes, barley, beans and meat was concocted and given the name of cholent – a name of origin as uncertain as the recipe for the delicacy itself. Cholent has the wondrous characteristic that it never tastes the same, in spite of using the exact same ingredients and recipe from one Shabbat to the next. As a longtime expert on the matter, I can testify that it is never the same in taste and in the nuance of flavor from house to house and family to family.

The common denominator is that it is always hot food and somehow delicious, no matter what ingredients one may have used in preparing it. Again, it is apparent to me that Shabbat itself is the main ingredient in that traditional stew.

There is a halachic basis for serving gefilte fish on Shabbat as well. If one serves regular fish, unless it is extremely well fileted, there will always be the problem of dealing with the bones that of the fish being eaten. One of the prohibitions of work on Shabbat is removing part of the fish – the bones – from the edible flesh of fish itself.

In order to avoid this problem the fish itself was ground-up so that all of it now became edible, and the problem of removing the bones was obviated. I still remember both as a child and later as a very young husband setting up the hand grinder for the fish on Thursday nights and proceeding to grind the raw fish from which my mother, and later my wife, rolled into balls, spiced and then cooked. This gefilte

fish became one of the staple delicacies of my Shabbat life.

My mother never used the frozen fish loaves to make her delicious fish. It had to be freshly ground or otherwise it was not fit for the Shabbat table. My wife was also very reluctant to use such a time-saving creation but upon my prodding to do so – since I began to feel it beneath my dignity to have to grind raw fish on Thursday nights – succumbed to the advances of our progressive era and used the fish loaves. But both she and I agreed that our gefilte fish never quite tasted the same

### **Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Power of Ruach**

In September 2010, BBC, Reuters and other news agencies reported on a sensational scientific discovery. Researchers at US National Center for Atmospheric Research and the University of Colorado have shown through computer simulation how the division of the red sea may have taken place.

Using sophisticated modelling, they demonstrated how a strong east wind, blowing overnight, could have pushed water back at a bend where an ancient river is believed to have merged with a coastal lagoon. The water would have been guided into the two waterways, and a land bridge would have opened at the bend, allowing people to walk across the exposed mud flats. As soon as the wind died down, the waters would have rushed back in. As the leader of the project said when the report was published: "The simulations match fairly closely with the account in Exodus."

So we now have scientific evidence to support the biblical account, though to be fair, a very similar case was made some years ago by Colin Humphreys, Professor of Materials Science at Cambridge University, and Professor of Experimental Physics at the Royal Institution in London, in his book *The Miracles of Exodus*.

To me, though, the real issue is what the biblical account actually is. Because it is just here that we have one of the most fascinating features of the way the Torah tells its stories. Here is the key passage:

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. (Ex. 14:21-22)

The passage can be read two ways. The first is that what happened was a suspension of the laws of nature. It was a supernatural event. The waters stood, literally, like a wall.

The second is that what happened was miraculous not because the laws of nature were suspended. To the contrary, as the computer simulation shows, the exposure of dry land at a particular point in the Red Sea was a natural outcome of the strong east wind. What made it miraculous is that it happened just there, just then, when the Israelites seemed trapped, unable to go forward because of the sea, unable to turn back because of the Egyptian army pursuing them.

There is a significant difference between these two interpretations. The first appeals to our sense of wonder. How extraordinary that the laws of nature should be suspended to allow an escaping people to go free. It is a story to appeal to the imagination of a child.

But the naturalistic explanation is wondrous at another level entirely. Here the Torah is using the device of irony. What made the Egyptians of the time of Ramses so formidable was the fact that they possessed the latest and most powerful form of military technology, the horse drawn chariot. It made them unbeatable in battle, and fearsome.

What happens at the sea is poetic justice of the most exquisite kind. There is only one circumstance in which a group of people travelling by foot can escape a highly trained army of charioteers, namely when the route passes through a muddy sea bed. The people can walk across, but the chariot wheels get stuck in the mud. The Egyptian army can neither advance nor retreat. The wind drops. The water returns. The powerful are now powerless, while the powerless have made their way to freedom.

This second narrative has a moral depth that the first does not; and it resonates with the message of the book of Psalms:

His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,  
nor His delight in the legs of the warrior;  
the Lord delights in those who fear Him,  
who put their hope in His unfailing love. (Psalm  
147:10-11)

The elegantly simple way in which the division of the Red Sea is described in the Torah so that it can be read at two quite different levels, one as a supernatural miracle, the other as a moral tale about

the limits of technology when it comes to the real strength of nations: that to me is what is most striking. It is a text quite deliberately written so that our understanding of it can deepen as we mature, and we are no longer so interested in the mechanics of miracles, and more interested in how freedom is won or lost.

So it's good to know how the division of the sea happened, but there remains a depth to the biblical story that can never be exhausted by computer simulations and other historical or scientific evidence, and depends instead on being sensitive to its deliberate and delicate ambiguity. Just as ruach, a physical wind, can part waters and expose land beneath, so ruach, the human spirit, can expose, beneath the surface of a story, a deeper meaning beneath.

#### **AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL**

On the Seventh Day of Pesach we read from the Torah the Shirat Hayam, which tells of the stupendous miracle of the splitting of the Sea of Suf. We also read this portion each year in Perashat Beshalach, and we say it every day in our morning prayers. This repetition means that it is very important for us to understand and feel the many teachings of this open Miracle.

“ And Hashem on that day saved Israel from the hand of Egypt”. (14:30) The rescue of Israel from the power of Egypt was not completed until the day of the splitting of the Sea of Suf. From “that day” onward Egypt no longer interfered in the affairs of Israel. The remarkable fact that for the following 500 years nothing is mentioned of any intervention by Egypt in the affairs of Israel is a tremendous demonstration that testifies to the truth of the total devastation of Egypt by the Plagues and by the episode of the Sea.

“ And Israel saw Egypt die on the shore of the Sea”. (14:30) Not only did Hashem rescue Israel, but He also granted them the exultation of seeing the destruction of their pursuers, while standing safely on the shore. When we see the downfall of the wicked, we gain more Awareness of Hashem's power and His kindness:  
 “ Be elevated, O Judge of the world! Turn back recompense (revenge) upon the arrogant” (Tehillim 94:2).

“ Then would sing Moshe and Bnei Yisrael”. (15:1) Did the Jews rejoice at the destruction of the Egyptians?

Hashem does not rejoice at the destruction of any of His creatures, and it is stated that Hashem did not permit the angels to sing at the drowning of Paro's host (Megilah 10B).

But here we see that Moshe and the Bnei Yisrael sang, and even rejoiced in every detail of the destruction of their enemy. We understand therefrom that men, unlike angels, must utilize such opportunities to gain more

Awareness of Hashem, and more Gratitude to Him. Angels cannot make any progress, but Moshe and Yisrael

can gain understanding of Hashem and thereby improve themselves greatly.

And that is our function in this life, to improve ourselves.

Adapted from "A NATION IS BORN" by Rabbi Miller ZT'L

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