

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

BESHALAH

Haftarah: Shoftim 5:1-31, For Ashkenazim Begin at 4:4

FEBRUARY 3-4, 2012

11 SHEBAT 5772

Tu B'Shebat will be celebrated on Wednesday, February 8.

DEDICATIONS: By anonymous ... Go Giants!

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SCHEDULE

Kiddush this week is sponsored by the entire Yadgarov family to commemorate the yehrtzeit of their father and grandfather Mr. Daniel Yadgarov

Friday night dinner at the shul to commemorate the Rabbi's yehrtzeit is a sell out. Those who wish should prepare a five minute story and tell us what the Rabbi meant to them. Those who have not paid yet can bring checks made out the the Sephardic Congregation Sisterhood and hand them in before Mincha. Remember \$18 for those 12 and up, \$10 for children ages 5-12, under 5 free. Additional donations and sponsorships will be graciously accepted. Or Mail Rebecca Ovadia, 100 west Broadway apt 3n, Long Beach NY. Thanks to Patti Azizo and Lisa Gaon for making this possible.

We extend our condolences to our dear friend Jack Gruenfeld who has so often helped us when we needed a minyan on the loss of his brother Martin. Jack is sitting at 425 West Penn a few houses down from the Synagogue. His number is 516-431-9122

FRIDAY NIGHT

É Mincha at 5:00 ó Followed by Kabbalat Shabbat and Arbit (Candle Lighting: 4:56) Dinner for those who reserved at 6:00

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

É Shaharith: 9:00 - Benai Asher Youth Program 10:45 ó 11:45 Mincha following Kiddush

É Women's Learning Group 4:15 Alternating speakers, seudat shlishit served, at the Lemberger's 1 East Olive. Class is always cancelled if there is inclement weather.

É Arbit at 6:15pm followed by Havdalah and a class ó Shabbat ends at 5:58pm

É Moztei Shabbat, February 4th at 7:30 - Join us for the first of many movie nights sponsored by the Sephardic and Lido Synagogues on. We will be watching the 2007 Israeli thriller Ha Hov (The Debt) at the Lido Synagogue while our children will be watching a movie at our synagogue. Refreshments will be served. Cost: \$5 per person. Checks can be made out to our synagogue.

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

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

É Introduction to Prayer 9:00 ó 9:30 Sunday Mornings

É Kosher Kitchen Class ó 6:30 Sunday evenings led by Rabbi Colish @ the shul

É óWisdom from the Wisest of Men ó Mon-Fri 6:30 AM ó based upon King Solomon's Proverbs

É Men's Halacha Class Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30: Basar BeChalav

É óSephardic Women's Prayer ó Tuesday nights at the Bibi's @ 8PM with Rabbi Colish. - deep insights, simple translations and a how to guide. 1233 Beech Street in Atlantic Beach - House 11.

É Kosher Kitchen Class óWednesday Nights 1 8:00 led by Hindy Mizrahi @ the Mizrahi's, women only

SPECIAL EVENTS

É TU B'SHVAT SEDER - February 7 ó Tuesday evening interactive TU B'SHVAT SEDER in the shul coordinated by Rabbi Colish and Penny Waldman. The fruit filled meal will be followed by sushi or falafel (your preference) with tuna salad, veggie nuggets and baked fries for the kids. Please rsvp to zerizah@aol.com. Sponsorships of \$50 each are welcome. Please RSVP by 02/02/12 so we can order the correct number of plates, etc. Please rsvp to zerizah@aol.com OR AGAIN YOU CAN JUST REPLY AND WE WILL FORWARD TO PENNY. Please RSVP by 02/02/12 so we can order the correct number of plates, etc. Tu B'Shvat Sponsors To Date, please send in your donations (and if I missed anyone, please let me know). Thank you so much to the sponsors for making this evening possible.

ó Lobell Family, Ernie Davidson, Kathy Amiel, Sarina Gross, Solomon Wasserman, Ely Altarac, Yusupov Family, Azizo Family, Farbiarz Family, Sutton family, Lisa Gaon, Ovadia Family, Bibi Family, Cohn Family

É February 26 ó Sunday Long Beach Synagogues Joint Ski Trip ó coordinated by Ernie Davidson. See flyer in shul for details.

É March 2 ó Friday Night Dinner in the Shul celebrating Shabbat Across America ó save the date, tell your friends, details to follow. Speak to Rabbi Colish for more details or to volunteer.

please reply to
ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com

Daily Minyan on the East Side
59th and Third Ave
Monday through Thursday at
NEW TIME: 4:30 PM Sharp –
Join us
Mincha followed by Arbit –Take
20 Minutes out of your day
Artistic Frame – 979 Third
Avenue – 1705
For more information please
speak with
Rabbi Danny Greenwald
212-289-2100 or e-mail
Danny@artisticframe.com

Editors Notes

I wasn't able to work on the newsletter last night and I had hoped to write about Bitachon which was one of the subjects Rabbi Abittan z"l spent much time drilling into our head. The entire portion of Beshalach seems to center around putting one's faith and trust in G-d. We say ~~in~~ G-d we Trust+. We write it and we see it printed on our money, but do we heed the message? As you go through the portion place yourself in the situations. How would you have reacted? And after experiencing each miracle, how would it change the reaction you might have in the future?

Another subject just as dear to Rabbi Abittan was gratitude. Both are these are touched upon below.

I wrote a few years back that someone asked a question with regard to saying a blessing on a glass of water. Immediately one can recall the Rabbi telling the story of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter ztl., perhaps as he himself heard it from his Rabbi, Rav Dessler. He was sitting in a hotel lobby in France and was served a glass of water. Afterward the waiter presented him with an exorbitant bill of 10 francs. Reb Yisrael

asked the waiter if perhaps he had made a mistake because all he had was a glass of water and not an entire meal. The waiter went on to explain that it was no mistake, ~~Rabinner~~, you are not paying for the glass of water alone. No! You are paying for the waiters and the busboys, the dishwashers and the housekeepers. You are paying also for the magnificent scenery, the beautiful decorations, and the musicians in the background. You are paying for the ambiance!+

Reb Yisrael paid the bill and left a tip and when he went back to his room he wrote to his students in Russia that he now understands why when we drink a glass of water we say, ~~Shehokol~~ Nihiyeh Bidbaro+~~That~~ all comes about though His speech!+~~We~~ are not blessing for the water alone but rather the world is an expensive hotel and we are thankful for everything!+

The Rabbi would tell us that one of the difficulties that we have in this generation is a lack of appreciation. We have so much, Baruch Hashem, in comparison to past generations, but because we've never known anything else, it's so difficult for us to appreciate. This is especially true for the children.

I wrote at that the time that in the office that week, we were talking about taking kids to a baseball or basketball game. When we were kids, we were thrilled to go. We didn't complain if we sat in the bleachers at Yankee Stadium or up in the blue nosebleed seats in the garden. Today, if kids are not sitting behind the dug out or on the floor, they stand in shock at the deprivation they must suffer. Much of the fault lies with us. Some years back my son Jonah wrote an article for the Angel Fund paper explaining how the luxuries of the parents become

the necessities of the children. We want to give our children the best so the best to them becomes normal, just average. Maybe we should consider sometimes holding back, mixing it up, making things special by making them beyond the normal. Teaching our children values is our responsibility.

This week we read, Vayhi BeShalach Pharaoh . And it was when Pharaoh sent the nation out of Egypt. When I wrote this a few years back it was a few days before the winter vacation began and I noted it was apropos that week when so many of us reenact the Exodus, by making our own exodus to everywhere from Hawaii, Mexico, California, Colorado, Canada, Miami, the Caribbean, Europe, and Israel for our ~~children's~~ midwinter vacation break. Before I write about how important taking a break is, I should mention how the rabbi told us that sometimes we should skip the vacation. Sometimes we should say, ~~not~~ this year+. Instead of Acapulco, maybe we go for a day or two skiing or take them to a museum or other local attraction. We could take a drive out to Montauk or down to Washington DC for a couple of days. Or maybe we just stay home and tackle some household projects. Understanding that sometimes there is a ~~no~~+can in the end be a very crucial lesson along the road of life.

(My wife must have read this when she cancelled our flights to sunshine at the very last moment and loaded the kids into the car for a trip to Washington DC)

The Rabbi would explain that although we think we live in a world where modern conveniences have made our lives so much easier, they have actually added so much pressure.

Given our professional, family, communal and personal responsibilities, so many of us barely have a moment to spare. Our lives are governed by iPhones, blackberries, and appointment books. We are connected 24/6 via mobile phone, instant messenger, email, fax and Fedex. The Rabbi would tell us about a world where siestas followed lunch. Today we barely have time to grab a sandwich at our desks. Thank G-d for Shabbat!

But we also need a vacation. We need to take time to cut ourselves off, to reflect and be introspective, to bond with our wives and children. Rabbi Abittan would call it a time of depressurization; a time to change the pace.

In fact, one of the difficulties associated with our modern work pace is that we put so much effort into it, we devote so much time to it, we really give it all we've got to the point that we really believe that we are in total control and the return is proportionate to what we invest. We begin to believe what Moses warned us not to, that my strength and my efforts earn me everything. And it's only normal. We need to justify our efforts. And the greater the exertion, the more we must value it, inversely affecting our Bitachon . our trust in G-d!

Perhaps it's no coincidence that we read Beshalach this week. In it, we read of the miracle at the splitting of the sea, the miracle of the water at Marah and the miracle of the Maan that fell from heaven as food for 40 years.

A trick question sometimes asked to kids in school is when did Hashem command us about the laws of Shabbat? Most would reply that it was at Sinai as Shabbat is the fourth commandment. But the real

answer is as Rashi explains this week. The laws of Shabbat were given to us at Marah; at the place of bitter waters where Moses threw a tree into the water and miraculously the water became fresh and drinkable. But another question arises; why Shabbat at Marah?

During class that week, we discussed the concept of Hashem completing creation as it says Vayechal Hashem. The Rabbis explain that as the sixth day came to a close Hashem set in motion a world which would continue to run by the laws he established, the laws of nature. And in a world run by those laws, a world where one sees cause and effect, it's only natural to say that my effort at work is proportionately rewarded. We can say that there are no miracles; there is only nature.

And this being the case; that the world is run by nature and mazalot; a world of fate and simple cause and effect leads to another question. If I can't change anything, why bother praying? I ask for health and sustenance, for understanding and blessing, but why? Everything is determined by my stars or even in the best case, everything was determined at Rosh Hashana for the year. So what effect can my prayers have? The money I earned was set. The status of my health was set. Everything was written, then 10 days later signed and 10 days after that delivered. It's all in the book and what possibility do I have to rewrite it?

The answer comes in this week's Perasha from the miracles that occur within it.

King David writes, The sea saw and fled+. What did the sea see that caused it to split? The coffin of Yosef, as it says, and he fled + What is the connection between the righteousness of Yosef, who

resisted the advances of Potiphar's wife, and the splitting of the sea which saved *Am Yisrael*? Initially, the sea refused to split, citing the natural order, and didn't do so until it saw Yosef's coffin. Yosef defied human nature that would otherwise have made it almost impossible to avoid sinning. If he could overcome the most powerful drive of human nature, the sea could overcome its nature of not splitting as well. This is the power of the Brit.

But let's not forget the two other miracles in this week's portion that defy nature. There is the bitter water at Marah which becomes sweet. The salt water should have remained salty. Anyone involved in desalination efforts will tell you that it's nothing short of miraculously changing nature to turn salty water to sweet water. But nature was set in motion to follow its laws and not to change. How does one change nature? Here we have the same answer as at the sea. The power to change nature lies in the secret of the Brit - Covenant. Only it's a different Brit, it's the covenant of Shabbat. And this is why the laws of Shabbat are taught here. Following Shabbat may make no sense to the business man who wants to conclude his deal, to the salesman at the trade show where everyone else is open on Saturday, to the factory owner running full shifts seven days a week, and to the farmer who has a crop to harvest. Following the Shabbat is against nature, but going against our own nature earns us the power to have nature bend and even change for us.

And finally we have the maan. The maan is a miraculous food from heaven. But according to nature food does not fall from heaven. And even stranger is the fact that whatever we gathered

didn't matter, there was exactly a portion for each member of the household. And the maan did not remain overnight with one exception, with the exception of Friday night where we collected a double portion during the day and it lasted throughout the Shabbat. And a portion of the maan was set aside in the Temple to bear witness for the next 1000 years that when we bind ourselves to Hashem, Hashem takes care of it all.

When we pray three times each day, when we set aside time to learn Torah, when we go against our greedy natures and act charitably, when we are honest at work and refuse the shady buck, when we dedicate ourselves to the community and others, when we are shomer brit and shomer Shabbat; when we do all these things; we have truly risen to a higher level. We become someone above nature, no longer governed by the laws of nature. We rise to the point where our prayers are heard and miracles can happen because we bring ourselves up to the world of miracles.

But to appreciate miracles, we need to step back and look. We need to pay attention and ponder. We need to contemplate and appreciate.

Today we often need a vacation from the vacation. We go away and we run. We fill every moment with activities. We don't want to miss a thing. So many times, the sites escape us. Luckily we have pictures.

Now that most of us are back from vacation and the kids are back in school, let's take a breath. Take a look at the pictures and take a moment to appreciate the background; to appreciate the wonderful world G-d gave us, and truly say SheHakol Nihiyeh Bidbaro . everything was created

by His word. And hopefully we'll remember to put our blackberries down for a few moments here and there, turn our cell phones off for a few minutes, close the radio, bond with our families and together appreciate the world.

Thank G-d for the gift of Shabbat.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: The Bnai Yisroel (Children of Israel - Jews) had left Mitzrayim (Egypt). The closest route to Eretz Yisroel (The Land of Israel) was along the Mediterranean coast up into Israel. However; this territory was occupied by the Philistines. The Bnai Yisroel were not ready for a battle, so Hashem (G-d) lead them toward the Sea of Reeds. Pharaoh was informed that The Bnai Yisroel appeared to be lost, and he strengthened his resolve and that of his people and pursued the Jews into the Desert.

2nd Aliya: The Egyptians caught up to the Jews as they were camped by the edge of the sea. (Imagine the thundering sound, and cloud of dust that 600 charging chariots must have made and you can begin to understand the pure terror that must have struck the hearts of the people.) Moshe reassured them that they only had to trust Hashem and stand silently as His awesome majesty wiped out the might of Mitzrayim.

3rd Aliya: Moshe was told to stretch out his staff over the sea. Hashem separated the Jews from the Egyptians with a cloud cover and caused an Easterly wind to blow the entire night. As the waters parted, the Bnai Yisroel entered between the towering

walls of water and crossed to the other side. The Egyptians chased after them into the parted waters of the sea.

4th Aliya: Moshe stretched his arm back over the sea and the waters returned to their natural state, drowning the might and glory of Egypt's best. The Bnai Yisroel witnessed G-d's awesome display of justice and they believed in the reality of Hashem and in the appointment of Moshe as His most trusted servant. Moshe, and then Miriam, lead the Bnai Yisroel in a spontaneous song of exaltation and thanksgiving. The incident with the bitter waters at Marah is detailed.

5th Aliya: The Bnai Yisroel struggled with the realities of their experience, attempting to balance faith with practical concerns for survival. The concerns for food and water were overwhelming and Moshe promised them quail and Maana. These "miracles" were introduced to the Jews as evidence of Hashem's love, caring, honor and glory.

6th Aliya: The Bnai Yisroel were given strict instructions regarding the gathering and eating of the Maana. They were introduced to Shabbos, and an urn of Manna was saved for posterity.

7th Aliya: The nation traveled to Rephidim, and confronted Moshe over the issue of water. Moshe saw this as an unnecessary challenge to Hashem's caring and love. Hashem instructed Moshe to hit the rock and bring forth water. The final episode in the Parsha was Amalek's unprovoked attack on the newly independent nation. Yehoshua lead the attack against Amalek while Moshe, Aharon, and Chur (Miriam's son) stood atop the battle field with Moshe's arms stretched heavenward. Hashem commanded us to

eradicate and never forget Amalek's evil.

This week's Haftorah is found in Shoftim (Judges) chapter 4. It relates the story of Deborah the Prophet, who along with her husband Barak, ruled the nation for 40 years. The year was 2654 - 1107 b.c.e and the nation was subject to the rule of Yavin of Canaan and his evil General Sisra. In a decisive battle at the foot of Mt. Tabor by the brook of Kishon, Hashem delivered the armies of Yavin into the hands of Barak and the Bnai Yisroel (Children of Israel). Sisra, the general, fled the battlefield on foot and sought refuge in the tent of Yael (a non-Jew). He asked for water but she gave him milk, and he then fell into a deep sleep. Yael took a tent stake and drove it through the skull of the evil Sisra.

Reminiscent of the destruction of Mitzrayim by the Yam Suf (Sea of Reeds) and the Shira which was sung by the Bnai Yisroel, Deborah sang a magnificent song filled with the praises and glory of Hashem. This Haftorah is the longest Haftorah in the course of the year.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

What happened when Pharaoh sent out the people. (Shemot 13:17)

According to the Midrash (Mechilta), the expression "sent out" implies an escort or accompaniment. Thus Pharaoh escorted the Israelites out of Egypt with honor. While the Jews were in Egypt their plight became unbearable. Not only was the work backbreaking, but Pharaoh decreed that they must gather their own straw. With this additional burden the Jews could think only of how to rid themselves of their brutal

masters. It is therefore inconceivable that the Jews would even consider returning to Egypt of their own free will. Yet the Parashah begins by telling us that Hashem had to take them out of Egypt with a roundabout circuit so they would not go back. This seems to defy logic.

However, the Midrash quoted above reveals to us the unique character of Israel. During their final days in Egypt the Egyptians befriended the Jews. They lent them gold and silver and Pharaoh himself turned out to escort them. This is the error which seems typical of the Jewish people. Foolishly we tend to quickly forget the harshness of the nations of the world. All they need to do is favor us with the slightest smile and we believe they are our best friends. When Pharaoh sent us out with a smile the possibility already existed that they might lose heart and return to Egypt at the slightest sign of an obstacle, especially an attack. For this reason Hashem took the people, who were already excited by the honor Pharaoh gave them, along a circuitous path by way of the desert.

We also love the Americans, and that is a good thing. We should love the nations of the world. The only thing is that we shouldn't rely on them but only on Hashem. Even in our post-Holocaust era the lesson is not to hate the Germans but we learned that in our exiles we should rely only on Hashem. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

The Midrash in this week's parashah 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 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! Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT

Getting dressed in the morning is distressing to many people. They are attacked by feelings of insecurity and doubt as they try to match their exterior trappings to their internal mood. Others experience pride and excitement as they coordinate their look for the upcoming day of work or play. Whatever your attitude toward clothing may be, you cannot deny its power in projecting your image to others, and the ego-building potential a good outfit contains.

Clothing tells others who you are and how you feel about life. Are you blasé and nonchalant? Do you seek attention or hide from the stares of other people? Are you a doctor, policeman, Rabbi, or athlete? Do you earn a good income, or must you struggle to make ends meet? Are you neat or sloppy?

Clothes say a lot about a person!

In Judaism, clothes hold a place of special importance; in fact, Rabbi Yochanan called his clothes his *kibud*.+ Everyone is taught to dress in a fashion that is worthy of a diplomat in Hashem's Foreign Service. We acknowledge the gift of clothing from Hashem in our morning blessings, and blessings are said when new garments are worn. A husband should make sure that his wife has a special holy-day wardrobe to greet our *yamim tovin* (holidays).

As you catch sight of your reflection in the mirror, storefront glass, or reflective car window, ask yourself, *Do I appreciate the clothing Hashem has given me? Am I using the opportunity of getting dressed to create a mood, an image, and a style that makes me feel good . and my Maker,*

too?+ Then say, %Thank you Hashem!+ (One Minute With Yourself . Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Visit DailyHalacha.com, It's Hard Enough as it is!

Parashat Beshalah tells the story of Keriat Yam Suf, the great miracle of the splitting of the sea. King David speaks about this miracle in Tehillim (114), where he writes, *%Mayam Raq Vayanos+.* %The sea saw, and fled.+Apparently, the sea %saw+ something before it %fled+. meaning, before it consented to split into two bodies of water and let Beneh Yisrael pass through. The Midrash understood this Pasuk to mean that the sea split in the merit of Yosef, who %fled+. As we read in Parashat Vayesheb (39:13), Yosef fled from the house of Potifar, where he worked as a slave, when Potifar's wife tried to seduce him. It was in this merit, the Midrash writes, that the sea split for Beneh Yisrael to save them from the pursuing Egyptian army.

This comment of the Midrash requires some explanation. Why was the particular aspect of Yosef %fleeing+so special, and deserving of such a great reward? Yosef withstood temptation as a teenage boy in a foreign country. This itself was truly heroic. What was so significant about the fact that he fled?

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz (1901-1978) explained that the Midrash here teaches a fundamental and critical rule about religious life: we are to run away from spiritual challenges. We should not be looking for %tests,+to put ourselves in situations that arouse temptation or make religious observance difficult. A recovering addict does not keep a container of drugs on his kitchen table to

prove to himself that he is capable of abstaining. Similarly, the Gemara in Baba Batra (57b) teaches that if a man has two paths he could follow to reach his destination, and deliberately chooses the path where women are present and not modestly dressed, he is considered a Rasha even if closes his eyes. Voluntarily choosing situations of religious challenges is wrong . even if one successfully hurdles the challenge. Yosef's greatness was not just in resisting temptation, but in running away from temptation. He refused to stay there for even an extra moment, lest the Yeser Ha'ra figure out a way to overcome him.

The rationale behind this rule is simple. Namely, we've got our hands full as it is. We already have plenty to deal with. Any conscientious religious Jew knows that observing Halacha can be challenging and demands great amounts of discipline and effort. The tests that God sends us are enough for us. We should not be in the business of subjecting ourselves to further tests.

But there is a deeper reason for this principle, as well. Anytime God subjects us to a test, we can rest assured that we have the wherewithal to succeed. This is a basic rule that we should all know: God does not send us a spiritual challenge that we cannot overcome. If He brought the situation upon us, we can and must assume, unquestioningly, that we are capable of passing the test. However, we have no such guarantee regarding tests that we bring upon ourselves. We might feel confident in our ability to withstand the temptation, but only God knows the outcome before the situation unfolds. There is thus no justification for voluntarily placing oneself in spiritually challenging situations.

Indeed, we pray every day in our morning prayer service, *Al Tebieanu Ligdeh Nisayon*. that Hashem should not subject us to tests. Certainly, then, we should not be subjecting ourselves to tests.

We might draw an analogy to a driver who was speeding down the road and could not stop at the red light. He obviously cannot excuse himself from guilt by claiming that he was unable to stop. What was he doing driving dangerously in the first place? He had to anticipate traffic lights on the road. He should not be driving so fast to begin with.

Leading a Torah life is fraught with challenges, and we shouldn't be looking for more. We must be very careful in choosing the places we go and the kind of activities we engage in. If there are situations that could potentially compromise our religious standards, we should avoid them.

Rabbi Yonah Suf was likely the greatest miracle that ever occurred, and the Midrash teaches that it happened in the merit of Yosef escaping a situation of temptation. Let us follow his inspiring example and avoid all spiritually threatening situations, and in this merit, B'ezrat Hashem, we, too, will experience great miracles and receive God's bountiful blessings, Amen.

Rabbi Wein The Spiritual Effect of Tasting the Manna

The miracle of the manna that fell from heaven and nurtured millions of people for forty years is one of the focal points of this week's parsha. The obvious reason for the miracle's occurrence is that the Jewish people had to have daily nourishment simply to

survive. However the rabbis of the Talmud injected another factor into the miracle of the falling manna.

They stated that the Torah could only have been granted to those that ate manna daily. Thus the necessity for the manna was directly associated with the granting of the Torah to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai. No manna, no Torah. Why is this so?

Most commentators are of the opinion that only a people freed from the daily concerns of earning a living and feeding a family could devote themselves solely to Torah study and acceptance of the life values that acceptance of the Torah mandates.

The Torah is a demanding discipline. It requires time and effort, concentration and focus to appreciate and understand it. cursory glances and even inspiring sermons will not yield much to those who are unwilling to invest time and effort into its study and analysis. This was certainly true in this first generation of Jewish life, newly freed from Egyptian bondage and lacking heritage, tradition and life mores that would, in later generations, help Jews remain Jewish and appreciate the Torah. The isolation of the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai coupled with the heavenly provision of daily manna and the miraculous well of Miriam together created a certain think-tank atmosphere. This atmosphere enabled Torah to take root in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people.

In his final oration to the Jewish people, recorded for us in the book of Dvarim, Moshe reviews the story of the manna falling from heaven. But there Moshe places a different emphasis on the matter. He states there that the

manna came to teach, that humans do not live by bread alone but rather on the utterances of God's mouth,

In order to appreciate Torah, to truly fathom its depths and understand its values system, one has to accept its Divine origin. Denying that basic premise of Judaism compromises all deeper understanding and analysis of Torah. Thus the manna, the presence of God, so to speak, in the daily life of the Jew allowed the Torah to sink into the depths of the Jewish soul and become part of the matrix of our very DNA.

The Torah could only find a permanent and respected home within those who tasted God's presence, so to speak, every day within their very beings and bodies. The rabbis also taught us that the manna produced no waste materials within the human body.

When dealing with holiness and holy endeavors there is nothing that goes to waste. No effort is ignored and no thought and attempt is left unrecorded in the heavenly court of judgment. Even good intent is counted meritoriously. Let us feel that we too have tasted the manna

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Parsha Parables Sweet Offerings

Though the highlight of the portion of B'shalach is the splitting of the Red Sea, the Jews passing through safely and the drowning of the Egyptians, there are a number of seminal segments of the Torah in it as well. Of course, there is the Song at the Sea, known as Az Yashir recited everyday in the morning tefilah by thousands of Jews worldwide. But there is also the portion of the manna. After the miraculous sea-

crossing, things don't go as well. The nation becomes thirsty and hungry, and repeatedly complains to Moshe and Aaron. Hashem commands Moshe to use his staff to miraculously sweeten bitter waters at Marah, and later Moshe uses the same stick to bring forth water from a rock by striking it.

But one miracle that began in this week's parsha, continues day in and day out for 40 years, probably the longest ongoing miracle of sustenance in recorded history.

The manna falls every day except for Shabbos. The Children of Israel are instructed to gather a double portion of manna on Friday, as none will descend on Shabbos.

"So he said to them, that is what Hashem spoke, "Tomorrow is a rest day, a holy Sabbath to Hashem . . . And Moshe said, eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, Shabbath, on it there will be none" (Exodus 16:23).

The Torah tells us that there were, however, those who were not so trusting. "It came about that on the seventh day, [some] of the people went out to gather [manna], but they did not find [any]. Hashem said to Moshe, how long will you refuse to observe My commandments and My teachings? See that the Lord has given you the Sabbath. Therefore, on the sixth day, He gives you bread for two days. Let each man remain in his place; let no man leave his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day." (Exodus 16:25-30).

Then finally the Torah describes the manna. "The house of Israel named it manna, and it was like coriander seed, [it was] white, and

it tasted like a wafer fried with with honey" (ibid 16:31).

I am troubled. The narrative should have described the color, texture and taste of manna right from the very start. Why did the Torah tell us about the sweetness of the manna only after it relates the story of the would-be Shabbos violators? It is also interesting to note, that later in the Torah portion of Behalosecha, in an episode unrelated to Shabbos, the Torah tells us that the manna tasted like fried dough (See Numbers 11:6-7).

The Story

I recently received this story via e-mail, I assume it is apocryphal, but it is indeed telling.

When they first built the super highway from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, they built an exit that passed straight through a town of either Breslov or Chabad Chassidim, known for their warmth and hospitality. Of course, it was uncomfortable for them to see cars whizzing by on Shabbos, but they did not protest. They did not rant and rave to the Government and they did not throw stones and soiled diapers at the cars driving through.

Instead, the Chassidim went out after their morning services and set up tables beside the road. They invited the people driving through to stop for kiddush and some cake and wine and gefilte fish. They even offered hot cholent and a bit of vodka. Then they invited them home to have Shabbat lunch with their families. The drivers soon became interested in Torah and the meaning of Shabbos observance.

Guess what happened? The government moved the exit.

The Message

Perhaps the placement describing the manna as sweet as honey is very calculated. It is juxtaposed directly after the episode of Shabbos violation, to subtly teach us an antidote to the naysayers and detractors who would go out in search of Shabbos desecration.

"Let the Manna taste like honey". Give them something sweet. Maybe when the fare that people are given does not taste as bland like fried dough, but rather sweet as honey, they too, will never look to go out and attempt to desecrate the Shabbos.

Instead they will learn its sweetness from the delicious fare they just enjoyed.

Ricky Cohen

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close
The Oxymoronic Nature of Parenting

The movie ~~%~~Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close+is a sophisticated and courageous effort to show the devastation experienced by a young boy, Oskar, who suddenly loses his father in the terrorist attack, on the World Trade Center, on September 11, 2001. The victim, Thomas Schell, played by Tom Hanks, happens to be the son of Holocaust survivors, and the portrayal of his relationship with his only son is subtly interwoven with undertones of how that genocide shaped their lives. Thomas is an engaged and thoughtful father who spends large amounts of time with his son helping to permanently shape the way this young man engages his world.

Through an ongoing ~~%~~game+of sharing information, Thomas persistently encourages Oskar to confront areas of knowledge that

are foreign to him ultimately gaining access to those areas. Thomas challenges his son to search intellectually and lovingly. He also seems to spend a lot of time inspiring and teaching Oskar to dream, and to fantasize, with an ongoing tale of a ~~with~~ borough that once was part of New York City.

The acquired ability to fantasize allows Oskar to reach beyond his immediate circumstances and pursue something overwhelmingly unattainable. Although, the very young man seemed to know that, in the end, all good and fantastical things cease or die. Thomas and Oskar also engaged in an ongoing verbal dual, in which one would upstage the other with the oxymoronic elements of life and the terminology that described them. An oxymoron is a figure of speech with contradictory terms crafted to reveal a paradox. Terms like: ~~a~~ fine mess, ~~a~~ little pregnant, ~~a~~ benign neglect and ~~a~~ planned spontaneity are examples of commonly used oxymorons. Thomas' oxymoron games taught Oskar about some of the most profound and difficult to understand elements of life. Parenting is flush with efforts that are paradoxical and often demands behavior that can only be described in oxymoronic terms.

What follows is an excerpt from a piece I wrote some years ago describing my own challenges regarding the paradoxes of fatherhood:

To be a source of respect and awe,
and be emotionally touchable.

To be a fortress of strength,
and a palace of sharing.

To be a reservoir of wisdom,
and a river of thirst for knowledge.

To be as brave as a tiger,

and as brave as a kitten.

To be as resourceful as a super hero,
and as defenseless as a newborn child.

To smile with authority, as only a courageous human being can,
and to laugh fully with those who love you

(Adapted from ~~F~~atherhood in the book titled From Me to My Children)

To live life in a paradoxical position is generally complex, often open ended, and always challenging.

For a parent there is no other way.

A parent may never choose one or the other. Strength may never trump accessibility, power may never hide vulnerability, and respect may never allow a child to imagine that one is not hungry for new knowledge and growth. Political leaders, and aspiring corporate leaders, struggle with this. They must show a connectedness and the ability to empathize and be touched by those they lead, yet at the same time project a persona of power and self-assuredness.

Our forefathers and ancient leaders are deliberately shown in both roles, to enable us to model and mimic them. Abraham was a warrior and a compassionate father, uncle, and builder of humanity. Jacob was a dreamer and a scholar, yet immersed himself in the most challenging practical life scripts. Moshe (Moses) was a man of compassion, who saw himself as the father of a nation, yet also displayed his fears and even his anger.

A parent must always be aware that his young adult son is not his buddy yet they must laugh and share as friends. One's student is an individual she treasures. yet she must zealously insure that

deep felt respect is never compromised. One's employees are the team that is essential to his success, so there must be openness and a collective building process yet they and he must understand that the pyramid is not flat, and success demands clearly delineated leadership.

So, dear friends, in order to be a successful parent you must struggle with the paradox of parenthood every day. In order to effectively guide your children, they have to become comfortable with the oxymoronic nature of life. In the movie, Thomas wasn't attempting to teach his son how to separate himself from the concept of an oxymoron he was teaching him to embrace it. The depiction of the different sides of the ancient giants who built us provides the same lesson. So, as you wear ~~a~~ business casual clothing and engage ~~a~~ friendly competitors in an attempt to ~~a~~ grow your business, as you're happy with your lot, keep in mind that being an effective parent makes all the struggles worthwhile.

Warmest regards, Ricky

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United
Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth**

For the first time since their departure from Egypt the Israelites do something together. They sing. ~~Then~~ sang Moses and the children of Israel. Rashi, explaining the view of R. Nehemiah in the Talmud (Sotah 30b) that they spontaneously sang the song together, says that the holy spirit rested on them and miraculously the same words came into their minds at the same time. In recollection of that moment, tradition has named this week Shabbat Shirah, the

Sabbath of Song. What is the place of song in Judaism?

There is an inner connection between music and the spirit. When language aspires to the transcendent and the soul longs to break free of the gravitational pull of the earth, it modulates into song. Music, said Arnold Bennett is %a language which the soul alone understands but which the soul can never translate.+It is, in Richter's words %the poetry of the air.+Tolstoy called it %the shorthand of emotion.+Goethe said, %Religious worship cannot do without music. It is one of the foremost means to work upon man with an effect of marvel.+ Words are the language of the mind. Music is the language of the soul.

So when we seek to express or evoke emotion we turn to melody. Deborah sang after Israel's victory over the forces of Sisera (Judges 5). Hannah sang when she had a child (1 Sam. 2). When Saul was depressed, David would play for him and his spirit would be restored (1 Sam. 16). David himself was known as the %sweet singer of Israel+(2 Sam. 23: 1). Elisha called for a harpist to play so that the prophetic spirit could rest upon him (2 Kings 3: 15). The Levites sang in the Temple. Every day, in Judaism, we preface our morning prayers with Pesukei de-Zimra, the 'Verses of Song' with their magnificent crescendo, Psalm 150, in which instruments and the human voice combine to sing God's praises.

Mystics go further and speak of the song of the universe, what Pythagoras called 'the music of the spheres'. This is what Psalm 19 means when it says, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands . . . There is no speech, there are no words, where their voice is not heard. Their music[1]

carries throughout the earth, their words to the end of the world.' Beneath the silence, audible only to the inner ear, creation sings to its Creator.

So, when we pray, we do not read: we sing. When we engage with sacred texts, we do not recite: we chant. Every text and every time has, in Judaism, its own specific melody. There are different tunes for shacharit, mincha and ma'ariv, the morning, afternoon and evening prayers. There are different melodies and moods for the prayers for a weekday, Shabbat, the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot (which have much musically in common but also tunes distinctive to each), and for the Yamim Noraim, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

There are different tunes for different texts. There is one kind of cantillation for Torah, another for the haftarah from the prophetic books, and yet another for Ketuvim, the Writings, especially the five Megillot. There is a particular chant for studying the texts of the written Torah, for studying Mishnah and Gemarah. So by music alone we can tell what kind of day it is and what kind of text is being used. There is a map of holy words and it is written in melodies and songs.

Music has extraordinary power to evoke emotion. The Kol Nidrei prayer with which Yom Kippur begins is not really a prayer at all. It is a dry legal formula for the annulment of vows. There can be little doubt that it is its ancient, haunting melody that has given it its hold over the Jewish imagination. It is hard to hear those notes and not feel that you are in the presence of God on the Day of Judgment, standing in the company of Jews of all places and times as they pleaded with heaven for forgiveness. It is the

holy of holies of the Jewish soul. (Lehavedil, Beethoven came close to it in the opening notes of the sixth movement of the C Sharp Minor Quartet op. 131, his most sublime and spiritual work).

Nor can you sit on Tisha B'av reading Eichah, the book of Lamentations, with its own unique cantillation, and not feel the tears of Jews through the ages as they suffered for their faith and wept as they remembered what they had lost, the pain as fresh as it was the day the Temple was destroyed. Words without music are like a body without a soul.

Each year for the past ten years I have been privileged to be part of a mission of song (together with the Shabbaton Choir and singers Rabbi Lionel Rosenfeld and Chazanim Shimon Craimer and Jonny Turgel) to Israel to sing to victims of terror, as well as to people in hospitals, community centres and food kitchens. We sing for and with the injured, the bereaved, the sick and the broken hearted. We dance with people in wheelchairs. One boy who had lost half of his family, as well as being blinded, in a suicide bombing, sang a duet with the youngest member of the choir, reducing the nurses and his fellow patients to tears. Such moments are epiphanies, redeeming a fragment of humanity and hope from the random cruelties of fate.

Beethoven wrote over the manuscript of the third movement of his A Minor Quartet the words Neue Kraft fühlend, %Feeling new strength.+That is what you sense in those hospital wards. You understand what King David meant when he sang to God the words: %You turned my grief into dance; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to You and not be silent.+You feel the strength of

the human spirit no terror can destroy.

In his book, *Musicophilia*, the neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks (no relative, alas) tells the poignant story of Clive Wearing, an eminent musicologist who was struck by a devastating brain infection. The result was acute amnesia. He was unable to remember anything for more than a few seconds. As his wife Deborah put it, 'It was as if every waking moment was the first waking moment.'

Unable to thread experiences together, he was caught in an endless present that had no connection with anything that had gone before. One day his wife found him holding a chocolate in one hand and repeatedly covering and uncovering it with the other hand, saying each time, 'Look, it's new.' 'It's the same chocolate', she said. 'No', he replied, 'look. It's changed.' He had no past at all. In a moment of awareness he said about himself, 'I haven't heard anything, seen anything, touched anything, smelled anything. It's like being dead.'

Two things broke through his isolation. One was his love for his wife. The other was music. He could still sing, play the organ and conduct a choir with all his old skill and verve. What was it about music, Sacks asked, that enabled him, while playing or conducting, to overcome his amnesia? He suggests that when we 'remember' a melody, we recall one note at a time, yet each note relates to the whole. He quotes the philosopher of music, Victor Zuckerkandl, who wrote, 'Hearing a melody is hearing, having heard, and being about to hear, all at once. Every melody declares to us that the past can be there without being remembered, the future without

being foreknown.' Music is a form of sensed continuity that can sometimes break through the most overpowering disconnections in our experience of time.

Faith is more like music than like science. Science analyzes, music integrates. And as music connects note to note, so faith connects episode to episode, life to life, age to age in a timeless melody that breaks into time. God is the composer and librettist. We are each called on to be voices in the choir, singers of God's song. Faith teaches us to hear the music beneath the noise.

So music is a signal of transcendence. The philosopher and musician Roger Scruton writes that it is 'an encounter with the pure subject, released from the world of objects, and moving in obedience to the laws of freedom alone.' He quotes Rilke: 'Words still go softly out towards the unsayable / And music, always new, from palpitating stones / builds in useless space its godly home.' The history of the Jewish spirit is written in its songs. The words do not change, but each generation needs its own melodies.

Our generation needs new songs so that we too can sing joyously to God as our ancestors did at that moment of transfiguration when they crossed the Red Sea and emerged, the other side, free at last. When the soul sings, the spirit soars.

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