

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

## BESHALAH

JANUARY 11, 2014

10 SHEBAT 5774

Tu B'Shebat will be celebrated on Wednesday night and Thursday, January 15-16..

**DEDICATIONS:** Please pray for a refuah shelemah for Yosef ben Esther

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### Editors Notes

Tonight the Yahrzeit of my Rabbi and teacher Haham Asher Abittan z'sl. Its 3AM and circumstances allowed me to set aside tonight to learn and then complete the newsletter. I prepared my article on Sunday and completed much of the newsletter on Monday night. So I assume I'll be done before the sun beckons. Before I continue, can I ask you all a favor? Please . pray for a Refuah Shelemah for Yosef Ben Esther. He suffered an infection which led to complications and we pray he will be healed.

Earlier this evening my son asked me a question on Psalm 67, the one we often see in the shape of the Menorah. This is what I would study tonight. I had finished reviewing some notes when I received an email from Gutman Locks in Jerusalem. I was reminded of a conversation with Rabbi Abittan and decided to reply.

### **Gutman writes:**

***When I told a 'Charedi Rosh Hayeshiva that my YouTube videos are on a number of channels, and all together they have received well over one million views, he made a sour face and yelled, "And what good do they do?"***

***I tried to explain to him that the vast majority of Jews in the world today do not buy religious books, at least not Jewish religious books, so the internet is the best way to reach them. I told him that I have received letters from all over the world telling me how a video changed their lives. He scowled at me.***

***I just received another one. Yes, the internet is dangerous, but it is also an opportunity to help people who otherwise we would not be able to reach.***

### **Yohanan Levi wrote:**

***Rabbi, I was a Jew stranded in fables and nonsense and thanks to one of your videos I came back to the Faith of my forefathers. I will forever be grateful to Hashem for you. Peace to you forever. Besides me also my mother, wife and my sister.***

### **Gutman wrote back:**

***The best way to thank me is to look for someone else who is stuck where you were stuck and help him to come home, too. You can be a huge help to a lot of people if you try. Be well***

I was moved and using my iphone, I wrote back, Chazak Ubaruch

Tonight is the Yahrzeit of my Rabbi and teacher Haham Asher Abittan z'sl and I fondly recall discussing the internet with him especially when I started a newsletter called Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace 19 years ago.

The rabbi would explain that everything in the world is always kept in balance. That which has the greatest ability to do bad, must also have the greatest ability to do good. We know the negative about the Internet, but if the negative is so great the positive and the potential must be just as great he suggested.

Rabbi Wein tells that the single greatest invention for the Jewish people was the printing press. The printing press truly allowed us to become the people of the book. And although the first item that Gutenberg printed was the Bible, few know what the second and third books were. Rabbi Wein tells us that they were books of pornography that probably outsold the Bible at the time.

I remember when my dear friend Rabbi Paysach Krohn, was approached by another friend Michael Rothschild who founded the Chafetz Chaim Heritage

Foundation. Michael asked rabbi Krohn if he would like to speak to 100,000 people on tisha beav. The rabbi wondered if Michael thought he could rent giant stadium and fill the playing field with seats in addition to the stands. Where in New York could you put 100,000 people?

We all know that the idea of the Tisha BeAv video was born that day. Today hundreds of thousands of Jews around the world see the same video on the 9th of Av around the world.

But technology has played a crucial role in our learning. I recall how we would go to Brooklyn for the satellite hook up to see Haham Ovadia z'sl. And with tapes, CDs, MP3s and streaming audio, many of my greatest teachers I only met years after I became their students.

I remember speaking with Rabbi Yosef Kazan z'sl who founded Chabad's website. How many millions has it reached? How many lives have changed?

I probably reach 25,000 or so people each week through my newsletter and through the places that publish my thoughts on the Perasha. Compare that to the 100 people who are in Synagogue to hear a derasha on Shabbat.

There are some words that the Torah refers to using the masculine and the feminine forms. Those include fire and wind. The commonality in items the Torah refers to in both ways is the great potential for negative and positive simultaneously. Technology would be one of those items.

My rabbi z'sl would quote the Chofetz Chaim reminding us that all inventions and technologies are ultimately for our benefit.

He would imagine the Mashiah may he come bimherah beyameynu, teaching the entire world wherever anyone was as a hologram complete with holograms of books we could see and touch and turn in order to follow the daily lesson.

Let me close with a story the Rabbi would tell that Saul Kassin emailed this week.

Once, during a snow blizzard Rabbi Shlomo Heiman arrived to give his Shiur. His normally crowded Shiur had only four bachurim. As was his style, he gave an animated Shiur, lecturing as if a huge crowd was present. One of those bachurim asked Reb Shlomo why he used so much effort for only four bachurim?

He replied, "Do you think I was giving the Shiur just to you? I was giving the Shiur for you, for your talmidim and for all their future talmidim. Such a Shiur must be given with every ounce of strength."

Imagine if the gedolim took advantage of these technologies. They too could speak to tens of thousands each time they taught. Imagine how that would change the world.

May Hashem bless you. May you go from strength to strength. May your views increase from a million to ten million reaching our brothers in the far corners of the earth and those next door. Be well my friend. I look forward to seeing you BH. Shabbat Shalom

And now what I wrote for this week

### **Breaking Through the Barriers that Block our Paths**

I was speaking with a friend, a doctor, who was experiencing a great deal of frustration in medicine especially because of the poor bedside manners of many of his colleagues. He would get especially upset when he would hear someone tell a patient that they had a specific amount of time to live. They would justify themselves as being honest realists towards their patients. My friend would counter that only G-d decides when cautioning them to be very careful with their predictions. He would quote the Talmud from Kidushin which states, "The best among the physicians to Gehinom". He would explain that in his opinion the best refers to those physicians who think they are the best; those physicians who are so sure of themselves and their predictions; those physicians who seem themselves as all knowing. He bemoaned the fact that so many physicians forget they are tools of the Almighty. Although we have heard many stories of people who lived well beyond predictions, we must ponder, how much damage the negative prediction causes to an already ill person. Whatever strength may have been there quickly evaporates into the air.

Physicians are not prophets, yet still we shudder at their prophecies. Now imagine it's not the physician who makes the prediction, let's picture it's a prophet who was told what to say by G-d Himself. Melachim II tells us about the Jewish King, Chizkiyahu. He was an extremely righteous king who spread Torah among the Jewish nation in amazing ways. Yet the verse states, "In those days, Chizkiyahu became deathly ill; Yeshayahu the son of Amotz came to him and said, 'So says Hashem: Prepare your household, for you shall die and you shall not live!'"

Picture the scene. Chizkiyahu the King is laying in bed, probably surrounded by physicians shaking their heads. Into the room steps the Navi Yishayahu, who many suggest that after Moses, he was considered to be the greatest of all prophets. Perhaps he is here to offer a blessing? No, Yeshayahu the prophet has come to inform the King that a death sentence was already decreed upon him from Above. The Talmud expounds, that what the prophet meant to tell him was, "For you shall die," referring to death in this world, "And you shall not live," referring to death in the World to Come. The discussion continues with the King pleading for a way out, but Yeshayahu tells him, "The decree has already been sealed," meaning that anything you do will be futile at this point.

Hearing the word of G-d and staring into this abyss what would most of us have done? Called our family, the undertaker, the estate lawyer and said good bye. Yet Chizkiyahu replies, "Son of Amotz, finish your prophecy and leave! I have a tradition handed down from my ancestors that even if one has a sharp sword laying on his throat, he should not hold back from requesting Hashem's mercy!"

Where does one find the strength to reject predictions? Where does one find someone staring into a dead end and certain death, yet refusing to give in? The Rabbis tell us he learned it from his ancestor King David, but perhaps it was in David's DNA from an ancestor the midrash tells us about relating to this week's portion of Beshalach where we cross the sea and leave the Egyptians drowning in its waters. .

Although most of us picture the splitting of the sea differently depending on the media influences; be it, The Ten Commandments, The Prince of Egypt or some painting we saw, Rabbi Shraga Simmons recounts the scene beautifully, "Three million Jews are standing at the shores of the Red Sea. Their options are either to go forward into the un-split sea, or back to Egypt. The sea is cold, strange and foreboding. Egypt is warm, familiar and comfortable.

"The Egyptians are thundering closer. The Jews are panicked. And then Nachshon, from the tribe of Yehuda, steps foot into the sea. (The original "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.") But the sea still does not split. Nachshon continues as the water reaches his ankles, then up to his knees. Still no split. Nachshon forges deeper: Up to his waist, his chest. Still no split.

"Nachshon's mind races: Maybe we should return to Egypt. Then he reminds himself: Life is about growing ... leaving the place of confinement behind...

moving forward into the unknown ... But the alternative — to stay in our small space of warmth and comfort, is to choose stagnation and, ultimately, death. Egypt, Nachshon knew, was no option at all.

"By now the water has reached his neck. Nachshon is being challenged to his limit. Yet he continues into the sea. As the water reaches his nostrils, at this last possible moment... the Red Sea splits. The Jewish People all rush in after him. Finally, freedom.

Rabbi Simmons continues, "Although every Jew passed through on dry land, the experience of Nachshon was qualitatively different. When Nachshon walked through the sea, he was alive and invigorated. The future had issued its challenge, and Nachshon confronted it head-on. Slavery was baggage he'd left behind. He was liberated, both body and soul.

"Contrast this to the experience of the rest of the Jewish People. The others, having entered only after the sea split, were in one sense disappointed in themselves for not having the bravery of Nachshon. Nachshon "entered the water first" (Exodus 14:22); the others "entered first on dry land" (14:29)."

Nachshon left this impression, this feeling of never say dead, never say its over, no matter how high the mountain or how wide the river. Have faith, ask for help and press forward.

Remember Chizkiyahu. He will not accept the negative prophecy. A negative prophecy is never sealed in stone. A negative prophecy can be changed. There is a wall in front of him but the wall can be penetrated and broken. The verse in Melachim continues: "He turned his face towards the wall and he prayed to Hashem saying: 'Please Hashem! Remember how I have walked before You truthfully and whole-heartedly and how I have done good in Your eyes!' Chizkiyahu wept a great weeping."

And how quickly does salvation come. As the water enters Nachshon's mouth, the sea miraculously splits in front of everyone's eyes.

Sidkiyahu says a momentary prayer from his heart. He refuses to accept what will be. Instead he begs for what can be. He steps into his own sea and Immediately afterwards, Hashem reappeared to Yeshayahu the prophet and told him: "Return to Chizkiyahu, officer of my nation, and tell him: 'So says Hashem, G-d of your father David: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I shall heal you! On

the third day ascend to the House of Hashem and I shall add fifteen years to your life.”

Nachshon led the way. And we have to follow his path. We have to step forward. We have to try.

Now this does not mean that everything will go our way and be as we want it. It does not mean that we will split every sea that sits in our path. But it does mean we can try, we can press forward, we can pray and we can fight.

Miracles happen, but only when we take the step forward, when we believe they can happen and only when we try.

And when the doomsayers knock at your door, remember the words: “Son of Amotz, finish your prophecy and leave! I have a tradition handed down from my ancestors that even if one has a sharp sword laying on his throat, he should not hold back from requesting Hashem’s mercy!”

May we all be blessed to be the recipient of the mercy our Father in Heaven wants to give us and to step through the seas that appears to block our paths and see them split before us.

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.

Shoftim 4:4 - This weeks Haftorah is found in Shoftim (Judges) chapter 4. It relates the story of Devorah 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 Shirah which was sung by the Bnai Yisroel, Devorah 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

**“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Behold I shall rain down for you food from heaven.’” (Shemot 16:4)**

Whether we are financially successful or struggling, our livelihood is in the hands of the Almighty. Yet in our daily living it is easy to forget this fact. In Parashat Beshalah the Israelites began to receive the manna. When they received their daily portion of manna there was no question who had given it to them. Today it's not so easy to be cognizant of that fact, but we must try to keep it in mind as much as we can.

Rabbi Yechiel Spero tells a true story that can help us. The Ba'al Shem Tov had a student named Yossele, who, although well meaning, had a great desire to steal. A young woman named Sarah, who had recently lost both her parents, lived in a beautiful mansion on the outskirts of town. Yossele decided that he would target her home.

The gatekeeper was sleeping when Yossele crept up to the house and surprisingly not one servant was around. Yossele entered the mansion and was awed by the riches he found. Beautiful rugs, paintings, chandeliers, crystal and silver filled the home. Yossele made his way to a safe he discovered behind one of the paintings. Yossele was savvy at picking locks, and the door to the safe popped open before he knew it. The safe was full of jewelry, precious stones, and stacks of money.

But ironically, Yossele was disappointed. Why had everything gone so easily for him? He knew a person's livelihood is predetermined from Rosh Hashanah, so why was he trying to steal from this orphan? He waged war with his inner being and decided he was not going to steal any valuables, disappointed with himself that he had fallen to such depths.

The next day the Ba'al Shem Tov summoned Yossele to his office. Yossele couldn't tell if the Rabbi knew about his near heist. But shockingly the Ba'al Shem Tov did not admonish him; instead he suggested to Yossele to meet the orphan Sarah for marriage! The girl whose house he had almost robbed! Within a short time the two were married. The fortune was Yossele's after all.

This story gives us an important lesson about our livelihood. Unfortunately there are those who cannot withstand the urge to be dishonest. If only they would know that if they're supposed to have that money, they will receive it anyway, then they wouldn't resort to cheating. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

## **"And [the Manna] tasted like honey" (Shemot 16:31)**

The Rabbis tell us that the Manna tasted like whatever a person wanted it to taste like. If he thought about meat, it had a meat taste; if he had dairy in mind, it had a dairy taste. Rabbi Shimon Schwab z"l once visited the Hafess Hayim in 1930 and heard him ask the following question: "What if a person had nothing in mind when he ate the Manna? What would it taste like?" The Hafess Hayim answered, "If a person had nothing in mind, then the Manna would taste like nothing." He went on to explain that the Manna is symbolic of everything spiritual; whatever we put into spiritual things determines what the taste of the outcome will be. If a person learns Torah or does misvot with enthusiasm, then his enjoyment and fulfillment will be apparent. However, if a person does it as if it is a chore, with no feeling, then it will be dull and tasteless. Just as we plan a vacation or something exciting with feeling and enthusiasm, so too we should approach our spiritual involvement. Then we will have a sweet taste in everything we do. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

**The holiday of Tu B'Shvat will be celebrated this Thursday.** One of the beautiful customs that we have is that of families getting together to celebrate. Some have plates and plates of all the different fruits and nuts representing all the berachot while other families have bags of these delicacies for the children. Besides showing appreciation to Hashem for all His bounty, what relevance does this holiday have to us?

The Rabbis tell us that on Tu B'Shvat, the juices of the trees begin to flow again, getting ready for another season of producing leaves and fruits. It is a time that Hashem "remembers" the trees, deciding which one will flourish and which one will not, and indeed, the Sages tell us that one should pray for a nice Etrog on Tu B'Shvat. The lesson for us is very heartening. If Hashem, Who runs the entire universe, can involve Himself with the smallest detail of which tree will grow to which size, is He not watching and guiding and protecting all His creations, especially His Chosen People? If we can appease Him regarding the welfare of plants and trees by making the right berachot on Tu B'Shvat, surely we can pray to Him to bring about our salvation on a

general and individual level. We need His protection all the time, especially for our people living in Israel, who are always the target of our enemies, may Hashem protect them! Let us continue our beautiful customs and learn the underlying lesson that it is Hashem who rules the world and to Him do we turn for everything. Tizku Leshanim Rabot! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

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#### G-d Will Pay You Will Back

The Gemara in Massechet Pesachim (118) tells that after the miracle of the Yam Suf, when Beneh Yisrael crossed the sea and stood at the shore, they were still frightened. They feared that just as they crossed the sea to the shore, the Egyptians, who were pursuing them, also crossed the sea on dry land and would soon come to shore and try to kill them. In order to allay the people's fears, G-d ordered the angel assigned over the sea to spew forth the corpses of the drowned Egyptians, so Beneh Yisrael would see that their pursuers were dead. The angel, however, objected, asking, "Does a master give a gift and then take it away?" G-d had given the fish of the sea a "gift" – the remains of the Egyptians, which the fish could feed on. It would not be right, the angels protested, for G-d to now take this "gift" away from the fish. G-d replied by promising the angel that He would repay the fish 1.5 times that which He was taking from them. He was only "borrowing" their food, and would pay this "debt" at some point in the future. The angel demanded a guarantor, and G-d named the Kishon River, in Northern Israel, as the guarantor for this "loan" which He took from the fish. The angel accepted the deal, and the sea threw the bodies of the Egyptians onto the shore to show Beneh Yisrael that their former oppressors were drowned.

Many years later, during the time of Debora, Beneh Yisrael fought a fierce battle against the army of Sisera in Eretz Yisrael. The Gemara relates that to help Beneh Yisrael, G-d made the ground underneath the enemy's horses very hot. The horses rushed to the nearby Kishon River to cool off their feet, and G-d instructed the Kishon to overflow its banks and drown Sisera's army. He said to the river, "Go pay My debt," as the time had come to repay the "debt" owed to the fish. Sisera's army was drowned, and it was then that the fish were repaid for giving up the bodies of the Egyptians after the miracle of the Yam Suf. The Gemara concludes that at that point the fish sang praise to G-d, exclaiming, "Ve'emet Hashem Le'olam," extolling G-d's trustworthiness, seeing that He fulfilled His commitment.

This remarkable story may help explain the custom observed by many to eat fish on Shabbat. This custom is very common among Ashkenazim, as well as among some Sephardic communities (particular Moroccan Jews). Indeed, there is expression, "Ha'ochel Dag Be'yom Dag Nisol Mi'dag." The Hebrew word for "fish" is "Dag," which has the numerical value of 7, and has two letters – "Dalet" and "Gimmel" – which stand for "Din Gehinam" ("the punishment of Gehinam"). And it is thus said that whoever eats "Dag" on the day of "Dag" – the seventh day, Shabbat – is saved from "Dag" – the punishment of Gehinam.

Different explanations are given to explain the significance of eating fish on Shabbat, but one possibility may relate to the story of the fish in the Yam Suf. The Talmud teaches that a person's livelihood for the entire year is determined on Rosh Hashanah, but the money spent for Shabbat, Yom Tob and Torah education are not included in this sum. Meaning, the money spent for these Misvot is taken off G-d's account, as it were; He promises to pay us back for all the expenses incurred for Shabbat, holidays and Torah education. And thus when we sit down for the Shabbat meal, after spending significant sums of money for the delicacies that will be served, we eat fish to remind ourselves of the fish of the Yam Suf. We are shown that just as G-d fulfilled His promise to the fish, and many years later repaid them for the food He "borrowed" from them after the Egyptians were drowned, similarly, He can be trusted to pay us for the money we "borrowed" from Him when shopping for Shabbat. We have no reason to be concerned about the charges made to the credit card when purchasing our Shabbat goods, because Hashem made a promise to repay us for these expenses – and He can always be trusted to fulfill His promises.

#### Rabbi Wein

The current spate of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority under the watchful eye and undue pressure of the United States, though shrouded in silence and mystery, apparently is not really going anywhere soon. As is usual in the negotiation pattern of the past twenty years, Israel gives tangible assets away to the Palestinians – land, weapons, financial aid and the release of murderers – and obtains allegedly important benefits, which are intangible and easily reversible.

Every red line that Israel ever established regarding its negotiating stance with the Palestinians has been crossed and violated by Israel itself. Israel was not going to release Palestinian prisoners who had blood

on their hands. And it now releases the worst murderers in the history of the contest, freely and without much compunction. It always feels sorry for itself because of its "painful concessions" but it is the main author and perpetrator of those painful concessions.

We are supposed to be assuaged by assurances that further building will occur in the "settlements" of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. But this further building, subject to the byzantine and bureaucratic labyrinth of Israeli permits, world diplomatic pressures and unforeseen events that always arise, is years off. And by then, who knows what the situation on the ground will be.

But the murderers are being released now and many of them will undoubtedly return to practicing their chosen profession of terrorism. New heroes are being created for the Palestinian street to exalt and in so doing any meaningful settlement, let alone a lasting peace, is undermined and made even more unlikely.

There are rumors afloat that in return for this Israeli generosity in the release of these approximately one thousand prisoners, Jonathan Pollard, an American citizen who engaged in spying on behalf of Israel will finally be released from prison after almost three decades of incarceration. This is somehow tied in with the revelations that America has itself consistently spied on Israel and the rest of the world over the past half-century.

Pollard's release is also somehow to be connected to the prisoner release that Israel is now engaged in vis-à-vis the Palestinian terrorists that it holds in its jails. I fail to see the connection between the two. Pollard's punishment has been unduly harsh and certainly far too long in its enforcement. Pollard should be freed for the sake of America – its system of justice and commitment to equal fairness to all.

His sentence of life imprisonment is a stain on that system. Yet somehow Pollard is being held hostage to extract further concessions from Israel. This is unfairness and unequal treatment compounded. And we only hear rumors that Pollard may somehow be released. Netanyahu thought that he had obtained Pollard's release from President Clinton decades ago but as we all know words and deeds are two different matters completely.

So believing rumors and even seemingly solemn commitments by diplomats and governments is a very risky business. Only the naïve can still have trust in their words and promises. The Psalmist stated it

correctly: "Do not trust in the generous words and goodness of princes, in human beings that cannot bring salvation!" All of our life experience confirms the wisdom and truth of that statement.

I have no idea as to how the current series of negotiations with the Palestinian Authority will turn out. I am an incurable optimist and maybe there will be the necessary change of Palestinian mindset that will enable a breakthrough towards peace. But I am not too hopeful of that.

Again the experience of the past twenty years, of Israeli concessions and Palestinian intransigence does not auger well for a positive result of the current series of negotiations. It has been written in the Israeli press that Israel does not want to be seen as the reason for a breakdown in the talks. And therefore, it continually agrees to unfavorable terms proposed by America, hoping, so far justifiably so, that the Palestinians will turn down any agreement no matter how favorable it is to them.

Whether or not this is a wise negotiating tactic is certainly a matter of debate. It is difficult to appreciate why America is so concerned about this matter when it ignores much more bloody and dangerous conflicts – read Syria for example – in the Middle East, Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Nevertheless we cannot change the situation as it exists and we can only hope that somehow the security, and indeed the vital survival of Israel itself, will never be compromised. That used to be a red line. I hope it still is.

### Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

The Israelites had crossed the Red Sea. The impossible had happened. The mightiest army in the ancient world – the Egyptians with their horse-drawn chariots – had been defeated and drowned. The people were now free. But the relief proved short-lived. Almost immediately they faced attack by the Amalekites, and they had to fight a battle, this time with no apparent miracles from God. They did so and won. This was a decisive turning point in history, not only for the Israelites but for Moses and his leadership of the people.

The contrast between before and after the Red Sea could not be more complete. Before, facing the approaching Egyptians, Moses said to the people: "Stand still and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today ... The Lord will fight for you; you need only be silent" (Ex. 14: 13). In other words: do nothing. God will do it for you. And He did.

In the case of the Amalekites, however, Moses said

to Joshua, "Choose men for us, and prepare for battle against Amalek" (Ex. 17: 9). Joshua did so and the people waged war. This was the great transition from a situation in which the leader (with the help of God) does it for the people, to one in which the leader empowers the people to do it for themselves.

As this was happening, the Torah focuses our attention on one detail. As the battle began Moses climbed to the top of a hill overlooking the battlefield, with a staff in his hand:

As long as Moses held his hands up, the Israelites prevailed, but when he let his hands down, the Amalekites prevailed. When Moses' hands became weary, they took a stone and placed it under him, so that he would be able to sit on it. Aaron and Chur then held his hands, one on each side, and his hands remained steady until sunset. (Ex. 17: 11-12)

What is going on here? The passage could be read in two ways. The staff in Moses hand – with which he had performed miracles in Egypt and at the sea – might be a sign that the Israelites' victory was a miraculous one. Alternatively, it might simply be a reminder to the Israelites that God was with them, giving them strength.

Very unusually – since the Mishnah in general is a book of law rather than biblical commentary – a Mishnah resolves the question:

Did the hands of Moses make or break [the course of the] war? Rather, the text implies that whenever the Israelites looked up and dedicated their hearts to their father in heaven, they prevailed, but otherwise they fell.[1]

The Mishnah is clear. Neither the staff nor Moses' upraised hands were performing a miracle. They were simply reminding the Israelites to look up to heaven and remember that God was with them. This gave them the confidence and courage to win.

A fundamental principle of leadership is being taught here. A leader must empower the team. He cannot do the work for them. They must do it for themselves. But he must, at the same time, give them the absolute confidence that they can do it and succeed. He is responsible for their mood and morale. During the battle he must betray no sign of weakness, doubt or fear. That is not always easy. Moses' hands "became weary." All leaders have their moments of exhaustion. At such times the leader needs support – even Moses needed the help of Aaron and Hur. In the end, though, his upraised hands were the sign the Israelites needed that God was giving them the

strength to prevail, and they did.

In today's terminology, a leader needs emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman, best known for his work in this field, argues that one of the most important tasks of a leader is to shape and lift the mood of the team:

Great leaders move us. They ignite our passion and inspire the best in us. When we try to explain why they are so effective, we speak of strategy, vision, or powerful ideas. But the reality is much more primal: Great leadership works through the emotions.[2]

Groups have an emotional temperature. As individuals they can be happy or sad, agitated or calm, fearful or confident. But when they come together as a group, a process of attunement – "emotional contagion" – takes place, and they begin to share the same feeling. Scientists have shown experimentally how, within fifteen minutes of starting a conversation, two people begin to converge in the physiological markers of mood, such as pulse rate. "When three strangers sit facing each other in silence for a minute or two, the one who is most emotionally expressive transmits his or her mood to the other two – without speaking a single word." [3] The physiological basis of this process, known as mirroring, has been much studied in recent years, and observed even among primates. It is the basis of empathy, through which we enter into and share other people's feelings.

This is the basis of one of the most important roles of a leader. It is he or she who, more than others, determines the mood of the group. Goleman reports on several scientific studies showing how leaders play a key role in determining the group's shared emotions:

Leaders typically talked more than anyone else, and what they said was listened to more carefully ... But the impact on emotions goes beyond what a leader says. In these studies, even when leaders were not talking, they were watched more carefully than anyone else in the group. When people raised a question for the group as a whole, they would keep their eyes on the leader to see his or her response. Indeed, group members generally see the leader's emotional reaction as the most valid response, and so model their own on it – particularly in an ambiguous situation, where various members react differently. In a sense, the leader sets the emotional standard.[4]

When it comes to leadership, even non-verbal cues are important. Leaders, at least in public, must



project confidence even if inwardly they are full of doubts and hesitations. If they betray their private fears in word or gesture, they risk demoralizing the group.

There is no more powerful example of this than the episode in which King David's son Absalom mounts a coup d'etat against his father, proclaiming himself king in his place. David's troops put down the rebellion, in the course of which Absalom dies, caught by his hair in a tree, and stabbed to death by Joab, David's commander-in-chief.

When he hears the news, David is heartbroken. His son may have rebelled against him, but he is still his son and he is devastated by his death, covering his face and crying, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!" News of David's grief quickly spreads throughout the army, and they too – by emotional contagion – are overcome by mourning. Joab regards this as disastrous. The army have taken great risks to fight for David against his son. They cannot now start regretting their victory without creating confusion and fatefully undermining their morale:

Then Joab went into the house to the king and said, "Today you have humiliated all your men, who have just saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and the lives of your wives and concubines. You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that the commanders and their men mean nothing to you. I see that you would be pleased if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead. Now go out and encourage your men. I swear by the Lord that if you don't go out, not a man will be left with you by nightfall. This will be worse for you than all the calamities that have come on you from your youth till now." (2 Samuel 19: 6-8)

David does as Joab insists. He accepts that there is a time and place for grief, but not now, not here, and above all, not in public. Now is the time to thank the army for their courage in defence of the king.

A leader must sometimes silence his or her private emotions if he is not to demoralize those he or she leads. In the case of the battle against Amalek, the first battle the Israelites had to fight for themselves, Moses had a vital role to perform. He had to give the people confidence by getting them to look up.

In 1875 an amateur archaeologist, Marcelino de Sautuola, began excavating the ground in a cave in Altamira near the north coast of Spain. At first he found little to interest him, but his curiosity was rekindled by a visit to the Paris exhibition of 1878

where a collection of Ice Age implements and art objects was on display. Determined to see whether he could find equally ancient relics, he returned to the cave in 1879.

One day he took his nine-year-old daughter Maria with him. While he was searching through the rubble, she wandered deeper into the cave and to her amazement saw something on the wall above her. "Look, papa, oxen," she said. They were, in fact, bison. She had made one of the great discoveries of prehistoric art of all time. The magnificent Altamira cave paintings, between 25,000 and 35,000 years old, were so unprecedented a finding that it took twenty-two years for their authenticity to be accepted. For four years Sautoula had been within a few feet of a monumental treasure, but he had missed it for one reason. He had forgotten to look up.

One of the ongoing themes of Tanakh is the need to look up. "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things," says Isaiah (Is. 40: 26). "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From there will my help come" said King David in Psalm 121. In Deuteronomy Moses tells the Israelites that the Promised Land will not be like the flat plain of the Nile Delta where water is plentiful and in regular supply. It will be a land of hills and valleys, entirely dependent on unpredictable rain (Deut. 11: 10-11). It will be a landscape that forces its inhabitants to look up. That is what Moses did for the people in their first battle. He taught them to look up.

No political, social or moral achievement is without formidable obstacles. There are vested interests to be confronted, attitudes to be changed, resistances to be overcome. The problems are immediate, the ultimate goal often frustratingly far away. Every collective undertaking is like leading a nation across the wilderness towards a destination that is always more distant than it seems when you look at the map.

Look down at the difficulties and you can give way to despair. The only way to sustain energies, individual or collective, is to turn our gaze up toward the far horizon of hope. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein once said that his aim in philosophy was "to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle". The fly is trapped in the bottle. It searches for a way out. Repeatedly it bangs its head against the glass until at last, exhausted, it dies. Yet the bottle has been open all the time. The one thing the fly forgets to do is to look up. So, sometimes, do we.

It is the task of a leader to empower, but it is also his or her task to inspire. That is what Moses did when, at the top of a hill, in full sight of the people, he raised

his hands and his staff to heaven. When they saw this, the people knew they could prevail. "Not by might nor by power, but by My spirit," said the prophet (Zechariah 4: 6). Jewish history is a sustained set of variations on this theme. A small people that, in the face of difficulty, continues to look up will win great victories and achieve great things.

**Drasha**  
**by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**  
**Out of Bounds**

In this week's parsha the B'nai Yisrael are given the manna. It falls every day from Heaven - except on the Sabbath. The Jews may not collect it on the Shabbos and thus a double portion falls from heaven on Friday. "See that Hashem has given you the Sabbath; that is why He gives you on the sixth day a two-day portion of bread." In addition the Torah proscribes the Jews from traveling distances on the Shabbos. "Let every man remain in his place; let no man leave his place on the seventh day" (Exodus 16:29).

Rashi explains that this refers to the t'chum Shabbos, a Shabbos ordinance that confines one's boundaries under certain settings to 2,000 cubits from the initial point of origin. One cannot walk farther than that distance on Shabbos.

Though this is not the forum for a discussion of the intricate laws of Sabbath borders, including certain limitations to the restrictions, one basic question arises: There are many intricate laws regarding Shabbos activities. None were yet mentioned. Why discuss the concept of confinement to an approximate one-mile radius before the Jews learned about the most basic prohibitions of the Sabbath such as lighting new fires or carrying in the public domain? In fact, this law of t'chum does not carry the severe penalties associated with other transgression. Why, then, is it the first Shabbos law that is introduced?

**Once a religious man came to the Brisker Rav, Rav Yitzchok Zev Soleveitchik, and asked him whether he should join a certain organization comprised of people whose views were antithetical to Torah philosophy. Well intentioned, the man felt that his association would perhaps sway the opinions of the antagonists and create harmony among the factions. He would be able to attend meetings and raise his voice in support of Torah outlook.**

**The Rav advised him not to get involved. The man unfortunately decided to ignore the advice. Within a few months, he was in a quagmire, because policies and actions of the theologically-skewed organization were being linked to him, and were creating animus toward him throughout the community.**

**For some reason he could not back out of his commitments to the organization. He was torn. How could he regain his reputation as a Torah observing Jew and ingratiate himself to his former community? He returned to the Brisker Rav and asked him once again for his advice.**

**The Rav told him the following story. There was a young man who aspired to become a wagon driver. He approached a seasoned wagoner and began his training. After a few weeks, he was ready to be certified.**

**Before receiving an official certification the veteran decided to pose a few practical applications.**

**"Let's say," he asked his young charge, "that you decide to take a shortcut and deviate from the main highway. You cut through a forest on a very muddy trail. Your wheels become stuck in the mud and your two passengers become agitated. The horses are struggling to pull out of the mud. They can't seem to get out. What do you do?"**

**The young driver looked up in thought. "Well," he began, "first I would take some wooden planks and try to get them under the wheels. "Ah!" sighed the old timer, "you made a terrible mistake!" "Why?" retorted the neophyte driver, "I followed procedure in the precise manner! What did I do wrong?"**

**The old man sighed. "Your mistake was very simple. You don't take shortcuts into muddy forests!"**

**The activist understood the Brisker Rav's message.**

Rav Moshe Feinstein of blessed memory explains that before the Jews were even given the laws of Shabbos they were taught an even more important lesson in life. Before you can embark on life's journeys and even approach the holy Shabbos, you must know your boundaries. So before discussing the details of what you can or can not do on Shabbos, the Torah tells us where we can and cannot go on Shabbos. Sometimes, keeping within a proper

environment is more primary than rules of order. Because it is worthless to attempt to venture into greatness when you are walking out of your domain.

*In Memory of Reb Yisroel Zisha Ben Reb Hersh Mordechai - Irving Tanzer Of Blessed Memory -- Yahrzeit --11 Shevat*

#### **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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