

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

BESHALAH

Haftarah: Shoftim 5:1-31

JANUARY 22-23, 2016 13 SHEBAT 5776

**DEDICATIONS: In memory of my day, Yosef ben Esther – Joe R Bibi 14 Shebat
Tu Bishbat will be celebrated on Monday, January 25.**

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Editors Notes

For all of you in warmer places or even those skiing with your kids, enjoy! Remember you're in the public eye wherever you go and to always take the opportunity to make a Kiddush hashem. B'H, We'll be at the Safra Synagogue on 63rd Street in Manhattan for Shabbat morning first Minyan and for Seuda Shelishi. Hopefully, if it does snow as predicted, the sidewalks wont be too bad, and we'll see some of you there.

Improving our spiritual eyesight

About a year and a half ago, I wrote about an experience I had standing under the chupah at my cousin's wedding and about seeing spiritual things that perhaps in a moment of clarity we see and perhaps in a moment of emotion, we only imagine we see. I was drawn back to this concept of seeing things that are not physical when reviewing this week's portion. This week we read BeShalach which highlights the miracle of the splitting of the sea. The pasuk tells us, "Israel saw the great might which Hashem performed in Egypt." The Rabbis ask, "What exactly was this level of seeing that nation of Israel attained at that time"?

In order to explain, the Rabbis teach us that at the time of the splitting of the sea, a simple maidservant saw more than the visions of the holy prophet Ezekiel - Yechezkel Ben Buzi. The Rabbis are specific in the use of the word saw. Yechezkel was one of the Major Prophets and began to prophesize just before the destruction of the first Temple. He was a student of Isaiah the prophet and some suggest that he was the son of Jeremiah. The Abarbanel explains that the name 'Yechezkel' is derived from the words 'strength of God' (chozek El), because of his prophecies

concerning the redemption which express Hashem's might.

What were the visions of Yechezkel that the Talmud refers to? The book of Yechezkel opens with the words, "The Heavens were opened and I saw Divine visions of Hashem Himself". For almost all of us, even beginning to understand this chapter describing G-d on his throne or chariot is nearly impossible. The Rabbis interpret this vision as "Maaseh Merkava" – The discipline of the G-d's chariot which Ezekiel describes. This is explained as the wisdom of delving into the very depths of the essence of the Creator Himself.

A number of midrashim draw on the idea of the people being given the ability to see into the spiritual realm while crossing the sea. The question I have relates to this seeing. I wonder if it means that something spiritual appeared in a physical form. I doubt that. So I must assume that what they saw was always there and they were simply given the ability to see what they might not have been able to see before or after. Can some people see what others can't?

A few years back I read that kids were using a ringtone for text message notifications during class that the students could hear but almost all the teachers and administrators could not. How can that be? Scientific American explains: "Humans are born being able to hear a wide range of frequencies, but we certainly can't hear everything—especially sounds on the higher end of the frequency spectrum! Consider dog whistles, which canines can hear but we can't. That's because dogs' ears have evolved (or were created) to detect such high-frequency sounds. Similarly, it has recently been discovered that elephants communicate over long distances using super-low-frequency sound that we're also unable to hear."

In a similar vein, there are sound frequencies that only young people can hear. Due to an ear-aging process called presbycusis which can begin as early as 18 we hear less. For example we all should be able to hear frequencies of 8000 hertz, but by age 40, 12,000 hertz becomes difficult and for anyone older than a teen, 17,400 hertz is nearly impossible to detect. So if in a room filled with adults, someone plays a 17,400 hertz tone that none can hear, is there

sound in the room? Of course there is as any child would tell you upon entering that room. We just can't perceive it.

It's obvious that just as there are sounds playing that we can't hear, there is so much around us beyond our perception. For example, we cannot see the millions of conversations, text messages and emails whizzing by us all day long and going from device to device, but they are there. Our eyes don't see and our ears don't hear the thousands of songs being broadcast by radio stations around the city, but open up a portable radio and tune in and it comes to life. Remember the scene of the person looking into the back of an early television set wondering how they fit those little people in there. We understand even less of the physical world.

The use of the word "seeing" in scripture may also allude to a perception. Why can some perceive more than others? My rabbi would explain that some are able to tune in better than others. Perhaps some antennas are caked with dirt while others are spit polish clean. I guess it's like dirty glasses. If they are covered with dust and finger prints, how much do we really see?

We often say that woman can sense things that men cannot and we call this women's intuition. The rabbis call this a woman's binah yeterah or expanded understanding. I imagine this can be because women are made from life, while men are made from mud. Perhaps a way towards better understanding is for man to come out of that mud and wash it from him. Perhaps the method is into reducing our dependence and bond with our animal instinct and raising our bond with the spiritual.

We are taught that the soul of a human being is composed of two components. We call one the nefesh behemit which we translate as the animalistic soul. The other is the nefesh Elokit which we translate as the spiritual soul. On the one hand we try to suppress the physical while raising the spiritual. At the same time a Jew never completely nullifies the physical. We are not taught to be ascetics who seclude themselves near a mountain top, meditate for hours in a drafty cave, sleep on a bed of nails, and subsist on a diet of bread and water. The goal I believe is to raise the physical to the spiritual by giving meaning to what we do primarily through self-control and sanctification.

There are things out there which can be seen, but which we don't see. There are things our ancestors crossing the sea 3300 years ago were able to perceive that none who followed could. Perhaps for them it was a short term gift where Hashem cleared

away the fog for a moment or perhaps the act of being involved and appreciating such a miracle was enough to help them see. How can others see? Over the course of the 900-year period of the two Temples we had over a million prophets, men and women trained to cross the spiritual threshold.

We may have no prophets today, but perhaps sometimes we are given a gift and get to see what we otherwise shouldn't. At the same time we are told there are ways to improve our spiritual vision. How? To suppress the animal within us and to raise the spiritual, to reduce pride and increase humility, to bind ourselves to the Torah and commandments and steer clear of dirtying ourselves and finally by infusing into all of our physical aspects, a spiritual dimension.

We are supposed to imagine ourselves crossing the sea each day as we recite the Song of the Sea – Az Yashir. Perhaps in doing that and in attempting to perfect ourselves, we will one day experience what those crossing way back when did. And we do will see the great might that Hashem will perform in the coming days. Bimherah, Beyameynu, Amen.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Kerry's Magic: Making the Jewish Victims Disappear - Elliott Abrams in The Weekly Standard

Secretary of State John Kerry has done it again: even more foolish and offensive statements about the terrorist attacks in Paris a year ago.

I've written here before about his startling remarks in Paris last November, after the horrifying terrorist attacks of November 13. There, he said among other things these lines: "There's something different about what happened from Charlie Hebdo, and I think everybody would feel that. There was a sort of particularized focus and perhaps even a legitimacy in terms of—not a legitimacy, but a rationale that you could attach yourself to somehow and say, okay, they're really angry because of this and that. This Friday was absolutely indiscriminate."

So, killing Jews and journalists is somehow less awful than "indiscriminate" killing? Actually, Kerry did not in these remarks in November refer to the Jews who were murdered at a kosher grocery at all; he mentioned only the journalists killed at the offices of Charlie Hebdo.

And now he's done it again.

This is the statement he issued on January 7th, in full, entitled "First Anniversary of the Attacks in Paris:"On the one-year anniversary of the January 7-9, 2015, attacks that took the lives of 17 people, we honor the victims of this tragedy and share the sadness of their loss. Their legacy endures as a challenge and inspiration to all of us. Charlie Hebdo continues to publish, and journalists around the world continue in their essential mission to tell the stories that people everywhere need to hear.

No country knows better than France that freedom has a price, and that no rationale can justify attacks on innocent men, women, and children. But what was intended to sow fear and division has, in fact, brought us together. We must remain committed to protect each other and renew our determination to turn this moment of profound loss into a lasting commitment. Just as we tackle today's most daunting challenges side by side, the United States and France will always stand together."

Kerry's magic here: He made the Jews disappear. Once again he refers only to Charlie Hebdo and "journalists around the world."

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading Beshalach - Keriyat yam suf, water, manna, Amalek

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

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"On the first of Shebat is the new year of the trees, these are the words of Bet Shamai. Bet Hillel say on the fifteenth" (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:1)

Next week, on Monday, is Tu B'Shvat, the Rosh Hashanah for trees. It is a time to thank Hashem for all the magnificent fruits He created, but it is also a time for spiritual growth. Rabbi Paysach

Krohn quoted a sentence from a book by C.L. Kramer, "Any fool can count the seeds in one apple, but only the Highest Power (Hashem) can count the apples in one seed." You need little wisdom to cut open an apple and count the seeds in its core, but only Hashem knows the potential that lies in each tiny seed. It can be a seed from which a mighty tree will grow, or homiletically speaking, one "seed" could be a word of encouragement that sparks another person who is down to become uplifted and move on to accomplish great things. One "seed" could be a small loan that allows a person to regain his financial footing. One "seed" could be a listening ear to validate someone else's pain and give him strength to continue. We must never underestimate the value of one kind word, one kind deed, one small seed.

The Torah (Debarim 20:19) writes, "man is like a tree in the field..." which is homiletically understood to mean that just as a tree has roots and fruits, man too has ancestors and offspring. However, Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l of Mir would often say that just as a tree must be nurtured with sunshine and water so that it continues to grow, man too must be nurtured with the study of Torah and performance of misvot, so that he continues to grow. Otherwise, tree or man will wither.

One great Rabbi said, "A great man takes an apple so that he can bless Hashem with a berachah, a plain man says a berachah to eat an apple." The message is that all the material matter that Hashem has blessed us with – be it food, a home, finances, a car – are to be used as a means to sanctify Hashem and to fulfill His misvot. Everything we own should be used as a means to a holy end – to recognize Hashem and the needs of His people. Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

As we sit and eat our variety of fruits and delicacies this Monday, which is Tu Bishbat, we should take a moment and dwell on the significance of this day. The custom is to make berachot on different species of fruits and nuts, especially those which Eress Yisrael is noted for, such as grains, wine, etc. By doing so we cause Hashem to bless these items, which in turn produce more bounty.

When we say Boreh Nefashot, the after-blessing for many foods, the blessing encompasses two main categories: Our necessities, $\text{יְבֹרַךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, הַמֵּן הַלֶּחֶם וְהַמַּיִם}$, like bread and water, and all the luxury foods with which man could live without, but make life so enjoyable, $\text{וְהַיַּיִן וְהַבְּשֵׂמִיטָה}$, "Tt@rŠCæ« v"n kŠF k'g. On both of these we thank Hashem in the $\text{יְבֹרַךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, הַמֵּן הַלֶּחֶם וְהַמַּיִם}$. During Tu Bishbat, when we see the vast abundance of special fruits and nuts that Hashem created for our enjoyment, we

should be ever grateful that He gave us so many ways to enjoy this world.

Another lesson for Tu Bishbat is the following. It is freezing outside and all trees have shut down for the season. However, the Rabbis say that on Tu Bishbat the sap begins to rise in these dead-looking trees, getting ready for a new season. So too, we have to see people (and ourselves) in that vein. Even if it looks like they (or we) are not producing, the potential is there to start producing again. We have to let the "sap flow." Happy Tu Bishbat and Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

DO YOU THINK IT WILL STICK?

A winter storm can really upset the lives of thousands of people, with airport delays, road closings, downed electrical wires, and business and school closings. There are some, however, who anticipate – and even pray – that a minor storm will turn into a real blizzard and close the city down.

The other day, I was sitting in the bet midrash, brushing up on my learning. A young student – maybe a sixth- or seventh-grader – came in and asked, "Did you hear the weather report? Do you know if the snow is going to stick?"

"No, I'm sorry," I replied. "I've been too busy to check on the weather. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I have a test tomorrow, and I was hoping the snow would pile up and they would cancel classes."

Facing a difficult or unpleasant task can make you dream of a solution that won't solve the problem, but will allow you to avoid or delay dealing with it. Shelomo Hamelech said, "A lazy person won't leave the house for fear there is a lion in the streets" (Mishlei 22:13). Indolence can even reach the point where a lazy soul won't carry a spoon of food from plate to mouth. Food does not jump into a person's mouth by itself, and facts and information will not fly into a student's head without some effort being made to get them there. Simply dreaming of a miraculous salvation to make a desired outcome occur, or to prevent a feared one from happening, will not generally produce results.

When you are tempted to dream up an avoidance or denial response to a task or problem, change your attitude. Dig down deep into your latent strength and draw on your reserves of energy. Face the problem squarely. It only takes a little effort to spin your negativism into a positive attitude, but you will learn to succeed in even the most difficult circumstances. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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Filling in the Blanks

Parashat Beshalah includes "Az Yashir," the beautiful song of praise which Beneh Yisrael sung after the miracle of Keri'at Yam Suf (the splitting of the sea). Anyone who looks at the way this section appears in the Torah scroll immediately notices something unusual. The text of "Az Yashir" is written with large breaks of blank text interspersed among the words. The Gemara refers to this arrangement as "Ariah Al Gabeh Lebena" – "a half-brick on top of a whole brick." Every piece of text is situated on top of mostly a blank space, with text appearing underneath only the edges, like a brick resting on the edges of two bricks separated by a wide empty space.

What is the meaning behind this arrangement? Why are there empty spaces in the middle of the text of "Az Yashir"?

Rav Yishak Karo (1458-1535), the uncle of Maran (author of the Shulhan Aruch), explained that the blank spaces allude to the fact that there is so much more than needs to be said. The Gemara in Masechet Berachot (33) establishes that it is improper to praise G-d beyond the praises prescribed by our Sages, because indulging in praise gives the impression that we are capable of giving G-d all the praises He deserves. It is impossible to express all the praise owed to G-d, because He is His infinite. As such, any praise we express is, by definition, flawed, and even potentially dangerous, as it may be understood as comprehensively encapsulating the Almighty's greatness. Therefore, blank spaces are made in the text of "Az Yashir" to indicate the incompleteness of the praise. Although Beneh Yisrael praised G-d for this great miracle, they realized that their praise was incomplete, and there is infinitely more that needs to be said.

There is, however, an additional explanation.

"Az Yashir" is far more than a song sung by a group of people after experiencing a miracle. The Hid"ra (Rav Haim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1806) writes that whoever recites "Az Yashir" with intense concentration earns forgiveness for all his sins. Other books mention that reciting "Az Yashir" with concentration can help a person resolve even the most intractable problems. If a person finds himself "trapped" in a difficult dilemma that seems to have no solution, just like Beneh Yisrael were trapped against the sea and could not see any way out, he should recite "Az Yashir" and will be helped. "Az Yashir" is a

song with immense spiritual power, and Beneh Yisrael realized at the time that they were composing a song for all future generations, that would bring help and salvation to untold numbers of Jews for all time. This is why the introductory verse says that Beneh Yisrael sang this song "Lemor" – literally, "to say." They sang this song so it would be continued to be sung for all time.

As much as Beneh Yisrael knew the significance of the song they were now singing, they knew also of their limitations. They realized they lacked the knowledge and insight to infuse the song with the force and power that it needed to have. And so they left empty spaces, relying on G-d to "fill in the blanks." The empty spaces in "Az Yashir" symbolize the "empty spaces" in our prayers, our deficiencies and incompleteness. Even when we try to pray with sincerity, purity of mind and concentration, we know that our prayers will never be perfect. We therefore leave "empty spaces" and ask G-d to fill them, to make our prayers perfect in the merit of our efforts.

It is told that Rav Levi Yishak of Berditchev (1740-1809) once called for a special day of prayer in his community because of a grave crisis which they faced. The community's prayers were answered, and the dangers were averted. Afterward, Rav Levi Yishak said that the decrees against the town were annulled specifically in the merit of one congregant – the wagon driver. The people were stunned. The wagon driver was a simple ignoramus, and nobody understood why his prayers would be so special that they saved the entire town.

The people approached the wagon driver to ask him about his prayers. Visibly embarrassed, he said that he did not know how to pray; he could not even read the text in the Siddur. So when the community gathered for prayer, he told G-d that he would say the only thing he could – the letters of the Alef-Bet – and he asked G-d to do the rest, to take the letters and arrange them into the appropriate prayers.

Rav Levi Yishak said that this was, indeed, the most powerful prayer recited by the community. This simple man did what he could and relied on G-d to do the rest.

This is precisely the attitude we should have towards prayer, and toward our religious lives in general. We must try our hardest do all we can, and then beg the Almighty to "fill in the blanks" and generously accept our service as though it is perfect.

VICTOR BIBI SOD HAPARASHA

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Rabbi Wein THE NON-SLIP TALIT

A dear friend and rabbinic colleague of mine casually mentioned to me that as a gift for his birthday his wife presented him with a new tallit - the kind that does not constantly slip off of one's shoulders when in prayerful use. I was intrigued by this revelation on two counts. There are still spouses around who give each other birthday gifts?! And, secondly, is it possible that technology has finally achieved a solution to the millennia old problem of the discomfort of trying to maintain concentration on one's prayers to God while one's tallit keeps on slipping?

Assured by those who had purchased one of these non-slip tallitot, that they are ninety percent effective (only old rabbis are one hundred percent effective) I took the plunge and purchased two of them to replace the constantly-slipping-off-my-shoulders type that I own. Though it is my personal policy not to endorse or disparage products or people in my writings (however every rule has an exception - sometimes) I do find that this non-slip tallit is a boon to mankind generally and to Jewish prayer concentration particularly. It is a practical achievement long overdue – at least in my case.

A tallit that constantly slips off of one's shoulders during prayer is at first an annoyance but it gradually grows into a distraction and a disturbance. When one is addressing the congregation publicly, teaching and sermonizing, it is very counter-productive to holding the attention of one's listeners when the speaker constantly has to readjust his tallit. It seems the audience is more fascinated by the slipping and often begins to ignore what the speaker has to say. So the non-slip tallit is a blessing in both respects.

All of this has set me thinking, in a symbolic way, about the story of the Jewish people over the past few centuries. There is no question that the tallit has slipped off of the shoulders of millions of Jews during this latter period of time. The reasons and causes for this are varied. But, the main background for all of these reasons is the confrontation with the ideas and social mores of modernity, democracy, technology, social mobility and educational and professional opportunity that the modern world brought and continues to bring with it.

The initial reaction of Eastern European Orthodoxy (unlike that of German Orthodoxy) was to either ignore or completely reject the existence and unstoppable influence of modernity on the Jewish street. The hallmark of Orthodoxy was, and in many of its circles today, still remains the rejection of constantly advancing communicative technology, secular studies, scientific fact and certainly the changing roles of individuals in a constantly evolving and more complex society.

While all of the other movements that swept the Jewish masses on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries offered responses to modernity, Orthodoxy did not. Tragically none of those responses has stood the test of time and they are all, more or less, now in the ash heap of history. Orthodoxy survived and has even prospered simply because of adherence to Torah and tradition and God's covenant with the Torah and the Jewish people who would observe it.

The cost of that survival, however, has been great and painful. There are a lot of talitot that have slipped off of Jewish shoulders because of our inability to develop a reasonable, practical strategy regarding the challenges of modernity that face us.

So, again, symbolically, we should try and develop for our society a non-slip talit. No matter what we devise, it, not unlike the physical non-slip talit itself, will only be ninety percent effective. There is no one-size-fits-all in matters of faith and belief and the Lord's gift of free will remain constant in all times and circumstances. But such a non-slip talit, imperfect as it may be, will be a vast improvement over what is now the case.

We must begin to ask ourselves the hard questions that we always have avoided, questions that modernity has forced upon us? How can we continue to preach poverty and charitable dependency in a world of obvious plenty and great opportunity? How do we expect our future generation to succeed and inspire themselves and others in an educationally advancing and complex technical world if that generation has, at best, only an inferior elementary school level of education and skills?

Why are there so many of our children at risk and off the derech, having let their talitot slip off of their shoulders for no apparent reason? Why does Orthodoxy have such a bad name and reputation amongst other Jews, when sixty years ago it was still admired? Why so much divorce and family dysfunction in our society today? These are only some of the questions that current modernity has thrust upon us. We need a non-slip talit to help address them.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Renewable Energy

The first translation of the Torah into another language – Greek – took place in around the second century BCE, in Egypt during the reign of Ptolemy II. It is known as the Septuagint, in Hebrew Hashiv'im, because it was done by a team of seventy scholars. The Talmud however says that at various points the sages at work on the project deliberately mistranslated certain texts because they believed that a literal translation would simply be unintelligible to a Greek readership. One of these texts was the phrase, "On the seventh day God finished all the work he had made." Instead the translators wrote, "On the sixth day God finished." [1]

What was it that they thought the Greeks would not understand? How did the idea that God made the universe in six days make more sense than that He did so in seven? It seems puzzling, yet the answer is simple. The Greeks could not understand the seventh day, Shabbat, as itself part of the work of creation. What is creative about resting? What do we achieve by not making, not working, not inventing? The idea seems to make no sense at all.

Indeed we have the independent testimony of the Greek writers of that period, that one of the things they ridiculed in Judaism was Shabbat. One day in seven Jews do not work, they said, because they are lazy. The idea that the day itself might have independent value was apparently beyond their comprehension. Oddly enough, within a very short period of time, the empire of Alexander the Great began to crumble, just as had the earlier city state of Athens that gave rise to some of the greatest thinkers and writers in history. Civilisations, like individuals, can suffer from burnout. It's what happens when you don't have a day of rest written into your schedule. As Achad ha-Am said: more than the Jewish people has kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jewish people. Rest one day in seven and you won't burn out.

Shabbat, which we encounter for the first time in this week's parsha, is one of the greatest institutions the world has ever known. It changed the way the world thought about time. Prior to Judaism, people measured time either by the sun – the solar calendar of 365 days aligning us with the seasons – or by the moon, that is, by months ("month" comes from the word "moon") of roughly thirty days. The idea of the seven-day week – which has no counterpart in nature – was born in the Torah and spread throughout the world via Christianity and Islam, both of which borrowed it from Judaism, marking the difference

simply by having it on a different day. We have years because of the sun, months because of the moon, and weeks because of the Jews.

What Shabbat did and still does is to create space within our lives and within society as a whole in which we are truly free. Free from the pressures of work; free from the demands of ruthless employers; free from the siren calls of a consumer society urging us to spend our way to happiness; free to be ourselves in the company of those we love. Somehow this one day has renewed its meaning in generation after generation, despite the most profound economic and industrial change. In Moses' day it meant freedom from slavery to Pharaoh. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century it meant freedom from sweatshop working conditions of long hours for little pay. In ours, it means freedom from emails, smartphones and the demands of 24/7 availability.

What our parsha tells us is that Shabbat was among the first commands the Israelites received on leaving Egypt. Having complained about the lack of food, God told them that he would send them manna from heaven, but they were not to gather it on the seventh day. Instead a double portion would fall on the sixth. That is why to this day we have two challot on Shabbat, in memory of that time.

Not only was Shabbat culturally unprecedented. It was so conceptually as well. Throughout history people have dreamed of an ideal world. We call such visions, utopias, from the Greek *ou* meaning "no" and *topos*, meaning "place".[2] They are called that because no such dream has ever come true, except in one instance, namely Shabbat. Shabbat is "utopia now", because on it we create, for twenty-five hours a week, a world in which there are no hierarchies, no employers and employees, no buyers and sellers, no inequalities of wealth or power, no production, no traffic, no din of the factory or clamour of the marketplace. It is "the still point of the turning world", a pause between symphonic movements, a break between the chapters of our days, an equivalent in time of the open countryside between towns where you can feel the breeze and hear the song of birds. Shabbat is utopia, not as it will be at the end of time but rather, as we rehearse for it now in the midst of time.

God wanted the Israelites to begin their one-day-in-seven rehearsal of freedom almost as soon as they left Egypt, because real freedom, of the seven-days-in-seven kind, takes time, centuries, millennia. The Torah regards slavery as wrong,[3] but it did not abolish it immediately because people were not yet ready for it. Neither Britain nor America abolished it

until the nineteenth century, and even then not without a struggle. Yet the outcome was inevitable once Shabbat had been set in motion, because slaves who know freedom one day in seven will eventually rise against their chains.

The human spirit needs time to breathe, to inhale, to grow. The first rule in time management is to distinguish between matters that are important, and those that are merely urgent. Under pressure, the things that are important but not urgent tend to get crowded out. Yet these are often what matter most to our happiness and sense of a life well lived. Shabbat is time dedicated to the things that are important but not urgent: family, friends, community, a sense of sanctity, prayer in which we thank God for the good things in our life, and Torah reading in which we retell the long, dramatic story of our people and our journey. Shabbat is when we celebrate shalom bayit – the peace that comes from love and lives in the home blessed by the Shekhinah, the presence of God you can almost feel in the candlelight, the wine and the special bread. This is a beauty created not by Michelangelo or Leonardo but by each of us: a serene island of time in the midst of the often-raging sea of a restless world.

I once took part, together with the Dalai Lama, in a seminar (organised by the Elijah Institute) in Amritsar, Northern India, the sacred city of the Sikhs. In the course of the talks, delivered to an audience of two thousand Sikh students, one of the Sikh leaders turned to the students and said: "What we need is what the Jews have: Shabbat!" Just imagine, he said, a day dedicated every week to family and home and relationships. He could see its beauty. We can live its reality.

The ancient Greeks could not understand how a day of rest could be part of creation. Yet it is so, for without rest for the body, peace for the mind, silence for the soul, and a renewal of our bonds of identity and love, the creative process eventually withers and dies. It suffers entropy, the principle that all systems lose energy over time. The Jewish people did not lose energy over time, and it remains as vital and creative as it ever was. The reason is Shabbat: humanity's greatest source of renewable energy, the day that gives us the strength to keep on creating.

[1] Babylonian Talmud Megillah 9a.

[2] The word was coined by Sir Thomas More in 1516, who used it as the title of his book of that name.

[3] On the wrongness of slavery from a Torah perspective, see the important analysis in Rabbi N. L. Rabinovitch, *Mesillot Bilvavam* (Maaliyot, 2015), 38-45. The basis of the argument is the view, central to both the Written Torah and the Mishnah, that all humans share the same ontological dignity as the image and likeness of God. This was in the sharpest possible contrast to the views, for

instance, of Plato and Aristotle. R. Rabinovitch analyses the views of the sages, and of Rambam and Meiri, on the phrase "They shall be your slaves forever" (Lev. 25:46). Note also the quote he brings from Job 31:13-15, "If I have denied justice to any of my servants ... when they had a grievance against me, what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account? Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One form us both within our mothers?"

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL
 "This is my G-d and I will adorn Him" 15:2

The word "this" denotes clarity of perception and True Knowledge, as if they were viewing the Shechinah and pointing to it with the finger, for such was the elevated level of knowledge of Hashem which they gained at that wondrous spectacle of the splitting of the Sea.

"This is my G-d." The word for G-d here is the Alef and Lamed (Kel), which denotes "strength" (as in Beresheet 31:29). 1) He alone is my G-d of strength 2) and He is for me alone ("My G-d").

Therefore I pledge my gratitude and love to Him "and I will adorn Him". I will praise and glorify Him in such manner to demonstrate that He alone is beautiful, and beside love of Him nothing else deserves to be loved as beautiful. And only that which has connection with His Torah and with His service is beautiful.

The only beautiful men are those who are faithful to His Torah.

Therefore I will adorn His Mitzvot; a beautiful Lulav, beautiful Sisit, a beautiful Sefer Torah. We do not adorn Him (i.e. give Him beauty) but we thereby demonstrate that we recognize His beauty, because we constantly consider His ways of kindness and wisdom and we see how beautiful are His attributes.

This is the vow which our nation made at the Sea. And now this vow is being fulfilled by the genuine Jewish nation to this day.

"Abba Shaul says: 'I will adorn him'; this means to be similar to Him (Anvehu: I will adorn Him; Ani V'Hu: I and He). Just as He is gracious and merciful" (ibid.). Just as we adorn Him by beautifying His service ("a beautiful Lulav, Sisit, Torah...so even more do we honor Him by following His ways and emulating His attributes.

Thus the blessings of the marriage rite begin with "that He created everything for His glory" (Ketubot 8A).

Rashi explains: "The gathering (of the wedding guests) to do kindness (to the groom & bride) is a memorial to the kindness of Hashem to Adam (at his marriage) and therefore this gathering is a glory to Hashem."

Because of His great kindness at the Rending of the Sea of Suf, we undertake a national obligation to publicize His attributes of kindness by practicing them in our own lives. Thus we adorn Him by imitating Him, which is the most genuine and effective of all forms of glory which could be rendered to Him. We shall adorn Him by resembling Him (Ani V'Hu).

"Holy shall you be, for I Hashem your G-d am holy" (Vayikra 19:2)

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

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