

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

BESHALAH

JANUARY 25-26, 2013 15 SHEBAT 5773

Tu B'Shevat will be celebrated on Shabbat, January 26

DEDICATIONS: Happy Birthday to Ely Altarac – without him we never could have kept the Synagogue going

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH SCHEDULE

Candle Lighting - 4:47pm / Mincha - 4:45pm

Celebrate Tu B'Shevat in with the entire community at the YILB
Friday Night Shabbat Dinner and Fruit Bar

Guest Speaker: Rabbi Eliyahu Yenay accompanied by the YILB Acapella Group.
\$20 p/p if reserved by Friday January 18th - (Price then goes up to \$25) Kids 4 and up \$12
Call Rivka Bohan 516-749-9099 rbohan@darchei.org – Not sure if you can still join, but try!

Shabbat, January 12

Shacharit - 9:00am – Latest Shema is 8:57

Kiddush sponsored by the Extended Yadgarov Family And by Nellie Ostrovsky

We will have a Tu Bishvat Kiddush

Special guest is Rabbi Eliyahu Yenay who teaches our weekly Monday night class

Mincha 12:20 – Amidah after 12:33

Shabbat Ends - 5:47pm - Return for Arbit at 6:05

Followed by Children's program with Pizza - And David's class, "Power over Nature"
A Melave Malka with Rabbi Yenay sponsored by the Safaniev family follows David's class
Bring your friends

Daily Services - Shacharit

Sunday- 8:00am / Monday thru Friday - 7:00am SHARP

Class with Rabbi Yenay Monday night at 7PM –

Purim is Saturday night February 23rd

Anyone who wants to volunteer please let Rabbi Colish know

Our Sisterhood dinner this year will be held February 27th at Chosen Island
and our Guest of Honor will be---Lisa Gaon!!Reserve the date and invite your friends -
Remember this dinner is for men too!

On Saturday night, March 2, 2013, The Sephardic Congregation Of Long Beach will host a talk by Dr. Reeva Simon entitled "Jews and Islam: An Inconsistent Relationship. From the Golden Age to Modern Times." Dr. Simon is a former Associate Director of The Middle East Institute at Columbia University and professor of Middle East history at Columbia and Yeshiva Universities and the author of a number of books on the topic
Dr. Simon's talk will begin at 8pm, with a reception to follow. Suggested donation is \$10.

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please reply to
ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com
Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th
Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us! 212-
289-2100

Editors Notes

My daughter Aryana was working with my niece Adel
on a Tu Bishvat project she is doing for school. She

has the kids planting in window boxes to be placed in
the classrooms.

She was talking to me about what she prepared and I
thought you would find it very interesting.

In Temple times Tu Bishvat was the farmer's fiscal
year end. It was the dividing line for calculating maser
and terumot which needed to be brought to the bet
HaMikdash.

Most of us remember Tu Bishvat as the day we get the bag of dried fruits along with some carob and hope the carob doesn't crack our teeth and send us to the dentist. I always wonder how Rabbi Shimon and his son Eliezer limited their diet to this stuff for a dozen years.

In modern culture Tu Bishvat is celebrated in various ways. Many have come to look at it as our Earth Day where we take a moment to appreciate the world that Hashem has given us

In Israel Tu Bishvat is a beloved day by school children everywhere. It's a day of planting trees and getting our hands dirty.

Many wonder why is Tu Bishvat is still relevant today?

Just how important is taking care of the earth we have- how GREEN is the Torah? We are aware of las forbidding us to waste, forbidding us to needlessly cut trees and forbidding us to cut a fruit tree almost always.

In the (Midrash Avot Derabbi Natan 8,31) were told "If you had a sapling in your hand and were told that the Mashiach had come, first plant the sapling, then go out to greet the Mashiach."

How fascinating it is to image that the Mashiach is here and who in their right mind would finish planting a little sapling? Most people would say drop the sapling and run. But no, we are told to stop and first finish our planting and only then we can go to greet the Mashiach.

Why? Why is it so important to finish planting this tree?

Well let's go back to the beginning. The Torah describes the creation of man. Hashem created Adam and placed him in the garden to work it and to guard it. Why is man required to work the land? Wouldn't Hashem be expected to create a perfect world?

Hashem did give us a perfect world but a perfect world for us. Perfection does not necessarily mean complete.

When Hashem created man, He said- - nasaeh adam- let us make man.

Who is us? Who is Hashem talking to? Many commentators explain that Hashem is speaking to

the angels. But a unique way of looking at this is that Hashem is speaking to man himself. Hashem is saying to man, "let us together make the ultimate man". Hashem gives us the opportunity to be his partner in both shaping mankind and in shaping the world.

The Midrash Tanchuma (Tazria 5) cites a famous dispute between Rabbi Akiva and the wicked Roman procurator, Turnus Rufus. Turnus Rufus asked Rabbi Akiva, "Whose acts are greater, man's or God's?" R. Akiva answered him that man's acts are greater. After a discussion, Rabbi Akiva brought sheaves of wheat and cakes, and said to Turnus Rufus: These sheaves were made by God, while these cakes were produced by man!

Well what would u rather eat wheat or bread?

In essence Rabbi Akiva is explaining that G-d created wheat, but in order to turn the wheat into something we benefit from, man must first harvest it, winnow, grind and process it into flour and still bake it into bread.

We live in a world where Hashem gives the raw materials needed, but then its up to us to complete the process. It's our job to perfect the world and ourselves.

Tu Bishvat serves to remind us to appreciate the variety we were given in this world and to re-accept our job as caretakers of the world with a duty to make the world a better place. We see clearly that it is our obligation to work the land and take care of it. We should be making the world better for the future than the it was when we received it. To do the opposite is a crime.

Let me close with a story. The Talmud discussed the righteous Choni HaMaagel and his miracles. It discussed his views on a conversation discussing if its really possible for a man to sleep for seventy years. The narrative continues. One day Choni was riding along on his donkey. A great exhaustion overtook him. He got off his donkey to rest. In the nearby field he saw an old man planting a carob tree. Choni asked the man when this newly planted tree would bear fruit. He was told that this type of carob bears fruit only seventy year after it is first planted. Choni wondered "Do you intend to eat from this tree?"

"Just as my ancestors saw to it that when I came into the world I found fruit trees that I could eat from, so to I am making sure my descendents will have fruit trees available when they come into the world."

Answered the old man. Each generation makes sure the following generations' needs are met.

Fatigue overwhelmed Choni and he lay down next to the sapling and fell into a deep sleep. From heaven it was made sure no one would notice him. No one would disturb him. Seventy years later he woke up. How did Choni know seventy years had passed? He saw that the tree that had been planted on the day he fell asleep, was now bearing fruit.

The Talmud teaches us that we are responsible for the future. This Friday night as we sit with our families and partake of a very special desert course, let us remember the lesson to appreciate and accept responsibility.

Halacha Yomit explains: Tu Bishvat will fall out, G-d-willing, this coming Friday night (Shabbat). It is customary to partake of a large variety of fruits and recite the appropriate blessings on them on the eve of Tu Bishvat in order to show that this day is the New Year for trees. This custom is mentioned in the works of the Mekubalim as well, and it is a fine custom.

On such a year when Tu Bishvat falls out on Shabbat (and it is customary to eat a variety of fruits on the night of Tu Bishvat, as we have mentioned as well), the Poskim disagree whether the fruits should be eaten between Kiddush and the Hamotzi blessing, after the Hamotzi blessing has already been recited, or after Birkat Hamazon altogether.

Let us briefly discuss the various opinions:

The Opinion of the Razah

The Razah (acronym for Rabbeinu Zerachya Ha'Levi, commonly known as the "Ba'al Ha'Ma'or") writes regarding the night of the Pesach Seder when the first two cups of wine are drunk before the Hamotzi blessing that an after-blessing should not be recited on the wine, for Birkat Hamazon exempts the after-blessing on the wine. The Rosh rules likewise.

The Opinion of the Rif

On the other hand, the Rif, Ramban, and others write that one should indeed recite an after-blessing on the wine before reciting the Hamotzi blessing, for wine that was drunk before Hamotzi cannot be exempted from its after-blessing with Birkat Hamazon.

The Ruling of Maran Shlit"a

Since there is a disagreement between the Rishonim regarding this matter, Maran Harav Ovadia Yosef Shlit"a writes that one should therefore not enter this kind of doubtful situation and one should eat the fruits

only after having recited the Hamotzi blessing and not beforehand. (See Responsa Yechave Da'at, Volume 1, Chapter 82, Chazon Ovadia-Yamim Nora'im, page 97, and Chazon Ovadia-Tu Bishvat and Berachot, page 4.)

Serving the fruits after Birkat Hamazon Maran Harav Shlit"a writes (Chazon Ovadia-Berachot, page 8) that the most preferable practice on the night of Tu Bishvat which coincides with Shabbat is to place the fruits on the table but to eat them only after Birkat Hamazon, for in this way, one will be able to recite both blessings before and after ("Al Ha'etz" and Boreh Nefashot) eating the fruits and vegetables, thus affording one the opportunity to recite more blessings on Shabbat and completing the daily quota of reciting one-hundred blessings.

Fruits which usually contain worms in them must be opened and checked prior to reciting the blessings on them. One must be extremely careful in the checking of fruits that are known to contain worms, for this is a grave sin; one who consumes even one worm transgresses five Torah prohibitions (Pesachim 24a). One who consumes a worm taints his soul and blocks his heart from the service of Hashem. Indeed, Hagaon Rabbeinu Chizkiya di Silwa (author of the "Peri Chadash) took issue with the orators of his time who would expound nicely upon stories and hints of the Torah but would not rebuke the people about the terrible sin of consuming worms and the like.

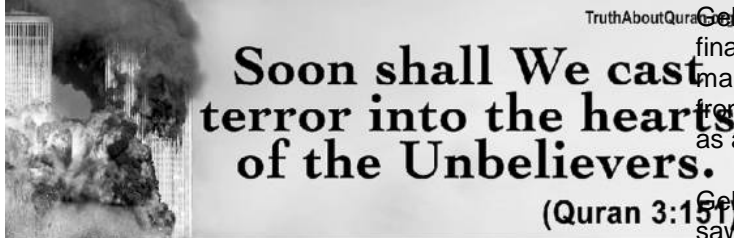
One must take special care regarding dried fruits during the Tu Bishvat season which are known to contain worms, such as dried figs which are very difficult to check. There have been certain rabbis who have banned eating dried figs and the like altogether due to the difficulty of checking them. One must therefore take extreme care in this matter.

About one hundred years ago, the Sages of Aleppo, Syria declared a ban on grape leaves, for in that city, the grape leaves were known to contain worms and they were very difficult to check, thus, people came to transgress the Torah prohibitions of consuming forbidden items. For this reason, all of the Sages of the city unanimously decided to outlaw the consumption of these leaves. We can see from here how much care must be taken regarding this matter. Our Sages have told us that there is no more disgraceful sin than the consumption of forbidden foods such that the forbidden object enters one's body and the body itself becomes a part of the prohibition. (See Rishonim on Gittin 7a and Baba Batra 36a).

On a new fruit (meaning a fruit that one has not eaten yet this season), one recites the blessing of "Shehecheyanu Ve'Kiyemanu Ve'Higianu La'Zeman Haze". One should first recite the regular blessing on the fruit and only afterwards should one recite the "Shehecheyanu" blessing, as per the rule of "common and uncommon, the common takes precedence". Thus, the fruit's regular blessing which is recited on a more frequent basis precedes the "Shehecheyanu" blessing which is not recited as frequently.

If one has several kinds of new fruits in front of him, one "Shehecheyanu" blessing suffices for all of them. However, this only applies when all the new fruits are in front of him, for if not, one must recite the "Shehecheyanu" blessing anew for each kind of fruit.

Shabbat HSalom and Happy holiday, David



By Malka Eisenberg – For the Jewish Star

A Five Towns native is once again behind a stark ad campaign in the New York City subways, this time linking the bombing of the World Trade Center to a Koranic verse.

The posters, showing the two iconic buildings in flames beside the words, "Soon shall we cast terror into the hearts of the unbelievers (Quran 3:151)" on a blue background, are hung beside all 225 clocks in the NYC subway system. They were put up on January 7th and will remain in place through February. Some of the stations where they can be found include 42nd Street and 8th Avenue, West 4th Street, 50th and 8th Avenue, and 86th Street and Broadway. The MTA is running a disclaimer with the ads to emphasize that the MTA is not endorsing the views of the ad. Aaron Donovan, the media liaison of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority stressed that, "The MTA does not endorse the content of this ad, or any ad that runs in the transit system."

Two organizations, the American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI) and Stop the Islamization of America (SIOA) are behind the ad campaign. They were also behind a previous subway posting, when ten ads were put up in September 2012 that stated, "In any war between the civilized man and the savage,

support the civilized man. Support Israel. Defeat Jihad." Pamela Geller is the founder and executive director of those two organizations and is the founder, editor and publisher of the blog Atlas Shrugs.com. She has been profiled on 60 Minutes, covered in the New York Times and has appeared on ABC, CNN, AP, shows on Fox News, and written about in the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post and other publications. Her articles have also been published widely.

She said that AFDI and SIOA are "human rights organizations dedicated to freedom of speech, freedom of conscience and individual rights."

One of four sisters, Geller grew up in Hewlett Harbor and attended Lynbrook High School and Hofstra University. She learned to speak Spanish fluently while working in her father's business. In the 1980s, Geller worked at the New York Daily News as a financial analyst and then in advertising and marketing. She worked at the New York Observer from 1989 through 1994 as associate publisher and as a business executive.

Geller began her blog in 2005, she said, because, "I saw increasingly how the new media was our best hope for breaking through the mainstream media propaganda line and getting the truth to the American people. Our country was attacked on 9/11. The more I learned about who attacked us and why, the more I saw that freedom was not a given. We had to fight to defend it."

In this new subway ad campaign she said that she hopes to "challenge law enforcement and government officials, as well as the Muslim community, to be more realistic and honest about the ways in which Islamic texts and teachings are used by jihadis to justify violence and supremacism, and to formulate effective ways to counter this."

Geller pointed out that the MTA charge for "all the clocks in the system is \$70,000" and that it was funded by many small donations from "patriotic Americans deeply concerned about protecting our freedoms." She has been called an "Islamaphobe" by some pundits and has been praised by others. Her advertising campaigns have been seen in transit systems in New York City, Washington, D.C. and San Francisco.

As for the reaction to the campaign, Geller said, "There has been the predictable and manipulative charge of hate from Islamic supremacists in the U.S. and their Leftist allies. There is nothing hateful about revealing the motives and goals of the jihadis who

have vowed to destroy our nation, or about calling for a more effective defense against them. The charge reveals more about those who make it than it does about me."

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 weeks Haftorah is found in Shoftim (Judges) chapter 4. (Sephardim **Shoftim 5:1-31**) 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 Suff (Sea of Reeds) and the Shira 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, 'Why do you cry out to me? Speak to the Children of Israel, and let them journey.'" (Shemot 14:15)

In this week's perashah, when the Jewish people are in mortal danger, sandwiched between the Red Sea and the Egyptian army, Hashem says to Moshe, "Why do you cry out to me? Speak to the Israelites and let them journey forth!" Explains the Seforno, Moshe thought the Jews wouldn't listen to him and enter the water, and therefore he prayed for help. Hashem told him there was no need for Divine intervention. Just tell the nation to go and they will. Indeed, explains the Seforno, Moshe was "Choshed Bikeshirim" (he wrongly suspected them) and Hashem was correcting him, telling him that the Jewish people have faith.

We have faith, and it's not just our good genes inherited from Abraham, Yitzhak and Ya'akov, but we are educated in faith. We are graduates of Misrayim, of the splitting of the sea, and of Har Sinai, where we got our doctorates in faith.

A year ago this week, a study called "A portrait of Israeli Jews" conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute, was revealed. The study surprisingly showed that 80% of the Jews in Israel believe in Hashem, 67% believe that the Jews are the Chosen People, and 60% believe that the country should be run according to Jewish tradition. 80% believe in reward and punishment, 77% are convinced that the world is guided by Hashem, and 72% believe that praying can improve a person's situation. The exhaustive study by a non-religious organization was based on face-to-face interviews with 2803 Israeli Jews over the age of 20.

The message to the Democracy Institute is clear, that true freedom is doing Hashem's will, and it's the only thing that brings happiness to the Jewish soul. The message for the Torah observant public is not to be content with the 80% who believe in Hashem, but to worry about the 20% who don't. Our job is to act in a way that shows the entire Jewish world the beauty of a Torah way of life. Rabbi Reuven Semah

There is a charming little story about a boy who came home from Sunday school saying that he learned about the Israelites and the crossing of the Red Sea. When his mother asked if he could repeat the story to her, he replied, "Sure, Mom! Moses was in a helicopter with a walkie-talkie in his hand, watching to see when the Israelites were nearing the Red Sea. When they were at the shore, Moses radioed to the Army Corps of Engineers who laid down pontoon bridges over the Red Sea, and the Israelites crossed over to the other side. When the last Israelite crossed over, Moses radioed to the Engineer Corps and they lifted the bridges, thereby drowning the Egyptians!" The mother turned to her son in shock and asked him, "Is this how they taught it to you?" He replied, "No, Ma, but if I tell you how they taught it to us, you'd never believe me!"

Since we are so used to the real story of the Splitting of the Red Sea, we tend to take it for granted. If we were to hear it like the young boy in the story, we would be truly amazed and exclaim, "What a great miracle occurred to save the Jewish people!" Yet the real miracles are that much more awesome and we are not amazed anymore when we read it every day. We should stop every now and then, close our eyes and picture in our mind's eye what it must have felt like to be part of these great

events. Then we would say it with a little more understanding. The Hafess Hayim used to say the Shirat Hayam (the song of the Splitting of the Red Sea) with great concentration and feeling, and those who heard it felt as if the Egyptians were coming right behind him. If we put a little more feeling into our prayers, we would appreciate all the kindnesses Hashem is constantly doing for us! Shabbat Shalom.
Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com

Our Top Priority

After being warned of the impending plague of Arbeh (locusts), Pharaoh enters into a dialogue with Moshe, expressing a willingness to allow Beneh Yisrael to leave Egypt. He asks Moshe, "Mi Va'mi Ha'holechim" – "Who are the ones going?" – and Moshe responds that he intends to bring with him the entire nation: "With our youth and our elders we will go...for we have a festival to G-d." Pharaoh flatly denies this demand. He tells Moshe that he is prepared to allow the older members of the nation to leave, but not the youth. At that point, the negotiations break down, and G-d unleashes the deadly plague of locusts against Egypt.

Pharaoh understood one of the basic truisms of Jewish survival – it's all about the youth, the younger generation. He was ready to allow the adults to leave and worship their G-d. He was not worried about them. What he insisted upon was that the youngsters remain in Egypt, exposed to the lures of Egyptian culture and society. The youth are impressionable, and Pharaoh did want them to come under the influence of the religious observance that Beneh Yisrael had planned to conduct upon leaving Egypt. He wanted the Israelite youth to remain in Egypt, under the strong influence of Egyptian culture, so they would harbor no feelings of loyalty to their religious traditions.

Moshe therefore firmly declared, "With our youth and our elders we will go." Significantly, he first mentioned the youth before the elderly, because the young generation was his priority. For the precise same reason that Pharaoh refused to allow the youth to go worship G-d, Moshe demanded that the youth go – and even made them the priority. From Moshe's perspective, if there would be room on the bus out of Egypt for either the youngsters or the older folks, the youngsters would be given the seats – because they, more than the others, needed to be removed outside the influence of Egyptian society, and brought into the service of the Almighty.

This is a critical lesson for us, especially in contemporary society, where the influence and lure of anti-Torah culture, beliefs and behaviors is so strong and so pervasive. Now, perhaps more than ever before, we must prioritize our children's education. Certainly, we must take care of the adults and elderly, too. But Moshe's proclamation – "With our youth and our elders we will go" – must serve as our motto, as well. The youth's education comes before all else. Impressionable minds in today's society, when people walk around with the very worst that culture has to offer in their pockets, need protection. And we must make this protection our highest priority, just as it was for Moshe.

Tuition affordability is certainly a major challenge facing American Jewry. But let us ask ourselves: if, Heaven forbid, an observant couple had a child who was considering marrying a non-Jew, how much money would they be willing to spend to convince him or her to end the courtship? I imagine they would be prepared to pay whatever sum was needed, even if this meant mortgaging the house and pawning their valuables. When we look at it from this perspective, the price of tuition does not seem quite so daunting. This is the price we need to pay in today's society to protect our children and guide them to a life of Torah observance.

Baruch Hashem, our community is successful because it makes and has always made Torah education its highest priority. This is the model and example we must continue to follow, so that our children can successfully withstand the pressures of contemporary society and grow to be loyal and worthy heirs of our sacred tradition.

Rabbi Wein

The miracles performed by God through Moshe and Aharon, the apex of which is reached in this week's parsha by the splitting of Yam Suf and the final deliverance of the Jewish people from the oppression of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. We are then further witness to the miracle of the manna falling six times a week to sustain the Jewish people in the Sinai desert and the ongoing miracle of water supplied to millions in that arid climate.

With all this, the Jewish people are trained and accustomed to a completely miraculous supernatural existence and way of life. They are, to a certain extent, lulled into believing that this is always the way things will be. Their passive role in all of these events is somehow the norm that will always be expected of them.

In the name of God, Moshe told them at the Yam Suf that God would fight their battle with Pharaoh and that they might remain quiet and passive in the ensuing struggle. It is this experience of constant visible and recognizable Divine intervention on their behalf, during the forty year span of residing in the desert of Sinai, that makes preparation for entry into the Land of Israel so difficult, as we will read later in the Torah.

A dependent society that is accustomed only to supernatural intervention will find it difficult to suddenly change and become self-reliant and independent. From this vantage point of practical living, the rabbis of the Talmud constantly reminded us not to rely solely on miracles.

Through the long and bitter centuries of Jewish exile amongst the Christian and Moslem nations of the world, the Jewish people somehow survived - barely so, but survive we did – in nothing short of a miraculous fashion. Powerless and defenseless, despised, hated and ridiculed, Jews nevertheless persevered, convinced that Divine intervention would somehow guarantee their continuance - individually and nationally.

Because of this enforced condition of passivity, Jews waited for supernatural deliverance from their plight. The hand of God, so to speak, acting almost invisibly and through seemingly natural forces and occurrences in the last century, changed these dynamics of Jewish life. Passivity now gave way to activity and great human effort and sacrifice.

God's miracles were always present with us but much of the Jewish nation girded its loins to struggle on its own for independence, self-reliance and national realization. The fact that these efforts proved successful is itself nothing short of miraculous. Viewing the Jewish world at the beginning of the twentieth century, who could have imagined what that Jewish world would look like a scant one hundred years later.

There are those who refuse to see the hand of God, so to speak, in these remarkable events. And there are those who refuse to see that positive human effort and initiative were necessary to bring this wonder about. But the truth is that both factors were and are present in the events of Jewish life today and will continue to be so in our immediate future as well.

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

To be a Leader of the Jewish People

“That day, G-d saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians . . . The Israelites saw the great power G-d had displayed against the Egyptians, and the people were in awe of G-d. They believed in G-d and in his servant Moses. Moses and the Israelites then sang this song, saying . . .”

The Song at the Sea was one of the great epiphanies of history. The sages said that even the humblest of Jews saw at that moment what even the greatest of prophets was not privileged to see. For the first time they broke into collective song – a song we recite every day. There is a fascinating discussion among the sages as to how exactly they sang. On this, there were four opinions. Three appear in the tractate of Sotah:

Our rabbis taught: On that day Rabbi Akiva expounded: When the Israelites came up from the Red Sea, they wanted to sing a song. How did they sing it? Like an adult who reads the Hallel and they respond after him with the leading word. Moses said, I will sing to the Lord, and they responded, I will sing to the Lord. Moses said, For He has triumphed gloriously, and they responded, I will sing to the Lord.

R. Eliezer son of R. Jose the Galilean said: It was like a child who reads the Hallel and they repeat after him all that he says. Moses said, I will sing to the Lord, and they responded, I will sing to the Lord. Moses said, For He has triumphed gloriously, and they responded, For He has triumphed gloriously.

R. Nehemiah said: It was like a schoolteacher who recites the Shema in the synagogue. He begins first and they respond after him. (Sotah 30b)

According to Rabbi Akiva, Moses sang the song phrase by phrase, and after each phrase the people responded, I will sing to the Lord – their way, as it were, of saying Amen to each line.

According to R. Eliezer son of R. Jose the Galilean, Moses recited the song phrase by phrase, and they repeated each phrase after he had said it.

According to Rabbi Nehemiah, Moses and the people sang the whole song together. Rashi explains that all the people were seized by divine inspiration and miraculously, the same words came into their minds at the same time.

There is a fourth view, found in the Mekhilta: Eliezer ben Taddai said, Moses began and the Israelites repeated what he had said and then completed the verse. Moses began by saying, I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, and the Israelites repeated what he had said, and then completed the verse with him, saying, I will sing to

the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and its rider He hurled into the sea. Moses began saying, The Lord is my strength and my song, and the Israelites repeated and then completed the verse with him, saying, The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation. Moses began saying, The Lord is a warrior, and the Israelites repeated and then completed the verse with him, saying, The Lord is a warrior, Lord is His name. (Mekhilta Beshallah Parshah 1)

Technically, as the Talmud explains, the sages are debating the implication of the (apparently) superfluous words *vayomru lemor*, “they said, saying”, which they understood to mean “repeating”. What did the Israelites repeat? For R. Akiva it was the first words of the song only, which they repeated as a litany. For R. Eliezer son of R. Jose the Galilean they repeated the whole song, phrase by phrase. For R. Nehemiah they recited the entire song in unison. For R. Eliezer ben Taddai they repeated the opening phrase of each line, but then completed the whole verse without Moses having to teach it to them. Read thus, we have before us a localised debate on the meaning of a biblical verse. There is, however, a deeper issue at stake. To understand this, we must look at another Talmudic passage, on the face of it unrelated to the passage in Sotah. It appears in the tractate of Kiddushin, and poses a fascinating question. There are various people we are commanded to honour: a parent, a teacher (i.e. a rabbi), the Nasi, (religious head of the Jewish community), and a king. Many any of these four types renounce the honour that is their due?

R. Isaac ben Shila said in the name of R. Mattana, in the name of R. Hisda: If a father renounces the honour due to him, it is renounced, but if a rabbi renounces the honour due to him it is not renounced. R. Joseph ruled: Even if a rabbi renounces his honour, it is renounced . . .

R. Ashi said: Even on the view that a rabbi may renounce his honour, if a Nasi renounces his honour, the renunciation is invalid . . .

Rather, if was stated, it was stated thus: Even on the view that a Nasi may renounce his honour, yet a king may not renounce his honour, as it is said, You shall surely set a king over you, meaning, his authority should be over you. (Kiddushin 32 a-b)

Each of these people exercises a leadership role: father to son, teacher to disciple, Nasi to the community and king to the nation. Analysed in depth, the passages makes it clear that these four roles occupy different places on the spectrum between authority predicated on the person and authority vested in the holder of an office. The more the relationship is personal, the more easily honour can be renounced. At one extreme is the role of a parent

(intensely personal), at the other that of king (wholly official).

I suggest that this was the issue at stake in the argument over how Moses and the Israelites sang the Song at the Sea. For R. Akiva, Moses was like a king. He spoke, and the people merely answered Amen (in this case, the words "I will sing to the Lord"). For R. Eliezer son of R. Jose the Galilean, he was like a teacher. Moses spoke, and the Israelites repeated, phrase by phrase, what he had said. For R. Nehemiah, he was like a Nasi among his rabbinical colleagues (the passage in Kiddushin, which holds that a Nasi may renounce his honour, makes it clear that this is only among his fellow rabbis). The relationship was collegial: Moses began, but thereafter, they sung in unison. For R. Eliezer ben Taddai Moses was like a father. He began, but allowed the Israelites to complete each verse. This is the great truth about parenthood, made clear in the first glimpse we have of Abraham:

Terach took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. (Bereishith 31:11)

Abraham completed the journey his father began. To be a parent is to want one's children to go further than you did. That too, for R. Eliezer ben Taddai, was Moses' relationship to the Israelites.

The prelude to the Song at the Sea states that the people "believed in G-d and in his servant Moses" – the first time they are described as believing in Moses' leadership. On this, the sages asked: What is it to be a leader of the Jewish people? Is it to hold official authority, of which the supreme example is a king ("The rabbis are called kings")? Is it to have the kind of personal relationship with one's followers that rests not on honour and deference but on encouraging people to grow, accept responsibility and continue the journey you have begun? Or is it something in between?

There is no single answer. At times, Moses asserted his authority (during the Korach rebellion). At others, he expressed the wish that "all G-d's people were prophets". Judaism is a complex faith. There is no one Torah model of leadership. We are each called on to fill a number of leadership roles: as parents, teachers, friends, team-members and team-leaders. There is no doubt, however, that Judaism favours as an ideal the role of parent, encouraging those we lead to continue the journey we have begun, and go further than we did. A good leader creates followers. A great leader creates leaders. That was Moses'

greatest achievement – that he left behind him a people willing, in each generation, to accept responsibility for taking further the great task he had begun.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"And the waters were for them a wall on their right and on their left" (14:22)

"A wall" means that the waters protected them from the arrows of the enemy. The sons of Israel had feared the waters no less than they had feared the enemy, but now they saw that Hashem had caused the waters to become their protector.

This is an important part of Hashem's plan, whereby He demonstrates that he alone controls men's fate, by causing the salvation to come from what seemed to be the peril itself.

The daughter of the oppressor Paro was the one that rescued Moshe who defeated the oppressor. The feared vice-regent of Egypt who cast terror upon the sons of Jacob turned out to be none other than Yosef who was the savior of his family afterward. Egypt, the land of Israel's degradation and servitude, became the place where the nation increased at a rate never afterward equaled. Joseph was put into great peril, in the jail "where the king's prisoners are bound" (Bereshit 39:20), in order to interpret the dreams of the king's prisoners and thereby he became the vice-regent.

The Sea that had appeared as an obstacle and a threat to Israel at Yam Suf, became the savior that engulfed the enemy. The Sea which had threatened Israel with a worse fate than Paro's wrath, had rescued them from their enemy; and now it washed up on the shore a huge wealth of booty.

Hashem had thereby instilled in us the great awareness and serenity which is Bitachon in Hashem. By demonstrating that Hashem is in control and that He can turn our foe, the Sea, into our friend who destroys our enemy, the Egyptians.

Parts of this newsletter are courtesy of Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Project Genesis, and refer to learn@torah.org and <http://www.torah.org/>. Both the authors and Project Genesis reserve certain rights. For full information on copyrights, send email to copyrights@torah.org.