

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

BO

JANUARY 28, 2012

4 SHEBAT 5772

**DEDICATION : In memory of my Rabbi – Asher Haham Abittan, z'sl and
in memory of my uncle Hayim ben David Gindi, HaCohen and David ben Yishak Mizrahi**

**Rabbi's Yehrtzeit. The entire Abittan family will be with us for Shabbat
SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SCHEDULE**

- Mazel Tov to Menachem and Edan Zakai on the birth of a baby boy. The Brit will be Tuesday 8:25 AM in the Sulitz Beit Midrash in Far Rockaway

FRIDAY NIGHT

- Mincha at 4:50 – Followed by Kabbalat Shabbat and Arbit (Candle Lighting: 4:47)

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

- Shharith: 9:00 Kiddush this week is sponsored by
- Benai Asher Youth Program 10:45 – 11:45
- Mincha following Kiddush
- Women's Learning Group 4:15 Alternating speakers, seudat shlishit served, at the Lemberger's 1 East Olive. Class is always cancelled if there is inclement weather.
- Arbit at 6:15pm followed by Havdalah – Shabbat ends at 5:51pm
- Class and Movie resume in February

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

- Shharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

- Introduction to Prayer 9:00 – 9:30 Sunday Mornings
- "Wisdom from the Wisest of Men" Mon-Fri 6:30 AM – based upon King Solomon's Proverbs
- Men's Halacha Class Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30: Basar BeChalav
- "Sephardic Women's Prayer" Tuesday nights at the Bibi's @ 8PM with Rabbi Colish. - deep insights, simple translations and a how to guide.
- Kosher Kitchen – One class will be held on Sundays at 6:30 PM in the shul and coordinated by Rabbi Colish. The other class will be held on Wednesdays at 8 PM at the Mizrahi's and coordinated by Hindy Mizrahi. Classes begin February – please speak to David Bibi to sign up!

SPECIAL EVENTS

- February 3 - Friday night dinner at the shul to commemorate the Rabbi's yehrtzeit. Prices \$18 for those 12 and up, \$10 for children ages 5-12, under 5 free. Additional donations and sponsorships will be graciously accepted. To rsvp call Patti Azizo (516) 608-2320 or Lisa Gaon (516) 431-0243
- Moztei Shabbat, February 4th at 7:30 - Join us for the first of many movie nights sponsored by the Sephardic and Lido Synagogues on. We will be watching the 2007 Israeli thriller Ha Hov (The Debt) at the Lido Synagogue while our children will be watching a movie at our synagogue. Refreshments will be served. Cost: \$5 per person. Checks can be made out to our synagogue.
- TU B'SHVAT SEDER - February 7 – Tuesday evening interactive TU B'SHVAT SEDER in the shul coordinated by Rabbi Colish and Penny Waldman. The fruit filled meal will be followed by sushi or falafel (your preference) with tuna salad, veggie nuggets and baked fries for the kids. Please rsvp to zerizah@aol.com. Sponsorships of \$50 each are welcome. Please RSVP by 02/02/12 so we can order the correct number of plates, etc.
- February 26 – Sunday Long Beach Synagogues Joint Ski Trip – coordinated by Ernie Davidson. See flyer in shul for details.
- March 2 – Friday Night Dinner in the Shul celebrating Shabbat Across America – save the date, tell your friends, details to follow. Speak to Rabbi Colish for more details or to volunteer.

We extend our condolences to Karen Schein, to her children Adam, Ella and Ben Dahan and to her mother Dorothy Schein on the loss of her father, Harold Schein , Heshel ben Yosef.

**Graveside funeral 11am
Sunday January 29
Montefiore Cemetery
12183 Springfield Blvd,
Jamaica, NY
(718) 528-1700**

**Shiva afterwards at
Karen's residence
518 Franklin Blvd
Long Beach, NY
Through Sunday
516-314-7572
Rabbi Goodman is in charge**

Editors Notes

Einstein taught us that time is relative and explained it, at least with a physicist's perspective. But we always knew that time is relative at least in the way we experience it. Rabbi Abittan would explain that although the same hour might tick away on the same clock, three people in different situations would experience time very differently.

How long would the hour feel like if you were standing on line in the cold waiting to purchase a loaf of bread? And what if you were sitting in the dentist's chair; with drugs and without drugs? And what about the hour that two young people madly in love get to spend with each other? Time can stand still or time can fly by. Time is governed by our experience and our attitude.

That same relativity in experiencing time extends as well from the past to the future. Sometimes you consider an event, or a person from your past and it feels like a million years ago. And sometimes it feels like

yesterday and you have no idea where all that time went. You see a child getting married and think that only moments ago we were bringing that child home from the hospital.

This Shabbat we will commemorate the sixth Yahrzeit of our Rabbi, Asher Chacham Abittan, z'sl (although it actually falls on Tuesday night when we will have our class in his memory and typically drawing from his notes and lessons).

In some ways it feels that a lifetime has passed during these six years, but for me quite often it seems like yesterday. And although I will lament the fact that during those 17 years that I learned from this righteous scholar I gleaned so little and left so much more untouched, I am deeply grateful for everything I did learn and that I continue to learn because of his lessons. That feeling of yesterday allows me to recall with excitement those instructions. The gift of reading through old newsletters and notes taken during classes or notes I jotted while preparing my own classes with his help in those days.

So many times when placed into a situation, when asked a question or when puzzled and lacking a solution, I can close my eyes and see him sitting to my left and slightly ahead of me, and I can see me sitting to his right and slightly behind. I lean forward while the Rabbi leans to the right and I can hear his words. And probably because I use this image so often, it's an image that plays back in dreams when I get to ask about what I learned that day or what I didn't understand.

I take great pleasure that through this newsletter which we have been distributing for close to 18 years to thousands and

thousands of people each week, many of you have told me that without even meeting the rabbi, you've come to know him. There are certain gems that shouldn't be hidden away in small beach side towns. Even the greatest Rabbis of this and the past generation marveled at his knowledge, his wit, his sensitivity, his purity, his sense of humor and his ability to teach. As I continue to learn I again state that I am saddened over the fact that I had a treasure chest filled to the brim willing to give me anything and everything and I took perhaps one small stone. I take some solace that hardly a week goes by without me quoting Rabbi Abittan in a class, in a speech or in this newsletter giving the world a taste of who he was.

I think that quoting a person regularly and often keeps their spirit many ways close by and alive. I recall learning with the Rabbi the statement in Yevamot where Rabi Yohanan said in the name of Rabi Shimon Bar Yohai, "Any scholar in whose name a statement is said in this world, his lips move gently in the grave".

I saw posted that Rabbi Yaakob Ibn Chabib explains it figuratively. "In the afterlife, there is no opportunity to fulfill commandments and thereby gain additional reward. However, if your Torah is still being discussed in this world then it is as if you are accomplishing more and you gain additional reward. It is as if you are teaching Torah in this world, even though you are in the next world."

Rabbi Mendel Weinbach quotes Rashi who explains that this movement of the lips is considered as a virtual experience of life, and thus achieves the goal of living in both worlds at the same time.

Maharsha, however, offers an approach allowing for literal interpretation of this statement. Human speech is soul energy generated by bodily organs. Virtuous speech, such as words of Torah, creates a spiritual energy. When those words are repeated in the name of their originator, this energy activates its creators in both worlds - the soul in the World to Come and the organs of speech in this world.

Quoting someone keeps their spiritual energy flowing in this world. It lets us feel them and feel their teaching. It keeps a part of them alive and within us.

In many ways the great commentators never die. We still learn and announce Rashi says or Ramban says. Did you notice that we never use the past tense; we never say, "said", it's always "says"!

That relativity is really up to us. We have the power to keep the connection. We have the power to bring things to life.

With that said, let's try to appreciate those we have while we have them. Let's stay very connected with our parents, grandparents and great grandparents.

At the beginning of this week's perasha, already having been struck with seven plagues the last of which was fire balls wrapped in hail, Pharaoh finally tells Moses to get out. But he prefaces this by asking, "Mi VaMi", who and who will go out. Moses responds with one of the most famous verses in the Torah and tells him we will go out with our children and our elders our sons and our daughters. Pharaoh offering to allow only the adults out, refuses.

This verse is perhaps the key to the success of the Jewish people

representing the connection through the generations. Later in the portion we learn the law to tell your child. We are required to tell our children about the Exodus from mitzrayim and about our own personal exoduses. We are required to teach our children every day. And we often fulfill this in sending them to school where we assign the Rabbis and teachers with our responsibility to teach.

So this week as many of us have taken time to travel as families, it is incumbent upon us to remember to take advantage of this time together. This is a time for us to be with our children and talk to them. For grandparents to tell their grandchildren what life was like when they were children, and to teach them. Many of us are out of the houses for 12,14, 16 hours a day during the year, now that we have our children with us, let us take advantage of the opportunity to be with them. These weeks we learn about the plagues, the exodus, the crossing of the sea and the giving of the Torah. Tell your kids what it means to be a Jew, tell them of Hashem's blessing and how we should be appreciative of everything we have.

I remember the Rabbi telling that in Morocco, four families shared an outhouse and they had no running water and comparing it to the miracle of a running sink, shower, bath and toilet in America even if a whole family shared a bathroom to today where we often have a bathroom for each child. We need to appreciate what we have, the miracle and gift of technology. I recall my great uncle Dave Bibi tell of his trips abroad by boat when the journey alone took weeks and we complain that the flight to Tel Aviv is delayed by an hour. To appreciate what we have, kids have to know what it was like in

the stone ages when we had no laptops, cell phones or digital cameras and ipods.

My rabbi of blessed memory often taught us that the Jewish people are compared to an eben, a stone. The word eben is made up of two words the first two letters spell ab, father the second two letters, ben or son. And the rabbi continued, if we take the letters individually we see an aleph, a bet and a nun, standing for ab – father, ben - son and neched - grandson. When we bind three generations, the rabbis teach us that it's like a rope with three bound strands which is very difficult to break.

The eben which we form through joining the father, the son and the grandson, becomes the eben over which King David taught is the foundation stone for the future Temple. So during all of this week we should take advantage of the opportunity. Believe me, every father has a lifetime of experience to tell their children of and every grandfather has a treasure chest of diamonds. Don't let them regret collecting only a small stone when so much more was there. Let us all fulfill this commandment of telling our children and connecting with our children and may we merit together, parents, children, grand children and great grandchildren to see this eben as the foundation stone for the third Temple speedily in our days.

Quote these words and live these words. That's what the Rabbi would want on his Yahrzeit more than anything else.

I know I have already written much, but one more point. With all the talk of Rosa Parks being alive and well in Israel, of fools doing foolish things and of a press who has nothing better to than to provoke more gossip and

criticism of Jews, I received this incredible article.

Everything depends on the attitude Just read and tell me what you think Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

The 350 Mehadrin bus from Bnei Brak to Ashdod is normally jammed, but at 3 PM more than half the seats were still vacant. Four young women in slacks, obviously not from the *charedi* or religious neighborhoods along the route, boarded the bus at the stop adjacent to the Coca Cola factory in Bnei Brak. Rather than moving to the rear of the bus, they sat down demonstratively in the front two rows seats on the right side of the bus. Some of the male passengers were baffled; two others decided to get off the bus. A Breslover Chassid, sitting across the young ladies on the left side of the bus simply closed his eyes and smiled. This was not a reaction that the headline-seeking heroines were looking for, having so boldly entered the mobile *charedi* "lion's den."

No one yelled at the fearless four, women's-rights or democracy activists in their late twenties. No one even spoke to them. There was nothing to document on their cell-phone videos. What a waste! Well, at least they might be able to take a nice walk on the beach in Ashdod...

If there's no news, then make the news! One of the young woman got out of her seat (while the three others were poised with their cell-phone video cameras, waiting to pounce on the action they hoped would come) and stood next to the Breslover, whose toothy smile would have done justice to any Crest or Colgate commercial.

"Hey, why can't you look at me?" the young lady asked abrasively, obviously itching for a conflict.

"Do you want your husband looking at other young women?" the Breslover responded.

"I'm not married," she said.

"I bless you that you should find your soul-mate this year!"

The activist wasn't ready for this turn in the conversation. She needed to steer things differently. "What are you so happy about with that imbecilic grin of yours?"

"In Torah 282 of Likutei Moharan, Rebbe Nachman teaches us to appreciate our good points and to be happy with every little mitzvah we do; and in Torah 17, first part, Rebbe Nachman says that the slightest good deed that a person does makes a tremendous impression in the upper spiritual realms..."

The activist was getting more and more impatient. This was not the action she was looking for, wasting half a day on a bus ride going someplace where she didn't need to go. "So what," she snapped.

"You asked me why I'm smiling. I'm answering you. I never thought that riding a Mehadrin bus was a big deal; I mean, it didn't seem to be such a great mitzvah. But if the Yetzer Hara is going to such lengths to bother me on this bus ride, then it must be really significant in shamayim that men and women don't mix. This morning, when I was learning Tosefot on Baba Kama, the Yetzer wasn't bothering me as much as he is now. Thank You, Hashem, for giving the mitzva of riding this bus." With eyes shut, he turned at the activist and added, "And thank you, cherished

sister, for adding to my rewards in the World to Come."

The young lady's antagonism was melting into frustration. She was obviously the ring-leader, and her three sisters-in-arms were eagerly awaiting to see how she'd react. Their game plan (or battle plan) to wave the flag of women's rights on the Mehadrin bus didn't anticipate a frontal confrontation with a Breslover...

"What do you people smoke that gets you so spaced out?" she chided.

"I'll admit that I'm high, dearest sister, but that comes from tallit, tefillin, Torah, and an hour of talking to Hashem every day."

"What's with this 'dearest' and 'cherished sister' garbage?"

"You see," explained the Breslover, "your soul and mine both are a tiny part of Godliness. We have the same Father; you don't need a PhD in genealogy from Hebrew University to know that we're brother and sister. Besides, the Torah says so explicitly..."

"Are you the real deal or are you just putting on a good show?"

"If I invite you and your girlfriends for Shabbat...", meanwhile removing his kosher cellphone from his shirt pocket, about to dial his wife's number, "will you come? When you taste Shabbat and my wife's cooking, you'll understand how much Hashem loves you, and so do we."

Squirming and completely off guard, the activist snarled, "Your wife is probably an illiterate cook and bottle washer pregnant with her twelfth - what would she and I have in common?"

The Breslover chuckled. "No, my wife is only pregnant with our eighth. But you'll like her -she has a MBA in Finance from the University of Tel Aviv. Besides, she was a sergeant in the Artillery Corps of the IDF, an army medic and a training-base instructor in first aid. She even served in Lebanon for two months..."

"What?! Don't tell me you were in the army too?"

"Yeh, I admit it. I was a tank commander. Then I did a degree in Communication from UTA. That's where my wife and I met..."

All the stereotypes were crumbling. The four activists were disarmed. No fight, no arguments, no protests - only an invitation for Shabbat...

The activist tried one last effort. She sat down next to the Breslever. This will surely get his goat and make him lose his cool, she thought.

He still smiled, but a tear trickled down his cheek.

"Why are you crying?" she asked, jolted by this additional surprise. Her compassion was a sign of the Jewish soul that shined from deep within her.

"I'm not really the prude that you think. But I love my wife and want her face to be the only female image in my brain. You, dear sister, are a Bat Yisroel, a Jewish daughter. Every Bat Yisroel is beautiful. Please, I wouldn't embarrass you by getting up. But I'm not a holy man - I wish I were. You're really testing me. You are a moral young lady; would you steal something from a pregnant woman with seven children? By making me look at you, you'd be stealing some of my affection for

my wife. I'm sure that's not your intention."

Gently, as if walking on eggs, the young lady stood up. "I'm so sorry," she said, showing her true delicate and considerate inner self. "I never thought of it that way. Besides, if all the *charedim* were like you, things would be different.

"Are all of you this nice? I mean, you don't try to act like Hashem's cop." She surprised herself by saying 'Hashem.' Since when do such words come out of an ultra-liberal libertarian feminist's mouth?

"I only try to police myself."

The bus arrived at the Breslever's station in Ashdod's Rova Gimel. The Breslever got up but added, "Let us know if you're coming for Shabbat..."

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st & 2nd Aliyot: Moshe and Aharon forewarned Pharaoh about the Locust. His advisors begged Pharaoh to consider Moshe's request, and Pharaoh attempted to negotiate with Moshe and Aharon that the children should stay behind. When his offer was refused, all negotiations broke down and Pharaoh chased Moshe and Aharon away. The Locust swallowed up Mitzrayim (Egypt), but Pharaoh still refused to send away the Jews.

3rd Aliya: Darkness enveloped Egypt for three days. Pharaoh told Moshe that he could take out his people, but he had to leave the cattle behind. Moshe refused and Pharaoh forewarned Moshe that he could not come to him again. In truth, the next time they saw each other would be after the Death of the First Born, when Pharaoh went to Moshe.

4th Aliya: Moshe forewarned the Egyptians about the Death of the First Born. In 12:2 Hashem (G-d) commanded Moshe and Aharon with the very first Mitzvah to be given to the Nation. The very first Korban Pesach was described along with the Mitzvos of Matzoh, Chametz, and Pesach.

5th Aliya: The Bnai Yisroel were commanded to mark the inside of their doors with the blood of the Korban Pesach.

6th Aliya: The plague of the Death of the First Born left Mitzrayim in mourning. Pharaoh and the Egyptians hurried the Jews out of Mitzrayim. Approximately 600,000 men besides women, children, and the elderly (3,000,000 total) as well as about 1,000,000 non-Jews (the Eruv Rav) left Mitzrayim during the Exodus. It was the year 2448, and the Pasuk says that the Jews had been in Mitzrayim for 430 years. (exactly 430 years from the Bris Bain Habisarim - The Covenant Between the Halves) The laws of the Korban Pesach were reviewed.

7th Aliya: The Parsha concludes with a review of the laws of Pesach as well as introducing the Mitzvos of Pehter Chamor - the commandment to exchange all first born, male donkeys for a sheep; Pidyon Haben - redeeming the first born male child; and the Mitzvah of Tefillin.

This week's Haftarah is from Yirmiyah 46:13. The rise of Nevuchadnetzar and Babylon to world dominance heralded the destruction of Mitzrayim (Egypt) eight centuries after the time of the Exodus. Mitzrayim had been a dominant power in the region for many centuries and saw the decline of Israel as an opportunity to gain even greater power. Israel, concerned about her own

fate in the face of Babylon's onslaught, turned to Egypt for help. Yirmiyahu had already predicted in last week's Haftorah that Bavel would turn its fury and strength against Egypt, conquering her and dispersing her inhabitants. This would force Israel to stand-alone and meet her destiny. Israel's only option for salvation would have to come from Hashem (G-d) and Hashem alone. In this week's Haftorah Yirmiyahu continues his prophecy of the destruction of Mitzrayim. This is the obvious connection to our Parsha in which the proud and arrogant Pharaoh is bought to his knees by the awesome hand of Hashem. So to o, Bavel, acting as Hashem's agent, would punish Mitzrayim for her continued arrogance and pride.

The Bnai Yisroel (Jewish nation) would be directly impacted by Mitzrayim's destruction; however, they are reassured that Hashem will ultimately deliver them, so long as they keep their faith and trust in Hashem's promise

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"Also a great mixed multitude went up with them." (Shemot 12:38)

As we study the events of the Exodus, we learn that what is most required of us is the desire to grow and to do good. A person can be great in Torah wisdom and performance of misvot but if he doesn't have a desire to acquire good things and grow, he will not merit greatness. On the other hand, a person can have no knowledge and no misvot but if he has a yearning desire to cling to Hashem he can merit true greatness.

Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l derives this lesson from the Jews and the Erev Rav (the Egyptian converts that joined

the Israelites that left Egypt). The Midrash states that many Jews perished during the plague of darkness. The reason stated was because they didn't have the desire to leave. The Midrash implies that this was the only reason. So they were righteous people, plus they believed Moshe when he said it was time for the redemption. The only problem was their lack of desire to leave even though they were children of Abraham, Yitzhak and Ya'akov. All of this didn't help them and they missed the giving of the Torah on Har Sinai and they died in the darkness because they didn't desire to obtain the ultimate good.

On the other hand, the Erev Rav, who were Egyptians who came from Ham, merited to join the Jews at the splitting of the Red Sea and were at Har Sinai and more. Why? Because they had a burning desire to see what Hashem would do for the Jews. So strong was that desire that they left their homes right after the plague of the firstborn. At that time every gentile home was in mourning. One can only imagine the anguish and sadness of those homes that suddenly every home lost its oldest son. They left anyway at that terrible time to see the fulfillment of the will of Hashem. They merited to join Israel forever.

We see the need to strengthen our desire to grow in the service of Hashem, and with this we can merit greatness forever. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"All of your servants will come down to me...and he left Pharaoh's presence in anger" (Shemot 11:8)

When Moshe was telling Pharaoh about the last plague, which was the death of every first born, he said to Pharaoh, "Your servants will come to me to ask

me to leave, and that's when I will leave Egypt." Moshe didn't say to Pharaoh, "You will come to me to ask me to leave," even though that's what really happened, because he didn't want to show dishonor to the king of Egypt. This is truly amazing, because right at the end of this verse it says that Moshe stormed out of the palace in anger for the way Pharaoh had spoken to him. If someone is angry, does he still have the presence of mind to show honor and to speak in a certain way? This should reinforce to us the greatness of our leaders, such as Moshe Rabenu. Although he got angry at Pharaoh, he was in complete control of himself, down to the exact words with which he should speak to the king. Everything Moshe did was exactly measured in order to be able to do the will of Hashem.

Indeed, many of our great Sages followed in Moshe's footsteps in this respect. There was a great Rabbi of the previous generation who once got angry at what his son had done, but waited two weeks, until he was totally in control of his emotions, before rebuking him! On the one hand, we can't help but be in awe of such self-discipline, but on the other hand, we have to learn from them how to behave in such situations. How often do we fly off the handle just because we're upset? Even in anger or frustration we must learn to stay in control and use the right words and the right tone of voice. We will be the real beneficiaries of such self-control. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR The Smokescreen

Parashat Bo tells the story of Yesi'at Misrayim – Beneh Yisrael's Exodus from Egypt after over two centuries of exile and

bondage. We read that when Beneh Yisrael left, they took with them the utensils and clothing of their Egyptian neighbors, as God had commanded them (12:35). The Ba'al Ha'turim (Rabbenu Yaakov Ben Asher, Germany-Spain, 1269-1343) comments that each member of Beneh Yisrael took two garments from the Egyptians. One was used to wrap the Masot which they took with them, and the other was worn throughout the forty years of travel in the wilderness. Miraculously, these garments remained intact and fresh for the entire forty-year period.

We might wonder why it was deemed appropriate for Beneh Yisrael to wear these garments. Intuitively, we would have expected God to not want them to have anything to do with the belongings of the debased, idolatrous Egyptian society. Why did He want Beneh Yisrael to stand at Mount Sinai and behold His revelation while wearing Egyptian clothing? Is this appropriate attire for such a sacred event? Why did God insist that Beneh Yisrael wear the Egyptians' clothing while they traveled in the wilderness?

The Hatam Sofer (Rabbi Moshe Sofer of Pressburg, 1762-1839) explained that something very significant happened to these garments on the night of the Exodus. That night, besides killing the firstborns of Egypt, God also destroyed the country's idols. Moshe predicted before Yesi'at Misrayim that God would "make judgment" upon all the pagan gods of Egypt ("U'v'chol Eloheh Misrayim E'eseh Shefatim" – 12:12). All the statues were shattered, and all the idolatrous images were miraculously removed from the objects upon which they were engraved. Likewise, the Egyptians would embroider idolatrous images onto

their clothing, and these images were miraculously torn off the clothing on the night of the Exodus. Thus, by the time Beneh Yisrael took these garments, they had undergone a change, and no longer bore images of pagan gods.

God specifically wanted Beneh Yisrael to wear these garments in the years following Yesi'at Misrayim in order to teach them – and us – a vital lesson. These pagan gods were looked upon as powerful deities, but in an instant they were exposed as mere smokescreens. They appeared significant, until they were shown to have no power and no significance whatsoever. The same is true of the Yeser Ha'ra (evil inclination). Our Yeser Ha'ra convinces us that sinful behavior is gratifying and will bring us contentment and happiness. To take an extreme example, alcoholics crave intoxicating drinks because they are convinced that drinking will make them happy and bring them a feeling of gratification. But after the intoxication wears off, the addict feels worse and emptier than he did before he drank. Sins, too, appear tempting and gratifying, but then leave us feeling empty and unfulfilled. The Yeser Ha'ra sets up for us a smokescreen, portraying the sin as something we need in order to attain happiness. But like the gods of Egypt, it is only an illusion, appearing as something valuable when in truth it is sheer vanity and nothing of significance.

The Gemara teaches that in the times of Mashiah, the Yeser Ha'ra will be destroyed. We will look back at the vanities and lures of this world and realize that they were all just a hoax, an illusion, that we were deceived into affording importance to something meaningless. We must at all times remember the message of

the Egyptians' clothing, the illusionary nature of sin. It appears to have significance and value, but in truth is worth nothing. This perspective will help us avoid the traps set for us by the Yeser Ha'ra, and ensure that we invest all our time and energies into worthwhile and valuable pursuits.

Rabbi Wein

This week's parsha is the introduction to the halachic process of observance of the commandments of the Torah. In every commandment there are numerous layers of meaning and importance. There is the social and moral value that the commandment represents and teaches. There are also the technical minutiae and complex details that comprise the fabric of every commandment.

The commandments regarding the observance of Pesach and of the structuring of the Jewish calendar are part of this week's parsha. The general values of these commandments are apparent to all. Pesach represents for us the value and concept of freedom from bondage and teaches us the beginning history of our people. The calendar has always been a necessity for social and commercial life and keeps us in tune with the changing seasons of the year.

These are the general reasons and lessons of these commandments. However, as we also all know, the devil always lies in the details. What is the mechanism that will enable the story of our departure from Egyptian slavery to freedom to remain fresh and vital thousands of years later? Values only have life if they are somehow translated into human action and normative behavior.

Theories are wonderful but they rarely survive the tests of time and ever changing circumstances. Every scientific theory is therefore subjected to be proven by physical experiment and validation. Freedom is a great theory but unless somehow put into practical application in society it remains divorced from the realities of everyday existence. Just ask the North Koreans or the Syrians and Iranians about freedom! It is the technical requirements of the commandment – the matzo, chametz, hagadah, etc. – that alone are able to preserve the value and validate the theory and guarantee its meaningfulness for millennia on end.

The uniqueness of the Jewish calendar lies also in its technical details. The permanent calendar that we now follow, established in the fifth century CE, is a lunar calendar with adjustments to make it fit into a solar year span. The technical halachic details how the last Sanhedrin squared this circle are too numerous and detailed for the scope of this parsha sheet.

However, suffice it to say, that if not for those details and calculations our calendar would long ago have disappeared just as the ancient calendars of Egypt, Babylonia, Greece and Rome have disappeared. Many people look at calendars not as Godly commandments but as merely a practical way to mark our passage through time. Thus the details are really not important to them since we are only interested in the so-called result.

But in Judaism, the details are of equal if not even greater importance than the general value and end result that they represent. In our time, those Jews who for various reasons only

concentrated on the values, who were good Jews at heart but observed no commandments or details, rarely were privileged to have Jewish descendants.

Of course concentrating only on the details and ignoring the value system that it represents is also a distortion of the Godly word. Seeing both the general value of a commandment and observing its necessary technical details in practice is the guarantee for allowing the Torah to survive amongst the people of Israel for all times

Shehebar Sephardic Center Giving the benefit of the doubt

The Tora instructs us to judge people giving them the benefit of the doubt. By doing this, we fulfill a very important Mitzva: betzedeq tishpot amitekha (Vayiqra 19:18) and we also prevent one of the main triggers of Lashon haRa. Many times, we might be misjudging people's actions or attitudes toward us. The Mitzvah of giving the benefit of the doubt consists in stopping our own negative thoughts before they become resentment or hatred in our heart.

Illustration: A rabbi was giving a speech. In the last row Mr. Cohen, a respected member of the community is seating with a stranger. They seem to be good friends. While the rabbi is speaking, he notices that the two of them don't stop talking. The rabbi is a little upset. The talking continues. Actually every time the rabbi says something, Mr. Cohen makes a comment to his friend, without even trying to hide it! The rabbi considers stopping his speech and demand from Mr. Cohen to be silent. But he knows this will greatly embarrass Mr. Cohen in public, and decides to continue. You can see in the Rabbi's face that he is very irritated.

As soon as he finished his speech the rabbi walks directly to Mr. Cohen, ready to reprimand him for his disrespect. To the rabbi's surprise Mr. Cohen came smiling toward him and before the rabbi could pronounce a word Mr. Cohen says "Dear rabbi, what a great speech! As always, I enjoyed every word. Let me introduce you to my cousin, Gerard. He is from France and he does not understand a word of English. But, I translated to him your whole speech and he was very impressed". (Based on a true story)

Ricky Cohen

Everybody is a Somebody
A Vacation Related Message for
Every Day of Your Life

The taxi or car service driver.
The baggage handler.
The airline employee at the check-in counter, and the stewardess on the plane.
The custom's person at the airport and the bellhop at the hotel.
The waiter that serves you in the restaurant and the busboy who clears the table.
The lifeguard who secures your fun and the pool boy...

Everybody is a somebody.

Your tour guide and bus driver.
The security guard.
The salesperson in the souvenir shop, and the housekeeper who cleans your room.

Each one of them is a somebody.
Everybody is a somebody.

As a young man, walking through the Conway stores with my father, I was confused by something. Each time my father would acknowledge someone - that person seemed to stand taller. If he walked by an employee and

failed to acknowledge them, they shrunk with his lack of attention.

I never understood it. My father walked through the stores five days a week - and saw the same people - how could their reactions have been so dramatic each and every day?

My lack of understanding was compounded by other misimpressions of youth and circumstances: Weren't these people there to serve my father and to facilitate his business success? Why did he make the effort to acknowledge some of them? And why did they care?

Years later, when I began to walk through the stores myself - I did as I was shown.

I acknowledged some and ignored others, not in a purposeful way - rather in a generally disengaged way. I never thought much about my greetings, or lack thereof.

Then something simple but insightful happened. I had been doing training in the stores, and awarded "Certificates of Achievement" to those who completed the program. The certificates were a fairly standard practice in my mind, until I visited the home of one of our employees a few years after the program ended. When I entered the family room, I noticed that her walls were empty, with the exception of some pictures of her family members, and the framed certificate she had received in our training program. I asked her daughter why the certificate had been framed and mounted. She answered that her mom was very proud of that accomplishment.

Everybody is a somebody and needs to be treated that way - by everybody else.

Everybody is a somebody and should be valued, as such, by all

who come into contact with him/her.

The man pumping your gas, the one collecting your garbage, and all of those mentioned above have infinite value, granted by their Maker. They have pure and uncomplicated human value - a value that's not a function of anything they may or may not do in life. Their value is inherent, and embedded by their Maker, from the beginning of time.

The ability to recognize that everybody is a somebody makes each of us part of this magnificent, G-d endowed human experience. Opting out of that perspective denies the inherent greatness of others, and will ultimately provide you with the unfortunate perspective of denying that greatness in yourself.

So, let this serve as a special vacation supplement :-)! Let's make sure our children respectfully greet, thank and recognize everyone they come into contact with on their vacation. Be very sensitive to this yourself. They will be taught by example - as children, of all ages, are.

The taxi or car service driver.

The baggage handler.

The airline employee at the check-in counter and the stewardess on the plane.

The custom's person at the airport and the bellhop at the hotel.

The waiter that serves you in the restaurant and the busboy who clears the table.

The lifeguard who secures your fun and the pool boy.

Everybody is a somebody.

Your tour guide and bus driver.

The security guard.

The salesperson in the souvenir shop and the housekeeper who cleans your room.

Each one of them is a somebody. Everybody is a somebody.

Building this perspective in our children will enable each of them, always, to treat themselves as a somebody as well. Have a great vacation!

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United
Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth
The Necessity of Asking
Questions**

It is no accident that parshat Bo, the section that deals with the culminating plagues and the exodus, should turn three times to the subject of children and the duty of parents to educate them. As Jews we believe that to defend a country you need an army, but to defend a civilization you need education. Freedom is lost when it is taken for granted. Unless parents hand on their memories and ideals to the next generation – the story of how they won their freedom and the battles they had to fight along the way – the long journey falters and we lose our way.

What is fascinating, though, is the way the Torah emphasizes the fact that children must ask questions. Two of the three passages in our parsha speak of this:

And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" (Ex. 12: 26-27)

In days to come, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?'

say to him, 'With a mighty hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. (Ex. 13: 14)

There is another passage later in the Torah that also speaks of question asked by a child:

In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?" tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. (Deut. 6: 20-21)

The other passage in today's parsha, the only one that does not mention a question, is:

On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.' (Ex. 13: 8)

These four passages have become famous because of their appearance in Haggadah on Pesach. They are the four children: one wise, one wicked or rebellious, one simple and "one who does not know how to ask." Reading them together the sages came to the conclusion that [1] children should ask questions, [2] the Pesach narrative must be constructed in response to, and begin with, questions asked by a child, [3] it is the duty of a parent to encourage his or her children to ask questions, and the child who does not yet know how to ask should be taught to ask.

There is nothing natural about this at all. To the contrary, it goes dramatically against the grain of history. Most traditional cultures see it as the task of a parent or teacher to instruct, guide or command. The task of the child is to obey. "Children should be seen, not heard," goes the old English proverb. "Children, be

obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord," says a famous Christian text. Socrates, who spent his life teaching people to ask questions, was condemned by the citizens of Athens for corrupting the young. In Judaism the opposite is the case. It is a religious duty to teach our children to ask questions. That is how they grow.

Judaism is the rarest of phenomena: a faith based on asking questions, sometimes deep and difficult ones that seem to shake the very foundations of faith itself. "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" asked Abraham. "Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people?" asked Moses. "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?" asked Jeremiah. The book of Job is largely constructed out of questions, and God's answer consists of four chapters of yet deeper questions: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? ... Can you catch Leviathan with a hook? ... Will it make an agreement with you and let you take it as your slave for life?"

In yeshiva the highest accolade is to ask a good question: Du fregst a gutte kashe. Rabbi Abraham Twersky, a deeply religious psychiatrist, tells of how when he was young, his teacher would relish challenges to his arguments. In his broken English, he would say, "You right! You 100 prozent right! Now I show you where you wrong."

Isadore Rabi, winner of a Nobel Prize in physics, was once asked why he became a scientist. He replied, "My mother made me a scientist without ever knowing it. Every other child would come back from school and be asked, 'What did you learn today?' But

my mother used to ask: 'Izzy, did you ask a good question today?' That made the difference. Asking good questions made me a scientist."

Judaism is not a religion of blind obedience. Indeed, astonishingly in a religion of 613 commandments, there is no Hebrew word that means "to obey." When Hebrew was revived as a living language in the nineteenth century, and there was need for a verb meaning "to obey," it had to be borrowed from the Aramaic: le-tsayet. Instead of a word meaning "to obey," the Torah uses the verb shema, untranslatable into English because it means [1] to listen, [2] to hear, [3] to understand, [4] to internalise, and [5] to respond. Written into the very structure of Hebraic consciousness is the idea that our highest duty is to seek to understand the will of God, not just to obey blindly. Tennyson's verse, "Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do or die," is as far from a Jewish mindset as it is possible to be.

Why? Because we believe that intelligence is God's greatest gift to humanity. Rashi understands the phrase that God made man "in His image, after His likeness," to mean that God gave us the ability "to understand and discern." The very first of our requests in the weekday Amidah is for "knowledge, understanding and discernment." One of the most breathtakingly bold of the rabbis' institutions was to coin a blessing to be said on seeing a great non-Jewish scholar. Not only did they see wisdom in cultures other than their own. They thanked God for it. How far this is from the narrow-mindedness than has so often demeaned and diminished religions, past and present.

The historian Paul Johnson once wrote that rabbinic Judaism was “an ancient and highly efficient social machine for the production of intellectuals.” Much of that had, and still has, to do with the absolute priority Jews have always placed on education, schools, the bet midrash, religious study as an act even higher than prayer, learning as a lifelong engagement, and teaching as the highest vocation of the religious life.

But much too has to do with how one studies and how we teach our children. The Torah indicates this at the most powerful and poignant juncture in Jewish history – just as the Israelites are about to leave Egypt and begin their life as a free people under the sovereignty of God. Hand on the memory of this moment to your children, says Moses. But do not do so in an authoritarian way. Encourage your children to ask, question, probe, investigate, analyze, explore. Liberty means freedom of the mind, not just of the body. Those who are confident of their faith need fear no question. It is only those who lack confidence, who have secret and suppressed doubts, who are afraid.

The one essential, though, is to know and to teach this to our children, that not every question has an answer we can immediately understand. There are ideas we will only fully comprehend through age and experience, others that take great intellectual preparation, yet others that may be beyond our collective comprehension at this stage of the human quest. As I write, we don't yet know whether the Higgs' boson exists. Darwin never knew what a gene was. Even the great Newton, founder of modern science, understood how little he understood, and put it beautifully: “I do not know what I may appear

to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”

In teaching its children to ask and keep asking, Judaism honoured what Maimonides called the “active intellect” and saw it as the gift of God. No faith has honoured human intelligence more

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“And I shall see the blood and I shall skip over you and there shall be no plague upon you” (12:13)

Why was anything necessary to protect the Israelites from a plague that was sent upon their oppressors?

But there is a rule: “When permission is given to the Destroyer, he no longer distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked” (Baba Kama 60A). Hashem's preference for the righteous is not permitted by Him to interfere with this principle of His. Unless the righteous take shelter in houses which are distinguished by a mark of Hashem's service. The Destroyer, then, ‘passes over’ the loyal.

The significance of this symbolism is one of the miracles of history: the eternity of Israel as a nation in this world.

The Destroyer eventually brings destruction to every nation, one after the other. No nation has survived this inexorable fate of eventual downfall. Egypt (today Egypt is merely a name, but the people and the culture of Egypt's original greatness have vanished

entirely), Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome have disappeared from the face of the earth.

But Israel, that accepted G-d's service forever, is ‘passed over’ by the Destroyer and they shall continue as a nation forever. Those of Israel that are disloyal shall also go lost forever.

Not only in this life is Israel's existence forever, but also those that pass into the Afterlife are also forever. “All Israel has a share in the World to Come”.

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