

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE MATOT

JULY 18-19, 2014

21 TAMUZ 5774

Welcome Amalia Shulamit to the world!

Happy Birthday Ellen and Renee

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Reuben Ben Farha – Reuben Bibi – 22 Tamuz
And in memory of Dror Hanin HY"D

Dror Hanin, the 38 year-old Beit Aryeh man and father of 3 killed Tuesday
as he handed out food and gifts to soldiers on reserve duty, was buried in Yehud Wednesday afternoon.

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION

Candle lighting Friday evening 8:04 p.m. Shir Hashirim 7:15 Mincha at 7:30 SHARP

Happy Birthday to David Pinto

SHABBAT Class at 8:30, Relevant Daily Halachot based upon the teaching of HaRav Ovadia Yosef
Hashem Melech at 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:28AM

We will endeavor to keep it to the 7 aliyot, somech, samuch and maftir each week.

Kiddush this Shabbat is sponsored in honor of the 99th Birthday of Mr. David Golden - Abal 120
Please sponsor a Kiddush or Seudah Shelishi or breakfast in memory or in honor of a loved one
Anyone wishing to do a Dairy Kiddush with hot food must speak with Rabbi Colish in advance.

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30

Ages 0-5 - in the Playroom/ Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Children's afternoon program with the Bach at the Bach from 5:30 to 6:30

We are doing this program with the Bach and the program will be held at
The Sephardic Congregation for the latter part of the summer.

Pirkei Avot with Rav Aharon at 6:40

Mincha at 7:20 – Followed by Seudah Shelishi at 7:50

Seudah Shelishi Class with R' David – Reuben, Gad and Menashe

Birkat HaMazon at 8:45 Arbit at 8:50 - Shabbat Ends – 9:04

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00AM, Mon and Thurs at 6:55, Tues, Weds and Fri at 7:00

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE - Men and Women are Invited

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai 7:30

Daily class with Rabbi Colish - Weekday 6:30 AM (ADDITIONAL NEW TIME Sunday Mornings 7:30)
Kaballah as a Guide to Spiritual Growth based upon the teachings of Likutei Moharan

Thursday Nights 8:30-9:30 Virtual* Class facilitated by Rabbi Yosef Colish.

Practical Laws of Shabbat for Sephardim

AMIT will present a Yom Iyun – Day of Learning Seminar – For Women by Women on Wednesday, July 30th
from 9:30-1:30 at the Sephardic Temple - 775 Branch Boulevard, Cedarhurst, New York. The Seminar is titled
"Reading Between the Lines: A Bibliodramatic Approach to Tisha B'Av"

The Keynote Speaker is Sally Grazi-Shatzkes ,

noted Drama and Creative Arts Therapist, Lecturer and Educator.

Lunch will follow. For more information please call the AMIT office at 212-477-4720

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BeShevach VeHodaah Le'Hashem Yiybarach, our daughter Aryana woke us at 2AM on Sunday morning when her contractions were regular at five minutes apart. She told us that it was time to go to the hospital and off we went, B'H she gave birth 75 hours later on Wednesday morning a few moments after sunrise. Both mother and baby, Amalya Shulamit are doing well. And although we have not slept much this week, it's not like she was in active labor for all those hours. She actually left the hospital on Sunday for lunch and didn't come back until late Tuesday night when the baby signaled that she was ready for the world. The miracle of life is mind boggling.

Without much sleep, I was in a sort of fog for most of the week. I can't even remember the fast on Tuesday and I was unable to write my usual article for the Jewish Voice. But let's do our best to get a newsletter out this week.

My friend Rabbi Kasriel Sudak came to visit me this evening. He pointed out the following verses: The officers appointed over the army's thousands, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, approached Moses. They said to Moses, "Your servants counted the soldiers who were in our charge, and not one man was missing from us." We read this verse today in the Chok LeYisrael from the fifth portion of Matot and we pray as the soldiers begin their ground offensive into Gaza, that these words will be uttered at the end of the battle.

He continued to explain that almost 50 years ago at the time of the Six Day War, the Rebbe explained that although we are outside the land we should do whatever we can to help. Every time someone puts on tefilin, that action helps to cover and protect the soldiers in battle. It's especially important to reach out to those who don't put on and get them to give it a try. And for those who wear them each day, its good to think that just as we cover our arm, Hashem should protect those in Eres Yisrael. In our spare

time we should read Psalms and have in mind those who are under constant barrage. We are thankful for the Iron Dome, but need to remember that the Iron Dome has a spiritual component. The Iron Dome is our Hishtadlut, we do the best we can and we rely on Hashem. The miracles are hidden in the technology, but let us not forget that there really are miracles. Now is the time for Bitachon.

Our soldiers are amazing. I received a video from R' Saul Kassin today of Israeli Soldiers giving their food to Arab children. Summarizing his accompanying note he comments on the 1377 rockets fired by them, almost a rocket every ten minutes. What country in the world would accept this? Yet Israeli Soldiers give their food to Arab children. We the Jewish people care more for the children of our enemies than they care for themselves. We are taught a Human Being is Selem Elokim (created in the image of Hashem).

Hamas use their people as human shields; they endanger their own people. Even Egypt came out with a statement today holding Hamas responsible for any deaths that may come

Hamas shows an utter disregard for human life. They hope and want Israel to kill many of their own people. These deaths are public relation pawns. Why is the fact that the UN discovered 20 rockets in a UN school not on the front page? Why is the fact that Hamas centralizes its military operation command in the basement of a hospital not leading the news?

R' Saul Kassin in the same post wrote, that recently The Gadol Hador, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky was asked for a Haskama (approbation) for a new Sefer on Tisha BeAv. Rav Chaim refused to give the Haskama stating that "This year we won't need it."

A couple recently came to the Rabbi and asked for Rav Chaim to help them pick a date to get married. The Rabbi told them to get married on Tisha BeAv. They asked, "Isn't Tisha BeAv a sad day?" He responded that, "This year Tisha BeAv is be a Happy Holiday."

Let's hope his words come true.

Our thoughts tonight are with the boys in Gaza. We have a number of friends and congregants with children, grandchildren and nephews who are going in tonight. Beautiful young kids who are risking their lives to protect the Jewish people are on our minds. As we mentioned Hishtadlut and Bitachon – effort vs faith, I thought of a note I received from my friend Jack Doueck, Jack asked me to put a question to our readers.

"What's your opinion on Rabbi Slifkin's email below?"

"Shall Your Brothers Come Into War, While You Remain Here?"

Earlier this week I wrote a post that used satire to criticize the charedi approach of claiming that yeshivah students provide protection while simultaneously pulling them out of areas that require protection. A number of people criticized that post, arguing that now is a time for unity, not criticism, and certainly not satire.

Now, I do agree that in a time of national emergency, unity is required. Allow me, then, to explain why I consider my post to have been appropriate.

As we know, the Bnei Yisrael were terrified of waging war to take possession of the Land of Israel. In this week's parashah, we are told about how the Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven asked that they be allowed to remain on the east of the Jordan, and not to enter the Land of Israel. Moshe Rabbeinu gives his famous reply (32:6): "Shall your brothers come into war, while you remain here?"

Would one ask why Moshe is sowing divisiveness at a time when unity is required? Of course not! First of all, his criticism was directly relevant to the matter at hand. Second, it was precisely the lack of unity that he was criticizing!

It was only a few months ago that hundreds of thousands of charedi (and a handful of misguided non-charedi) Jews rallied in Jerusalem and New York against the army draft being minimally applied to charedim with the same enforcement that is applied to non-charedim. They recited the prayer for Hashem to "pour out His wrath upon the nations" with regard to the Government of Israel. They expressed hakaras hatov to the NYPD but not to the IDF (a pattern that continues this week with the Agudah expressing its hakaras hatov to Obama for funding the military but not to the soldiers who are actually in the military).

Many of us still haven't gotten over that. And right now, it is the IDF that is protecting the citizens of Eretz Yisrael from the thousands of rockets that Hamas is launching. Right now, there are tens of thousands of reservists being drafted to join the regular IDF forces in a possible land invasion of Gaza. Why is the charedi community not part of this?

Why is it the non-charedi community that has to put themselves out, potentially putting their lives on the line? "Shall your brothers come into war, and you remain here?"

Making things worse is that not only are they not serving in the army, not only do they not express hakaras hatov and concern for those who do serve in the army, not only do they curse those who try to make them join, but they are even weakening morale by evicting yeshivos from areas of the country that are in greater danger. And to add insult to injury, they claim that they are the ones providing the true protection!

So, yes, I think that at this time, criticism is extremely appropriate. And it is not "inappropriately harming national unity" to criticize those who are harming national unity. (As for the satirical tool of referring to the "black dome", the idea was to take them at their word that they believe themselves to be providing essential protection, which serves to highlight the problem in their approach.) Davka now, when everyone can see the importance of the IDF and the sacrifices that are made by its soldiers, and when everyone can see the folly and hypocrisy of the claim that yeshivah students are providing protection via Torah study, we have an opportunity to impress Moshe Rabbeinu's message upon the charedi community.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

The year is 2488 and the 40 years in the desert are drawing to a close. Miriam and Aharon have passed on, and Yehoshua has been appointed as the successor. In these last two portions of Sefer Bamidbar, Mattoth - Massey, Hashem begins to wrap things up. Pay attention to the laws selected to end the 4th Sefer.

1st Aliya: The laws of personal vows are detailed and Moshe is instructed to "take revenge" against Midian. In the battle, both Balak and Bilaam are killed.

2nd Aliya: In the aftermath of the war, Moshe instructs the soldiers regarding the applicable laws of Tumah - impurity, and deals with the division of the booty between the soldiers, community, and the Mishkan.

Note verses 22 and 23 which teach us the laws of how to make kosher our vessels, and the Torah requirement for metal vessels made by a non-Jew or

purchased from a non-Jew to be immersed in a mikvah before being used. (the Rabbis extended this law to included glassware)

In appreciation for the fact that not a single soldier was lost in battle, the Generals and Captains donate their personal percentage of the captured gold to the Mishkan. The total weight of the donated gold weighed 837.5 lbs.! (Areyeh Kaplan)

3rd & 4th Aliyot: Moshe is approached by the tribes of Reuven, Gad, and 1/2 of Menashe to acquire the Trans-Jordan territories captured from Sichon and Og. Moshe first treats their petition with suspicion; however, an agreement is reached between the 2 1/2 tribes and Moshe: Trans-Jordan in exchange for manning the front lines in the campaign to take Eretz Yisroel.

5th Aliya: Moshe instructs the Bnai Yisroel to clear out the Land from all negative influences, and sets the Biblical boundaries of the Land.

6th Aliya: New leaders are appointed to oversee the division of the Land, and the 48 Levitical cities, including the 6 Cities of Refuge, are mandated.

7th Aliya: The laws regarding the inadvertent murderer are detailed, and the prohibition against marrying outside one's tribe is established. This prohibition was only for the generation that occupied the Land.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"He shall not profane his word, according to whatever comes from his mouth shall he do." (Bemidbar 30:3)

The perashah begins with the power of the word. Even if a simple person makes a vow, he can make something that is normally permitted into something forbidden. An individual can transform a mundane object into a holy one. One can dedicate and set aside something for the Bet Hamikdash by merely saying so. How is it possible for one to change the status of an object with his mouth?

Rabbi Y. Spero explains according to Rabenu Yonah: If a person guards his mouth carefully, he transforms it into a kli sharet (a holy vessel used in the Temple). Just as a vessel of holiness that was used in the Bet Hamikdash was able to transform a mundane object that was placed into it into one of holiness, so too a person can transform his mouth into a kli sharet, a vessel of holiness, which can transform mundane objects into holy ones.

The mouth has the power to do tremendous good, or G-d forbid, it has the potential to wreak havoc on people's lives. The Sefat Emet points out that this perashah is always read during the three weeks, for during this time our words can really make a difference. If one is careful, his words can help rebuild the Bet Hamikdash.

On numerous occasions, Rav Yisrael Gans, Rav in the neighborhood of Mattersdorf, Jerusalem, was present when Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, Rosh Yeshivah of Torah Ore, met with childless couples and promised them that they would have a child. Not a blessing, but a promise. When he was asked how he was able to guarantee that a childless couple would have children and from where that power came, he responded with a simple but very powerful thought, "My entire life I have been careful to watch my mouth and therefore I have the ability to make that promise."

One should never dismiss the power of words with the notion that they are "just words."
Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

When the author of the Sefat Emet was a young boy, he stayed up all night to learn Torah, and by the time the morning prayers came, he had dozed for a few minutes and he came a little late to the minyan. His grandfather, who was a great Rebbe and was in charge of bringing him up, began to rebuke him for being late to shul. He said to him, "If this is your attitude now, what will happen when you get on in life; if you want to succeed you can't be lazy, etc."

The young grandson took the rebuke with his head lowered to the ground and didn't try to defend himself. After the grandfather left, the boy's study partner, who had learned with him all night, exclaimed, "Why didn't you defend yourself and tell him that you were up all night and that's why you were late?" The youngster, who succeeded his grandfather and became a big Rebbe himself later on in life, told his friend, "I learned this from the perashah of Matot. When Moshe rebuked the tribes of Gad and Reuben for wanting to inherit the land on the east of the Jordan, he suspected them of wanting to shirk their responsibilities and of not wanting to fight with the rest of the Jewish people. After Moshe finished his speech they answered that they were not intending to abandon the Jewish people, but were planning to fight with their brothers. We see from here that they did not interrupt Moshe while he was rebuking them because when someone points out our faults, especially someone who cares for us, we should listen rather than object and defend ourselves.

This way even if we were right this time, we would have learned something for the future.”

This is true today as much as back then. Whenever our loved ones or our friends say anything to us, we become defensive and sometimes even take the offense against them. We should realize that every rebuke or criticism can be helpful in our development if we open our minds and hearts and listen! Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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Showing Appreciation

In Parashat Matot, G-d commands Moshe to lead a war against Midyan, who initiated a scheme to lead Beneh Yisrael to sin which resulted in the deaths of thousands of people among the nation. The Midrash notes that whereas G-d instructed Moshe to wage this war, he did not go out to battle. Instead, he sent 12,000 men led by Pinhas to fight Midyan, while he remained behind. How, the Midrash asks, could Moshe Rabbeinu shirk his responsibility? If G-d commanded him to go and wage war, how could he delegate this difficult task to others?

The Midrash offers a remarkable answer. Moshe owed a debt of gratitude to Midyan, where he found refuge when he was forced to flee from Egypt many years earlier. As we read in Parashat Shemot, Moshe killed an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating an Israelite slave, and Pharaoh heard about the incident and sought to kill Moshe. Moshe immediately fled and found safety in Midyan, where he married the daughter of Yitro and worked for him as a shepherd. Moshe owed his life to Midyan, and it would thus have been inappropriate for him to lead a war against it.

Moshe did not arrive at this logic on his own. He reached this conclusion on the basis of G-d's commands many years earlier during the ten plagues. G-d commanded that specifically Aharon – as opposed to Moshe – should turn the water of Egypt into blood, and produce vermin from its dust. It would have been improper for Moshe to strike the water, which protected him when he was an infant and his mother placed him in a basket in the river to save him from the Egyptians, and to strike the earth, which he used to cover the remains of the taskmaster whom he killed. The fundamental value of gratitude dictates that one does not “throw a rock into the well from which he drank,” that we must not cause harm to those who have been good to us. And thus even

though G-d wished to strike the water and earth of Egypt, He did not want Moshe to carry out this task, given the debt of gratitude he owed.

Recalling this precedent, Moshe understood that he was not the one to wage battle against Midyan. He realized that when G-d instructed him to go out to war, He meant that Moshe should mobilize and send an army, rather than go fight himself.

The Torah value of gratitude extends even to sworn enemies of our nation – like Midyan – and even to inanimate objects – such as water and earth.

It is told that Rav Yisrael Gustman, who served as a Rosh Yeshiva in Jerusalem, would water the plants and bushes outside his yeshiva each day. When asked about this practice, he explained that he survived the Holocaust, spending a considerable amount of time hiding in fields. He felt a deep sense of gratitude to bushes and plants for helping him escape from the Nazis, and he thus felt it was appropriate to personally care for the yeshiva's garden.

If this is the Torah's attitude when it comes to plants, then it certainly applies to family members and friends. If Moshe owed a debt of gratitude to the waters of Egypt, shouldn't we show appreciation to our spouses? If Moshe was to show respect to dirt for the service it provided him, shouldn't we respect the people who work for us? If Moshe felt grateful to a wicked nation like Midyan, shouldn't we be profoundly grateful to our parents, our siblings, our friends and our neighbors?

The story of this war should thus serve as an important reminder to all of us to always take note of the favors done for us, of all the benefit we receive from other people, and to feel a sincere sense of gratitude which ought to be regularly expressed in both words and actions.

Rabbi Wein THE TERRIBLE TRUTH

In my many decades as a public speaker I have encountered many reactions to my words. Though most people love me and are enthralled by what I have to say, many times people have somehow vehemently disagreed and have informed me of their negative opinions. Sometimes people have even walked out while I was still speaking to express their displeasure.

Once or twice I remember being heckled by members of the audience who somehow were unable to appreciate the greatness of my character and the

wisdom of my words. But last Shabbat afternoon, while teaching my weekly class/lecture on Pirkei Avot, the air raid siren in Jerusalem sounded and all of us attending this class in our synagogue repaired to the bomb shelter and stairwell in the building.

Those rockets headed for Jerusalem were intercepted by the Iron Dome defensive system or fell in open fields outside of the city. This was the first time in my career that anyone shot at me while I was speaking. I imagine there is a first time for everything and I am somewhat flattered that Hamas somehow has taken notice of my oratorical skills and has attempted to silence them.

In all seriousness, the terrible truth of the ongoing conflict is that unreasoning and ideological hatred overrules all logic, strategy, human concerns and reasonable behavior. The terrible truth is that all of the casualties suffered by the civilian population living in Gaza are directly attributable to Hamas. It started the conflict, it kidnapped and killed innocent children, and it has fired over 700 rockets against purely civilian targets in Israel.

And, Hamas is frustrated beyond belief at its failure to obtain any tactical or strategic advantage with its violent and vicious behavior. It just continues to shoot rockets, knowing that it only guarantees that its own population in Gaza will pay the price for its doctrinal hatred of Israel and the Jewish people. That is the terrible truth that the world knows but will not accept and act upon.

Another aspect of the terrible truth was acted out on the streets of Tel Aviv on Saturday night. A small group of diehard Leftists and peace loving humanitarians attempted to conduct a rally – mostly for the benefit of the television and print media of the world – demanding that Israel end its Gaza campaign. Spontaneously, and in reaction, a small group of other Israeli citizens gathered and vociferously denounced and opposed those attempting to conduct that rally.

The police immediately came to interpose themselves between the two opposing groups, both of which were now vehemently shouting at each other and coming close to blows. Hamas intervened by shooting six rockets at Tel Aviv at that moment. Some were intercepted again by the Iron Dome system and the others fell harmlessly in open areas or in the sea.

Both groups of demonstrators ran to the same shelter when the air raid siren sounded. In the shelter their argument continued and the police, who also were in

the shelter, had to maintain separation and order. The absurdity of the situation apparently did not register upon the peace loving humanitarians.

They somehow still failed to realize that Hamas and its rockets meant them as well and not just those “aggressive, war-mongering, right-wing extremists” who control the government and defense forces of Israel. Hamas rockets also fell in Arab Hebron and Bethlehem, cities controlled by and located in the areas of the Palestinian Authority.

But, since Hamas does not care about its own civilians in Gaza, why should it care about Arabs living on the West Bank? Hamas does not care about any human life and therefore it only keeps on firing rockets, to no avail or advantage except as a release point for its hatreds and perverted ideology.

The media of the world – especially such biased anti-Israel organs as the New York Times, Haaretz and the Guardian, etc. – headline the destruction of mosques and the deaths of civilians in Gaza. Parenthetically they note that the mosques were used to store and shoot rockets aimed at Israeli citizens.

The world looks for symmetry in human casualties in this conflict. The fact that symmetry is lacking in this area is used to condemn Israel instead of admiring it for its ability to defend itself and its citizens. The symmetry that is lacking is in the media coverage and reporting of events. There is no country in the world that would sit idly by while hundreds of rockets rained down on its civilian population and cities.

Israel has tried for many decades to reach a peaceful accommodation with its Arab neighbors. For religious, cynical, greedy and ideological reasons, it has been rebuffed time and again in these efforts. The terrible truth is that in spite of the clucking of the do-gooders, the formula of quiet will be met by quiet and force will be met by force. This is still the only reasonable option left to us in our most dangerous area of the world.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks CONFLICT RESOLUTION

One of the hardest tasks of a leader – from prime ministers to parents – is conflict resolution. Yet it is also the most vital. Where there is leadership, there is long-term cohesiveness within the group, whatever the short-term problems. Where there is a lack of leadership – where leaders lack authority, grace, generosity of spirit and the ability to respect positions

other than their own – then there is divisiveness, rancour, back-biting, resentment, internal politics and a lack of trust. Leaders are people who put the interests of the group above those of any subsection of the group. They care for, and inspire others to care for, the common good.

That is why an episode in this week's parsha is of the highest consequence. It arose like this. The Israelites were on the last stage of their journey to the promised land. They were now situated on the east bank of the Jordan, within sight of their destination. Two of the tribes, Reuben and Gad, who had large herds and flocks of cattle, felt that the land they were currently on was ideal for their purposes. It was good grazing country. So they approached Moses and asked for permission to stay there rather than take up their share in the land of Israel. They said: "If we have found favour in your eyes, let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan" (Num. 32: 5).

Moses was instantly alert to the danger. The two tribes were putting their own interests above those of the nation as a whole. They would be seen as abandoning the nation at the very time they were needed most. There was a war – in fact a series of wars – to be fought if the Israelites were to inherit the promised land. As Moses put it to the tribes: "Should your fellow Israelites go to war while you sit here? Why do you discourage the Israelites from crossing over into the land the Lord has given them?" (32: 6-7).

The proposal was potentially disastrous. Moses reminded the men of Reuben and Gad what had happened in the incident of the spies. The spies demoralised the people, ten of them saying that they could not conquer the land. The inhabitants were too strong. The cities were impregnable. The result of that one moment was to condemn an entire generation to die in the wilderness and to delay the eventual conquest by forty years. "And here you are, a brood of sinners, standing in the place of your fathers and making the Lord even more angry with Israel. If you turn away from following him, he will again leave all this people in the wilderness, and you will be the cause of their destruction" (Num. 32: 14-15). Moses was blunt, honest and confrontational.

What then followed is a role model in negotiation and conflict resolution. The Reubenites and Gadites recognised the claims of the people as a whole and the justice of Moses' concerns. They propose a compromise. Let us make provisions for our cattle and our families, they say, and the men will then accompany the other tribes across the Jordan. They

will fight alongside them. They will even go ahead of them. They will not return to their cattle and families until all the battles have been fought, the land has been conquered, and the other tribes have received their inheritance. Essentially they invoke what would later become a principle of Jewish law: *zeh neheneh ve-zeh lo chaser*, meaning, an act is permissible if "one side gains and the other side does not lose."^[1] We will gain, say the two tribes, by having land good for our cattle, but the nation as a whole will not lose because we will be in the army, we will be in the front line, and we will stay there until the war has been won.

Moses recognises the fact that they have met his objections. He restates their position to make sure he and they have understood the proposal and they are ready to stand by it. He extracts from them agreement to a *tenai kaful*, a double condition, both positive and negative: If we do this, these will be the consequences, but if we fail to do this, those will be the consequences. He leaves them no escape from their commitment. The two tribes agree. Conflict has been averted. The Reubenites and Gadites achieve what they want but the interests of the other tribes and of the nation as a whole have been secured. It was a model negotiation.

Quite how justified were Moses' concerns became apparent many years later. The Reubenites and Gadites did indeed fulfil their promise in the days of Joshua. The rest of the tribes conquered and settled Israel while they (together with half the tribe of Manasseh) established their presence in Trans-Jordan. Despite this, within a brief space of time there was almost civil war.

Joshua 22 describes how, returning to their families and settling their land, the Reubenites and Gadites built "an altar to the Lord" on the east side of the Jordan. Seeing this as an act of secession, the rest of the Israelites prepared to do battle against them. Joshua, in a striking act of diplomacy, sent Pinhas, the former zealot, now man of peace, to negotiate. He warned them of the terrible consequences of what they had done by, in effect, creating a religious centre outside the land of Israel. It would split the nation in two.

The Reubenites and Gadites made it clear that this was not their intention at all. To the contrary, they themselves were worried that in the future, the rest of the Israelites would see them living across the Jordan and conclude that they no longer wanted to be part of the nation. That is why they had built the altar, not to offer sacrifices, not as a rival to the nation's sanctuary, but merely as a symbol and a sign to

future generations that they too were Israelites. Pinhas and the rest of the delegation were satisfied with this answer, and once again civil war was averted.

The negotiation between Moses and the two tribes in our parsha follows closely the principles arrived at by the Harvard Negotiation Project, set out by Roger Fisher and William Ury in their classic text, *Getting to Yes*.^[2] Essentially they came to the conclusion that a successful negotiation must involve four processes:

1. Separate the people from the problem. There are all sorts of personal tensions in any negotiation. It is essential that these be cleared away first so that the problem can be addressed objectively.
2. Focus on interests, not positions. It is easy for any conflict to turn into a zero-sum game: if I win, you lose. If you win, I lose. That is what happens when you focus on positions and the question becomes, "Who wins?" By focusing not on positions but on interests, the question becomes, "Is there a way of achieving what each of us wants?"
3. Invent options for mutual gain. This is the idea expressed halakhically as *zeh neheneh ve-zeh neheneh*, "Both sides benefit." This comes about because the two sides usually have different objectives, neither of which excludes the other.
4. Insist on objective criteria. Make sure that both sides agree in advance to the use of objective, impartial criteria to judge whether what has been agreed has been achieved. Otherwise, despite all apparent agreement the dispute will continue, both sides insisting that the other has not done what was promised.

Moses does all four. First he separates the people from the problem by making it clear to the Reubenites and Gadites that the issue has nothing to do with who they are, and everything to do with the Israelites' experience in the past, specifically the episode of the spies. Regardless of who the ten negative spies were and which tribes they came from, everyone suffered. No one gained. The problem is not about this tribe or that but about the nation as a whole.

Second, he focused on interests not positions. The two tribes had an interest in the fate of the nation as a whole. If they put their personal interests first, God would become angry and the entire people would be punished, the Reubenites and Gadites among them. It is striking how different this negotiation was from that of Korach and his followers. There, the whole argument was about positions, not interests – about who was entitled to be a leader. The result was collective tragedy.

Third, the Reubenites and Gadites then invented an option for mutual gain. If you allow us to make temporary provisions for our cattle and children, they said, we will not only fight in the army. We will be its advance guard. We will benefit, knowing that our request has been granted. The nation will benefit by our willingness to take on the most demanding military task.

Fourth, there was an agreement on objective criteria. The Reubenites and Gadites would not return to the east bank of the Jordan until all the other tribes were safely settled in their territories. And so it happened, as narrated in the book of Joshua:

Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh and said to them, "You have done all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. For a long time now—to this very day—you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you. Now that the Lord your God has given them rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan. (Joshua 22: 1-4)

This was, in short, a model negotiation, a sign of hope after the many destructive conflicts in the book of Bamidbar, as well as a standing alternative to the many later conflicts in Jewish history that had such appalling outcomes.

Note that Moses succeeds, not because he is weak, not because he is willing to compromise on the integrity of the nation as a whole, not because he uses honeyed words and diplomatic evasions, but because he is honest, principled, and focused on the common good. We all face conflicts in our lives. This is how to resolve them.

[1] Baba Kama 20b.

[2] Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, Random House Business, 2011.

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