

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE MAS'EI

JULY 26, 2014

28 TAMUZ 5774

DEDICATIONS: In memory of my grandmother Victoria Gindi – Victoria Bat Rosa – 1 Ab

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION

Candle lighting Friday evening 7:59 p.m. Shir Hashirim 7:15 Mincha at 7:30 SHARP

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 8:33 AM
We will endeavor to keep it to the 7 aliyot, somech, samuch and maftir each week.

Kiddush this Shabbat and next Shabbat is sponsored by
Leon Bijou in memory of his parents Sallee and Joe Bijou A'H And
Dr Robert and Linda Glaser in honor of the marriage of their children Judith and Jonathan Soniker

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 6:30
Mincha at 7:10 – Followed by Seudah Shelishi at 7:40
Seudah Shelishi Class with R' David – Reuben, Gad and Menashe
Birkat HaMazon at 8:40 Arbit at 8:45 - Shabbat Ends – 8:58

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

"What is happening to our beloved Israel and are there any long term realistic solutions?"
Presentation by Shmuel Sackett, Co-Founder and International Director of
Manhigut Yehudit - The Jewish Leadership Movement

Shmuel represents the opinions and strategies of Likud MK Moshe Feiglin, currently the Deputy Speaker of the Knesset.

Don't miss the event that will give you hope and optimism in this time of national crisis.

Wednesday July 30th 8:30 pm
The Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach
161 Lafayette Blvd, Long Beach NY

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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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame. Mincha at 4PM through October 30th – Please join us! 212-289-2100

Most of us cannot send our sons and daughters to put on the uniform of the IDF and fight in Gaza. We cannot donate blood for wounded soldiers. We cannot volunteer in the myriad grassroots initiatives springing up all over Israel to relieve traumatized civilians suffering incessant Hamas bombardment.

But we *can* give up our lunch break this coming Monday, July 28, from 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. to attend the biggest rally to date in support of our beleaguered homeland, the State of Israel, at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, Second Avenue and 47 Street. The rally is co-sponsored by virtually the entire organized Jewish world, including UJA-Federation of NY, the JCRC, the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, etc.

This Monday afternoon, please join me and thousands of others to lend our voices when we cannot lend our bodies.

Editors Notes

How Can I Help?

“Tell the people that when you cross into the land of Canaan, you shall drive out all people who live there and destroy all their symbols, idols and places of worship. I have given this land to you. If you do not drive out the people who live there then those left behind will become like a thorn in your side. They will oppress you as enemies in the land in which you dwell...”

As I write this, our prayers and our thoughts are with the brave soldiers of the IDF who hope their mission into Gaza will yield some relief for the residents of Israel who find themselves under the constant rocket attack which has gone on for years and now threatens eighty percent of the country. The discovery of dozens of sophisticated tunnels whose sole purpose is to terrorize the people is chilling.

The question that is posed to me again and again is, "how can I help?" Every misvah we do, every prayer we offer, every chapter of Psalms we read helps to reinforce the spiritual iron dome of protection. We can each spiritually adopt a soldier – visit Shmiraproject.com or call 443-203-8592 to participate. But we can and should do more.

I am reminded of a call my wife received in December of 2008 prior to operation cast lead. A friend told her of the army's need for packs of a special high dose caffeinated gum that was unavailable in Israel at the time. They wanted a pack for each soldier and needed someone to purchase the gum and then deliver the gum to Israel preferably within a few days. That was on a Wednesday if I recall correctly and Chantelle contacted the manufacturer that day and arranged for the huge purchase and a special delivery over night to our home charging everything to her credit card. After it arrived, she packed the gum into carry on duffles and arranged for a large group of students to each carry a bag onto their plane. She and her friend Shoshana Pilevsky delivered the gum with police assistance to Newark airport and miraculously the El Al jet waited for them. They were whisked through security and the duffles arrived in Israel the next day Friday where the students were met at Ben Gurion. The gum was distributed in the field on Sunday morning. When I wrote about all the amazing coincidences that allowed this all to happen, in a matter of hours so many of our readers wanted to participate in the cost of the project and pledged and later on sent in tens of thousands in donations. We, through your generosity, were able to accommodate a request for a second shipment a week later.

But this year nobody asked for gum.

With many friends who have children in the army and with our own children identifying with their own friends who have volunteered to serve we realize that one of the most important things for those serving especially the youngest of them is knowing that people around the world are with them in spirit and are supporting them. For them to realize that they are not alone is crucial.

With that in mind my daughter Mikhayla and a couple of friends started a project last week called challah for our soldiers. Within a day they had a website up challahforoursoldiers.org and arranged for volunteers from New Jersey to LA and in three cities in Israel as well. In more than a dozen places around the country challot are baked and sold and in turn thousands of challot and care packages are distributed to the

soldiers on the front. Imagine the emotion when one of these kids receives a package. "I am not alone".

I marvel had how amazing these kids are and how much they care. And you can participate by visiting their website. Every nickel collected goes to help. There are no administrative costs. Even the challah baking and supplies are donated. And this week they have added a feature, "Write a letter to a soldier."

But the question still remained. What else could we do? And here's where I need all of you to get involved.

On Friday, my colleague Rabbi Yosef Colish put me in touch with the rabbinate of the friends of the IDF. The challenge after repeated requests from the command level both from units in the south around Gaza and in Judea and Samaria was as follows.

They needed Olive green "dri-fit" Tzitzit (what many of the combat soldiers in the field call: "HaShaChPaTZ HaAmiti" - the real bullet proof vest!) Which the IDF Rabbinate is supplying as fast as it can but does not have the significant quantities it needs. The necessity is many tens of thousands more as the Operation expands together with a major call-up of reserve combat troops.

My first thought was for us as a community to sponsor at least five thousand pairs.

Then after speaking with Lt. Colonel Rabbi Yedidya, I felt we should also undertake to sponsor a printing of the Magen Yisrael Tehillim-Siddur for Combat Soldiers. They were printing 40,000 copies but with our commitment they were able to go into another printing this morning (Monday) of another 20,000. Each siddur is made pocket size and is enclosed in a transparent thick plastic envelope to fit exactly in the soldier's fatigue shirt pocket.

A popular saying is that there are no atheists in the fox hole. Just imagine how important these Tzitzit and siddurim with tehillim are to these boys. And knowing they are coming from their friends in America compounds that importance. As my daughter suggested, we need them to know that we are one nation with one heart.

So on Sunday night, without having collected a dollar in donations and anticipating the generosity of our readers and friends, we sent them a check for both the Tzitzit and the books.

So how can you help? Participate with us in this mitzvah. The approximate cost per combat company

for Tzitzit is \$1,800. A full battalion is \$5,000. Whatever amount you or any of your friends or congregants can do in this regard is appreciated. It all adds up accordingly. Siddurim are \$1.30 each and packages that we are having prepared for the soldiers are about \$3 each. Send us an email. Let us know how much you can sponsor - email me at DavidBibi@gmail.com and send a check made out to the Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach c/o Rabbi David Bibi, 979 Third Avenue, suite 1705 New York, NY 10022. I am sure that based on our experience with the gum, you will generously assist us here too and we will be able to double our order and add care packages for each soldier. These young men and women serving in the armed forces need us to know we are there for them.

As of this writing after speaking in my own Synagogue and some of the guys in the early minyan at the Safra Synagogue on 63rd street, we already have commitments of \$18,000 and we would like to triple that. With your help we will.

This week's portion of Masei names all 42 encampments of Bnei Yisrael on their 40-year journey from the Exodus until the crossing of the Jordan River into Eretz Yisrael. The journey was made as one nation with one heart. Let us continue that journey together. Let us prove especially during these three weeks and this time of need that we can be one people with one heart.

Please join me.

Shabbat Shalom,
David Bibi

PS: Although many agreed with Rabbi Slifkin, that the Haredi community outwardly support our soldiers; most of you who felt that Rabbi Slifkin's note was somewhat inflammatory. This was compounded given my own comments in the paragraphs prior reminding us of a needed spiritual component to Israel's iron dome and the numerous calls from the Torah world for Tefilot for the soldiers. Facing the terrible tragedy of the loss of life of so many young men in the last few days, perhaps this alone will act as a wakeup call and the rest of the Torah world will not shy away from showing the appreciation and concern in times of war and beyond.

**Obama to the rescue --- of Hamas
By Caroline B. Glick**

We have known for years that tunnels were a central component of Hamas's logistical infrastructure.

What began as the primary means of smuggling weapons, trainers and other war material from Hamas's sponsors abroad developed rapidly into a strategic tool of offensive warfare against Israel.

As we have seen from the heavily armed Hamas commando squads that have infiltrated into Israel from tunnels since the start of the current round of warfare, the first goal of these offensive tunnels is to deploy terrorists into Israel to massacre Israelis.

But the tunnels facilitate other terror missions as well.

Israel has found tunnels with shafts rigged with bombs located directly under Israeli kindergartens.

If the bombs had gone off, the buildings above would have been destroyed, taking the children down with them.

Other exposed shafts showed Hamas's continued intense interest in hostage taking. In 2006 the terrorists who kidnapped Cpl. Gilad Schalit entered Israel and returned to Gaza through such a tunnel.

Today the presence of sedatives and multiple sets of handcuffs for neutralizing hostages found in tunnel after tunnel indicate that Hamas intends to abduct several Israelis at once and spirit them back to Gaza.

In an interview with Channel 2 Monday evening, Minister Naftali Bennett spoke of a mother at Kibbutz Netiv Ha'asara who told him that her children wake her in the middle of the night and tell her that they hear digging beneath their beds.

As Bennett said, this state of affairs simply cannot continue. People cannot live in fear that there are terrorists burrowing beneath their homes, digging tunnels to murder or kidnap them.

These tunnels must be found and destroyed not merely because they constitute a physical danger to thousands of Israelis. They must be located and destroyed, and Hamas's capacity to rebuild them must be eliminated because the very idea that they exist makes a normal life impossible for those immediately threatened.

Hamas's tunnels are also the key component of their command and control infrastructure inside Gaza.

Hamas's political and military commanders are hiding in them. The reinforced bunkers and tunnel complexes enable Hamas's senior leadership to move with relative freedom and continue planning and ordering attacks.

The sophistication of the tunnels and the malign intentions of Hamas are not in the least surprising.

But Hamas's rapid advances in both tunnel and missile technology are deeply worrisome. At a minimum, they indicate that if it is allowed to end the current round of fighting as a coherent, relatively well-armed terrorist army, Hamas will be able to rapidly rebuild and expand its capabilities.

As a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas is not a stand-alone terror group. It is part of a much larger web of Islamic jihadist terror groups including al-Qaida and its affiliates as well as the Shi'ite Hezbollah. Like Hamas, all of these threaten several major Sunni Arab states.

Due to their recognition of the threat Hamas and its allies pose to the survivability of their regimes, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have taken the unprecedented step of supporting Israel's efforts to defeat Hamas.

They understand that a decisive Israeli blow against Hamas in Gaza will directly benefit them. Not only will Hamas be weakened, but its state sponsors and terrorist comrades will be weakened as well.

Presently, Hamas's most outspoken state sponsors are Qatar and Turkey.

As Israel's Calcalist newspaper reported earlier this week, Qatar is Hamas's biggest and most important financier, a role it plays as well for ISIS, al Nusra, the Muslim Brotherhood and various jihadist groups in Libya.

Turkey for its part is aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Like Qatar, Turkey has also been a major supporter of ISIS and al Nusra, as well as Hamas. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's slander against Israel has grown so hysterical in recent weeks that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who has been trying to downplay Turkey's animosity, called him out on his open anti-Semitism.

By Tuesday morning, IDF forces in Gaza had destroyed 23 tunnels. The number of additional tunnels is still unknown.

While Israel had killed 183 terrorists, it appeared that most of the terrorists killed were in the low to middle ranks of Hamas's leadership hierarchy.

Hamas's senior commanders, as well as its political leadership have hunkered down in hidden tunnel complexes.

In other words, Israel is making good progress.

But it hasn't completed its missions. It needs several more days of hard fighting.

Recognizing this, Israel's newfound Muslim allies have not been pushing for a cease-fire.

In contrast, the Obama administration is insisting on concluding a cease-fire immediately.

As Israel has uncovered the scope of Hamas's infrastructure of murder and terror, the US has acted with the UN, Turkey and Qatar to pressure Israel (and Egypt) to agree to a cease-fire and so end IDF operations against Hamas before the mission is completed.

To advance this goal, US Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in Cairo on Monday night with an aggressive plan to force on Israel a cease-fire Hamas and its state sponsors will accept.

As former ambassador to the US Michael Oren told the media, it is clear that neither Israel nor Egypt invited Kerry to come over. Their avoidance of Kerry signals clearly that the US's two most important allies in the Middle East do not trust US President Barack Obama's intentions.

And their distrust is entirely reasonable.

The State Department has openly applauded Turkey and Qatar for their involvement in attempts to achieve a cease-fire. Last week Israeli officials alleged that the US was responsible for Hamas's rejection of the Egyptian cease-fire proposal. By attempting to coerce Egypt to accept Qatar and Turkey as its partners in mediation, Obama signaled to Hamas's leaders that they should hold out for a better deal.

Due to Turkey's membership in NATO and the glamour of the Qatari royal family, many Westerners find it hard to believe that they are major sponsors of terrorism. But it is true. Turkey and Qatar are playing a double game.

While sending his ambassador to Brussels for NATO meetings, Erdogan has been transforming Turkey from an open, pro-Western society allied with Israel into a closed, anti-Semitic and anti-American society that sponsors Hamas, ISIL, al Nusra and other terrorists groups.

As for Qatar, the tiny natural gas superpower presents itself to Americans as their greatest ally in the Muslim world. The emirate gives hundreds of millions of dollars to US universities to open campuses in Doha and pretends it is a progressive, open society, replete with debating societies.

Qatar hosts three major US military bases on its territory. And it is becoming one of the most important clients for US military contractors. Earlier this year Qatar signed an \$11.4 billion dollar arms agreement with the US.

At the same time, according to the Calacalst report, Qatar is the major bankroller of ISIS and al Nusra in Syria and Iraq. It gives \$50 million a month to jihadists in Libya. It gives Hamas \$100m. in annual aid. And in the past two years Doha has provided Hamas with an additional \$620m. dollars, including \$250m. it transferred to Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal's personal bank account, and \$350m. in military aid to Hamas, transferred after the Egyptian military forced the Muslim Brotherhood government from power last July.

Add to that the \$100m. per year that Qatar pours into Al Jazeera's satellite network — which has dedicated itself to undermining pro-Western Arab regimes while popularizing the likes of al-Qaida and Hamas, and Qatar is the largest financier of international jihad in the world.

Rather than notice that Qatar and Turkey are playing a double game, and treat them with suspicion, the Obama administration has embraced them.

Chances that Kerry will secure a cease-fire in the near future are small. In all likelihood, the government will be able to buy the time necessary to complete the mission in whole or large part. But the fact that the US has chosen at this juncture in the operation — with Israel enjoying unprecedented support from the most important Sunni states in the region — to side with Hamas and its state sponsors in their demand for an immediate cease-fire speaks volumes about the transformation of US foreign policy under Obama's leadership.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading CHABAD:

General Overview: In this week's reading, Massei, Moses reviews the forty years of Israelite journeys through the desert. The Torah discusses the boundaries of Israel, its division amongst the tribes, the cities which the Levites would receive, and the

cities of refuge. Zelophehad's daughters are restricted to marrying within their own tribe.

First Aliyah: The Torah recounts the journeys of the Jews in the desert. In the first aliyah the Torah lists the first seven of the 42 journeys which took them from Egypt to the banks of the Jordan.

Second Aliyah: The rest of the journeys are enumerated.

Third Aliyah: G-d instructs the Jewish people to eradicate all Canaan's inhabitants and destroy their idols after crossing the Jordan River. The borders of the land of Israel are delineated. The land was to be divided by lottery amongst the nine and a half tribes (Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh were going to settle on the eastern bank of the Jordan).

Fourth Aliyah: G-d appoints a representative from each tribe to divide his tribe's portion of land between the tribal members.

Fifth Aliyah: The Jews are commanded to provide the Levites with 48 cities where they would dwell -- 42 cities plus the six cities of refuge which would be designated. Along with these cities, the Levites were given expanses surrounding the cities for their cattle.

Sixth Aliyah: The Jews are commanded to designate six cities of refuge. These cities offer refuge to a person who inadvertently kills another. The murderer must remain in the city of refuge until the death of the serving High Priest. The Jews are enjoined not to take "blood money" from a -- intentional or unintentional -- murderer who wishes to lighten his sentence.

Seventh Aliyah: In last week's reading, G-d instructed Moses to give the daughters of the deceased Zelophehad his portion in the land of Israel. The elders of Zelophehad's tribe now protested that this would cause Zelophehad's sons -- who could possibly be of another tribe -- to inherit their mother's properties, thus possibly transferring land from the portion of their tribe to another. G-d therefore instructs Zelophehad's daughters to marry men from their own tribe, so the land they inherit will remain in their ancestral tribe.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“And he called it Nobah after his name. These are the journeys of the Children of Israel.”

At the end of last week's perashah, Matot, the Torah tells us about the cities that were taken by the tribes of Gad and Reuben. The last verse tells us about a man named Nobah who captured a city called Kenat and he renamed it Nobah after his name. The next pasuk begins the perashah of this week, Mas'ei. As we know, when one subject follows another, there is a connection between them. What is the connection between the story of Nobah and the subject of Mas'ei, which is the counting of the journeys and the encampments of the Israelites during the forty years in the desert?

Rabbi Matis Blum has an interesting idea. There is an important comment by the Kli Yakar in the perashah of Debarim. Basically, his advice is based on a pasuk that implies that while in exile the Jewish people should hide their wealth (Debarim 2:3). Showing off wealth tends to arouse the jealousy of the gentiles. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to be low key. The Kli Yakar sadly comments that sometimes a Jew has only hundreds and spends like he has thousands. He concludes that the wise person should learn this lesson.

Nobah named a city after himself. If you look at Rashi on the pasuk about Nobah, the word "lah (לה), which means "he called it Nobah," is missing a dot in the letter "heh;" the usual form of the word lah includes a dot in the heh. Rashi comments "that the dot is missing to tell us that this name did not last for it, that is why it is weak (missing a dot), for the implication of the way it is expounded is that it is like the Aramaic word "לא, no."

The message is glaring. The story of Nobah was of a man who wanted to show off his wealth to others by naming a city after himself, which is the opposite of the advice of the Kli Yakar. One should not do what he did when one is in exile, which is hinted to in the beginning of our perashah, "These are the journeys of the Children of Israel." So this is the connection: And Nobah named a city after himself, which didn't work out, because of the times of exile of the Israelites. Low key is the key word for us today. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

“And they traveled from Elim and they encamped by Yam Suf” (Bemidbar 33:10)

Elim hints to the word alimut, which means violence. Yam Suf hints to the word sof, the end. They traveled from the trait of violence. How? By coming to the trait of looking at the end of a person.

Violence induces both actions and words. There is the physical violence of hitting or pushing someone, and there is the verbal violence of shouting at someone or putting him down. Any form of violence not in self-defense is against the principles

of the Torah. What is the main cause of violence? Frustration and anger! When you become frustrated or angry, you are likely to lash out at someone. When you remember your true purpose in this world, most things that get other people angry will not affect you very strongly. Also, the more you appreciate life and the more joyous you feel, the less angry you will become. By remembering the end of each person, you will gain a greater appreciation for life. You will value your time and utilize every opportunity for growth. This awareness will keep you far away from any form of violence. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Rabbi Wein IMPERFECT DEMOCRACY

Winston Churchill once famously said that "democracy is a terrible system of government but it is better than any other system." The irony of that statement has been borne out by the past events of this last century and by current events.

It is true that Hitler ruled as a megalomaniac dictator. However, his rise to power was by democratic means and through electoral success. Once in power, he naturally did away with the nuisance of elections. But if it were not for the Nazi party's success in the German elections in the years immediately preceding his ascension to becoming the Chancellor of Germany, he never would have been able to achieve that office.

We are currently witness to the imperfections and failures of the democratic process as they affect the Middle East. Iraq's democratically elected government is apparently so corrupt and powerless that the country itself is literally falling apart in civil strife and ethnic conflict. Syria's sham elections have given Assad a third term as president and the right to preside over a civil war that has already taken the lives of approximately one-hundred-fifty thousand Syrians and sent millions of others into what will undoubtedly be permanent exile and refugee status.

Three years ago Egypt democratically elected the Moslem Brotherhood to lead its country. Only the interference of its military, which overthrew that democratically elected government, somehow stabilized the country and prevented further catastrophe in the area. And lest we forget, Hamas was democratically elected to govern by the people of the Gaza Strip.

Once in power, again like Hitler's Germany, no new elections have ever been held in Gaza. Nevertheless, Hamas came to power in a legitimate democratic

election. Would that that electoral result could somehow have been reversed!

For almost eighty years, Turkey was governed by an autocratic, secular, military government devoted to bringing Turkey into the Western world and minimizing the insidious influence of militant Islamists. All forms of public display of religion were forbidden and Turkey became a member of NATO and was deemed a westernized country.

During this time, Turkey, an overwhelmingly Moslem country, maintained excellent relations – diplomatic, military and economic - with the State of Israel and world Jewry generally. All of this changed within the last decade when the military abdicated its ruling role in favor of more democratic rule and allowed elections for the leadership of the country to take place.

In those elections, the Islamist parties came to power and leader of the country became Erdogan. There is no longer any doubt that he is an inveterate anti-Semite and he has reversed Turkey's long-standing relationship with Israel. His statements regarding Israel border on the hysterical.

He has involved Turkey in the Syrian civil war and is fighting his own civil war with the Kurdish minority of his country. He is certainly leading Turkey down a path of loss of regional influence in the Middle East, diplomatic isolation and economic ruin. Yet, again, he was democratically elected and claims that he has a mandate for all his evil and unwise domestic and foreign policies.

Turkey has now aligned itself fully and almost fanatically with Hamas and is the source of relentless anti-Israel agitation in the Moslem and European world, even outdoing Iran in virulence and vitriol. It seems that the establishment of Turkish democracy has brought ruin to all concerned. That is a most sobering thought.

This is not a plea for the restoration of autocracy, absolute monarchy or any other form of authoritarian rule. It merely points out the dangers and imperfections that are part and parcel of democratic rule. It may very well be that, God willing soon, after the current Gaza war ends and the physical and emotional wreckage that Hamas has brought upon so many millions of people is tallied and recognized, it would nevertheless win an election in Gaza.

The wisdom of the masses is always questionable and unreliable. Yet, who is wise enough to know what is the best form of rule for those who live in Gaza?

Israeli military government is certainly not an attractive option or solution. Abbas and his feckless Palestinian Authority would undoubtedly prove to be unpopular, corrupt and inefficient.

The British mandate is never going to be restored and UN peacekeepers have proven to be anything but keepers of the peace. So, now what? We live in an age where there are no simple or logical answers to any of the vexing issues that assail us from all directions. We should be very wary in confidently predicting that democracy and/or any other form of rule will somehow ameliorate the situation here in the Middle East. Democracy has worked wonders for the State of Israel. It has not done so well for any of our neighbors. Only time will tell how this drama will finally work itself out

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Leadership At Time of Crisis

The parsha of Masei always occurs at the heart of the Three Weeks. This is the time when we engage in an act of collective recall of our two greatest defeats as a nation. The symbol of the nation was the Temple in Jerusalem. So the symbol of the nation's defeat was the destruction of the Temple. It happened twice, once in the sixth century BCE, the second time in the first century of the common era. In both cases it happened because of poor leadership.

The first defeat was set in motion some three centuries before it happened by a disastrous decision on the part of king Solomon's son Rehoboam. The people were restless during the latter part of Solomon's reign. They felt he has placed too heavy a burden on the people, particularly during the building of the Temple. When he died they came to his son and successor and asked him to lighten the load. His father's counsellors told him to accede to their request. They gave him one of the finest pieces of advice ever given to a leader. If you serve the people they will serve you (1 Kings 12:7). Rehoboam did not listen. The kingdom split. Defeat of both halves – the northern and southern kingdoms – was inevitable and only a matter of time. As Abraham Lincoln said: "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

The second defeat in the days of the Romans was the result of a complete collapse of leadership during the late Second Temple period. The Hasmonean kings, having defeated Hellenism, then succumbed to it. The priesthood became politicised and corrupt.

Maimonides wrote, in his Letter to the Sages of Marseilles,[1] that the Second Temple fell because Jews had not learned military strategy and the laws of conquest. The Talmud says it fell because of gratuitous hatred. Josephus tells us it fell because of conflicts within the forces defending Jerusalem. All three explanations are true and part of the same phenomenon. When there is no effective leadership, divisions open up within the group. There is internal conflict, energy is wasted, and no coherent strategy emerges. Again defeat becomes inevitable.

In Judaism, leadership is not a luxury but a necessity. Ours is a small and intensely vulnerable people. Inspired, we rise to greatness. Uninspired, we fall.

But there is, oddly enough, a deeply positive message about the three weeks. For the fact is that the Jewish people survived those defeats. They did not merely survive. They recovered and grew stronger. They became in the most positive sense a nation of survivors. Who gave them that strength and courage?

The answer is: three leaders whose names are indelibly associated with the three weeks: Moses, whose message to the generations at the beginning of Devarim is always read on the Shabbat before Tisha be'Av, Isaiah whose vision gives that day its name as Shabbat Chazon, and Jeremiah, the prophet who foresaw the destruction and whose words form the haftarot for two of the Three Weeks.

What made these men great leaders? They were all critical of their contemporaries – but then, so are most people. It takes no skill whatsoever to be a critic. All three predicted doom. But Jeremiah himself pointed out that predicting doom is a no-risk option. If bad things happen, you are proved right. If they don't – well, clearly God decided to have compassion.[2]

So what made Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah different? What made them great leaders? Specifically, what made them leaders in hard times, and thus leaders for all time? Three things set them apart.

The first is that they were all prophets of hope. Even in their darkest moments they were able to see through the clouds of disaster to the clear sky beyond. They were not optimists. There is a difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the belief that if we work hard enough together we can make things better. It needs no courage to be an optimist, but it needs courage, wisdom, a deep understanding of history and possibility, and the ability to communicate, to be a prophet of hope. That is what

Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah all were. Here is Moses:

When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. (Deut. 30: 1-4)

Here is Isaiah:

I will restore your leaders as in days of old, your rulers as at the beginning. Afterward you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City." (Isaiah 1: 26)

And this is Jeremiah:

This is what the Lord says: "Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded," says the Lord. "They will return from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your descendants," says the Lord. "Your children will return to their land." (Jer. 31: 15-16)

The point about all three of these prophecies is that they were delivered knowing that bad things were about to happen to the Jewish people. They are not easy hope; they express hope rescued from the valley of despair.

The second characteristic that made Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah different was that they delivered their criticism in love. Isaiah said in the name of God perhaps the loveliest words ever spoken to the Jewish people: "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, My unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor My covenant of peace be removed" (Isaiah 54: 10). Jeremiah, in the midst of his critique of the nation, said in the name of God, "I remember the kindness of your youth, how as a bride you loved Me and followed Me through the wilderness, through a land not sown" (Jer. 2: 2).

Moses' love for the people was evident in every prayer he said on their behalf, especially after they had made the golden calf. On that occasion he said to God: "Now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written" (Ex. 32:). He was prepared to give his life for his people.

It is easy to be a critic, but the only effective critics are those who truly love – and show they love – those whom they criticize.

Third, Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah were the three prophets who, more than any others, spoke about the role of Jews and Israel in the context of humanity as a whole. Moses said, Keep the commands "for they are your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations" (Deut. 4: 6).

Isaiah said in God's name: "You are my witnesses ... that I am God." (Isaiah 43: 12), and "I created you and appointed you a covenant people, a light of nations, opening eyes deprived of light, rescuing prisoners from confinement, from the dungeon those who sit in darkness" (42: 6-7).

Jeremiah was the leader who defined for all time the role of Jews in the Diaspora: "Seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its prosperity you shall prosper" (Jeremiah 29: 7) – the first statement in history of what it is to be a creative minority.

Why did this universal perspective matter? Because those who care only for their own people are chauvinists. They create false expectations, narrow and self-regarding emotions, and bravado rather than real courage.

Moses had to show (as he did when he rescued Jethro's daughters from the local shepherds, Ex. 2: 17) that he cared for non-Israelites as well as Israelites. Jeremiah was told by God to become a "prophet to the nations," not just to Israel (Jer. 1: 5). Isaiah in one of the most remarkable prophecies of all time showed as much concern for Egypt and Assyria, Israel's enemies, as for Israel itself (Is. 19: 19-25).

Great leaders are great not just because they care for their own people – everyone except a self-hater does that – but because they care for humanity. That is what gives their devotion to their own people its dignity and moral strength.

To be an agent of hope, to love the people you lead, and to widen their horizons to embrace humanity as a whole – that is the kind of leadership that gives people the ability to recover from crisis and move on. It is what made Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah three of the greatest leaders of all time.

[1] English translation available in Isidore Twersky, A Maimonides Reader, Behrman House, 1976, 463ff.

[2] See Jeremiah 28; Maimonides, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah 10: 4