

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

MATOT-MASEI

JULY 6, 2013

28 TAMUZ 5773

Rosh Hodesh Ab will be celebrated on Monday, July 8.

DEDICATIONS: For A Refuah Shelemah for Yosef Ben Esther

July 4th Shahrith at 8AM followed by breakfast donated by Hindy Mizrahi
in memory of her brother Moishe on his Yahrzet – may his Neshama have an Aliyah

Happy Birthday to Barbara Halio
Rabbi Colish and his family will be away this Shabbat

Candles: 8:11 PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:00 PM

Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM – Please say Shemah at home by 8:21AM

The Kiddush this week is given by the Congregation in honor of the birthday of Barbara Halio and in appreciation of all the support that She and her husband Dr Halio A'H have given to the Synagogue.
Mrs. Halio is a very special lady, please join us to say Happy Birthday!

11:00 - 12:00 Orah's will be here with our Shabbat Morning Kids Program upstairs in the Rabbi's study.
Stories, Tefillah, Games, Snacks and more . . .

5:30: Ladies Torah Class at the Lemberger's 1 East Olive.

Pirkei Avot with Rav Aharon: 6:45 Minha: 7:25 PM –
Seudah Shelishi and a Class 8:00 – with David
Evening Service (Arbith): 9:00 PM - Shabbat Ends: 9:10 PM

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

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

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Daily 6:30 AM class – Honest Business Practices

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yanai – 7PM

LADIES: Wednesday Night 8PM with Esther Wein at The Grill Home
Financial Peace University – Tuesday at 8PM

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

Editors Notes

The Path of Abraham

My daughter Aryana had just returned home from a learning program in Israel. It was the summer between her junior and senior years in high school. She wanted to change high schools. She had nothing against her old school. She just felt that a new school for senior year would be beneficial. She would be leaving a more modern school, a few minutes from home; a school she had attended for more than a dozen years for an all-girls school located seventy miles away. We met with the principals and they obviously wanted her to stay as she was a

tremendous influence, not only on her own grade, but on all the others as well.

They posed the following argument. Leaving for an all-girls seminary type school, which one might classify as Haredi light, was akin to being Noah who locked himself and his family in the ark. There one was protected from the outside world rejecting multiculturalism and seeing themselves as a group apart. In contrast if she stayed in the world of Torah Umaddah (Torah Umaddah is typically defined as "Torah and secular knowledge" and is a philosophy which combines the secular world and Judaism) doing outreach she would be like Abraham who set his tent in the center of the cross-road with doors open to each side. As Abraham she could change the world, but as Noah she could only flee from the world.

Chantelle and I watched as Aryana pondered the question. Thoughtfully she responded that she was committed to one day follow in the footsteps of Abraham, but to become Abraham one had to be first willing to lock themselves in the ark or in the Yeshiva and grow. To become Abraham, she felt she first had to live like Noah. (And today six years later, she really has become an Abraham).

As individuals, we take on different roles as we travel the road of life. What's true for the individual is true for the nation as a whole.

These are the journeys of the Children of Israel who left Egypt as a nation under the leadership of Moshe and Aharon. (Bamidbar 33:1) What is the reason for these forty-two stops in the desert? There is a mystical concept that the purpose of these forty-two encampments was for Benai Yisrael to gather the sparks of holiness which were trapped in the desert. And the same concept helps to explain why we went from The Holy Land to Assyria, Babylonia, Rome, North Africa, Spain, France, England, Eastern Europe, Russia, China, India, The Americas, Australia and New Zealand. When G-d told Abraham, Ufaratzta yama va'kedma va'tzafona va'negba -- And you shall break through (spread out) to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south, I doubt Abraham could even imagine the extent of how that blessing would play out over the next 3700 years. The Jewish people have been on a journey and we continue on that journey gathering sparks and spreading holiness wherever we pass.

And as we travel through time and space we too take on different roles. We take on the role of Noah. We take on the role of Abraham and sadly we take on the role of Lot.

As he sets to leave office as the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Rabbi Jonathan Saks has written an amazing pamphlet that everyone should take the opportunity to read entitled, "A JUDAISM ENGAGED WITH THE WORLD".

In it he writes, of, "Three models of the religious life". I quote:

"... In place of assimilation and segregation we need to argue, the case for a Judaism that engages with the world. The case is not new. It is set out at the dawn of our history in three striking biblical portraits of Noah, Abraham and his nephew Lot.

"Noah is the only person in Tanakh called a tzaddik, "righteous." Yet Noah's righteousness was turned inward. He had no influence on his contemporaries. His was the way of segregation. Hassidim used to call Noah a 'tzadik im peltz - a righteous man in a fur coat.' There are two ways of keeping warm on a cold day. You can wear a fur coat or light a fire. Wear a fur coat and you warm only yourself. Light a fire and you warm others. Jews are supposed to light a fire.

"Lot chose the way of assimilation. He tried to merge into the society, Sodom, in which he had chosen to live. His daughters married local men. We see Lot at the beginning of Genesis 19 sitting at the city gate, implying as Rashi says that he had been appointed a judge. Superficially he seemed to have been accepted. He was soon to discover otherwise. Having welcomed strangers into his house, he found himself surrounded by an angry mob demanding that he hand them over. When he refuses, the mob say, "This one came here as an immigrant, and now all of a sudden, he has set himself up as a judge!" - Perhaps the first anti-Semitic remark in history. When the angels urge him to leave, he delays, fatefully trapped by his own ambivalence as to his real identity. Only when the angels drag him and his daughters out are their lives saved.

"Noah and Lot, the exemplars respectively of segregation and assimilation, are not happy precedents. Abraham is different. In Genesis 14 he fights a battle on behalf of the cities of the plain and liberates the people taken hostage. In Genesis 18 he mounts one of the most audacious prayers in history on behalf of the people of Sodom ('Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?'). He fights for his neighbors and prays for them but he does not become like them. He lives out the principle that has been the Jewish imperative ever since: Be true to your faith and a blessing to others regardless of their faith.

“What is the result? When Abraham comes before the Hittites to buy a plot of land in which to bury Sarah, they say to him: ‘You are a prince of G-d in our midst.’ That is the first instance, and the classic example, of Kiddush haShem in the Torah.

“Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch drew attention to the phrase Abraham used in his prayer to God to save the city. Perhaps, says Abraham, there are fifty, even ten, tzaddikim betoch ha-ir, ‘righteous people within the city.’ There is a difference, says Hirsch, between a tzaddik and a tzaddik in the city. Those who are righteous by separating themselves from the city can save themselves but not others. The challenge is to be righteous within the city, involved in the life of one’s contemporaries, working for the good of all. That is the way of Abraham, to live one’s faith while engaging with the world.

“Abraham’s always was the road less travelled. The sages say that he was called ha-Ivri, “the Hebrew,” because “he was on one side while the rest of the world was on the other.” Judaism is a countercultural faith, and Jews have often been iconoclasts, willing to challenge the idols of the age.

“The assimilationist-segregationist divide in Jewish life today looks less like the way of Abraham, more like the ways respectively of Lot and Noah.”

Rabbi Sacks goes on in his 31 page final message to explain a third path - You can go to his website, Google the title or email me and I’ll send you a copy. We see that to survive after the holocaust when the world and when most of the Jewish people saw the end of observant Jewry, it was by creating an insular world, it was through locking ourselves in the Yeshiva and separating ourselves from the outside which allowed us to survive and thrive to the point where we have more people learning today than at any point in our 2000 years of exile. But with the rejection of the outside world come the abundant problems that we are facing today. And while we fortified ourselves with Torah within our fortresses, we saw more and more of our brothers disappear through assimilation and intermarriage. We cannot forget that if Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh LaZeh – if we are all responsible for each other, we need to do something.

On our path we’ve followed the path of Noah out of necessity, and sadly too many of us have followed the path of Lot out of rejection, but there comes the day when we need to follow the path of Abraham. Don’t you think that day has arrived?

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

Will Egypt Save Itself From Total Collapse by Going to War With Israel? By Lee Smith

The Egyptian military has given President Mohamed Morsi until today to resolve the country’s political crisis or else it will step in. “If the people’s demands are not met,” Gen. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, announced on Monday, the army “will have to disclose its own future plan.”

Aside from promising that “no one party will be excluded or marginalized,” Sisi failed to elaborate on his roadmap to restore stability to Egypt. That’s perhaps because no one, not the government, not Morsi’s ruling Muslim Brotherhood-aligned Freedom and Justice party, not the army, nor even the protesters themselves know what it is that the 3 million people who have taken to the streets of Egypt are demanding. The unhappy reality is that in all likelihood, the vast majority of the protesters do not want anything except to end the chaos in their country, which they apparently aim to do by gorging themselves on violence.

The White House has called for early elections and warned the military against a coup. The bigger problem is that the Egyptian army has no plan to stabilize the country. And even if the army takes over, what price is it willing to pay to keep the streets quiet? Shooting protesters? How many? Egyptians, contrary to received wisdom, do not love the army, or else hundreds of people wouldn’t have flashed laser lights at a military helicopter the other night in an effort to blind the pilot and crash it. The army can’t bring order because the energies unleashed with the fall of Mubarak two-plus years ago can’t be put back in the bottle.

The Egyptian army has only one card left to play. Western journalists and other true believers in the promise of the Arab Spring may be shocked by the suggestion that Egypt may be headed to war with Israel in the not-too-distant future. But as the country implodes, war has become the easy way out. It doesn’t matter that the Egyptian army doesn’t want another catastrophic contest with Israel—neither did Anwar Sadat 40 years ago when he saved Egypt by going to war with Israel, which in turn helped him acquire the superpower patronage of the United States.

Of course, some prominent American commentators believe that the point of the current demonstrations in Egypt is to revive the liberal democratic goals of the revolution that toppled Hosni Mubarak. However, it's worth noting that the main goal of the revolution, after pushing out Mubarak, was to win a political system with free and fair elections in which Egyptians would get to choose their own government. That was in fact accomplished—and Morsi won. Academic experts and Western journalists might be perturbed that there is too much reliance on Islamic law in Egypt's new Constitution, but many Egyptians believe in Islamic law—and people do not typically ransack their own country to protest amendments to a legal document.

A more relevant complaint perhaps is that Morsi has empowered his own party at the expense of others. However, in Egypt this is not a political problem but a cultural one. In a country that treats *wasta*, or connections, like a civic virtue, every businessman, bureaucrat, and village mayor is going to employ his own people, so why would it be different for the country's top political official? There is no Egyptian president who would not do precisely what Morsi has done in stacking his government with allies.

Egyptians are definitely angry at the state of their country's economy. But the fact that staples like bread, rice and oil have skyrocketed is to be blamed almost entirely on the fact that protesters have filled the streets since January 2011. In bringing down Mubarak and prosecuting the regime's technocrats who won high marks from the IMF for reforming the Egyptian economy and attracting foreign direct investment, the revolutionaries ensured that it would be at least a generation before any Egyptian official sought to implement the same policies.

It was in order to avoid unrest that Morsi balked at cutting subsidies and otherwise reforming the economy to satisfy the IMF's requirements for a \$4.8 billion loan. If Qatar wasn't floating the Morsi government a few billion dollars every couple of months, Egypt would starve. And how do the Egyptians repay Doha's munificence? By claiming that Morsi's fall will return Qatar to its proper and, compared to Egypt, insignificant place in regional affairs. Maybe Qatar's newly enthroned emir will decide he'd rather build more air-conditioned soccer stadiums than feed the inhabitants of the Nile River valley.

Up until two and a half years ago, tourism was one of the country's main sources of revenue, but political instability has kept visitors away—as has violence directed against foreigners. No one is going to visit a country where American college students are

stabbed to death in broad daylight and Dutch journalists are gang-raped in Tahrir Square, ground zero of Egypt's glorious revolution.

What is unfolding in Egypt is not about politics or the economy, it is simply a medieval carnival of grievance and rage, where every appetite, no matter how vicious, can be indulged, because no one feels a stake in preserving any larger, inclusive whole—however that whole is described. It is easier for Western commentators to get a fix on the chaos when it appears to be motivated by religious hatred. Last week, four members of Egypt's minuscule Shia community were surrounded, beaten, and stabbed to death in their village outside Cairo. Since the mob was incited to murder by a Salafi sheikh, it was clear who was responsible for this bit of butchery, an Islamist fanatic.

The chain of accountability is a little more difficult for those same Western analysts to track when it's the anti-Morsi forces who are drawing blood. All of the Muslim Brotherhood's offices across Egypt have been stormed, and the national headquarters was torched. Sixteen people are dead, allegedly including Brotherhood supporters, whose apparent sin was backing a political party that won a free election—the last one that Egypt is likely to see for quite a while.

If foreign journalists and analysts have failed to be appropriately appalled by the demonstrations, it is because in their worldview, the Islamists are the bad guys and the secularists are the good guys. Now that Egyptians are mad at Morsi, the thinking goes, the Egyptians will get their liberal revolution back—along with that cool guy from Google. Reporters are told in man-on-the-street interviews that Morsi is the problem. The complaint should sound familiar because that's exactly what the same protesters said about Mubarak. The one thing everyone is definitely agreed on is that the problem with Egyptian society isn't the Egyptians themselves.

A competent leader, likely not Morsi, will soon come to see that he has no choice but to make a virtue of necessity and export the one commodity that Egypt has in abundance—violence. So, why not bind the warring, immature, and grandiose Egyptian factions together in a pact against Israel, the country's sole transcendent object of loathing? Indeed, it's not entirely clear why Egypt's venomous strains of anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic sentiment have not yet hit fever pitch. Yes, Morsi doesn't want to get the White House angry. And there's also the obvious fact that Egyptians are too divided against themselves right

now to be unified against anyone else. But that can't last for long, or else Egypt will implode.

So, here are the facts that Egyptians and Western reporters alike would rather not face: There is simply no way that today's Egypt can feed its own people, or fuel the tractors that harvest its crops—let alone attract tens of billions of dollars in foreign investment to grow a hi-tech miracle along the banks of the Nile. That's fantasyland stuff—like the fantasy of an American-style constitutional democracy run by the Muslim Brotherhood and guaranteed by the Egyptian army.

So, what's left? A short war today—precipitated by a border incident in Sinai, or a missile gone awry in the Gaza Strip, and concluded before the military runs out of the ammunition that Washington will surely not resupply—will reunify the country and earn Egypt money from an international community eager to broker peace. Taking up arms against Israel will also return Egypt to its former place of prominence in an Arab world that is adrift in a sea of blood. But even more important is the fact that there is no other plausible way out: Sacrificing thousands of her sons on the altar of war is the only way to save Mother Egypt from herself.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

The year is 2448 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.

Jeremiah 2:4 - 2:28, 3:4 - 2nd of the Tlas Diparanusa - Haftoras of Ill Tidings

This week's Haftorah is the second Haftorah forewarning the impending destruction of Yerushalayim. In the 2nd chapter of Yirmiyahu, the Navi detailed the extent of the nations infidelity that ad led up to the Churban - destruction. The leaders, the Kohanim, and the common man had all betrayed G- d's love. Whereas last week the Prophet left us with a vision of G-d's love for His children, this week his words relentlessly assault our consciousness.

"As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their priests, and their prophets, who say to a piece of wood: "you are my father," and to a stone: "You gave birth to me. ...But in the time of their trouble they will say: Arise and save us. Where are your g-ds that you made for yourselves? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your trouble... (Yirmi. 2:26)

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"These are the journeys of the Children of Israel." (Bemidbar 33:1)

This perashah is always read during the three week period of mourning for the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash. This reminds us that in the same

way all forty-two encampments were part of the journey to the Land of Israel, all of our wanderings in exile are also part of our ultimate journey to the Promised Land. A Jew must never make himself too comfortable in exile, in order that he remember that he has not yet reached his home in Eress Yisrael.

Rabbi Ephraim Nisenbaum tells a true story related to this idea. Kalman Wissotzky owned a successful tea business in Russia, and became wealthy providing the Czar's army with all its tea. In the early 1900's he was offered an opportunity to develop a tea company in Palestine.

He hesitated, as the governing Turks were difficult to deal with. It would also be expensive to import tea to Palestine, since it could not grow there. Nonetheless, his desire to assist the struggling community in Israel drove him to send enough money to start a small tea business.

In 1917, the Communists seized all private business in Russia and Wissotzky was left penniless. His only remaining asset was the business in Palestine. The family fled to Palestine and built up the business, which continues to prosper today.

Our eyes and mind should always focus on the Land of Israel. Rabbi Reuven Semah

When the tribes of Gad and Reuben asked for permission to inherit their portion of Israel on the Eastern bank of the Jordan River, Moshe suspected them of wanting to shirk their responsibility in conquering the land of Israel. They then told Moshe Rabenu, "We will build corrals for our sheep and cities for our children and leave them alone, and we will go fight together with our brethren." Moshe acceded to their request and commanded them to first build cities for their children and then to take care of their animals.

Rashi points out that Moshe Rabenu was chastising them in a subtle way. He was telling them, first you have to care for your children and then your livestock. Although it seems like a simple thing to us, not even worthy of mention, we should reflect on our own lives and see if we don't sometimes forget this lesson. During our busy season, do we make time for our families or is the business the overwhelming consideration? If we have to travel often on business, does our home life pay the price? When we plan our excursions and outings on our days off, do we realize that our children might be second fiddle to our ball games? Let's keep our priorities straight! Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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Breaking the Selfish Instinct

Parashat Maseh introduces the law of "Ir Miklat," the cities of refuge where one would have to live after killing somebody accidentally. A modern-day example might be a case where one lowers a grand piano out of his house through the window with a pulley. The pulley system malfunctions, and the piano flies down the side of the house, killing an innocent pedestrian walking by. In such a case, the Torah requires the person who lowered the piano to relocate to an Ir Miklat. He must leave everything behind, including his synagogue, his community and his business, and move to one of the designated cities of refuge. He must remain there until the death of Kohen Gadol, regardless of how many years it takes.

This Misva teaches a powerful lesson about selfishness. An individual is held responsible for his careless behavior, for not alerting people to what he was doing and failing to ensure that nobody would be walking underneath the piano. And from the Torah's perspective, this kind of carelessness is a direct outgrowth in selfishness. As we conduct our daily business, we need to be alert and look out for the needs of others. We cannot do what we want without thinking about how our actions and words might affect other people. If we are moving furniture out of our house, if we are driving, no matter what we are doing, we must think about others and not only about ourselves.

This might sound simple and self-evident, but unfortunately, it is a message that needs to be repeated and reinforced. We live in a very selfish generation, when people are exclusively focused on their own concerns and desires without showing concern for others. This accounts for the drastic rise of failed marriages, and for the alarming low birth rate in contemporary society. Marriage is all about sharing and giving consideration to somebody else, and raising children, as every parent knows, is all about giving of oneself to another person. In a generation that is not interested in giving, when people are looking out only for themselves, marriages break down and people do not want to have children.

One of the reasons for this trend is the high-pressured nature of modern society. Modern life imposes many perceived obligations upon a person, and in the race against the clock to get everything done, people naturally lose sight of their responsibilities towards others. This is reflected in the

institution of Ir Miklat. The negligent person is brought away from the life he knows and is forced to slow down and think. Far away from his home, business and other responsibilities, he isn't rushed to close a deal or to refurbish his home. He has time to think about others and take their needs into account.

There are many things we can do to try to break the selfish instinct and become more sensitive and caring people. One Rabbi tells his students before they got married to make a point of calling their wives whenever they are in a store to see if they need everything. Even if the husband is confident that his wife does not need anything from that store, he should still call, as a simple way of conveying the message that she is important to him, that he is thinking of her, that he is interested in her needs.

Another method is to get ourselves in the habit of giving compliments. Selfish people are too busy caring about themselves to pay compliments to other people. Accustoming ourselves to give compliments will have the effect of not only making the people around us feel good, but also opening our eyes to the qualities and accomplishments of others, rather than focusing only on ourselves.

Additionally, everybody should try to take some time to do some kind of volunteer work, to engage in some activity that benefits other people without offering remuneration. There are so many worthy organizations and institutions in our community that need manpower so they can do their wonderful work. If everyone in the community chose just one such project to get involved in, this would not only enhance the work of these organizations, but would turn all of us into more sensitive, generous, and giving people.

Finally – and I find it unfortunate that this needs to be mentioned – we must train ourselves to treat our workers with respect and dignity. Whether it's a housekeeper, an employee in the store, a waiter in a restaurant, a broker, or anybody who does a service for us, it is our strict obligation to pay the person in a timely fashion and to speak with him or her with dignity and respect. There is no excuse for not leaving a waiter a generous tip after he serves us a meal, and there is no excuse for speaking to a housekeeper as though she is our slave. We have to think about their feelings, and their desire to support themselves and their families, and respect those feelings. How would we feel if we worked for somebody who did not pay us, or if somebody spoke to us disrespectfully? This is the kind of question we need to ask whenever we deal with people, keeping in mind their needs and feelings just as we keep in mind our own needs and feelings.

If we live with an awareness of other people's needs, we will be happier and more content in life. Selfish people often expect too much and then feel disappointed and short-changed. But when we are genuinely concerned about others, we are less preoccupied about ourselves, and thus less anxious about filling our every wish. By becoming more sensitive, caring people, we in effect bring greater joy and fulfillment to ourselves and to others, and we help make our community and the world a much happier and more pleasant place to live.

Rabbi Wein CAREER OR CALLING

There was a time not that long ago when those entering the field of the clergy did so in response to what they felt was a calling. This meant that there was somehow a Heavenly instinct within them that called them to the service of their faith and its adherents. This idea was promulgated and publicized especially after the Reformation changed the face of religion in Europe in the non-Jewish world.

But its basis, as is true of much of the ideals and mores of the modern Western world, lay deeply embedded in Jewish thought and tradition. Judaism never considered teaching Torah or helping those in need, of leading and guiding people according to the values system and way of life of Torah – in short, serving as communal rabbi - as being a career.

When our teacher Moshe installed the tribe of Levi as being the "professional" religious leaders of the people he admonished them: "Do not think that I am granting you power or office. I am granting you servitude!" And that has pretty much been the general attitude towards serving in the rabbinate throughout Jewish history.

In fact, the concept and custom of communal rabbis drawing a salary from public funds does not appear to have taken hold in Jewish life until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Ashkenazic Europe. And even then, many rabbis struggled mightily to earn their own way in life and not to be beholden to the community coffers for their sustenance. In this fashion the rabbinate was seen as a calling and not as a career.

Understandably, not every rabbi was the paragon of altruism and purely devoid of self-interest. Human nature is human nature and rabbis are not immune to the pitfalls that human nature poses for all people. Yet, generally speaking, the honor afforded to Torah scholars and especially to rabbis was recognized as

being honoring Torah and not necessarily personal in nature to the scholar or rabbi himself.

But slowly over the centuries, the concept of the rabbinate as being a career and not a calling seeped into Jewish life. We have records from eighteenth and nineteenth century Jewish Europe of rich relatives "buying" rabbinical positions for their family members and of the emergence of dynastic families controlling the rabbinate of certain communities for many decades and even centuries.

With the rise of Chasidut in those centuries, one can easily make the case that being a rebbe also became a career for which one required training and pedigree. Naturally, there were and are always exceptions to this observation but in the main, the shift in religious Jewish life from calling to career was gaining momentum. In the American Jewish community in the twentieth century, the rabbinate became an almost pure profession requiring certain training and skills, while the spiritual component of the position was diminished and even ignored. America has witnessed openly atheistic rabbis, as incongruous as that sounds. But once the rabbinate became only a career, such incongruities are easily understandable.

The current unseemly goings on regarding the Chief Rabbinate in Israel is a clear example of where careerism and dynastic interests lead. In my opinion, the Chief Rabbi need not be the greatest Talmudic scholar in the land, though he must certainly be a Talmudic scholar, nor need he be the most gifted orator in the land. The task certainly involves being politically savvy but he should not be a politician.

Independence of agenda and freedom of action are necessary requirements for the job. But above all he must view his position as being a calling and not the culmination of a career. In Avot we are told that one should not advance one's own personal interests and monetary gains by the exploitation of Torah for one's personal benefit.

The careerist is the one most susceptible to fall into that disgraceful trap. The careerist feels answerable to humans and humans can be manipulated and fooled. The one who feels called to public service feels one's self answerable to Heaven and therefore has a different attitude towards the tasks and challenges at hand. Legend has it that when Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant instructed his disciple Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer (Peterburger) to assume the position of rabbi in then St. Petersburg, Rabbi Blazer told him: "Master, I am afraid to do so!" To which Rabbi

Yisrael responded: "Well then whom shall I send, someone who is not afraid?!"

The careerist is never afraid. The one who feels called always has the necessary amount of trepidation to see the issues and problems of public service correctly and vividly.

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

It is a fascinating story and from it comes one of the great principles of Judaism. Two of the tribes, Reuben and Gad, see that the land east of the Jordan is ideally suited as pasture for their large herds and flocks of livestock. They approach Moses and ask to have permission to settle there rather than cross the Jordan. Moses is initially furious at their request. It is, he says, bound to demoralise the rest of the people: "Shall your fellow countrymen go to war while you sit here?" Had they learned nothing from the sin of the spies who, by de-motivating others through their behaviour, condemned an entire generation to forty years of wandering in the desert?

The Reubenites and Gadites take the point. They explain that they have no wish to exempt themselves from the struggles of their fellow Israelites. They are fully prepared to accompany them into the promised land and fight alongside them. "We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received his inheritance." Moses makes them take a public pledge to this effect and grants their request on condition that they fulfil their word. "When the land is then conquered before God you may then return, free of any obligation before God and Israel and this land will be yours as your permanent property before God."

The italicised phrase – literally you will be innocent before God and Israel – became in the course of time an ethical axiom of Judaism. It is not enough to do what is right in the eyes of God. One must also act in such a way as to be seen to have done the right in the eyes of one's fellow man. One must be above suspicion. That is the rule of *veheyitem neki'im*, "You shall be innocent in the eyes of God and Israel."

How did this translate itself into Jewish law and life? The Mishnah in Shekalim speaks of the three periods in the year when appropriations were made from the collective donations stored in the Temple treasury. The Mishnah states that "The person who made the appropriation did not enter the chamber wearing a bordered cloak or shoes or tefillin or an amulet, so that if he subsequently became poor, people would not say that he became poor because he committed

an offence in the chamber, and so that if he became rich people would not say that he did so by misappropriating contributions in the chamber – for we must be free of blame in the eyes of people just as we must be free of blame before God, as it is said, ‘You shall be innocent in the eyes of God and Israel.’”

Similarly the Tosefta states: “When one went in to take up the offering of the chamber, they would search him when he went in and when he came out, and they continue chatting with him from the time he goes in until the time he comes out.” Not only must there be no wrongdoing when coins are taken from the Temple treasury; there must be no suspicion of wrongdoing. Hence the person who gathered the money should not wear any item of clothing in which coins could be hidden. He was to be searched before and afterwards, and even engaged in conversation so that he would not be tempted to secrete some of the money in his mouth.

Two rabbinic teachings from the Second Temple period speak of families famous for their role in Temple life and the lengths they went to place themselves beyond suspicion. The Garmu family were expert in preparing the showbread. It was said of them that “their memory was held in high esteem because fine bread was never found in their children’s homes, in case people might say, they feed from the preparation of the showbread.” Likewise the Avtinas family were skilled in making the incense used in the temple. They too were held in high regard because “Never did a bride of their family go forth perfumed, and when they married a woman from elsewhere, they stipulated that she was not to go out perfumed, in case people should say, They perfume themselves from the preparation of the Temple incense.”

The general principle is stated in the Talmud Yerushalmi: R. Samuel bar Nachman said in the name of Rabbi Jonathan: In the Mosaic books, the Prophets and the Writings, we find that a person must discharge his obligations before men just as he must discharge them before God. Where in the Mosaic books? In the verse, ‘You shall be innocent in the eyes of God and Israel.’ Where in the prophets? In ‘God, the Lord God, He knows and Israel too shall know.’ Where in the Writings? In the verse, ‘You shall find grace and good favour in the eyes of God and men.’ Gamliel Zoga asked R. Yose bar Avun,. Which verse says it most clearly? He replied, ‘You shall be innocent in the eyes of God and Israel.’ “

This concern became the basis of two halakhic principles. The first is known as chashad, “suspicion”, namely that certain acts, permitted in themselves, are

forbidden on the grounds that performing them may lead others to suspect one of doing something forbidden. Thus, for example, R. Shimon bar Yochai held that one of the reasons why the Torah prescribes that peah [the corner of the field left unharvested for the poor] should be left at the end of harvesting was because of suspicion. If the owner of the field had set aside an unharvested corner at the beginning or middle, the poor would come and take what is theirs before the end of harvesting, and a passer-by might think that no corner had been set aside at all. Likewise the rabbis ordained that if a house has two doors on different sides, Hanukah candles should be lit at both so that a passer-by, seeing one door but not the other, should not think that the owner of the house had failed to fulfil the command.

A closely related halakhic principle is the idea known as marit ha-ayin, “appearances”. Thus for example, before milk substitutes became common, it was forbidden to drink milk-like liquids (made, for example, from almonds) together with meat on the grounds that people might think it was milk itself. Similarly it is forbidden on Shabbat to hang out garments that had become wet (for example, by falling into water) to dry, in case people think that one has washed them on Shabbat. In general one is not allowed to perform actions which, permitted in themselves, lend themselves to misinterpretation.

The connection or contrast between these two principles is a matter of some debate in the rabbinic literature. There are those who see chashad and marit ha-ayin as very similar, perhaps even two names for the same thing. Others however see them as different, even opposites. Chashad represents the possibility that people might think you have done something forbidden and thus think badly of you. Marit ha-ayin concerns cases where people, knowing that you are not the sort of person to do something forbidden, draw the mistaken conclusion that because you are doing X, Y is permitted, because X is easily mistaken for Y. Thus, to take one of the cases mentioned above, people seeing you hanging out clothes to dry on Shabbat might conclude that clothe-washing is permitted, which it is not.

This concern for appearances is, on the face of it, strange. Surely what matters is what God thinks of us, not what people think of us. The Talmud tells us of a moving encounter between the dying Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai and his disciples:

They said to him: Master, bless us. He said to them: May it be God’s will that the fear of heaven should be as important to you as the fear of [the opinions of]

human beings. They said: Is that all? He said: Would that you were able to attain this [level of spirituality]. You can see [how difficult it is] because when someone wants to commit a sin, he says, I hope no one will see me [thus placing his fear of human beings above the fear of God who sees all].

What is more, it is forbidden to suspect people of wrongdoing. The rabbis said, "One who suspects the innocent is [punished by being] bodily afflicted" and "One should always judge a person in the scale of merits." Why then, if the onus is on the observer not to judge harshly, should we – the observed – be charged with the duty of acting above suspicion?

The answer is that we are not allowed to rely on the fact that others will judge us charitably, even though they should. Rashi makes a sobering comment on the life of Moses:

If he left his tent early, people would say that he had had a row with his wife. If he left late, they would say, He is devising evil plots against us.

Even Moses, who devoted his life with total selflessness to the people of Israel, was not able to avoid their suspicion. R. Moses Sofer goes so far as to say that he was troubled throughout his lifetime by the challenge of the command, 'You shall be innocent in the eyes of God and Israel,' adding that it was far easier to fulfil the first half of the command ('in the eyes of God') than the second ('in the eyes of Israel'). Indeed he wondered if it was possible for anyone to fulfil it in its entirety. Perhaps, he said, this is what Ecclesiastes meant when he said, "There is not a righteous man on earth who only does what is right and never sins."

Yet there is a profound idea embedded in the concept of *veheyitem neki'im*, 'You shall be innocent.' The Talmudic sage Rava was scathing of those who stood in the presence of a Torah scroll but not in the presence of a Torah sage. To be a Jew is to be summoned to become a living *sefer Torah*. People learn how to behave not only from the books they study but also – perhaps more so – from the people they meet. Jewish educators speak of 'text-people' as well as 'text-books,' meaning that we need living role models as well as formal instruction. For that reason, Rabbi Akiva used to follow Rabbi Yehoshua to see how he conducted himself in private, saying 'This too is part of Torah, and I need to learn.' The twin principles of *chashad* and *marit ha-ayin* mean that we should act in such a way as to be held as a role-model (by being above suspicion – the rule of *chashad*) and that, just as a book of instructions should be unambiguous, so should our conduct (by

not laying itself open to misinterpretation – the idea of *marit ha-ayin*). People should be able to observe the way we behave and learn from us how a Jew should live.

The fact that these rules apply to every Jew, not just to great sages, is eloquent testimony to the spiritual egalitarianism of the halakhah. Each of us is bidden to become a role-model. The fact, too, that these rules exist despite the fact that we are commanded not to suspect others of wrongdoing, tells us something else about Judaism, namely that it is a system of duties, not just of rights. We are not allowed to say, when we have acted in a way conducive to suspicion, 'I have done nothing wrong; to the contrary, the other person, by harbouring doubts about me, is in the wrong.' To be sure, he is. But that does not relieve us of the responsibility to conduct our lives in a way that is above suspicion. Each of us must play our part in constructing a society of mutual respect.

This brings us back to where we began with the request of the tribes of Reuben and Gad to settle the land east of the Jordan. Moses, we recall, granted their request on condition that they first joined the other tribes in their battles. They did so. Years later, Joshua summoned them and told them that they had fulfilled their promise and were now entitled to return to the place where they had built their homes (Joshua 22).

However, by a profound historical irony, suspicion was aroused again, this time for a quite different reason, namely that they had built an altar in their territory. The other tribes suspected that they were breaking faith with the God of Israel by constructing their own place of worship. Israel was on the brink of civil war. The suspicion was unfounded. The Reubenites and Gadites explained that the altar they had built was not intended to be a place of worship, but rather a sign that they too were part of the Israelite nation – a safeguard against the possibility that one day, generations later, the tribes living in Israel proper (west of the Jordan) would declare the Reubenites and Gadites to be foreigners since they lived on the other side of the river:

That is why we said, 'Let us get ready and build an altar – but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.' On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the Lord at sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, 'You have no share in the Lord.' And we said, 'If they ever say this to us or to our descendants, we will answer:

Look at the replica of the Lord's altar which our fathers built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you.'

Civil war was averted, but only just.

Suspicion is a pervasive feature of social life and it is intensely destructive. Judaism – a central project of which is the construction of a gracious society built on justice, compassion, mutual responsibility and trust – confronts the problem from both directions. One the one hand it commands us not to harbour suspicions but to judge people generously, giving them the benefit of the doubt. On the other, it bids each of us to act in a way that is above suspicion, keeping [as the rabbis put it] "far from unseemly conduct, from whatever resembles it, and from what may merely appear to resemble it."

Being innocent before God is one thing; being innocent before one's fellow human beings is another, and far more difficult. Yet that is the challenge – not because we seek their approval (that is what is known as pandering) but because we are summoned to be role models, exemplars, living embodiments of Torah, and because we are called on to be a unifying, not a divisive, presence in Jewish life. As the Chatam Sofer said, we will not always succeed. Despite our best endeavours, others may still accuse us (as they accused Moses) of things of which we are utterly innocent. Yet we must do our best by being charitable in our judgement of others and scrupulous in the way we conduct ourselves.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

" Mizmor Shir Leyom Hashabbat Tov Lehodot LaHashem... " (Tehillim 92:2)

"A Psalm, a song for the Shabbat Day: It is Good to give thanks to Hashem, and to sing to Your name, O Most High." What is good? The best thing in the world is to give thanks to Hashem. That is our job and Shabbat is the time.

We are called 'Yehudim', after the name Yehuda that our great Mother Leah named her son. She said, "This time I will Thank Hashem". The Yehudim are the Nation whose purpose is to Thank Hashem. "Ki simachtani Hashem befaolecha..." You've made me happy Hashem with Your handiwork, I sing at the deeds of Your hands."

It's a wonderful and marvelous world! Look at the beautiful sky. Isn't it a wonderful day?

We have to teach ourselves the happiness of life. Life is happy and Hashem wants us to enjoy this great gift of Olam Hazeih (this world).

"Olam hesed yibaneh " (Tehillim 89:3). The world is built on Kindliness. We have a kindly Father. Instead of complaining and ignoring all the blessings He is showering on us, let's utilize the Shabbat and sing of the deeds of Hashem's Hands. Let's thank Hashem for Water, which we cannot live without. Therefore, Hashem created the world with a reservoir covering 65% of the Earth. The Oceans are holding water which is briny and not suitable for drinking. So Hashem brings the Sun's rays, from 93 million miles away, and in eight minutes ("ad mehera yarutz debaro" Tehillim) sunlight comes to the surface of the ocean causing the water to evaporate. Only pure distilled water vaporizes, rising to form clouds. Hashem causes the winds to blow ("mashiv haruach") the clouds over the continents and condense. Pure, life giving, rain water is brought to the soil and our reservoirs

This is a wondrous miracle, which we should keep in mind as we drink a glass of water.

It is no less a miracle than when the bitter waters were purified through Moshe by putting a tree in the waters causing them to sweeten, according to Hashem's command. "Vayimteku Hamayim", "And the waters became sweet"! (Shemot 15:25)

Water causes your eyes to sparkle. It is the water that makes you able to see. Water is the most important element of the blood, causing your blood to be liquid and flow freely to bring nourishment to your body.

Baruch Hashem for the glass of Water! The elixir of Life! Shabbat should make us happy & filled with Bitachon and Peace of Mind, in the kindness of Hashem. Try to appreciate that gift. That is part of the purpose of Shabbat. Adapted from "Rav Avigdor Miller Speaks"

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