

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE HUKAT

Haftarah: Shoftim 11:1-33
JUNE 14-15, 2013 7 TAMUZ 5773

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Mrs Esther Elbaz with our condolences to all of her family including Rabbi Elie, Rabbi Hanania and Rabbi Yaakov Elbaz. Some of you will remember how helpful Rabbi Elbaz was many many moons ago to our Congregation – it was before my time, but as a congregation we appreciate all he did.

Candles: 8:09 PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:00 PM

This Sunday we received a beautiful brand new Sefer Torah in a magnificent case for us to use from Jeffrey and Heather Deutsch in Brooklyn. See some images. We will celebrate this Shabbat.

And we will have a very special Kiddush sponsored by: "The Soleymanzadeh Family (Twins and All) to express their appreciation and gratitude to Rabbi David Bibi, Sam Shetrit and Baruch Kahn for their Guidance, Support and Photographic skills during their Bris ceremony."

And we look forward to our own Naim Zemirov Yisrael - Uri Lemberger, reading the Haftara this Shabbat for his brother's Yahrzeit. And the return of Abie Lieber our Torah reader from Jerusalem for the summer before he makes Aliyah

Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM –Please say Shemah at home by 8:15 AM

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 . . . And Leah Colish will be babysitting down in the playroom

5:30 - Mincha Shabbat Afternoon Oneg with Rabbi Yosef and Leah; Treats, Stories, Basketball, Hula-hoop, Parsha Quiz, Tefillot, Raffles and Fun! Supervised play during Seudat Shelishit.

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

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

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit 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

All are invited for a special Shabbat Getaway

Friday to Sunday June 21-23

Radisson Hotel Piscataway

Greenwald Caterers

Inspiring Shiurim from World Class Lecturers and Rabbis

Sunday Morning medical Symposium

Only \$675 per couple

Call 732- 719-4955

Chantelle and I plan on attending

June 24th – Monday morning trip to Six Flags Great Adventure
Don't miss out on our Annual Summer 2013 Sephardic Youth Trip!
Fun for a day, Memories for a lifetime.
\$25 each. Reservations and payments required by Monday

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please reply to ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com
 Newsletter archives now at BenaiAsher.Org

Our weekly article is now printed in the Jewish Voice. Please pick up a copy at your local shop or go on line to JewishVoiceNY.com. You can also comment on the articles there and tweet them to your friends.

Follow us on twitter @BenaiAsher for a daily dose of Torah, Israel or something of interest

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

Editors Notes – You Gotta Believe

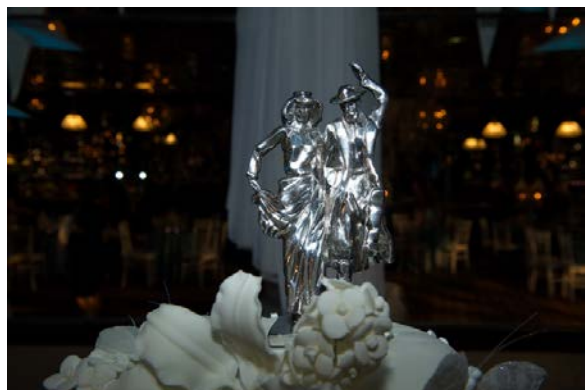
One of the Rabbis under the chupah turned to me and said, "I've seen you speak for twenty years at countless occasions under all sorts of pressure and I don't remember ever seeing you getting nervous... wow, you're human." Well I do get tense and standing out on the beach with six hundred people around us and the sun starting to set, I was downright anxious.



This week we read the portion of Chukat which begins with the laws of the Parah Adumah- the Red Heifer. King Solomon states that with all his wisdom, there were concepts relating to the laws of purification through the ashes of the red cow that were difficult for even him to fully comprehend. Based on this, the Rabbis describe Chukim as statutes of faith. We follow them simply because we were commanded to do so.



This theme of faith runs through the entire Perasha. Following the death of Miriam and the drying of the well, the people instead of coming to comfort Moses, have a crisis of faith and gather to complain. We have the incident of Moses "hitting of the rock" where G-d tells him, "because you didn't believe in Me". Then although the people encounter the southern Cannanities and defeat them in battle, they complain again. G-d allows the poisonous snakes who typically fill the desert to attack the nation. Moses creates the "copper snake on a stick" which reminds them that G-d is in charge and they are miraculously healed. And finally we have the battles of Sichon and Og. Moses is concerned lest the merit of Og's assistance to Abraham protect him. Hashem must assure Moshe, who then leads the people into victorious battle against the giants.



Again and again, we see that one can do what they can to succeed in life. But after all is said and done, as Tug McGraw reminded us so well, "You gotta believe". We can get so far believing it is our own effort that's taking us somewhere, but at some point we need to admit; we're often kids driving the car at Nelly Bly Playland where we think that by pressing the gas and turning the wheel, we're doing something, but the car follows the track and it moves at the will of the operator.



So many of you asked, "So, what happened at the wedding". For those who didn't read last week's article, I noted that my daughter Aryana was marrying her fiancé Steven this past week. It was a mix of customs and communities. We had a plan, a little of this and a little of that, all following a rigid schedule. And we hoped the plan would follow course. But man plans and G-d laughs.

It was 8PM, I was standing at the beginning of the walkway out to the beach. I knew there were 400 chairs around the chupah and it looked like another 200 people were standing. Others were running by and sitting along the end of the cabanas. Still 150 more were waiting inside. It should have been 7PM. Now at 8PM the last few marchers needed to walk down the aisle and I wondered how to complete a wedding in 22 minutes. It wasn't just Shekiah that was the problem, it was literally sundown that worried me. The ceremony was set up further out on the beach and the only light was G-d's light. And when you start to get emotional, emotions don't quit. I had already cried when the groom came to veil the bride and I was asked to bless my daughter. My wife reminded me that the last time she saw me shed a tear was 25 years ago when my son Jonah was born

as the sun rose outside the hospital room. I wondered how those accustomed to assigned tables would handle open seating which included dozens of sofas, benches and coffee tables. Would there be enough seats? Would there be enough food for people who weren't used to a buffet? What about the lines? Already we mishandled the food at the signing of the Ketubah, what next?

And as I looked at my daughter sitting there next to my wife waiting for our turn to march down and saw her calm, I remembered that one friend told me, there is no ketubah without a mistake and another told me I should expect to give the devil his meal and be sure to send him on his way, I realized there wasn't much more that I could do. So I turned to Heaven and told G-d that He could take it from there.

And everything began to fall into place. The musicians led by Eitan Katz were phenomenal. Steven's father, Steven's brothers, my dear friends Dr. Rabbi Meyer Abittan and Dr. Rabbi Elie Abadie along with my son Moses serenaded the crowd. The sun seemed to stand still and even after it set in a breathtaking manor, her rays provided more than enough light. The wind died down. The ocean sang in the background and the beach setting couldn't have been nicer. People told me they felt they were transported to some island in paradise.



And when we returned to the ballroom, it couldn't have been nicer. My wife Chantelle is an artist with a penchant for detail and no detail was left out. Every table had a unique setting. There were nine buffets. Plenty of tables, chairs, sofas and benches filled the room and provided more than enough seats for everyone. Richie of the

Sands outdid himself. People never saw the place so beautiful. My dearest friends Ruthie Hecht and her mom Barbara Esses took complete charge. Joey Zami had more than enough food and extra to spare and not only was it abundant, people raved at how delicious it was. The desert room was decorated with cakes and cookies, each painstakingly designed by Chantelle. And the dancing never stopped. When the band paused, Morris Fax stepped in and kept the crowd moving. And the people rejoiced in the bride and groom who rejoiced with the people. Even the photographer Hy Goldberg who has done thousands of weddings found this one unique.



And the end of the wedding topped all. We set up a huge table and almost a hundred of us, washed and ate and told words of Torah and together blessed the couple. I was deeply grateful to all who helped and to Steven's parents and family for making this night so special.

When I got home early that morning, I said a prayer of thanks to Hashem. I compared the worry in the moments before 8PM with the calm that followed. I hope to remember especially in times of stress, that our job is to give our all; our job is to do our best, but we should never forget to have faith even when we don't understand and put our trust into Hashem. He's been there for us and He'll be there for us. Sometimes you just Gotta Believe!

Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

PS> I was told by the Publisher of the Jewish Voice to add pictures – especially this week!

Meet the Mensch of Steel. By Simcha Weinstein – Aish.com

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, the two ordinary young men who created an extraordinary hero, lived twelve blocks apart from each other in Cleveland. The pair collaborated on stories for their high school newspaper and shared a passion for science fiction and pulp comics.

It was the 1930s, and comic book publishing was in its infancy. Like many young Jews with artistic aspirations, Siegel and Shuster yearned to break into this fledgling industry. Comic book publishers actively hired Jews, who were largely excluded from more "legitimate" illustration work.

The 1930s were also, arguably, the most anti-Semitic period in American history. Nazi sympathizer Fritz Kuhn of the German-American Bund led legions of rabid followers on marches through many cities, including Siegel and Shuster's hometown.

Radio superstar Father Charles E. Coughlin of the pro-fascist Christian Front was one of the nation's most powerful men. And Ivy League colleges kept the number of Jewish students to a minimum, while country clubs and even entire neighborhoods barred Jews altogether.

So Siegel and Shuster began submitting treatments under the pseudonym Bernard J. Kenton, just to be on the safe side. Throughout the Great Depression, the two boys scraped together every penny they could just to cover postage. Shuster sketched on cheap brown wrapping paper.

From these humble beginnings, Siegel and Shuster carved out a character that embodied their adolescent frustrations, served as a mouthpiece of the oppressed, and became an American icon. Many years later, Jerry Siegel recalled the birth of Superman:

"The story would begin with you as a child on far-off planet Krypton. Like the others of that world, you had super-powers. The child's scientist-father was mocked and denounced by the Science Council. They did not believe his claim that Krypton would soon explode from internal stresses. Convinced that his prediction was valid, the boy's father had been constructing a model rocket ship. As the planet began to perish, the baby's parents knew its end was close. There was not space enough for three people in the small model craft. They put the baby into it."

The idea of for this new superhero came to them in 1934. It would take another four years before

Superman would be transformed from a feverish dream to a full-fledged hero. In 1938, Detective Comics, Inc., was looking for a character to launch its new magazine, Action Comics. They paid young Siegel and Shuster \$130 for the first thirteen pages of Superman. Action Comics #1 came out in June of that year.

Superman's original name on Krypton also reveals Biblical underpinnings. Superman is named Kal-El and his father Jor-El. The suffix "El" is one of the ancient names for G-d, used throughout the Bible. It is also found in the names of great prophets like Samuel and Daniel and angels such as Michael and Gavriel. We may never know whether Siegel and Shuster were aware of these precise Hebrew translations; nevertheless, the name could not be more apt.

Like the biblical Moses, Superman is discovered and raised in a foreign culture. Baby Moses is found by Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh, and raised in the royal palace. Superman is found by Jonathan and Martha Kent in a Midwestern cornfield and given the name Clark.

From the onset, both Batya and the Kent's realize that these foundling boys are extraordinary. Superman leads a double life as the stuttering, spectacle-wearing reporter whose true identity no one suspects. In the same way, for his own safety, Moses kept his Israelite roots hidden for a time.

While the invincible Superman may have stood the test of time, the lives of his creators were not as triumphant. From the beginning, Siegel and Shuster were so busy they had to hire assistants, but while DC Comics was making millions, Superman's creators weren't sharing the wealth. The two men were paid a salary, but their initial payment back in 1938 had included all rights. They had sold their percentage of a goldmine for \$130 and were eventually fired from their own creation.

Lawsuits followed. None were successful. Siegel and Shuster tried and failed to create new characters. Their names were familiar only to comic book aficionados. Then, rumors began to circulate in the early 1970s that a big budget Superman movie was in the works. DC Comics received \$3 million for the rights to film Superman. Once again, Siegel and Shuster were left out of the equation.

This time, the two men tried a new approach. They bypassed their lawyers and went straight to the media. Newspapers across the world picked up the story of Siegel and Shuster, the poor boys who'd created an American icon, made DC Comics rich – and were now penniless and forgotten. That Shuster was now going blind added to the story's poignancy.

Legally, DC Comics owed Siegel and Shuster nothing, but bad publicity was costing the company dearly. A financial settlement was reached,

and the names "Siegel and Shuster" appeared in Superman comics once more.

My 2006 best-selling book, *Up, Up, and Oy* chronicled how Jewish history, culture, & values helped shape the early years of the comic book industry. Like Siegel and Shuster, the early comic book creators were almost all Jewish, and as children of immigrants, they spent their lives trying to escape the second-class mentality which was forced on them by the outside world. Their fight for truth, justice, and the American Way is portrayed by the superheroes they created. The dual identity given to their creations mirrors their own desire to live two lives privately as a Jew, and publicly as an American.

In 2013, "Siegel and Shuster's" creation returns to save the world again. In today's age of uncertainty and turmoil, the world needs the Jewish values that underpin the Mensch of Steel more than ever.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: The laws of the Parah Adumah- the Red Heifer, are detailed.

2nd Aliya: In Nissan of the 40th year, Miriam died. The well dried up and the nation gathered against Moshe and Aharon to complain.

3rd Aliya: The "hitting of the rock" occurred and Moshe and Aharon were refused entry into Eretz Yisroel.

4th Aliya: Moshe requested from Edom permission to travel through their land on the way to Eretz Yisroel. Edom refused.

5th Aliya: Aharon died and Elazar succeeded his father as Kohain Gadol. They encountered the southern Cannanities (13 miles west of the Dead Sea) and bested them in battle. Following Aharon's death the protective clouds departed and the nation began to complain about the living conditions. Hashem sent poisonous snakes to attack the nation and Moshe was instructed to create the "copper snake on a stick" o miraculously save the bitten.

6th & 7th Aliya: The nation traveled to Yeshimon - northeast of the Dead Sea. In the conclusion of Chukas, the nation was refused access to the lands of Sichon and Og and Moshe led them into victorious battle against them.

In the year 2779 Yiftach HaGiladi became Judge - Shofet. Yiftach is described as a gifted warrior who was seemingly unworthy of becoming the Shofet. His brothers had cast out Yiftach because he was the

son of a concubine. While away from his family Yiftach gathered around himself an army of outlaws. Due to the oppression and tyranny of Ammon, Yiftach was asked by the elders of Gilad to return to the family and lead them against the forces of Ammon. Yiftach was victorious and remained Shofet for six years.

There are a number of reasons why the story of Yiftach was selected to complement Parshas Chukas. First of all the issue of leadership. The Talmud tells us that "Yiftach in his generation was like Samuel in his generation."

Although Yiftach was not the greatest scholar, he nevertheless was the recognized leader and a prophet. As such he was accorded the absolute support of the Halacha and the people. This support can at times appear as dogmatic as the law of the Red Heifer. However, our absolute support for our acknowledged Torah leadership is the foundation of our legal system and the transmission of Torah from generation to generation.

The second reason has to do with the battle with Sichon. Sichon was king of the Ammonites who had taken possession of lands once belonging to Moab. Sichon refused to allow the Bnai Yisroel to pass through his lands and went to war against them. Sichon was destroyed and his lands were forfeited to the Bnai Yisroel. In our Haftorah, the king of Ammon, as cousins to the Moabites, claimed legal ownership to the lands which Moshe had taken from Sichon, who had taken them from Moab.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"And he struck the rock." (Bemidbar 20:11)

The termination of Moshe Rabenu's leadership was announced in our perashah. Moshe was told by Hashem to speak to the rock, which would then bring forth water for the entire nation. According to Rashi, the fact that Moshe hit the rock rather than just speaking to it was the sin that prevented him from entering the Land of Israel.

Rabbi Shemuel of Slonim asks: How could Moshe, the ultimate servant of Hashem, possibly commit such a sin? Wasn't he aware that he was violating a direct command of Hashem? He answers that miracles occur on various levels. To hit the rock involved a physical effort, but to produce water from the rock merely by speaking to it was a miracle on a higher level. One reason that Moshe hit the rock was that he did not think the Jewish people were worthy of a miracle on a higher level. We learn from this

explanation that one should not underestimate the strengths and merits of the Jewish nation.

This principle is not only applied to Moshe Rabenu, but to any leader of the Jewish people. Every Rabbi is the leader of his kahal. It is important that a Rabbi should know his kahal; he must realize what level they are on and not make demands upon them that are unrealistic. However, at the same time he must not limit how far they can grow and what level of serving Hashem they can reach. The Rabbi is obligated to communicate to the people in a way that is encouraging but not demanding, the Torah standard of Halachah. The Rabbi must always believe in the great potential of his people and not lose hope that they can truly attain greatness. Every man and woman must hear from the Rabbi, "You can do it!" And then the day will come that they did. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"Then Israel sang" (Bemidbar 21:17)

The Jewish people sang a song of thanksgiving after they were saved from the Emori'im. Rashi tells us of a fascinating episode. The enemies of the Jews decided to ambush the Jewish people while they were crossing between two mountains, by throwing rocks on them from the two mountaintops. Hashem caused the mountains to come together miraculously and crush the enemy before the Jews ever came to that pass. The Jewish nation didn't even know of the miracle until afterwards when they saw the dead floating in the waters, and there they began to sing to Hashem.

We see from here that very often we are not even aware of the miracles Hashem does for us, as it says, "uxhbc rhfn xbv kgc iht." We sometimes complain when we miss a traffic light or miss the bus, not realizing that we may have just been the recipient of a great favor. Whenever we see the Hand of Hashem revealed to us, this should give us faith and encouragement for all other occurrences when the miracle is not readily apparent. Miracles are all around us, we just have to see them - "there is no one more blind than those who refuse to see!" Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

SCORE BIG

When trying to decide whether or not to participate in a business deal, you must figure the potential loss, the return on investment, and the drain on capital and liquidity. Then you can make an intelligent move. Sharp businesspeople love to jump on an opportunity where the potential for loss is low, and the profit potential, high.

There is an area of Torah observance that our Sages teach pays a dividend in this world and deposits eternal capital in the World to Come: acts of hesed (kindness).

Sometimes helping another may require a big investment of money and also a great deal of time – a commodity which, in today's fast-paced world, is very valuable. But as with every other rule, there is an exception. You can offer someone else something as simple as an encouraging word and earn major returns in the "business" of Torah and misvot. This true act of hesed costs literally nothing and takes hardly any time at all.

Should someone make you aware of a personal problem, don't reply, "It's your own fault," or, "Why can't you solve your own problems?" Instead, offer some advice or sympathy. "I'm sorry to hear it. Maybe if I can't help, I can at least recommend someone who can."

Take a minute and earn capital for eternity. It only takes a moment of understanding to score big. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

**Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com**

The story is told of a king who dispatched an ambassador to a distant country, and instructed him not to make any wagers during his stay in that country. Under no circumstances, the king sternly warned, may the ambassador agree to a bet of any kind. The ambassador gave the king his word and set off on his diplomatic mission.

When the ambassador arrived in the royal palace of the other country, the king looked at him and exclaimed in horror, "A hunchback! I cannot believe that a hunchback was sent here as an ambassador!" "What do you mean?" the ambassador asked. "I'm not a hunchback!"

"Sure you are!" the king exclaimed. "What nerve, sending a hunchback on such a high-level diplomatic mission!"

The ambassador insisted that he was not a hunchback, and the king challenged him to a bet: if he could prove that he is not a hunchback, the king will give his country \$5 million.

The ambassador thought to himself, "I know I promised not to agree to any bets, but this is a bet I cannot lose. Surely the king would want me to

accept the bet and bring \$5 million to the kingdom!" So, he agreed to the bet, removed his shirt to show that he was not a hunchback, and received the \$5 million.

Upon completing his series of talks and meetings, he returned to his country and went to report to the king. He proudly announced that he had won \$5 million in a bet.

The king became anxious and angry, and shouted, "I thought I ordered you not to accept any bets!"

The ambassador explained that this was a bet he could not lose, and related to the king precisely what had happened.

The king was infuriated. He told the ambassador that he had made a \$10 million bet with the other king that he would be unable to convince the new ambassador to remove his shirt...

Business owners recognize this concern very well. They want their employees to do as they are told without trying to intuit why the boss asks that things be done that way. The best workers are those who work with blind obedience, rather than imposing their own rationale and logic onto the business' operations.

This is true with regard to Torah, as well. Parashat Hukat begins by referring to the laws of the Torah as "Hukat Ha'Torah" ("the statute of the Torah"). The word "Hok" ("statute") generally denotes laws whose underlying rationale eludes human comprehension. We are instructed in this verse to approach all the Misvot as "Hukim," to perform them regardless of if or how we understand their reasons.

The Torah forbids a Jewish king from marrying more than eighteen wives "so that his heart shall not stray" (Devarim 17:17). King Shelomo, however, allowed himself to marry many wives, figuring that at his spiritual level his heart will remain loyal to the Torah. Unfortunately, towards the end of his life he indeed strayed due to the influence of his wives (Melachim I 11:4).

The Mishna in Masechet Shabbat (11a) establishes the Halacha forbidding reading by candlelight on Shabbat. The Gemara (12b) explains that the Sages enacted this prohibition out of concern that one might mistakenly tilt the lamp to improve the flame, which constitutes a Shabbat violation. Rabbi Yishmael Ben Elisha, however, as the Gemara records, had the practice of reading by candlelight on Shabbat because he felt confident that he could read by

candlelight without tilting the candle. He followed this practice until one Shabbat he indeed tilted the candle as he read. Rabbi Yishmael then exclaimed, "How great are the words of the Sages, who said, 'A person may not read by candlelight!'"

The Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna, 1720-1797) explained that Rabbi Yishmael recognized the greatness of the authors of the Mishna, who recorded this Halacha plainly, without mentioning its reason. The Mishna simply stated, "A person may not read by candlelight," without mentioning the concern underlying this provision. Rabbi Yishmael realized that the Mishna omitted the reason precisely to prevent people like himself from taking the liberty to read by candlelight out of confidence that they will not tilt the lamp.

We are to see ourselves as faithful "employees" of the Almighty, and observe His laws regardless of our understanding of their reason and rationale. Though we are certainly encouraged and bidden to intensively study the Torah and understand the basis of every law to the best of our ability, our observance should not depend upon the extent of our understanding. We are to approach every Misva as a "Hok," and faithfully observe it regardless of how we understand its basis and rationale.

Rabbi Wein D-DAY PLUS 69

This past June 6 marked the sixty-ninth anniversary of the invasion of continental Europe by Allied forces in World War II. There has been much discussion over the past few decades as to the strategic and true military importance of that great amphibious landing operation. However for all those who were alive at that time it was an event of almost messianic proportions.

All felt that here at last Hitler would meet his final comeuppance. Even though it is obvious that the bulk of the war against Germany was carried by the then Soviet Union, the successful landings on Normandy's beaches signaled to the free and not so free world that Germany would finally be crushed and defeated.

Stalin had long pressed Roosevelt and Churchill for such an invasion in order to relieve some of the German pressure on his troops and fronts. Churchill was very skittish about the wisdom of such a landing, fearing the worst scenario that the Allies would be driven off of the beaches into the British Channel.

General Dwight Eisenhower, the supreme allied military commander over the invasion forces, had

prepared an announcement for release to the press and media in the event that the landing forces would have to be withdrawn. Later in his memoirs he wrote that defeat in Normandy on D-Day was a very real possibility in his mind.

The Western Wall built by Germany's formidable generals has a certain air of impregnability about it and if Hitler had not withheld two armored divisions from the initial landing battles, the success of D-Day would certainly have been jeopardized. Rommel was convinced that the entire battle for Europe would be decided on the beaches of the landing areas chosen by the Allies. It was prescient of him to call the day of the landings "the longest day."

June 6 1944 came too late for European Jewry. The destruction of European Jewry was almost complete by then, though tragically hundreds of thousands more would still die in the remaining months of the war and even after the war had officially ended. Even though it was obvious to all that Germany was finished, having now to fight a two-front war against enemies that outnumbered and outgunned her, German forces fought bitterly and tenaciously until the end.

Distorted into fanaticism, the German army remained a potent fighting force until its ultimate demise. And the killing of the hapless Jews continued till the very end of the war. There were great reputations that were made by Allied commanders from D-Day forward to the end of the war – Eisenhower, Bradley, Dever and others. Some commanders, such as Montgomery, had their reputations during this latter stage of the war, diminished.

General George Patton, who was in charge of occupation policy in southern Germany, was tarnished by his post-war behavior and statements. Patton and his Third Army did not participate in D-Day itself though they eventually became the true driving force that liberated France and invaded Germany and Czechoslovakia. War oftentimes leaves mixed results and perplexing judgments about the men who wage it.

Time and the events of the last sixty-nine years have allowed D-Day to start to slip into oblivion. Time erases almost everything and World War II and all of its horrors and heroism has certainly receded from the conscience and psyche of the Western world. Former enemies have become steadfast allies while former allies became openly hostile one to another.

Anti-Semitism, which was one of the driving ideologies of World War II, became unacceptable for

a short period of time, but has currently redeveloped in all of its virulence and poison. There will always be those that will arise and say that the whole effort, the lives and money expended in D-Day, was unnecessary in light of today's world and its values. But only those who did not live through that moment in history would be foolish enough to maintain such a position.

D-Day, at the time, was as much a moral victory over evil as it was a military expedition that succeeded against most formidable odds. It renewed the belief that good can and will overcome evil and that tyranny and hatred eventually always must collapse from the weight of its own iniquities. And it gave beleaguered and broken Jewry a glimmer of hope that better days would arrive ahead. Those were and are very important accomplishments and they should never be minimized. The "Longest Day" morphed into a long and difficult, over half-century of profound problems, wars and challenges. But the light of D-Day still shines upon us.

Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth
Why was Moses not destined to enter the Land?

It is one of the most perplexing, even disturbing, passages in the Torah. Moses the faithful shepherd, who has led the Israelites for forty years, is told that he will not live to cross the Jordan and enter the promised land.

No one has cast a longer shadow over the history of the Jewish people than Moses – the man who confronted Pharaoh, announced the plagues, brought the people out of Egypt, led them through the sea and desert and suffered their serial ingratitude; who brought the word of God to the people, and prayed for the people to God. The name Israel means "one who wrestles with God and with men and prevails." That, supremely, was Moses, the man whose passion for justice and hyper-receptivity to the voice of God made him the greatest leader of all time. Yet he was not destined to enter the land to which he had spent his entire time as a leader travelling toward. Why?

The biblical text at this point is both lucidly clear and deeply obscure. The facts are not in doubt. Almost forty years have passed since the exodus. Most of the generation who remembered Egypt have died. So too had Miriam, Moses' sister. The people have arrived at Kadesh in the Zin desert, and they are now close to their destination. In their new encampment, however, they find themselves without water. They

complain. "If only we had perished when our brothers perished in the presence of the Lord. Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die? Why did you take us up from Egypt to bring us to this vile place, where nothing grows, not corn or figs, not vines or pomegranates? There is not even any water to drink." The tone of voice, the petulance, is all too familiar. The Israelites have hardly deviated from it throughout. Yet suddenly we experience not *deja-vu* but tragedy:

Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the congregation to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and fell on their faces. The glory of the Lord appeared to them. The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "Take the staff, and then with Aaron your brother assemble all the community and, in front of them all, speak to the rock and it will yield water. You shall bring forth for them water from the rock, for them and their livestock to drink."

Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he had commanded him. Then he and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock, and said to them, "Listen to me, you rebels. Shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?"

Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed forth in abundance, and they all drank, men and beasts.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not lead this assembly into the land which I promised to give them."

What had Moses done wrongly? What was his sin? What offence could warrant so great a punishment as not to be privileged to see the conclusion of the mission he had been set by God?

Few passages have generated so much controversy among the commentators. Each offers his own interpretation and challenges the others. So many were the hypotheses that the nineteenth century Italian exegete R. Shmuel David Luzzatto was moved to say, "Moses committed one sin, yet the commentators have accused him of thirteen or more – each inventing some new iniquity!" One modern scholar (R. Aaron Rother, Shaarei Aharon) lists no less than twenty-five lines of approach, and there are many more. The following are the most significant:

Rashi, offering the simplest and best-known explanation, says that Moses' sin lay in striking the rock rather than speaking to it. Had Moses done as he was commanded, the people would have learned an unforgettable lesson: "If a rock, which neither

speaks nor hears nor is in need of sustenance, obeys the word of God, how much more so should we."

Rambam (Moses Maimonides) says that Moses' sin lay in his anger – his intemperate words to the people, "Listen to me, you rebels." To be sure, in anyone else, this would have been considered a minor offence. However, the greater the person, the more exacting are the standards God sets. Moses was not only a leader but the supreme role-model of the Israelites. Seeing his behaviour, the people may have concluded that anger is permissible – or even that God was angry with them, which He was not.

Ramban (Nachmanides), following a suggestion of Rabbenu Chananel, says that the sin lay in saying, "Shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?" – implying that what was at issue was human ability rather than Divine miracle and grace.

R. Joseph Albo and others (including Ibn Ezra) suggest that the sin lay in the fact that Moses and Aaron fled from the congregation and fell on their faces, rather than standing their ground, confident that God would answer their prayers.

Abarbanel makes the ingenious suggestion that Moses and Aaron were not punished for what they did at this point. Rather, their offences lay in the distant past. Aaron sinned by making the Golden Calf. Moses sinned in sending the spies. Those were the reasons they were not privileged to enter the land. To defend their honour, however, their sins are not made explicit in the biblical text. Their actions at the rock were the proximate rather than underlying cause (a hurricane may be the proximate cause of a bridge collapsing; the underlying cause, however, was a structural weakness in the bridge itself).

More recently, the late Rav Shach zt"l suggested that Moses may have been justified in rebuking the people, but he erred in the sequence of events. First he should have given them water, showing both the power and providence of God. Only then, once they had drunk, should he have admonished them.

Difficulties, however, remain. The first is that Moses himself attributed God's refusal to let him enter the land to His anger with the people, not just with himself: "At that time, I pleaded with the Lord, 'O Lord God, You have begun to show your servant your greatness and your strong hand . . . Let me cross over and see the good land that is on the other side of the Jordan, the fine hill country and the Lebanon.' But God was angry with me because of you . . ." Similarly, Psalm 106: 32 states, "By the waters of Merivah they angered the Lord and trouble came to

Moses because of them."

Second: however we identify Moses' sin, there is still a disproportion between it and its punishment. Because of Moses' prayers, God forgave the Israelites. Could he not forgive Moses? To deprive him of seeing the culmination of a lifetime's efforts was surely unduly harsh. According to the Talmud, when the angels witnessed Rabbi Akiva's death, they said, "Is this the Torah, and this its reward?" They might have asked the same question about Moses.

Third is the tantalising fact that, on a previous occasion in similar circumstances, God had told Moses to take his staff and strike the rock: precisely the act for which (for Rashi and many others) he was now punished:

The people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses, saying, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." The Lord answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink."

It is with the deepest trepidation that one hazards a new explanation of so debated a text, but there may be a way of seeing the entire episode that ties the others together and makes sense of what otherwise seems like an impenetrable mystery.

The Talmud (Avodah Zarah 5a) contains the following statement of Resh Lakish:

What is the meaning of the verse, 'This is the book of the generations of Adam'? Did Adam have a book? Rather, it teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Adam (in advance), each generation and its interpreters, each generation and its sages, each generation and its leaders.

One of the most striking features of Judaism is that it is not centred on a single figure – a founder – who dominates its entire history. To the contrary, each age gave rise to its own leaders, and they were different from one another, not only in personality but in the type of leadership they exercised. First came the age of the patriarchs and matriarchs. Then came Moses and his disciple Joshua. They were followed by a succession of figures known generically as 'judges', though their role was more military than

judicial. With Saul, monarchy was born – though even then, kings were not the only leaders; there were prophets and priests as well. With Ezra a new figure emerges: the ‘scribe’, the teacher as hero. Then came elders, sages, masters of halakhah and aggadah. During the Mishnaic period the leader of the Jewish people was known as Nasi (and later, in Babylon, as Resh Galutah or Exilarch). Chatam Sofer in one of his Responsa (Orach Chayyim, 12) notes that though the Nasi was a scholar, his role was as much political as educational and spiritual. He was, in fact, a surrogate king. The Middle Ages saw the emergence of yet more new types: commentators, codifiers, philosophers and poets, alongside a richly varied range of leadership structures, some lay, some rabbinic, others a combination of both.

Leadership is a function of time. There is a famous dispute about Noah, whom the Torah describes as ‘perfect in his generations’. According to one view, had Noah lived in a more righteous age, he would have been greater still. According to another, he would have been merely one of many. The fact is that each generation yields the leadership appropriate to it. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 21b) says that Ezra was worthy of bringing the Torah to Israel, had Moses not preceded him. In another passage (Menachot 29b) it says that Moses himself asked God to give the Torah through Rabbi Akiva rather than himself. One can speculate endlessly about the might-have-beens of history, but we are each cast into the world at a time not of our choosing, and we have no choice but to live within its particular challenges and constraints. For that reason, we do not compare leaders – for there are no timeless standards by which to judge them. “Jerubaal in his generation was like Moses in his generation; Bedan in his generation was like Aaron in his generation; Jephthah in his generation was like Samuel in his generation.”

Each age produces its leaders, and each leader is a function of an age. There may be – indeed there are – certain timeless truths about leadership. A leader must have courage and integrity. He must be able, say the sages, to relate to each individual according to his or her distinctive needs. Above all, a leader must constantly learn (a king must study the Torah “all the days of his life”). But these are necessary, not sufficient, conditions. A leader must be sensitive to the call of the hour – this hour, this generation, this chapter in the long story of a people. And because he or she is of a specific generation, even the greatest leader cannot meet the challenges of a different generation. That is not a failing. It is the existential condition of humanity.

The remarkable fact about Moses and the rock is the

way he observes precedent. Almost forty years earlier, in similar circumstances, God had told him to take his staff and strike the rock. Now too, God told him to take his staff. Evidently Moses inferred that he was being told to act this time as he had before, which is what he does. He strikes the rock. What he failed to understand was that time had changed in one essential detail. He was facing a new generation. The people he confronted the first time were those who had spent much of their lives as slaves in Egypt. Those he now faced were born in freedom in the wilderness.

There is one critical difference between slaves and free human beings. Slaves respond to orders. Free people do not. They must be educated, informed, instructed, taught – for if not, they will not learn to take responsibility. Slaves understand that a stick is used for striking. That is how slave-masters compel obedience. Indeed that was Moses’ first encounter with his people, when he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. But free human beings must not be struck. They respond, not to power but persuasion. They need to be spoken to. What Moses failed to hear – indeed to understand – was that the difference between God’s command then and now (“strike the rock” and “speak to the rock”) was of the essence. The symbolism in each case was precisely calibrated to the mentalities of two different generations. You strike a slave, but speak to a free person.

Moses’ inability to hear this distinction was not a failing, still less was it a sin. It was an inescapable consequence of the fact that he was mortal. A figure capable of leading slaves to freedom is not the same as one able to lead free human beings from a nomadic existence in the wilderness to the conquest and settlement of a land. These are different challenges, and they need different types of leadership. Indeed the whole biblical story of how a short journey took forty years teaches us just this truth. Great change does not take place overnight. It takes more than one generation – and therefore more than one type of leader. Moses could not become a Joshua, just as Joshua could not be another Moses. The fact that at a moment of crisis Moses reverted to an act that had been appropriate forty years before showed that time had come for the leadership to be handed on to a new generation. It is a sign of his greatness that Moses, too, recognised this fact and took the initiative in asking God (in Bemidbar ch. 27) to appoint a successor.

If this interpretation is correct, then Moses did not sin, nor was he punished. To be sure, the Torah uses language expressive of sin (“You did not believe in Me”, “You rebelled against Me”, “You trespassed

against Me", "You did not sanctify Me"). But these phrases may refer, as several commentators suggest (see the tenth interpretation cited by Abarbanel, and the commentary of Luzzatto) not to Moses and Aaron but to the people and the incident as a whole. That would explain why Moses said that "God was angry with me because of you".

The fact that Moses was not destined to enter the promised land was not a punishment but the very condition of his (and our) mortality. It is also clear why this episode occurs in the sedra of Chukkat, which begins with the rite of the Red Heifer and purification from contact with death. We also understand why it follows on the death of Miriam, Moses and Aaron's sister. Law and narrative are here intricately interwoven in a set of variations on the inevitability of death and the continuity of life. For each of us, there is a Jordan we will not cross, however long we live, however far we travel. "It is not for you to complete the task," said Rabbi Tarfon, "but neither are you free to disengage from it." But this is not inherently tragic. What we begin, others will complete – if we have taught them how.

Moses was a great leader, the greatest of all time. But he was also the supreme teacher. The difference is that his leadership lasted for forty years, while his teachings have endured for more than three thousand years (that, incidentally, is why we call him Mosheh Rabbenu, "Moses our teacher", not "Moses our leader"). This is not to devalue leadership: to the contrary. Had Moses only taught, not led, the Israelites would not have left Egypt. The message of the rock is not that leadership does not matter: it is that leadership must be of its time. A teacher may live in the world of ancient texts and distant hopes, but a leader must hear the music of the age and address the needs and possibilities of now.

The great leaders are those who, knowledgeable of a people's past and dedicated to its ideal future, are able to bring their contemporaries with them on the long journey from exile to redemption, neither longing for an age that was, nor rushing precipitously into an age that cannot yet be. And, as Moses understood more deeply than any other human being, the great leaders are also teachers, empowering those who come after them to continue what they have begun.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"They shall take for you a red heifer, perfect" (19:2)

Included in "perfect" is also the requirement that also the color should be perfect without any hairs of a different color. Here we see the possibility of understanding this mystifying procedure of the purification by the Parah Adumah. This heifer, with a beautiful coat of red hair without a blemish even in the perfection of its color, was therefore a rarity, and it was so expensive that its owner became wealthy when he sold it to the public use (Kiddushin 31A).

Yet despite its striking beauty, this enormously costly creature could accomplish nothing of the purification procedure while it was still in a state of its beauty. Only after slaughtering it and then burning it into ashes could it achieve the purpose of purifying the unclean person or object.

This symbolizes a vastly important parallel: The Israelite is to Hashem the most precious object in the world. Even one Israelite is more valuable to Hashem than the entire Universe ("For my sake the world was created" – Sanhedrin 37A). Yet throughout his life he is susceptible to sin or even to entire self-ruination, no matter how perfect he is. The most beautifully righteous man becomes truly purified only when he dies and is interred and his body turns to ashes, exactly like the Parah Adumah.

"Greater are the righteous after their death, more than in their lifetime" (Hullin 7B) and the procedure of the Parah Adumah comes to emphasize the importance of the Afterlife as the culmination of all men's efforts to gain true excellence in the eyes of Hashem. The righteous, that bask in the splendor of Hashem's favor, perceive that their death and destruction of their bodies constituted the final purification.

The Israelite individual is the most precious object in the entire Universe while he is alive. Yet his ultimate and most sublime excellence is achieved when he becomes ashes in the earth.

Quoted from "Journey Into Greatness"