

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

SHELAH

Haftarah: Yehoshua 2:1-24

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**DEDICATION: In Memory of Charles Sutton Sivan 24
And in memory of Sarah Maslaton**

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G-d Helps Those Who Help Others – Shelach 5777

Benjamin Franklin made the phrase "God helps those who help themselves" famous by including it in his Poor Richard's almanac. It is a popular saying emphasizing the importance of self-initiative which would certainly have appealed to 18th century colonists. Many mistakenly believe the phrase has biblical origins. It doesn't although echoes of it can be heard throughout King Solomon's Proverbs. We emphasize that man must make some effort before expecting assistance from Heaven. Kabbalistically it is man's action below which is crucial in turning on the flow from above.

So which is it? Does Hashem help those who help themselves or those who help others? We can suggest that it's both, but which is better? Which practice should we follow?

We read this week of the Meraglim, but to understand the story we need to examine both this week's perasha and Moses' recap at the outset of his final speech to the people in Devarim. At the insistence of the people and with the permission of Hashem, Moses selects and sends twelve important representatives, one from each tribe. They are tasked with touring the land of Canaan in order to report back on the land and the inhabitants. Although they pass through the land for forty days, they are not discovered by the local population. They return carrying unusually large fruit. Instead of limiting their report to Moses, ten speak with fear of formidable inhabitants and a land which devours its people. The nation is overcome with anxiety and doubt. They despair of inheriting the Land which Hashem has promised. Two of the twelve, Yehoshua and Caleb try to counter the argument and give confidence to the nation. They report that the life force has left the Canaanites and that with Hashem's help, the nation can defeat the Canaanites and take the land. The nation is not swayed. They lose hope and instead of

celebrating, they cry. This night, the ninth of Av will be a perpetual night of crying and those who cried that night will all perish in the desert delaying the nation's entry into the land by 40 years.

To better understand how successful the tour was for those first twelve spies (although they failed to realize) and how unsuccessful their report was, we are forced to compare their task with the one given by Joshua forty years later to Caleb and Pinchas. While twelve spies traveled unnoticed for forty days, Caleb and Pinchas as we read in this week's Haftara are discovered within 24 hours of their crossing of the Jordan. Yet they report only to Joshua without riling up the nation. Pity that the twelve couldn't see the miracle they experienced. How many of us fail to see miracles every day?

We learn in the Haftara that Caleb and Pinchas stop for the night in the city of Jericho, at the house of an innkeeper named Rahav. Most commentaries suggest that the place was more than an inn, it was actually a well-known brothel and that Rachav was more than an innkeeper. Perhaps Pinchas and Caleb felt that they could remain under cover in such a place where few questions are asked and anonymity is prized. Additionally it may be a place where they could glean information, owing to the nature of intelligence work, the sought-after data is generally collected in questionable places. But things go wrong. The king of Jericho is informed of the presence of the spies and sends messengers to Rachav, where they have been seen. Surprisingly, instead of giving the spies up, she hides them on the roof of her inn and tells the messengers, "It is true; the men did come to me, but I do not know from where they are. When the city gate was about to close at dark, the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them!" Her brilliant reply saves Pinchas and Caleb. Finally, although the gates of the city are sealed, Rachav's inn sits within the outer wall and she lets them down with a rope through the window, advises them where to flee and insures their return to Joshua.

But before they leave, she exacts a price and requests of them, "...swear to me by Hashem, since I have done kindness with you, that you too will do kindness with my father's household and ...that you

will save our souls from death". The Rabbis explain that her words reflect an understanding that those in Canaan fear for their lives and all understand that given God's protection, the Jewish Nation is invincible. She commits then and there (or perhaps even earlier) to conversion and the rabbis of the Talmud tell us that this most beautiful woman who was forced into harlotry at the age of ten and has known every king and Noble over the last forty years will leave that life so far behind and marry none other than the Jewish leader Joshua and her progeny will include eight of the prophets and one prophetess.

The Rabbis beautifully explain and here I use the words of Mrs. Leah Kohn. Rachav set out to sanctify three physical trappings of her life, as it had existed, by using them to help Pinchas and Caleb escape. These are: her window, the rope that hung from her window and the location of her house, attached as it was to the wall surrounding Jericho. Previously, Rachav's high-profile clients had used the rope to arrive and depart through her window unnoticed, and to leave the city precincts without passing through the central gates.

Rachav approached Hashem and expressed her desire to rectify her deeds by using her window, rope and wall to help Pinchas and Calev escape from the authorities in Jericho. What she realizes with this gesture is that physical aspects of life are only tools, which we ourselves decide to use for benefit or detriment. In other words, Rachav understands that she can continue to use the rope attached to the window for her business purposes – or she can use for the sake of Hashem and in so doing become an exemplary woman. The principles behind Rachav's insight and her internal change indicate she has embraced a new reality.

Rachav's message to us is that no excuse should impede our ability to change. Whatever our life circumstances, we are free either to take responsibility or ignore opportunities for our own self-growth. Rachav decided to use the very same things she had used all along, in order to do the Will of Hashem, in order to create a relationship with him. When we contemplate change in life, we must remember that every change requires commitment, often combined with hardship and even great risk. Here Rachav risks her life, and probably the lives of all those around her.

I wonder if forced into this life as a child and even after reaching the top of her profession, she saw the coming of the Jewish people into the land as an opportunity no matter the risk to write a new page and tear the past from existence. A woman who knew

more than anyone that people cannot be trusted, risks everything for two enemy soldiers, not knowing if they will keep their commitment. She saves them and in the end she receives the greatest reward. Rachav is an example of someone who does for others and whom Hashem rewards.

I began with a question. Does Hashem help those who help themselves or those who help others? Which practice should we follow? And this is a real question. Does Hashem answer us when we pray for ourselves, or as we often hear that he answer one who prays for others? This question is debated by many of the acharonim.

The Chatam Sofer suggests an amazing idea as explained by Rabbi Yisroel Reisman. He states emphatically that when praying for someone else, the prayers of the one who is praying are answered first. But this he cautions is not in reward for his prayers. Amazingly he stresses that this is simply the way Hashem created the world. Just as there are laws of physical nature, this is a law of spiritual nature.

Imagine for a moment. When you help someone else, when you do for someone else, when you pray for someone else, you are really helping yourself. Your words and actions cause a spiritual reaction in Heaven which can trigger even a physical action below. As we noted, kabbalistically it is man's action below which is crucial in turning on the flow from above. But the trigger below has so much greater effect when it is pulled on behalf of others. Do for others and Hashem will answer you. We learn this lesson from Avraham who prays for Avimelech and his household and from Rachav who risks everything and saves Caleb and Pinchas and receives immeasurable reward.

May we all be blessed and encouraged to do for others and in that merit, may Hashem order that our prayers be heard and answered.

Shabbat Shalom,
David Bibi

**Israel's 1967 Victory Is Something to Celebrate
The Six-Day War at 50
By MICHAEL B. OREN JUNE 4, 2017**

JERUSALEM — Israelis are celebrating 50 years since the Six-Day War — and with good reason. That victory saved us from destruction and reunited our holiest city. Ultimately, it also brought us peace with Egypt and Jordan and a strategic alliance with the United States. The Palestinians, by contrast, are mourning a half-century of suffering. They claim that

Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza subjected them to colonization and denied them statehood.

While the war certainly shaped the modern Middle East, it alone cannot account for the contradictory ways Israelis and Palestinians commemorate it. The chasm can only be explained by events that preceded it. Far beyond 1967, the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is in fact about 1917, 1937 and 1947. Those anniversaries can teach us much about the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and why peace has proved so elusive.

A century ago this November, Britain, anticipating Turkey's defeat in the Middle East, issued the Balfour Declaration. Endorsed by the League of Nations, the declaration pledged to create a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. Britain did not commit to creating a Jewish state in all of Palestine — the national home could have been tiny — and promised to uphold "the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities." Still, the Palestinians vehemently rejected the document. "We Arabs," wrote Jerusalem notable Musa al-Husayni, would never accept "such a nation."

This year, Israelis are also celebrating the centenary of the Balfour Declaration because it formalized the international community's recognition of a Jewish nation and our 3,000-year attachment to our homeland. But the Palestinians are mourning it — their leaders have even called on Britain to apologize. Today, as in 1917, they view Jews not as a people with rights to a national homeland but as a religious group and, throughout much of Islamic history, an inferior one at that. Understanding this reality helps explain why, in the 1920s, Arab rioters murdered Palestinian Jews, desecrated synagogues and eradicated the ancient Jewish communities of Hebron and Safed.

Despite persistent Arab rejection of Jewish identity, the Zionist leadership recognized that the Palestinian Arabs were a people with sovereign rights. That acknowledgment was codified 80 years ago, in July 1937, with the Peel Commission in Britain, which divided Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. Though the Jews were allotted only one-third of the land, the Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion supported the plan. The Arabs rejected it, proclaiming that the only acceptable solution would be "the complete cessation of the experiment of the Jewish National Home." Buckling to Arab pressure, the British cut off almost all Jewish immigration to Palestine, shutting European Jewry's last escape route from Hitler.

Finally, in 1947, after six million Jews had been murdered in Europe, the United Nations stepped in. This November marks 70 years since the General

Assembly passed the Partition Resolution creating independent Arab and Jewish states in Palestine. The Zionist leadership, welcoming the United Nations' recognition of the Jewish people's rights but also respecting Arab claims, embraced the plan. But the Palestinian Arabs once again rejected the idea of Jewish peoplehood and independence. Their leader, Haj Amin al-Husseini, a Nazi collaborator who met with Hitler to ask him to extend his anti-Jewish plan into the Middle East, swore that the Arabs would not only block partition but would "continue fighting until the Zionists were annihilated." And indeed they fought, ambushing Jewish buses and car bombing public institutions. Arab militias besieged Jewish Jerusalem, denying food and water to 100,000 civilians.

But the Jews fought back. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs became refugees. Historians debate the causes and dimensions of what Palestinians refer to as the "Nakbah," or catastrophe, yet these tragedies never would have occurred if the Arabs in Palestine had accepted partition. Instead, the Arab states supported their intransigence and invaded Israel at the moment of its birth.

What began as a clash between Palestinian Arabs and Palestinian Jews changed overnight into the Arab-Israel conflict. The two-state solution twice turned down by the Palestinians, in 1937 and 1947, would be forgotten as Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip and Jordan annexed East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Yet the Palestinians showed no interest in establishing sovereignty in those areas. Instead, they rejected Israel within any borders. "We shall destroy Israel and its inhabitants" swore Ahmed Shukairy, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, on the eve of the Six-Day War.

Israel's shocking victory over three Arab armies, paradoxically, produced opportunities for breakthroughs. Israel accepted the principle of territory-for-peace contained in United Nations Resolution 242 and reunited the West Bank and Gaza under its rule. Nevertheless, Palestinian groups continued to seek Israel's elimination through large-scale terrorist attacks. When President Anwar Sadat of Egypt visited Jerusalem in November 1977 — yet another anniversary — Yasir Arafat, the P.L.O. chairman, threatened any Palestinian in the territories who supported the initiative. Palestinians who openly supported Sadat were shot. The P.L.O. attempted to thwart the subsequent Egypt-Israeli peace treaty by launching the Coastal Road Massacre that killed 38 Israelis, 13 of them children.

But the P.L.O. could not stop peace. Israel reconciled with Egypt in 1978 and, later, with Jordan in 1994, reverting the Arab-Israel conflict into an Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Efforts to address this were undoubtedly complicated by the construction of

Israeli settlements, but they never accounted for more than a fraction of the territories and the P.L.O. eventually accepted Resolution 242 and signed the Oslo Accords with Israel. These agreements created the Palestinian Authority and, in 2000, led to a United States-Israeli offer of statehood in Gaza, East Jerusalem and almost the entire West Bank. But the Palestinians rejected the proposal with violence that killed and maimed thousands — just as they did in 1937 and 1947. The reason was not 1967, but 1917. Because of the legacy of 1917 — the Palestinians' refusal to recognize the existence and rights of the Jewish people — Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas ignored an even more generous offer for a West Bank-Gaza state in 2008. For the same reason, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, uprooting 21 settlements, brought no peace but thousands of terrorist rockets fired at Israeli towns. Because of 1917, Abbas has paid over \$1 billion to terrorists over the past four years and names public squares and schools after Dalal Mughrabi, perpetrator of the Coastal Road Massacre. And because of 1917, Israelis fear that Palestinians will respond to any future offer of statehood in the lands captured in 1967 much as they did 1937 and 1947. The conflict is not about the territory Israel captured in 1967. It is about whether a Jewish state has a right to exist in the Middle East in the first place. As Mr. Abbas has publicly stated, "I will never accept a Jewish state."

We'll hear a lot this week about occupation and lack of Palestinian independence. Israel has a clear policy on this score: It does not want to rule over another people and is ready to begin immediate negotiations. Yet while Palestinian leaders claim they support a two-state solution, until they state that they favor "two states for two peoples," affirming both Jewish and Palestinian peoplehood and rights, the conflict will tragically persist. It is only through mutual recognition that Israelis and Palestinians will both be able to celebrate, rather than mourn, future anniversaries

Rav Kook on the Perasha Shlach: Repairing the Sin of the Spies

Spies - One of the greatest tragedies in the long history of the Jewish people occurred when the spies sent by Moses returned with a frightening report about the Land of Israel. Their dire warnings of fierce giants and a "land that consumes its inhabitants" convinced the people that they would be better off returning to Egypt.

Unlike other incidents in which the Israelites rebelled against God, on this occasion, Moses was unable to annul God's decree. The entire generation died in the desert, never reaching the Promised Land. The best

Moses was able to do was delay the punishment for forty years.

Rav Kook wrote that even today we still suffer the consequences of this catastrophic error. The root cause for the exiles and humiliations of the Jewish people, throughout the generations, is due to our failure to correct the sin of the spies.

How can we rectify the sin of the spies? To repair this national failure, a teshuvat hamishkal is needed, a penance commensurate with the sin which will "balance the scales." The spies defamed the Land of Israel, as it says, "They despised the desirable land" (Psalms 106:24). We must do the opposite and show our unwavering love for the Land.

"[We must] declare to the entire world [the Land's] magnificence and beauty, its holiness and grandeur. If only we could express (with what may appear to us to be greatly exaggerated) even a ten-thousandth of the desirability of the beloved Land, the splendid light of its Torah, and the superior light of its wisdom and prophecy!

"The quality of wonderful holiness that Torah scholars seeking holiness may find in the Land of Israel does not exist at all outside the Land. I myself can attest to this unique quality, to a degree commensurate with my meager worth." (Igrot HaRe'iyah, vol. I, pp. 112-113)

For Rav Kook, this recommendation on how to address the sin of the spies was not just a nice homily. Stories abound of his burning love for the Land of Israel and his indefatigable attempts to encourage fellow Jews to move to Eretz Yisrael.

Kissing the Rocks of Acre - The Talmud in Ketubot 112a records that Rabbi Abba would demonstrate his great love for the Land of Israel by kissing the rocks of Acre as he returned to Israel. What was so special about these rocks?

Rav Kook explained that if Rabbi Abba had bent down and kissed the soil of Eretz Yisrael, we would understand that his love for the Land was based on the special mitzvot that are fulfilled with its fruit — tithes, first fruits, the Sabbatical year, and so on. The soil, which produces fruit, signifies the importance and holiness of the Land through the mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz.

But Rabbi Abba's love for the Land was not dependent on any external factors — not even the Land's special mitzvot (see Avot 5:16; Orot, p. 9). Rabbi Abba cherished the intrinsic holiness of Eretz

Yisrael. He recognized that the special qualities of the Land of Israel, such as its receptivity to prophecy and enlightenment, go far beyond those mitzvot connected to agriculture. Therefore, he made a point of kissing its barren rocks and stones.

'God Willing' - During a 1924 fundraising mission in America, Rav Kook tried to convince a wealthy Jew to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael. The man gave various reasons why he could not yet leave America, but concluded, "God willing, I too will soon make Aliyah to Israel."

Rav Kook responded: "God is certainly willing. After all, settling Eretz Yisrael is one of His commandments. But you must also be willing..."

Without Calculations - Once, a Jewish tourist visited Rav Kook in Jerusalem, seeking advice as to the possibility of living in Eretz Yisrael. During the discussion, the visitor calculated the pros and cons of moving to Israel; and in the end, he decided that it was not worthwhile.

Rav Kook told the man: "Before the Israelites entered the Land in the time of Moses, they first needed to kill Sichon, the king of Heshbon. This teaches us that one should come to the Land of Israel bli heshbon — without making calculations." (Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Malachim Kivnei Adam, pp. 221, 222, 237.)

Summary of the Perasha

There is an interesting story in this week's parasha which does not get discussed often. After Moshe tells Benei Israel the punishment that Benei Israel will spend 40yrs in the midbar for complaining about the land, Perek 14, Pesookim 40-45 discuss how a group of people from Benei Israel woke up in the morning and decided they were wrong about the land and that they wanted to enter Eretz Israel. Moshe tells them not to attempt entering the land because Hashem is not with them and they will not succeed in defeating their enemies. The group does not listen. They defiantly ascend the mountain to enter the land and are wiped out by the Amalekim and Canaanim who dwelled on the mountain. I just thought this was interesting as we do not hear about this story very often.

Shelach - The parasha of the spies (year 2)

- 1- Spies are appointed to explore Eretz Israel before Benei Israel entered the land
- 2- The spies come back with a negative report. Benei Israel cries & complains

3- Hashem resolves to punish Benei Israel. Moshe fights to save them

4- Benei Israel are told they will spend 40yrs in the midbar. A group tries to enter Israel w/o permission

5- The parsha discusses the meal offering and libations that are brought with korbanot

6- The mitzva to separate challah, a kahal who sins with avoda zara by mistake

7- An individual who sins with avoda zara by mistake. The one who gathered wood on shabbat. The parasha of sinit.

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"Caleb hushed the people toward Moshe." (Bemidbar 13:30)

We find that Hashem considered the actions of Caleb to be very great. This is evident from a verse later on that says, "But My servant Caleb, because a different spirit was with him, and he followed after Me wholeheartedly, I shall bring him to the Land to which he came, and his offspring will drive out its inhabitants" (14:24). Caleb received a huge reward, although it seems that he accomplished little.

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l raises this point and builds on this point to teach an amazing lesson. At first the Rabbi raises the possibility that he was rewarded for his effort, but he quickly rejects this because he proves that there was actually a great real accomplishment.

It is evident from the reaction of the spies to his words, that something real happened. After Caleb's words in support of Moshe were said, the spies spoke again and added many more words against his idea of being loyal to Moshe. The verse states that the spies responded to Caleb and said, "We cannot go into the Land," even though they had said this already. Why say it again? It must be that Caleb successfully knocked out and nullified their first statements. Therefore, the spies had to try again to win over the people and used stronger negative words. Therefore, it is evident that Caleb caused the people to repent from their first reaction to support the spies. He caused real teshubah!

But, you might argue, that teshubah was short-lived. What good is it? Rav Moshe answers that we find in halachah that we are required to help a person to live even if he is very sick, even if it's only for a short time. We even desecrate Shabbat to take a person to the hospital, even if that person will only live a short time. If that's the law regarding physical life, all the more so when we are talking about the life of the soul. Teshubah and true belief in Hashem is life for the soul. Even if it lasts only a few minutes, it's a very great thing and that's why Hashem rewarded Caleb with a huge reward.

When Moshe sent the twelve spies into the land, he changed his student's name from Hoshea to Yehoshua by adding a letter Yud to his name. The Rabbis tell us he took the letter Yud from the name of Sarah, our Matriarch, whose name was originally Sarai, and so the Yud from her name went to Yehoshua. What is the symbolism behind this message?

Sarah was the one who told Abraham to drive Yishmael out from the house because she saw him as a negative influence on her son, Yitzhak. Hashem agreed with Sarah and commanded Abraham to listen to Sarah. Here too, the lesson is that if Yehoshua wants to be the one to conquer and distribute the land to the Jewish people, he must remove all negative influences from their environment. To establish a proper community, we must be on guard that only positive and proper lessons be instilled within us and our children. That is the legacy of Sarah Imenu and that is what Yehoshua was to follow in setting up the land of Israel!

RABBI ELI MANSOUR **The Unsung Heros**

The Midrash comments, "There is nothing more beloved before the Almighty than Sheluhev Misva, and there were no Sheluhev Misva like those two men sent by Yehoshua Bin Nun."

The Sages here extol the virtues of "Sheluhev Misva"—people who are sent on a mission involving a Misva – and in searching for models of "Sheluhev Misva," they point specifically to the two spies sent by Yehoshua before Beneh Yisrael entered the land, about whom we read in the Haftara for Parashat Shelah. What specific quality of Sheluhev Misva is so admirable and worthy of praise, and why are Yehoshua's two spies – whom Hazal identify as Kaleb and Pinhas – seen as the quintessential "Sheluhev Misva"? The Shaareh Ora (by Rav Meir Bergman, contemporary) explains that "Sheluhev Misva" are generally the people who do the hard work without receiving credit or notoriety. For example, when we honor a person who "built" an institution, we generally refer to the primary donor, or the person who spearheaded or raised funds for the project. The laborers on the ground who laid the cement and placed the bricks are not the ones who receive the credit, even though they exerted far greater effort and toil to bring the project to fruition. The ultimate "Sheluhev Misva" are the people who devote themselves arduously to a Misva without seeking recognition or fame, who work purely "Le'Shem Shamayim," sincerely for the sake of God,

without anticipating fame or notoriety.

The models of this kind of "Sheluhev Misva" are Kaleb and Pinhas, two accomplished, distinguished men who were sent by Yehoshua, who was considerably younger than them, on a risky, clandestine mission that involved no honor or prestige. In fact, the text in Sefer Yehoshua does not even mention their names; we have to open up the Gemara to find out who they were. Kaleb and Pinhas thus exemplify the "Shaliah Misva," the unsung hero, the one who embarks on a difficult Misva with complete sincerity, without seeking fame and recognition.

Any American who lived during the Persian Gulf War of 1991 and would be asked to name the general who ran the war would, in an instant, mention the name of Norman Schwarzkopf, the U.S. Army commander at the time. However, an article published many years later noted that Schwarzkopf was not the only hero of the Gulf War. Schwarzkopf devised the military strategy of the war, which was certainly no easy feat and is deserving of praise, but this was not the most difficult challenge of the campaign. There was somebody else, whose name is not even known, who worked as the army's logistician during the war. He was the one who had to figure out how to get the many thousands of troops to where they needed to go, how to make sure they all had proper food and other provisions, and that the day-to-day needs of all personnel were met. This was an enormous undertaking, and one which did not come with any fame or distinction. Schwarzkopf received wide acclaim for his effective work, but the nameless logistician did not – even though his work was certainly no less important or difficult.

There are numerous groups of "unsung heroes" among Am Yisrael, those who toil laboriously and quietly to continue our Torah tradition but without receiving much honor or fame. The most notable of these groups, perhaps, is the women. The role of Orthodox Jewish women, by and large, revolves mainly around the home, as they are the ones who tend to the household and raise the children, imbuing within them a love for Torah and our traditions. Most women do not receive any public accolades for their work, despite the fact that they devote themselves tirelessly to the needs of the home and their job is at least as vital – and likely far more vital – than that of their husbands. The Jewish women are the unsung heroes, the Pinhas and Kaleb of Am Yisrael, the ones who undertake great challenges for the sake of the nation without seeking recognition, working purely "Le'Shem Shamayim," for the sake of God, Torah and the Jewish people

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
THE WORLD IS A MESS**

The political turmoil that is currently developing in major countries of the world only serves to underscore the uncertainty of life and events. Things never turn out the way we envision them to happen. The continuing destabilization of the Trump administration in the United States is deeply troubling and potentially very dangerous.

Sidetracked by all sorts of self-inflicted wounds, President Trump seems unable to currently fulfill his three major campaign promises – the control of immigration, a new healthcare system and a major overhaul of the tax laws of the country – in a speedy and efficient legislative manner. If this be the case, it bodes ill for the remainder of his presidency.

In the United Kingdom, Teresa May gambled on increasing the majority of her party in Parliament by calling for an early election. Her pollsters assured her of victory in that election. Well, things did not quite turn out that way, as she lost her party's sole control of Parliament and government.

France has elected a complete unknown and relatively inexperienced person who represents none of the major political parties in the country as its new president. He has hastily formed a political party to back him, though at this writing it is unclear whether that party will prove to be successful in the parliamentary elections that are looming.

Germany, until now apparently the most stable and prosperous country in Europe, also faces a general election that is becoming increasingly important and unpredictable. Looking around therefore, it is very simple and easy to come to the conclusion that, at least as far as the West is concerned, the world is a mess.

We here in Israel are not being spared the uncertainties that national life brings upon us. Prime Minister Netanyahu is the subject of numerous police investigations regarding breach of trust and other innuendos of corruption. These investigations have been going on for months and no one knows if there is any end in sight. His minister of the interior, apparently having learned little from his previous convictions and jail sentences, is again being

investigated for possible corrupt practices. Israel's coalition government has lasted for about two years. The average coalition government in Israel starts to waiver and eventually falls after two and a half to three years in power.

General elections in Israel really only reshuffle the deck but do not influence material changes in policy or in the everyday life of the citizenry of the country. Though the economy remains stable and the status quo militarily and diplomatically is holding steady, with the dollar so strong you are currently at a disadvantage if you are living on an American pension in Israel. This is not an ideal situation but given what other nations face, especially in our area of the world, Israelis should consider themselves fortunate indeed.

The mess that we find ourselves in is an old and known one so we have become accustomed and even immunized regarding its constant presence in our society. We are convinced that life is messy and that it will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.

Human beings hate prolonged uncertainty. We plan and map out our personal and national futures. Yet rarely is reality able to really implement those plans or create that future. Life always intervenes and mocks our pretensions of omniscience and omnipotence. We are always doomed to live in a messy and very uncertain world. That is why faith is such an important ingredient in Jewish life.

It is faith that can anchor our lives on a solid and righteous basis no matter what the social temperature outside may be. And unfortunately our generation exhibits a severe shortage of this inspirational commodity. But simply by living here in Israel and ignoring the tempting but illusory blandishments of emigration, Israelis exhibit an inner faith, which has always sustained Jewish people over the long centuries of our dispersion and exile.

There are no easy answers to the challenges that our messy world poses for us. Political upheavals and tension and violence-laden disputes are the norm in human society. We should not give in to false prophets and rosy predictions about the future. The world will probably remain fairly messy for the foreseeable future.

We should restock our arsenal of faith and remain determined to ride out the messy waves of instability and uncertainty that lap up on the shores of our existence. I know that this is not a very happy assessment of our present world, but it is a realistic one and that alone can be of benefit to all concerned

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Freedom Needs Patience

Whose idea was it to send the spies?

According to this week's sedra, it was God.

The Lord said to Moses, "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders." So at the Lord's command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. (Numbers 13:1-3)

According to Moses in Deuteronomy, it was the people:

Then all of you came to me and said, "Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to." The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe. (Deut. 1:22-23)

Rashi reconciles the apparent contradiction. The people came to Moses with their request. Moses asked God what he should do. God gave him permission to send the spies. He did not command it; He merely did not oppose it. "Where a person wants to go, that is where he is led" (Makkot 10b) – so said the sages. Meaning: God does not stop people from a course of action on which they are intent, even though He knows that it may end in tragedy. Such is the nature of the freedom God has given us. It includes the freedom to make mistakes.

However, Maimonides (Guide for the Perplexed III:32) offers an interpretation that gives a different perspective to the whole episode. He begins by noting the verse (Ex. 13:17) with which the exodus begins:

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Reed Sea.

Maimonides comments: "Here God led the people about, away from the direct route he had originally intended, because He feared that they might encounter hardships too great for their present strength. So He took them by a different route in order to achieve His original object." He then adds the following:

It is a well-known fact that traveling in the wilderness without physical comforts such as bathing produces courage, while the opposite produces faint-heartedness. Besides this, another generation rose during the wanderings that had not been accustomed to degradation and slavery.

According to Maimonides, then, it was irrelevant who sent the spies. Nor was the verdict after the episode

– that the people would be condemned to spend 40 years in the wilderness, and that it would only be their children who would enter the land – a punishment as such. It was an inevitable consequence of human nature.

It takes more than a few days or weeks to turn a population of slaves into a nation capable of handling the responsibilities of freedom. In the case of the Israelites it needed a generation born in liberty, hardened by the experience of the desert, untrammelled by habits of servitude. Freedom takes time, and there are no shortcuts. Often it takes a very long time indeed.

That dimension of time is fundamental to the Jewish view of politics and human progress. That is why, in the Torah, Moses repeatedly tells the adults to educate their children, to tell them the story of the past, to "remember". It is why the covenant itself is extended through time – handed on from one generation to the next. It is why the story of the Israelites is told at such length in Tanakh: the time-span covered by the Hebrew Bible is a thousand years from the days of Moses to the last of the prophets. It is why God acts in and through history.

Unlike Christianity or Islam there is, in Judaism, no sudden transformation of the human condition, no one moment or single generation in which everything significant is fully disclosed. Why, asks Maimonides (Guide, III: 32), did God not simply give the Israelites in the desert the strength or self-confidence they needed to cross the Jordan and enter the land? His answer: because it would have meant saying goodbye to human freedom, choice and responsibility. Even God Himself, implies Maimonides, has to work with the grain of human nature and its all-too-slow pace of change. Not because God cannot change people: of course He can. He created them; He could re-create them. The reason is that God chooses not to. He practices what the Safed Kabbalists called *tzimtzum*, self-limitation. He wants human beings to construct a society of freedom – and how could He do that if, in order to bring it about, He had to deprive them of the very freedom He wanted them to create.

There are some things a parent may not do for a child if he or she wants the child to become an adult. There are some things even God must choose not to do for His people if He wants them to grow to moral and political maturity. In one of my books I called this the chronological imagination, as opposed to the Greek logical imagination. Logic lacks the dimension of time. That is why philosophers tend to be either rigidly conservative (Plato did not want poets in his

Republic; they threatened to disturb the social order) or profoundly revolutionary (Rousseau, Marx). The current social order is either right or wrong. If it is right, we should not change it. If it is wrong, we should overthrow it. The fact that change takes time, even many generations, is not an idea easy to square with philosophy (even those philosophers, like Hegel and Marx, who factored in time, did so mechanically, speaking about “historical inevitability” rather than the unpredictable exercise of freedom).

One of the odd facts about Western civilisation in recent centuries is that the people who have been most eloquent about tradition – Edmund Burke, Michael Oakeshott, T.S. Eliot – have been deeply conservative, defenders of the status quo. Yet there is no reason why a tradition should be conservative. We can hand on to our children not only our past but also our unrealised ideals. We can want them to go beyond us; to travel further on the road to freedom than we were able to do. That, for example, is how the Seder service on Pesach begins: “This year, slaves, next year free; this year here, next year in Israel”. A tradition can be evolutionary without being revolutionary.

That is the lesson of the spies. Despite the Divine anger, the people were not condemned to permanent exile. They simply had to face the fact that their children would achieve what they themselves were not ready for.

People still forget this. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were undertaken, at least in part, in the name of democracy and freedom. Yet that is the work not of a war, but of education, society-building, and the slow acceptance of responsibility. It takes generations. Sometimes it never happens at all. The people – like the Israelites, demoralised by the spies’ report – lose heart and want to go back to the predictable past (“Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt”), not the unseen, hazardous, demanding future. That is why, historically, there have been more tyrannies than democracies.

The politics of liberty demands patience. It needs years of struggle without giving up hope. The late Emmanuel Levinas spoke about “difficult freedom” – and freedom always is difficult. The story of the spies tells us that the generation who left Egypt were not yet ready for it. That was their tragedy.

But their children would be. That was their consolation.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“And you will see it and you will remember all the Mitzvot of Hashem and you will do them” (15:39)

The Mitzvah of Sisit is a Commandment which is categorized as an ‘Edut’, Testimony.

An Edut testifies to Historical events or great principles. Since we can understand the Edut more easily, therefore they are more obligatory for us to do them. Principle: “Whatever is easier to do is more obligatory”.

Some examples of Edut are:

Matzah – to recall being slaves in Egypt.

Sisit – to remember the Mitzvot.

Mezuzah – reminds us that this is a Holy home given to us by Hashem.

Teffilin – reminds us that Hashem took us out of Egypt. And that the words of Torah should be on our lips.

Pesach – Yetziat Mitzrayim.

Shabbat – that Hashem created the world from nothing (ex nihilo).

The verse says that when we look at the Sisit we should remember all of the (613) Mitzvot. This would necessitate the knowledge of all the Mitzvot and include a special effort to perform. The Rabbis tell us, “If a person tries to do too much at one time he will not accomplish anything”. Therefore, when we gather the 4 Sisit every morning during the Shema prayer, lets try to think and ‘remember’ at least the following 4 Mitzvot which will fulfill 4 Commandments from our Torah.

1. “To gain fear/awareness of Hashem” – think that Hashem is looking at you. “Et Hashem Elokecha Tira”
2. “To Love Hashem” – say, ‘I Love You Hashem’. “Veahabta Et Hashem Elokecha Bechol Lebabecha”
3. “To Thank Hashem” – Thank Him for Everything. “Tob Lehodot LeHashem”
4. “To Love your fellow Jew & Jewish Nation” – “Veahabta L'reacha Kamocho”

We must listen to the testimony of the Edut as they were made in order to speak to us.

When you see ‘Sisit’, your neighbor’s or your own, remind yourself of the Mitzvot.

By thinking into the Edut/Testimonies of our Torah you will produce a diamond and a collection of gems in your mind which will give you pleasure in this world and in the next world forever.