

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

BEHA'ALOTECHA

Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

JUNE 24-25, 2016 19 SIVAN 5776

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Moshe Ben Farha – 22 Sivan
For Refuah Shelema for Chaya Esther bat Faygeh

AND For the Refuah Shelema of Chaya Raizel bat Dena

**A joint Tehillim read, each one reads one chapter and together we complete the Sefer Tehillim
I thought this was such a novel idea ... Please visit this site**

<http://tehillimyahad.com/mr.jsp?r=4IJAcY1Vi8>

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

Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor,
Artistic Frame at 4:00PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100 –
Mincha– The most important tefilah of the day –Give us 11
minutes and we'll give you the World To Come!

Editors Notes

Raising Flames and Second Chances

I've received lots of emails asking why I haven't been writing for the last few weeks. It's not for lack of material. Each day we have classes and during the course of a week a few speeches, so why am I not putting anything on paper? I'm not really sure.

This week's portion has so many amazing subjects.

We begin with Aaron's lighting of the Menorah. Instead of the typical word to light – LeHadlik, we use BeHaalotecha, which loosely translates as raising up a flame. It is the Kohen's job to raise up. We see this again as we continue with the subject of Aaron lifting up the Levites in order to consecrate them. The Kabbalists explain this as Aaron representing Kindness raising up the Levite who represents Judgment and sweetening that judgment. And then we get into a whole new subject. The concept of Pesach Sheni or a "Second Passover" is instituted. Moses is asked if there is a second chance for those who were ritually impure or whose donkey had a flat tire on the way to the Temple. He dials heaven on his cell phone and G-d immediately answers him that not only is that second chance available to them, its available to everyone.

I was thinking how these three segments connect.

Second chances and raising up a flame or a person by the Kohen.

In Judasim we must all realize that there is always a second chance. We see this again and again from

Adam after the sin, to Noah after the flood. We see the Jewish people after the Golden Calf and throughout history. King Solomon writes, that the righteous fall seven times and rises again. But sometimes a person needs help getting up; a person needs help raising the spirits. Sometimes a person buried in perceived judgments needs a lift with kindness. This is when the rest of us get involved.

We are a nation of priests of Kohanim and each of us has the ability to raise the flame or the spirit of a friend.

The rabbis describe that within each of us, no matter how much of what the angel we forget or how far we stray from Sinai, we maintain our Jewish soul and spark. The rabbis call it "Nitzotz HaYehudi", the spark of a Jew. In Yiddish, it is called the pintele yid. We understand it to be, the tiny part of Jew that never quits - the little spark of Jewishness that is indestructible. No matter how hard that person tries to leave his Jewish-ness, there is a part of him that just can't get away. Run to the ends of the earth, and it will still be there. Announce your non-belief to the world, tell everyone you don't believe, and the 'pintele yid' will still disrupt your plans. It is up to each of us to raise that flame.

We ask G-d three times each day to save us from Yagon and Anacha (sorrow and depression). The Kuntres Avodat HaTefillah suggests that Yagon refers to De'agah B'Lev--sadness, or a troubled or worry-filled heart. Anacha, on the other hand, refers to sadness that comes from physical strain and tzaros that actually occur. The kabbalists tell us that these are the tools of the dark side, because a person depressed cannot connect with G-d.

It is up to each of us to be the Kohen, to raise up the flame, and to even physically lift our friend out of the depths of sorrow and depression and remind them that there is always a second chance.

Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

No, Rabbi Riskin: Reform and Conservative Movements Are a Danger **By Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer**

It is sometimes hard to believe what we are reading, as things are turned upside down in an effort to be politically correct and gain popular appeal. Orthodox Judaism has never sought to be politically correct – on the contrary, it has stood its guns no matter what direction the winds are blowing. Unfortunately, with the case of Modern Orthodox rabbis who have crossed the line into Open Orthodoxy, it has become almost commonplace to read the unbelievable, things that would never have been expressed were Rabbi Soloveitchik zt"l, the Torah luminary of American Modern Orthodoxy, still with us. Sometimes, shocking ideas are articulated in direct contravention of his views, with the excuse that “times have changed.” Since when has that wellworn excuse been used in Orthodoxy? [Click Here!](#)

This, much as it hurts to write it, seems to be the case when it comes to rabbinic superstar, Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin, who seems to be on a much publicized collision course with tradition. There was the “Rabbi J- Video” (which Rabbi Riskin later said did not represent his views, due to the video’s poor editing), his promoting the chanting of Megillath Ruth by a woman at the main minyan of a synagogue under his jurisdiction, and other ideas that fly in the face of Orthodox tradition. A once modern rabbinic icon who did much to bring people closer to Torah, Rabbi Riskin has in his later years adopted positions that fly in the face of normative Torah understanding. (Please also see the later portion of this linked article regarding Rabbi Riskin’s involvement with Christian ministries.)

Although one could have otherwise, perhaps favorably interpreted Rabbi Riskin’s hair-raising idea in his recent public pronouncement on Arutz Sheva that the Reform and Conservative movements are partners in Jewish outreach to have been intended to express the demarcation between acceptance of Reform and Conservative Jews themselves and unequivocal opposition to their leaders and their interpretations of Judaism, a view held by respected rabbinic authorities, that is clearly not what Rabbi Riskin said. Rather, Rabbi Riskin stated: “They’re not tearing Jews away but bringing them closer... That may have been true at the beginning of the Reform Movement, but it’s very different now – they’re trying to bring Jews closer. Not to the wholeness, the fullness of Orthodox Judaism that I love and that I know, but nevertheless they’re trying to bring Jews closer.” In other words, it is the

leadership of the Reform and Conservative movements whom Rabbi Riskin praises!

This leadership is bringing Jews closer to what? Intermarriage? Christmas trees and menorahs in the living room? A total departure from normative halakhic Judaism?

Let us look at that greatest danger to the continuity of the Jewish people, not the just as important continuity of its halakhic framework. On a factual level, not only are most Reform Jews (and non-Orthodox Jews in general) intermarried today, and not only does the head of the Reform movement extol intermarriage, but there has been serious discussion within the Reform movement to permit its rabbis to themselves be intermarried. The Reconstructionist movement has gone further, formally allowing its rabbis to be intermarried, and a large plurality of rabbis in the Conservative movement favor the performance of intermarriages. In fact, the Conservative movement’s USY youth group now permits its leadership to interdate.

To endorse these movements as positive and as forces for bringing Jews closer to Judaism is downright wrong and even farcical. Although these groups may espouse some type of Jewish identity, they embody and encourage assimilation and the abandonment of Jewish tradition and commitment. And it is happening before our eyes. Theologically, the Reform and Conservative (as well as the Reconstructionist) movements reject the Singular Divine Authorship of the Torah and the other Cardinal Principles of Faith, and they have disavowed the binding nature of halakha.

It is therefore not only incorrect to refer to these groups as partners in bringing Jews closer to Judaism, but it is dangerous, as such a statement empowers and validates groups which threaten the very integrity and future of authentic Judaism in every manner. There is no need for elaboration, as the issue is not subtle or nuanced; endorsing the heterodox movements is tantamount to endorsing the dismantling and destruction of traditional Judaism.

Many of my friends were immensely impacted by Rabbi Riskin in a most positive way during his early tenure in the United States, as he energetically established Torah institutions of the highest caliber. My friends miss the old Rabbi Riskin. We all wish that he would return.

The author, Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer, is a member of the Executive Committee of the Rabbinical Council of America and a member of the New York Bar. His writings on Jewish topics appear regularly on Matzav.com.

Summary of the Perasha

This is the week to get back into reading the weekly parasha! After the 2nd half of Shemot discussing the mishkan and virtually all of Vayikrah discussing korbanot and tahara, and last two parshiot dealing with counting Benei Israel and korbanot for the inauguration of the mishkan the weekly parasha is finally exciting again (it's always exciting. But now it's really exciting)!! And these are the parshiot we didn't really learn so much in school considering they take place during the Summer months. So now is the time to get back into it! Parashat Be'ha'alotecha takes place with Benei Israel leaving Har Sinai for the first time since receiving the Torah. They are preparing to travel 3 days toward Eretz Israel and are poised to enter the land any day.

**Aliyot 6 and 7 are particularly interesting!

Be'ha'alotecha - The Leviim are made kadosh, Benei Israel's first traveling from Har Sinai (year 2)

- 1- Menorah, The Leviim are purified and made kadosh
- 2- The Leviim replace the bechorim to do the avodah
- 3- Korban Pesach in the midbar, pesach sheni for those who were tameh
- 4- How Benei Israel traveled in the midbar by way of the the amood ha'anan, amoond ha'esh, and trumpets
- 5- Israel's first traveling from Sinai - order of camps and how they traveled. Yitro returns home
- 6- Complaints about the traveling and about the manna. Moshe's despair. 70 Zekenim are chosen to help Moshe
- 7- Hashem sends the quail. Miriam speaks lashon hara and gets tzaraat

FROM THE JERSEY SHORE NEWSLETTER

“Why should we be left out by not offering Hashem’s offering in its appointed time among the children of Israel.” (Bemidbar 9:7)

If, for reasons beyond his control, a person can't perform a misvah properly, is there any point in doing it in part even if he does not fulfill his obligation of doing the misvah? For example, someone who can't eat a kazayit of maror, should he eat a little bit of it? Harav Moshe Feinstein zt"l brings a powerful proof from this week's parashah that one should do so.

When the individuals who were impure because they had come in contact with a deceased person came to Moshe Rabenu to plead that they

should be allowed to bring a korban Pesah, they articulated a specific request: the korban should be offered by those Kohanim who were pure, and since by nightfall they too would be already pure, they would be able to eat it as well.

Ultimately, Hashem instructed Moshe Rabenu to tell these individuals to bring a korban Pesah on Pesah Sheni. But their request seems unusual. Our Sages teach us that, in fact, those seeking to get the misvah of korban Pesah must be in a state of purity (Pesachim 61a). Even if they would have joined in a korban together with those who were pure, the impure would not be fulfilling the misvah. So what were they seeking to accomplish?

Out of genuine love for the misvah, these individuals were eager to partake in any way possible – even if they couldn't actually fulfill the misvah! Rejecting the assumption that unless something can be done in its entirety it shouldn't be done at all, they were intent on doing whatever they could possibly do. Rav Moshe says that from this we learn that one should seek to connect oneself as much as possible with a misvah. For instance, even if one can't eat or sleep in a succah, he should take part in building one.

At every berit milah, the child is blessed that just as he entered the milah, he should enter into Torah, huppah and good deeds (ma'asim tobim). The word Torah certainly includes the performance of misvot as well. So why is there a need to bless the child with “good deeds”?

It is because there are some misvot that one can avoid performing, and yet not transgress any prohibitions. For instance, one is only obligated to wear sitit on a four-cornered garment. According to halachah, were one to wear any garments that don't have four corners, he would never have to wear sitit. Yet in their great love of misvot, Jews choose to wear a tallit katan (the sitit under our shirts) so that they can perform the cherished misvah. This is the blessing we bless the baby at the milah. May he have the love of misvot to perform them even if exempt. Rabbi Reuven Semah

“[The Jewish nation] traveled from the mountain of Hashem” (Bemidbar 10:33)

The Midrash tells us that this was one of the instances where the Jewish people did something wrong, and indeed the Torah interrupts the narrative with “יִרְאוּ אֶת ה' וְיִשְׁמְרוּ” (which doesn't belong there) in order to separate between the wrongdoings. What was wrong with them traveling from the mountain of Hashem? Actually, they only traveled when given the signal by G-d, so if it was time to travel, why should it be a sin?

The Rabbis tell us that they traveled like children leaving school, in a hurry and anxious to leave their place of learning. For children to run out when the bell rings, that is expected of them. But when adults, who just learned Torah from Hashem for one year at Mount Sinai, also rush to get away, that was a sign that it wasn't becoming internalized. If we look at Torah as a chore or as burdensome, it will not have its effect of enriching our lives the way it should. We should remember this whenever we finish praying or learning. Sometimes, before the hazan is finished, the majority of the shul is almost outside "like children leaving school." Let's allow the Torah and Tefillah to enrich us so that it will always be a pleasure. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com
Remembering and Being Remembered

The Torah in Parashat Behaalotecha presents the Misva of the Hasoserot – the special trumpets which were blown on various occasions. In the desert, the trumpets were sounded to assemble the people and to announce that the nation was journeying. After Beneh Yisrael entered the Land of Israel, the trumpets were sounded during times of war, and also in the Bet Ha'mikdash during the Yom Tob celebrations (10:9-10).

Rav Shabtai Sabato (contemporary) noted an important difference between the way the Torah commands sounding the Hasoserot during wartime and the way it commands sounding them on the holidays. In reference to wartime, the Torah says that as a result of our blowing the trumpets, "Ve'nizkartem Lifneh Hashem Elokechem" – "you will be remembered before Hashem your G-d." The purpose of sounding the trumpets during war is that G-d will remember us favorably and grant us victory. In reference to the obligation to blow the Hasoserot in the Bet Ha'mikdash, however, the Torah writes, "Ve'hayu Lachem Le'zikaron Lifneh Elokechem" – "they shall be for you as a remembrance before your G-d." Here, the trumpets serve as reminders to us. Whereas in wartime the Hasoserot serve to ensure we are "remembered," so-to-speak, by G-d, on the holidays they serve to remind us about G-d.

Rav Sabato explains that during times of festivity and celebration, there is a natural tendency to forget about G-d and our religious obligations. We get caught up in the joy and feasting, and feel comfortable and confident. Therefore, during the holidays, it was necessary for us to be reminded of

G-d, and this was the purpose of the Hasoserot on the holidays. In times of war, however, we do not need to be reminded about G-d. The fear and tension brought about by war itself makes us mindful of our dependence on G-d for our survival and wellbeing. Under such circumstances, then, the Hasoserot serve a much different purpose – to ensure that we are remembered favorably by G-d, to bring our prayers before the Heavenly Throne so we earn G-d's merciful assistance.

The message, Rav Sabato writes, is that if we remember G-d when we are prone to forget Him, then He will "remember" us when we need Him the most. During times of peace and joy, when we tend to feel self-sufficient, we must remind ourselves that everything we have is granted to us by the Almighty, and that we depend on Him at all times, even when our lives seem perfectly stable. If we remind ourselves of this basic tenet during periods of joy and prosperity, then we will earn G-d's assistance during times of crisis and hardship, when we are keenly aware and mindful of how much we depend on His grace and mercy.

VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA

Will be distributed under a separate list
If you want to receive this article every week,
please let us know and we will add you to that list

Rabbi Wein
My friend, RABBI CHAIM ZELIG FASMAN

My beloved friend and study partner from my yeshiva days in Chicago, Rabbi Chaim Zelig Fasman, passed away recently. I was really brought up very short and greatly distressed at learning of his passing. Even though seventy years and the space of great continents separated us, one never forgets or is really distant from one's learning partner – we studied together on a daily basis for nine years during our yeshiva days.

When I left the yeshiva, newly married and looking to find my way in life, I entered the practice of law and commerce. My learning partner, Rabbi Fasman, went on to study in one of the great Torah think-tanks of that time in American Jewish life, Beit Hatalmud, then located in the Bensonhurst neighborhood of Brooklyn.

This institution was the bastion of very intensive and analytic Talmudic study coupled with the ideas and philosophy of Lithuanian Jewish mussar. The

founders and heads of that institution, after somehow surviving the Holocaust and years of exile in Shanghai, arrived haunted yet undaunted in spirit into postwar American Jewish life. Rabbi Fasman became a true disciple of these great personalities and to a large extent his passing now marks the end of that era and philosophy.

He was generous and sensitive to others, many times to a fault. Gentle in manner and in speech, he was iron in will, spirit and determination. He possessed within him a pioneering view of building a generation of Torah scholars and leaders. And, he chose Los Angeles to be the location of the institution that he founded, nurtured and expanded for decades, which literally changed the face of the Orthodox Jewish community in Los Angeles.

He himself was the son of a great rabbinic figure, Rabbi Oscar Z. Fasman. His mother, Jeanette Fasman, was an extraordinary woman of influence and stature. So, he had a great heritage upon which to build his own life, family and the institution. And he did so in a very successful fashion, against many odds and a world of naysayers.

I remember the Los Angeles Jewish community of almost seventy years ago. It was considered to be a wasteland as far as traditional Jewish life was concerned. Certainly no one ever imagined that the Los Angeles Jewish community would host and support an intensive kollel that would spread Torah in its midst. There was no shortage of those against the project and even to the very existence of such an institution in Los Angeles.

This was a generation that despaired of traditional Jewish life and said that it could not be done in America. This was followed by a generation that said that it could not be done outside of the communities that had a solid core of Orthodox Jews – such as New York, Chicago, etc.

So, Los Angeles fell into this category – with its physical, moral and social climate forbidding the success of such an institution. My beloved friend, Rabbi Fasman, proved them all wrong. And because of the institution that he founded and headed for these many past decades, the Los Angeles Jewish community has become a flourishing society of Torah study and intensive Jewish life.

I am confident that there will be others from his family and his community that will continue his great work. The institution of the Los Angeles kollel will continue and prosper, but for me his passing leaves an irreplaceable void in my heart and psyche. There

were so many shared experiences that we were partners to but I never imagined that somehow he would leave me.

But life is inexorable and there are no exceptions to our mortality. I am resigned and accepting but I grieve for the loss of such a person of nobility who always exemplified to me what the rabbis meant in Avot that a good friend can be the main focus of strength and security in one's lifetime. His loyalty was always unconditional and unshakable. He criticized what should have been criticized and encouraged when words of encouragement were required.

A good friend knows and keeps secrets, forgives transgressions and is never jealous or petty. This is why it is difficult in this world to really have a good friend in the full meaning of the words. That is why throughout Torah literature a good friend is regarded and described as a blood brother. I never had any biological brothers, but Rabbi Chaim Zelig Fasman filled that role for me during his lifetime. His memory will be a blessing not only for his immediate family but for all of Israel as well.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks From Despair to Hope

There have been times when one passage in today's parsha was for me little less than life-saving. No leadership position is easy. Leading Jews is harder still. And spiritual leadership can be hardest of them all. Leaders have a public face that is usually calm, upbeat, optimistic and relaxed. But behind the façade we can all experience storms of emotion as we realise how deep are the divisions between people, how intractable are the problems we face, and how thin the ice on which we stand. Perhaps we all experience such moments at some point in our lives, when we know where we are and where we want to be, but simply cannot see a route from here to there. That is the prelude to despair.

Whenever I felt that way I would turn to the searing moment in our parsha when Moses reached his lowest ebb. The precipitating cause was seemingly slight. The people were engaged in their favourite activity: complaining about the food. With self-deceptive nostalgia, they spoke about the fish they ate in Egypt, and the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. Gone is their memory of slavery. All they can recall is the cuisine. At this, understandably, God was very angry (Num. 11:10). But Moses was more than angry. He suffered a complete emotional breakdown. He said this to God:

"Why have You brought this evil on your servant? Why have I failed to find favour in Your eyes, that You have placed the burden of this whole people on me? Did I conceive this whole people? Did I give birth to it, that You should say to me, Carry it in your lap as a nurse carries a baby? ... Where can I find meat to give to this whole people when they cry to me saying, Give us meat to eat? I cannot carry this whole people on my own. It is too heavy for me. If this is what You are doing to me, then, if I have found favour in Your eyes, kill me now, and let me not look upon this my evil." (Num. 11:11-15)

This for me is the benchmark of despair. Whenever I felt unable to carry on, I would read this passage and think, "If I haven't yet reached this point, I'm OK." Somehow the knowledge that the greatest Jewish leader of all time had experienced this depth of darkness was empowering. It said that the feeling of failure does not necessarily mean that you have failed. All it means is that you have not yet succeeded. Still less does it mean that you are a failure. To the contrary, failure comes to those who take risks; and the willingness to take risks is absolutely necessary if you seek, in however small a way, to change the world for the better.

What is striking about Tanakh is the way it documents these dark nights of the soul in the lives of some of the greatest heroes of the spirit. Moses was not the only prophet to pray to die. Three others did so: Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), Jeremiah (Jer. 20:7-18) and Jonah (Jon. 4:3).[1] The Psalms, especially those attributed to King David, are shot through with moments of despair: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:2). "From the depths I cry to You" (Ps. 130:1). "I am a helpless man abandoned among the dead ... You have laid me in the lowest pit, in the dark, in the depths" (Ps. 88:5-7).

What Tanakh telling us in these stories is profoundly liberating. Judaism is not a recipe for blandness or bliss. It is not a guarantee that you will be spared heartache and pain. It is not what the Stoics sought, apatheia, a life undisturbed by passion. Nor is it a path to nirvana, stilling the fires of feeling by extinguishing the self. These things have a spiritual beauty of their own, and their counterparts can be found in the more mystical strands of Judaism. But they are not the world of the heroes and heroines of Tanakh.

Why so? Because Judaism is a faith for those who seek to change the world. That is unusual in the history of faith. Most religions are about accepting the world the way it is. Judaism is a protest against the world that is in the name of the world that ought to

be. To be a Jew is to seek to make a difference, to change lives for the better, to heal some of the scars of our fractured world. But people don't like change. That's why Moses, David, Elijah and Jeremiah found life so hard.

We can say precisely what brought Moses to despair. He had faced a similar challenge before. Back in the book of Exodus the people had made the same complaint: "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this desert to starve this whole assembly to death" (Ex. 16:3). Moses, on that occasion, experienced no crisis. The people were hungry and needed food. That was a legitimate request.

Since then, though, they had experienced the twin peaks of the revelation at Mount Sinai and the construction of the Tabernacle. They had come closer to God than any nation had ever done before. Nor were they starving. Their complaint was not that they had no food. They had the manna. Their complaint was that it was boring: "Now we have lost our appetite (literally, "our soul is dried up"); we never see anything but this manna!" (Ex. 11:6). They had reached the spiritual heights but they remained the same recalcitrant, ungrateful, small-minded people they had been before.[2]

That was what made Moses feel that his entire mission had failed and would continue to fail. His mission was to help the Israelites create a society that would be the opposite of Egypt, that would liberate instead of oppress, dignify, not enslave. But the people had not changed. Worse: they had taken refuge in the most absurd nostalgia for the Egypt they had left: memories of fish, cucumbers, garlic and the rest. Moses had discovered it was easier to take the Israelites out of Egypt than to take Egypt out of the Israelites. If the people had not changed by now, it was a reasonable assumption that they never would. Moses was staring at his own defeat. There was no point in carrying on.

God then comforted him. First He told him to gather seventy elders to share with him the burdens of leadership, then He told him not to worry about the food. The people would soon have meat in plenty. It came in the form of a huge avalanche of quails.

What is most striking about this story is that thereafter Moses appears to be a changed man. Told by Joshua that there might be a challenge to his leadership, he replies: "Are you jealous on my behalf? Would that all the Lord's people were

prophets, that the Lord would put his spirit on them" (Num. 11:29). In the next chapter, when his own brother and sister begin to criticise him, he reacts with total calm. When God punishes Miriam, Moses prays on her behalf. It is specifically at this point in the long biblical account of Moses' life that the Torah says, "The man Moses was very humble, more so than any other man on earth" (Num. 12:3).

The Torah is giving us a remarkable account of the psychodynamics of emotional crisis. The first thing it is telling us is that it is important, in the midst of despair, not to be alone. God performs the role of comforter. It is He who lifts Moses from the pit of despair. He speaks directly to Moses' concerns. He tells him he will not have to lead alone in the future. There will be others to help him. Then He tells him not to be anxious about the people's complaint. They would soon have so much meat that it would make them ill, and they would not complain about the food again.

The essential principle here is what the sages meant when they said, "A prisoner cannot release himself from prison." It needs someone else to lift you from depression. That is why Judaism is so insistent on not leaving people alone at times of maximum vulnerability. Hence the principles of visiting the sick, comforting mourners, including the lonely ("the stranger, the orphan and the widow") in festive celebrations, and offering hospitality – an act said to be "greater than receiving the Shekhinah." Precisely because depression isolates you from others, remaining alone intensifies the despair. What the seventy elders actually did to help Moses is unclear. But simply being there with him was part of the cure.

The other thing it is telling us is that surviving despair is a character-transforming experience. It is when your self-esteem is ground to dust that you suddenly realise that life is not about you. It is about others, and ideals, and a sense of mission or vocation. What matters is the cause, not the person. That is what true humility is about. As C. S. Lewis wisely said: humility is not about thinking less of yourself. It is about thinking of yourself less.

When you have arrived at this point, even if you have done so through the most bruising experiences, you become stronger than you ever believed possible. You have learned not to put your self-image on the line. You have learned not to think in terms of self-image at all. That is what Rabbi Yohanan meant when he said, "Greatness is humility." Greatness is a life turned outward, so that other people's suffering matters to you more than your own. The mark of greatness is the combination of strength and

gentleness that is among the most healing forces in human life.

Moses believed he was a failure. That is worth remembering every time we think we are failures. His journey from despair to self-effacing strength is one of the great psychological narratives in the Torah, a timeless tutorial in hope.

[1] So of course did Job, but Job was not a prophet, nor according to many commentators was he even Jewish. The book of Job is about another subject altogether, namely, Why do bad things happen to good people? That is a question about God, not about humanity.

[2] Note that the text attributes the complaint to the asafsuf, the rabble, the riffraff, which some commentators take to mean the "mixed multitude" who joined the Israelites on the exodus

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL "And Hashem said to Moses: Gather to me seventy men of the Elders of Israel that you know that they are the Elders of the people and its magistrates" (11:16)

The question arises: how did this answer Moshe's entreaty? Moshe had said "From where should I have meat to give to all this people?" (11:13). How could the choice of seventy elders solve this question?

Another question may be asked: Why the redundancy in Hashem's words: "The elders of Israel that you know that they are the elders of the people?" Also: at first they are called "the elders of Israel", and now they are called "the elders of the people."

But we must first understand that in reality the people lacked nothing. "Hashem is good to everyone" (Tehillim 145:9) "but most men are like the blind, and fail to recognize His kindness (Chovot Halevavot, Bechinah preface). This failure to enjoy the kindness of Hashem is induced by habit, and also by the constant striving to gain more, and also by the fact that there are always some inconveniences in men's lives which stimulate dissatisfaction. The remedy for this universal lack of happiness is not achieved by supplying additional pleasures, as some of the people had demanded (11: 4-5).

In order to be happy, men must learn to recognize how fortunate they are in every detail. This therefore requires the study of each detail until one learns to enjoy it, and after the study of many details, the sum of all them adds up to a total of happiness. Thus when a man enjoys his eyesight properly, and he appreciates his sane mind, and he relishes his daily bread, and he understands the blessings of a cup of

water, and he realizes the pleasures and benefits of sound sleep every night, and he sees the advantages of peace and of law and order, and he perceives the privileges of a roof over his head, and when the benefits of each article of his clothing and of each utensil of his home are properly studied: these and countless additional details create a chorus of joy and praise to Hashem.

But this study, as valuable as it is, is not available to the ordinary mind. Therefore the multitude needs instruction by sage teachers that are willing to donate their time for this purpose of opening the eyes of men to recognize the happiness of their lot. Moshe, as great a teacher as he was, was unable single-handedly to undertake this task. The seventy elders were chosen for this purpose. To assist them in this function, Hashem sent upon them the spirit of Prophecy.

These seventy were "elders of Israel" in the sense of sagacity in understanding the Torah, but they were chosen also because they were known as "elders of the people" that had experience in dealing with the matters of personal relations of the people and were therefore capable of dealing with every level of the people. It is probable that these 70 elders spoke first to the best disciples, in addition to their lectures to the people in general. Such disciples could train others, until the Awareness of Hashem's kindness would universally be recognized by the entire multitude.

Obstacle Course

It is really amazing. Every time you get a great idea and try to make it happen, obstacles get in the way. These can be either difficult or simple barriers blocking the successful realization of your dream. Had Marconi and Edison had luck like yours, you might think, who knows when – or even whether – the radio and light bulb would have been invented!

What you should realize, however, is that obstacles have no real power to prevent you from doing what you must; they only appear to have the ability to stop you. Rabbi Yisroel Miller says, "Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal."

When your new idea involves spiritual achievement – an attempt to grow to a new level – you must remember that it is Hashem who set you up with the challenge and that He gave you what it takes to pass the test successfully. No one volunteered to be born. No one chose his or her life circumstances. Hashem made the decision for each person's ultimate benefit. There is no obstacle you cannot overcome.

When a stumbling block tries to trip you up and make you lose sight of your goal, remember: it is only a test, and one that you certainly can pass with the tools the Tester provided for your use. Pick yourself up, rub your eyes, and refocus. Then push, climb, or go around the obstacle, and move ahead towards your goal. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

Parts of this newsletter are courtesy of Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Project Genesis, and refer to learn@torah.org and <http://www.torah.org/>. Both the authors and Project Genesis reserve certain rights. For full information on copyrights, send email to copyrights@torah.org.

Shabbat Shalom From Cyberspace E Mail Edition is published each week since 1995 and is distributed to 18,000 readers. Our goal is to spread torah knowledge. Articles are downloaded from sites and from e-mail forwarded to us. We encourage you to reprint the newsletter and distribute it to co-workers, friends and family. You can retransmit copies by fax, mail or by hand. Be a part of the Mitzvah of spreading torah. It takes so little to make copies and distribute them. And with E Mail it just takes a click to send this along. To subscribe directly or have us send to a friend or family member Send a request to ShabbatShalomNewsletter@Gmail.com with your name, phone, fax and E-Mail Address