

**SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE****BEHAALOTECHA****Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7****JUNE 9-10, 2017 16 SIVAN 5777****DEDICATION: In Memory of Haham Moshe Morris Bibi ben Farha****Albert Levy reminds us that Uncle Morris' yahrzeit generally coincides with the portion of BeHa'alotecha and they would say in Ahi Ezer that just as this portion discusses the humility of Moses, so was Moshe Ben Farha one of the humblest men they knew.**

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**Qualities of a Leader – BeHaalotecha 5777**

At the end of this week's portion, when Miriam and Aaron are critical of their brother, Hashem appears to them confirming with regard to His servant Moses that in all Hashem's household, there is none more faithful. And at the end of the Five Books of Moses, the Torah tells us, 'And Moshe died there, a servant (eved) of HaShem.' The Rabbis explain that the definition of an eved is 'someone who has the total possession of his master on him' - it means total servitude and commitment to one's master. And so Moshe being called an eved was the greatest accolade possible and needed no more words. This summarizes Moses' relation with the Al-Mighty in a nutshell.

With regard to prophecy, Hashem confirms Peh el Peh, mouth to mouth do I speak to him. Whatever I tell him or place in his mouth to say, he says exactly as told. All other prophets see Hashem in a vision, perhaps a crackly radio interpreting what they perceive, while Moshe has a perfect connection every time. Never was there a prophet as Moses. As a leader, Moses is the model after which all others are judged. When the people sin at Sinai with the Golden Calf, Moses steps forward and begs for their forgiveness, "and if not, erase me from Your book". As the Book of Torah is the blueprint of creation, erasure from that Book, means erasure from existence. Moses truly puts himself on the line, again and again in defense of the people. In a time where we see so many ascribe to leadership positions to benefit themselves either financially, politically or with honor, it is eye opening to be reminded of what a great leader is and to be inspired to strive to be more like Moses.

Toward the end of this week's portion, as the people begin to travel, they begin to complain. First they complain about the "arduous" journey. Then they grumble about the manna, expressing their desire for meat. When G-d promises that He will send meat,

Moses responds in a very unusual manner. He reminds Hashem that he's got about three million people to feed," and You said, 'Meat I will give them and they will eat a month of days.' Will sheep and cattle be slaughtered for them and be enough for them, or will all the fish of the sea be gathered for them and be enough for them?" And Hashem said to Moshe: "Will the hand of Hashem be short? Now you will see if My word happens to you or not."

Rashi quotes from the Midrash a dispute between the opinion of Rabbi Akiva and that of his student Rabbi Shimon. We are told that Rabbi Akiva understands these verses literally: Moshe doubted the ability of G-d to provide meat. We find this statement so difficult to comprehend. How could Moses, who we acknowledge as the greatest prophet who ever lived and most faithful servant of Hashem, doubt G-d's ability to provide, especially after all the miracles he had witnessed?

Rabbi Shimon does not accept the opinion of his teacher and suggests that Moses was really asking, "How can You provide all this food to the people and then kill them?" What purpose is there in making this miracle if the end result will be death? Hashem answered, "Let them and a hundred like them perish, but let no one say that My hand is short and unable to provide." Or in simpler terms, "Better that they should be punished and no one should doubt My power."

Many if not all of the rabbinical commentaries try to explain this conversation which seems somewhat beyond our comprehension.

The Ran in 14<sup>th</sup> century Spain suggests that Moses does not doubt Hashem's ability to provide the meat; he doubts the people's ability to gather sufficient animals to provide three million people with meat for ninety days. Hashem responds that not even this is beyond His ability as he will send the slav which we very loosely translate as quail but which is described as a very slow flying bird which travels at chest high and can easily be grabbed from the air and set aside into sacks.

The Daat Zkeinim after quoting the Ran suggest an alternative though similar explanation, again putting

the limitation on the people. While traveling in the desert, the only way to eat meat was to bring an animal as a sacrificial offering. The sacrifice was then divided into three, a third was burnt on the alter, a third was given to the Kohanim and a third was given to the owner. The meat needed to be eaten before dawn. If morning comes, any remaining meat needs to be burned, but it's best if all is eaten. Thus Moses is stating that it would be impossible for the Kohanim (Aaron and two sons) to eat a third of 100,000 sheep a night for a month.

They continue and interpret the second half of the verse as suggesting that fish would work because fish need not be sacrificed, but Hashem promised meat and not fish, thus Moses says it will be impossible. Again Hashem responds, "Am I unable to do something"? And we know that Hashem promised meat but never specified sheep and cattle, he referred to Slav, a type of bird not required to be brought as a sacrifice.

In discussing this in the synagogue, we sought a better explanation which would better fit with what Rashi suggests is the opinion of Rabbi Akiva, that being, Moshe said that Hashem could not do this!

I retold a mashal – a short parable – which I heard from Rabbi Aba Wagensburg.

A king had a rebellious son. This son was impossible to guide and lacked any control. He repeatedly committed crimes and acts in public to the detriment of the king and the kingdom. Finally at a huge banquet, the son entered and began cursing the king and his leaders. The king ordered his soldiers to arrest his son and bring him out to the gallows. The king decided that for the good of the Kingdom, his other children and his throne, he had little choice but to rid the kingdom of the prince. The prince who had always gotten away with everything was in shock as they dragged him off.

Suddenly the Queen rose from her throne and stood in the center of the room and cursed the king with words far worse than her child. The soldiers looked to the king wondering if she too would be arrested.

The king sat back and laughed. The crowd stood in shock.

The king explained. I know that my wife loves me and as every mother, she loves her children and would do anything for them. I realize that her love is so great that she would chose to die before seeing her own child killed and therefore she attempts to provoke me. She hopes to avert my attention from the son to the mother and in so doing save her son.

Returning to the desert, the King is Hashem, the Prince represents the Jewish people and Moses represents their mother. Perhaps Rabbi Akiva is correct. Moses truly does state the impossible challenging G-d. Perhaps Moses is only doing this to provoke Hashem to turn his wrath towards Moses and divert his attention from the Jewish people. Perhaps this is another circumstance of asking Hashem to "erase me from your book". Moses is the Queen willing to sacrifice herself for the people he loves as his own children.

If we consider this, we can consider Moses' other sins. Perhaps at the rock he knew he was speaking to the wrong rock and then hitting the rock he should have spoken to. Perhaps he was in fact again being the mother and accepting that he take the punishment and spare the child.

Moses greatness is said to be in his gift of prophecy or possibly in his relationship with G-d, but perhaps his greatness is really more than anything, at least as far as we are concerned, in his love, care and self-sacrifice for us his people.

This is a lesson which every leader needs to learn.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

### **Rav Kook on the Perasha Separating from Tziporah**

"Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses regarding the dark-skinned woman he had married." (Num. 12:1)

What was their complaint against Moses? The rabbinic commentaries explain that they were upset that Moses had separated from his wife Tziporah, the dark-skinned daughter of Jethro. Miriam and Aaron were able to receive prophecy without resorting to celibacy. Why did Moses feel he needed to separate from his wife?

The separation was in fact Moses' idea; God had not commanded him to do this. The Talmud explains that Moses decided it was necessary after witnessing God's revelation to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. Moses reasoned:

"The Shechinah spoke with all of Israel only on one occasion and at a predetermined hour. Nevertheless, the Torah cautioned [the Israelites at Sinai], "Do not go near a woman." Certainly I, with whom the Shechinah speaks at all times and with no set hour, must do the same." (Shabbat 87a)

The Sages noted that Moses' reasoning was sound and God approved of his decision. Their proof: after the revelation at Sinai, God told the people, "Return to your tents" [i.e., return to your families]. But to Moses He said: "You, however, shall stay here with Me" (Deut. 5:27-28).

Why was this separation something that Moses needed to work out for himself? And why was Moses the only prophet obligated to separate from his wife?

### Divine Perspective

Despite the innate greatness of the human soul, we are limited by our personal issues and concerns. Compared to the Shechinah's all-encompassing light — a brilliant light that illuminates all worlds and everything they contain — our private lives are like the feeble light of a candle before the blazing sun. The cosmos are brimming with holiness — in all of their minutiae, in their transformations and advances, in their physical and spiritual paths. All of their heights and depths are holy; all is God's treasure.

In order to attain this higher perspective, a prophet must free himself from his own narrow viewpoint. The pristine dawn of lofty da'at (knowledge) must be guarded from those influences that induce the prophet to withdraw to the private circle of his own family.

Moses, the faithful shepherd, could not be confined to the limited framework of private life — not even momentarily. His entire world was God's universe, where everything is holy.

It was Moses who recognized the need to separate himself from matters pertaining to his private existence. From the Divine perspective, all is holy, and thus such measures are unnecessary. For Moses, however, it was essential. It allowed him to raise his sights and acquire a more elevated outlook. Separating from his family allowed Moses' soul to constantly commune with the Soul of all worlds. It enabled Moses to attain his uniquely pure prophetic vision.

### Continual Light of Moses' Vision

What was so special about Moses' prophecy that, unlike all other prophets, he needed to detach himself from private life? We may use the analogy of lightning to illustrate the qualitative difference between the prophecy of Moses and that of other prophets.

Imagine living in a pitch-black world where the only source of light is that which is emitted by an occasional bolt of lightning. It would be impossible to truly identify one's surroundings in such a dark world. Even if the lightning occurs repeatedly, the lack of constant illumination makes this form of light inadequate. If, however, the lightning is extremely frequent — like a strobe light set to flash at a fast frequency — its illumination is transformed into a source of constant light.

This analogy may be applied to spiritual enlightenment. One cannot truly recognize the elevated realm, its holiness and eternal morality, the rule of justice and the influence of the sublime, without the illumination of continual prophecy.

Ordinary prophecy is like the intermittent light of an occasional lightning bolt. Only the Torah, the singular prophecy of Moses, is a light that radiates continually. We are able to perceive the truth of the world's inner essence through this constant light and live our lives accordingly.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, p. 174; Orot HaKodesh vol. I, p. 275.)

### 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

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, amood 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

I wanted to point out an important concept in our torah that is evident in this week's parasha. That is the idea of "ein mookdam oo'me'oochar ba'Torah (there is no chronological order in the Torah)". In the first pasook of the 3rd aliyah in this week's parasha the Torah tells us explicitly that that when the Jews were commanded to bring korban pesach in the midbar this was in the 1st month of the 2nd year in the midbar. And previously in the opening pasook of Sefer Ba'midbar the Torah tells us when Moshe was commanded to count Benei Israel that this was in the 2nd month of the 2nd year. So we see clearly without a doubt that the events of this week's parasha are taking place out of chronological order. And I thought it was important to point out this concept in a case where it is explicit because elsewhere in the Torah we see events that are difficult to explain in chronological order and Rashi concludes that the events are told to us out of chronological order (even though it is not stated explicitly in the Pesookim). And we may find this hard to accept but once we see this idea established explicitly here so it is not as difficult to accept when we see it elsewhere in the Torah even when it is not as clear. It should be noted that, unlike Rashi, Ramban generally goes out of his way to explain the events of the Torah in chronological order unless absolutely necessary.

#### FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"The people took to seeking complaints; it was evil in the eyes of Hashem." (Bemidbar 11:1)

The Erev Rav, the mixed multitude, had an intense craving and they cried. The Jewish people also cried for meat and they remembered the free fish they ate as slaves in Egypt, as well as the squash, the watermelon, the onions, and the garlic. Rashi explains that they mentioned these specific foods because the manna tasted like anything they wanted except these foods, which are injurious to nursing women.

Rabbi Noach Weinberg zt"l asks: What's going on here? The Jewish people are complaining about a meat shortage? They are longing for fish and squash? This is what they are complaining about? Remember, we are talking about the greatest generation, the generation who saw the pillar of fire and the clouds of glory. They heard Hashem speak

at Sinai and they are asking, "Where's the garlic?" We have to examine the meaning of their complaining, because it cannot be taken at face value.

Ultimately, there is only one tragedy that great people cry about, and that is being distant from Hashem. The Jewish people are not simply complaining about not having fish. They are reacting to what the lack of fish implies about their relationship with Hashem. They realize that this shortage means that Hashem has pulled back from them. Even while enslaved in Egypt, Hashem arranged for them to have plentiful free fish from the Nile. Being not as close to Hashem as before is a tragedy worth crying about. So the question is, if their crying was warranted, then what did they do wrong?

As mentioned above, the manna didn't taste like those foods because it hurt nursing mothers. The Children of Israel erred in not living with the belief that everything Hashem does is for our own good. There were deficiencies, but those were for a reason. The mistake was interpreting the deficiencies as Hashem's abandonment, instead of viewing them as something a loving Father was doing to encourage them to grow.

They should have realized that the manna was a lesson in bitahon, training them to trust that Hashem would provide their daily sustenance. The manna was to help them grow and the lacking was not a sign He was rejecting them.

Every one of us experiences some type of lack in life, and how we respond to our unique challenges reflects our sense of gratitude. If we are grateful for everything Hashem does for us, then we can take the lack in stride and focus on what Hashem is teaching us, and how He is pushing us to grow. Knowing that Hashem showers you with gifts will help you listen to the messages Hashem is sending you. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"And the Jewish people were like complainers." (Bemidbar 11:1)

Whenever the Torah tells us about the shortcomings of the earlier generations, we must keep in mind that they were much greater than we could even imagine, and as such, much more was expected from them. We may never compare ourselves to them; we can only learn from events in their lives and apply it to our own level.

Having said this, we read in the perashah how the Jewish people were punished back to back by fire and by plague. They asked for meat in an incorrect way, and this led to their suffering greatly through the very meat they asked for. The amazing thing, which is very instructive, is that the whole chapter begins with the words, "And the Jewish people were like complainers." The Rabbis point out that they really

didn't start to complain, yet by taking on an attitude of whining and groaning, even in a very subtle manner, they brought out all the terrible misfortunes. We see from here how important a positive attitude is, and how a nagging attitude can be detrimental. Even when one doesn't actually complain, yet talks in a bitter manner, this can bring out the negative in people and lead to a host of problems. Let's think positively and talk in an upbeat way, focusing on the good rather than the negative. You'll be amazed at the results! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

### Take Your Medicine

"And Aharon did so." (Bemidbar 8:3)  
Sifri explains: "To tell the praise of Aharon that he did not change."

Why was Aharon praiseworthy for the simple act of following Hashem's commands exactly without changing anything?

There is a parable told about three people who became sick and went to the doctor, who prescribed medicines for them. The first man knew nothing about medicine and took all the doses that the doctor prescribed. Eventually, he recovered. The second man was somewhat familiar with medicine, but did not recognize them all. He decided to take only those medications which he had heard of. His situation worsened and he eventually died of his illness. The third man also knew about medicine. He checked them all out, but even though some were strange to him, he took all of them exactly as the doctor ordered. He naturally recovered.

It is the same situation regarding Torah. Some people keep the misvot without trying to understand the meanings behind them. Others look into the reasons for the misvot, and if they don't find a "good enough" reason for a misvah, they might not keep it. The third group of people try to understand the misvot but accept upon themselves to keep the misvot even if they do not understand the reasons. This last group is praiseworthy because these people are putting their belief and trust in Hashem before anything else. No "logical" argument can persuade them to abandon a misvah. They understand, like Aharon understood, that unlike any set of laws of other nations, our Torah is not subject to change. (Lekah Tob)

### No Complaints

"And the people were complaining in a bad way in Hashem's ears." (Bemidbar 11:1)

Rashi comments that when the people were complaining they had no real cause to complain, they were just looking for an excuse to separate themselves from Hashem. By finding what would

sound like a complaint they felt justified in keeping a distance from the Creator.

When someone realizes all that Hashem does for him, he will not have a complaining attitude. There are times when a person is missing things and times when he is suffering, but complaining is wrong. The underlying theme behind a complainer is not necessarily that he wants the situation to be improved, but that he wants to have the benefits of complaining. The payoff here is that if I have complaints against someone, I can tell myself that I am free from the obligations I have towards him for all the good that he has done. Ultimately, a person who goes through life complaining does not appreciate the good in his life. By keeping his focus on what he is missing, he blinds himself to what he does have. Everyone could find something to complain about by looking hard enough. However, this is a direct contradiction to our obligation to be grateful to Hashem.

This same principle also applies to relationships between people. When a person wants to keep an emotional distance from someone with whom he should be close, a ploy used is to have complaints against that person. By this, he tries to free himself from gratitude to him for what he has done. The Sages have said that when a person does not appreciate what another person has done for him, he will eventually deny the good that Hashem has done for him. Show appreciation for everyone who helps you. (Growth Through Torah)

### Me Against the World

When you are in a hurry, everyone is the enemy. If you need to get important documents in the mail, there is always a very slow clerk at the post-office counter. If you need to make a deposit in the bank and rush off to a meeting, the person ahead of you on line will chat endlessly with the teller about trivial things. When you need to pick up the children from school, the shopper checking out before you at the store invariably presents the cashier with an item missing a ticket, a calamity that necessitates paging a clerk for a price check. Sometimes it seems as if the whole world is against you.

The fact of the matter is, all those people are not acting any differently than they always do. Sometimes you find them aggravating, and at other times their fumbling may amuse you. The difference is not in them; it is in you. Patience level is a factor of mood. When pressed for time, you view things differently than you would with minutes or hours to spare.

The solution is simple. Assume things will take longer than you expect. Plan for the unexpected delay. Anticipate heavy traffic, a slow clerk, an unforeseen obstacle. Leave time to enjoy life. Those

same people who always seem to be right in front of you will still be there, but they will make you smile with amusement and intelligent indulgence, secure in knowing that you have avoided getting aggravated about the slowpoke enemies that inhabit the world. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR**  
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**When Is It Good To Be Greedy?**

The first verses of Parashat Behaalotecha speak about the Misva of the Menorah, the lighting of the candles in the Mishkan, a Misva that was assigned to Aharon. Rashi, citing the Midrash, explains why this Misva appears specifically here, in this context, immediately following the account of the special gifts brought by the Nesi'im (tribal leaders) in honor of the Mishkan's inauguration. Aharon, the Midrash comments, felt dismayed over the fact that he had not participated in these gifts. The Nesi'im of all the tribes brought these offerings to the Mishkan – except Aharon, the leader of the tribe of Levi. His exclusion from this celebration caused Aharon great distress, and God therefore sought to encourage him by reminding him of the privilege he is given to light the Menorah each day. He should not be distressed by his exclusion from the Nesi'im's gifts, God told him, because he had the special honor of kindling the Menorah.

The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe Nahmanides, 1194-1270) raised several questions concerning Rashi's comments, including the question of why Aharon would feel distressed over not participating with the Nesi'im. Throughout the seven days preceding the Mishkan's inauguration, Aharon and his sons brought special sacrifices in the Mishkan as part of their consecration as Kohanim. Moreover, as Kohen Gadol, Aharon enjoyed numerous special privileges, including the exclusive right to enter the Kodesh Ha'kodashim – the inner sanctum of the Mishkan – on Yom Kippur. Why would he feel distressed because he did not take part in the Nesi'im's offering? He had so many unique privileges – why would this exclusion trouble him?

Rav Yerucham Levovitz of Yeshivat Mir (1873-1936) explained that Aharon's distress is characteristic of the Sadikim. They are always desperately seeking more opportunities for Misvot. Righteous people are never complacent, they're never satisfied with what they've accomplished. Like a greedy businessmen who continues to look for more deals even after he's made a fortune, the Sadikim are greedy –always

looking for more Misvot to perform. They passionately pursue each and every Misva opportunity like a precious asset that they absolutely must have. Aharon was distressed over a lost opportunity for a Misva, because he understood, like all Sadikim understand, just how valuable each and every Misva is.

Rav Yerucham brought other examples of this "greed" for Misvot. Moshe Rabbenu had the most impressive "resume" of anybody who ever lived. He spent forty days without eating or drinking, receiving the Torah directly from Hashem; he led Beneh Yisrael out of Egypt and through the sea, and received direct prophecy from God on many occasions. And yet, when God informed him that he would die without entering Eretz Yisrael, he recited 515 prayers begging for permission to enter the land. The Gemara explains that he desperately wanted to enter Eretz Yisrael so he could observe the Misvot that can be performed only there. As much as he had accomplished, it wasn't enough. He was greedy; he craved even more Misvot.

Another example is the famous story of Rabbi Akiba, who was tortured to death by the Romans for teaching Torah. As the executioner combed his skin off his body, Rabbi Akiba told his students that he had longed for this moment – for the opportunity to fulfill the Misva of surrendering one's life for God's honor. Rabbi Akiba taught Torah to thousands of students – but this wasn't enough. He still felt a desire to fulfill more Misvot.

It is told that a young man once saw the Hafetz Haim walking around anxiously outside on a cold, windy, snowy night. He later found out that the Hafetz Haim had not yet had a chance to recite Birkat Ha'lebana that month due to inclement weather, and he was anxiously awaiting the opportunity to see the moon so he could recite the Beracha. This is how passionate he was about grabbing opportunities for Misvot.

The lesson we can take from these examples is never to relax and rest on our laurels. No matter how much we grow and accomplish, there is so much more that we can still do. We, too, should be "greedy," always be searching for more Misvot to perform, for more opportunities to grow and to help others. This is the legacy that we have received from Aharon Ha'kohen, Moshe Rabbenu, Rabbi Akiba, and many other Sadikim, and the legacy which we must strive to follow.

**VICTOR BIBI  
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein  
DREAMS**

In the English language, the concept of dreams usually has a positive connotation. Negative dreams are called nightmares. In Hebrew, however, the word for dreams is neutral-which connotes both positive and happy dreams as well as dreams that are troubling and unpleasant. The subject of dreams is widely discussed in Talmudic and rabbinic writings and in Hebrew literature. In fact there is an entire chapter in the Talmud devoted to our ability to interpret dreams and what, if any, value they have in our lives.

Current medicine tells us that dreaming is a necessary component to getting a good night's sleep. Most dreams that we may have are not remembered by our conscious self. It is the extremely disturbing dream or the wildly exhilarating dream that may visit us while we are asleep that we are able to recall, sometimes only to vividly, even in our waking hours.

The father of modern psychotherapy, Sigmund Freud, based much of his research and medical conclusions on dreams and on their interpretations. Even though today much of Freud's work and ideas have been discarded by modern psychiatrists and psychotherapists, nevertheless we all remain fascinated by his attempt to plumb the depths of the human mind and conscience by the inexact science of interpreting dreams.

The rabbis of the Talmud taught us basic rules regarding dreams. One is that there is no dream, even a prophetic one engendered by Heaven, which is completely accurate in all of its details. The second rule is that the actuality of the dream as enacted in life is dependent upon the interpretation that one gives to the dream itself. These two rules contain a great deal of wisdom not only regarding dreams but regarding human nature itself.

The Talmud relates to us that one of the great rabbis upon having a negative dream quoted the verse in Proverbs that dreams only speak falsely and therefore he need not concern himself with the frightening aspects of the dream. However when he experienced a very positive dream, he referenced the very same verse except his intonation was that of a question – 'do dreams speak falsely?' It was in this

subtle difference that implied that there was merit in believing the dream that he had experienced.

Since most of us ordinary mortals are not able to make that fine a distinction, the rabbis of the Talmud instituted and recommended a procedure by which an apparently negative dream can be transformed into one that is positive and hopeful. This procedure of negating the negative – somewhat analogous to multiplying a negative by a negative in mathematics thereby arriving at a positive number – is one that is followed even today. If nothing else, it is a great psychological boon to the person who was troubled by an apparently negative dream.

This follows the rule that the import of dreams is determined by their interpretation and by somehow giving a positive explanation of what is apparently very negative and frightening. The dream itself is transposed into one that is positive and optimistic.

Just as there are dreams that are personal and individualistic, so too are there national dreams. The dream of the return of the Jewish people to independence and prosperity in their ancient homeland of Israel is a millennia old dream. Already we read in psalms that when the Lord returns the captives of Zion to their homeland we will all be as dreamers. This dream was nurtured by the Jewish people for millennia on end. Even in the darkest days of our long and bitter exile, the dream of Zion and Jerusalem continued to be part of our subconscious and conscious existence. This dream, like all others, was and is subject to the rule established by the rabbis that dreams are not taken exactly and literally in every detail.

In the words of the rabbis, "just as there is no edible grain that does not have straw within it as well, so there is no dream that does not have fantasy accurately portrayed within it." In our time, this national dream of the redemption of the Jewish exiles and their return to the land of Israel is being actualized in front of our very eyes. Nevertheless, not every detail of the dream is really happening.

In general, the reality follows the overall pattern of the dream but the details of this fulfillment of the age-old dream many times are disturbing and troubling to us. These difficult details that are less than idyllic do not conform to the great fantasy of the dream that we dreamt. So, the test of our time is to interpret our dreams positively and to realize that while the great dream is becoming reality, there may always be details that do not quite fit into our predisposed opinions and hopes

### Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Leadership Beyond Despair

Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible, is remarkable for the extreme realism with which it portrays human character. Its heroes are not superhuman. Its non-heroes are not archetypal villains. The best have failings; the worst often have saving virtues. I know of no other religious literature quite like it.

This makes it very difficult to use biblical narrative to teach a simple, black-and-white approach to ethics. And that – argued R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes (Mevo ha-Aggadot) – is why rabbinic midrash often systematically re-interprets the narrative so that the good become all-good and the bad all-bad. For sound educational reasons, Midrash paints the moral life in terms of black and white.

Yet the plain sense remains (“A biblical passage never loses its plain interpretation”, Shabbat 63a), and it is important that we do not lose sight of it. It is as if monotheism brought into being at the same time a profound humanism. God in the Hebrew Bible is nothing like the gods of myth. They were half-human, half-divine. The result was that in the epic literature of pagan cultures, human heroes were seen as almost like gods: semi-divine.

In stark contrast, monotheism creates a total distinction between God and humanity. If God is wholly God, then human beings can be seen as wholly human – subtle, complex mixtures of strength and weakness. We identify with the heroes of the Bible because, despite their greatness, they never cease to be human, nor do they aspire to be anything else. Hence the phenomenon of which the sedra of Beha'alotcha provides a shattering example: the vulnerability of some of the greatest religious leaders of all time, to depression and despair.

The context is familiar enough. The Israelites are complaining about their food:  
“The rabble among them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, ‘If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!’” (Num 11:4-6)

This is not a new story. We have heard it before (see for example Exodus 16). Yet on this occasion, Moses experiences what one can only call a breakdown: He asked the Lord, “Why have You brought this trouble on Your servant? What have I done to displease You that You put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I

give them birth? . . . I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how You are going to treat me, put me to death right now—if I have found favour in Your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin.” (Num. 11:11-15)

Moses prays for death! Nor is he the only person in Tanakh to do so. There are at least three others. There is Elijah, when after his successful confrontation with the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, Queen Jezebel issues a warrant that he be killed:

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day’s journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” (I Kings 19:3-4)

There is Jonah, after God had forgiven the inhabitants of Nineveh:

Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the Lord, “O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” (Jonah 4:1-3)

And there is Jeremiah, after the people fail to heed his message and publicly humiliate him:

“O Lord, You enticed me, and I was enticed; You overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me . . . The word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long . . . Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, made him very glad, saying, “A child is born to you—a son!” . . . Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?” (Jeremiah 20:7-18)

Lehavdil elef havdalot: no comparison is intended between the religious heroes of Tanakh and political heroes of the modern world. They are different types, living in different ages, functioning in different spheres. Yet we find a similar phenomenon in one of the great figures of the twentieth century, Winston Churchill. Throughout much of his life he was prone to periods of acute depression. He called it “the black dog”. He told his daughter, “I have achieved a great deal to achieve nothing in the end”. He told a friend that “he prays every day for death”. In 1944 he told his doctor, Lord Moran, that he kept himself from standing close to a train platform or overlooking the side of a ship because he might be tempted to commit suicide: “A second’s desperation would end everything”.<sup>1</sup>

Why are the greatest so often haunted by a sense of failure? Storr, in the book mentioned above, offers some compelling psychological insights. But at the simplest level we see certain common features, at least among the biblical prophets: a passionate drive to change the world, combined with a deep sense of personal inadequacy. Moses says, "Who am I . . . that I should lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:11). Jeremiah says: "I cannot speak: I am only a child" (Jer. 1:6). Jonah tries to flee from his mission. The very sense of responsibility that leads a prophet to heed the call of God can lead him to blame himself when the people around him do not heed the same call.

Yet it is that same inner voice that ultimately holds the cure. The prophet does not believe in himself: he believes in God. He does not undertake to lead because he sees himself as a leader, but because he sees a task to be done and no one else willing to do it. His greatness lies not within himself but beyond himself: in his sense of being summoned to a task that must be done however inadequate he knows himself to be.

Despair can be part of leadership itself. For when the prophet sees himself reviled, rebuked, criticised; when his words fall on stony ground; when he sees people listening to what they want to hear, not what they need to hear – that is when the last layers of self are burned away, leaving only the task, the mission, the call. When that happens, a new greatness is born. It now no longer matters that the prophet is unpopular and unheeded. All that matters is the work and the One who has summoned him to it. That is when the prophet arrives at the truth stated by Rabbi Tarfon: "It is not for you to complete the task, but neither are you free to stand aside from it" (Avot 2:16).

Again without seeking to equate the sacred and the secular, I end with some words spoken by Theodore Roosevelt (in a speech to students at the Sorbonne, Paris, 23 April 1910), which sum up both the challenge and the consolation of leadership in cadences of timeless eloquence:

It is not the critic who counts, Not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, Or where the doer of deeds could actually have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, Who strives valiantly, Who errs and comes short again and again – Because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; But who does actually strive to do the deeds, Who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions, Who spends

himself in a worthy cause, Who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, And who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat. Leadership in a noble cause can bring despair. But it also is the cure.

#### AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

**" And he called the name of that place 'graves of lust' for there they buried the people that had lusted" (11:34)**

Although Hashem had smote them with "a very great plague" (11:33), yet compared to the nation in general only a small number perished. We see that those "that lusted" were the sole culprits, which demonstrates that the survivors who constituted the overwhelming majority were not the lusters.

Above (11:20) it was stated "Because you rejected Hashem that is in your midst", but here they are declared to have been punished for their lust of eating. We learn that the sin of becoming enslaved by desire is equivalent to rejecting Hashem. To serve Him "with all your heart" requires freedom from everything else, and to be enslaved by excessive passion for anything is equivalent to rejecting Hashem.

In addition, men that are never satisfied but always lust for more and newer pleasures are never truly appreciative and grateful to Hashem. And because the chief function of life is gratitude, they are undeserving of the gift of life.

The purpose of life is not the pursuit of pleasures but rather the pursuit of Perfection and of finding favor in the sight of Hashem. The seeker of Perfection is justified in living properly and even happily, but Hashem desires that His people should never lose sight of the supreme intention for which He created them: To know Hashem.

Quoted from "Journey Into Greatness" by Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT'L