

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

PEKUDEI

Haftarah: Melachim I 7:40-50

MARCH 12, 2016 2 ADAR BET 5776

DEDICATIONS: Ezra Ben Shafiah – Ezra Nouri Dayan - 6 Adar 5759

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Editors Notes

Pikudei – An Accounting – Mickey Kairey Z'SL

This past Friday afternoon, hundreds of women in the community lit an extra candle for Shabbat. In almost all the community synagogues, there is someone saying Kaddish for a man they are not related to. And the old Magen David Synagogue on 67th Street in Brooklyn had a very unusual full minyan each morning.

King Solomon writes: "tov shem mi-shemen tov ve-yom ha-mavet miyom hivaldo". "A good name is better than good oil, and the day of death [is better] than the day of one's birth." We have often focused on the first part of this verse where we understand that the value of a good name is priceless. The second half though often leads to confusion. Don't we learn that life must be protected at all costs and only in the rarest occasion is death preferred over life?

One explanation is that only at the time of one's passing can his accomplishments be truly appreciated and his name is known and more meaningful than it is at birth. When a person is born, his name is perhaps just a label. True, we chose a name with hopes and desires and dreams of what that child will accomplish. And although we typically name for someone, that name rarely tells us anything about the newborn infant. Eventually though, that name becomes associated with the child who becomes an adult and truly lives on after the person.

Late Thursday night, Mickey Kairey, (Meir ben Latife ZT"L), was Niftar at the age of 93. The misva was held at Magen David on 667th St on Friday and he was buried in Israel this weekend. Mickey was a man who served his community I'Shem Shamayim his entire life. He left no family. Mickey was predeceased by his wife Pat and they had no children. But in many ways every member of the community was touched by Mickey and every one of us is in some way his child. The entire community was his family. He loved us all as if we were his own and made everyone feel that their relationship with him was unique.

Rabbi Saul Kassin once said of Mickey quoting the Gemara in Kedushin, "One who teaches a child Torah is considered as the parent of the child

When Magen David dedicated a wall of tribute to Mickey and Pat, Mickey told the crowd: "My greatest joys have been teaching the children in our community, and I think you'd understand when I say they were kinda like my own children. I have so many children, they would fill Yankee Stadium, and the cheering, instead of coming from the crowd, would come from me, the coach. You all make me proud of ya, you really do."

Mickey taught thousands of boys how to put on Tefillin, and how to read the Torah at their Bar Misva. On Friday, we sent out our Synagogue schedule for Shabbat and dedicated it memory of Mickey. Our Synagogue list is only 200 people, but within minutes I had calls from people not on the list who were told of Mickey's passing. One man said, "People often compliment me on my knowledge of pizmonim, but the fact is that everything I know was from Mickey and I still listen to his recordings when I want to brush up". Another recalled Mickey's catchphrase to a child who was worried or questioning himself, "You can do it, you can do it!"

Mickey Kairey was one of the teachers who taught the children in this religious school, and describes his experience: "I used to teach pizmonim in Magen David. Today I see these kids married and everything. They still know and that is the only thing they still remember...I used to go there 20 minutes a week, I used to teach them two pizmonim a week. Can you imagine that this is what they remember?" And he was right! This is what is remembered.

Mickey was in love with the community and defended it. He would tell a story about his father which I heard about my own great grandfather. One hundred years ago, Mickey's father had just put on his talet and tefillin and was praying in an Ashkenazi Synagogue. He was asked a question in Yiddish by one of those present. Not understanding the language, he was unable to respond. He simply said, "No Yiddish". Shocked the questioner asked in all seriousness asked, "bist ir a Yid" – Are you really a Jew? It was understandable when faced with the notion that being an Arab and a Jew were incompatible and impossible

and that no Jew was unable to speak Yiddish, those of that generation turned inward for support.

Some years back when the community honored three patriarchs of the Sam Cattan, Moses Tawil, and Abe Cohen, 91 on what was billed as our centennial in America, Mickey was interviewed and in his special way put it all into a single line. "There isn't a community on this planet as good as ours, he said. We never get tired of looking at each other."

Mickey was deeply involved with the Chevra Kadisha, helping families with the logistics of burial and Shiva, as well as serving as Chazan to thousands in mourning. Rabbi Shlomo Lankry referred to Mickey almost as a child to a father. And the feeling was shared by the entire Lankry family. The Rabbi would refer to Mickey as a true "ohav shalom verodef shalom – lover of peace and pursuer of peace." About four years ago I wrote of those involved in the Chevra Kadisha and I wrote: Rabbi Eli Mansour noted that remarkably, Rabbi Lankry and Mickey Kairey are the happiest people he knows (and I would say the same for Marvin Azrak z'sl), and yet they spend a good deal of their day involved with the hesed shel emet (proper Jewish burials).

My memories of Mickey were of him ringing the bell and coming up with his black briefcase. We would run to grab the Sedakah box and Mickey would empty it, count it out and give us a receipt. All the while entertaining us with one liners. We read this week Parshat Pikudei, where Moses takes an accounting with a lesson that everyone in charge of the communal bank must be beyond reproach and account for everything. When it came to Mickey, there was no one who didn't trust him with anything and everything. Mickey went from home to home picking up funds collected in Sedaka boxes and brought them to the respective organizations. Mickey started Maoz LaEvyon which later became Sephardic Bikur Holim. I found the original Magen David Newsletter from 1967 where it was announced that the boxes would be distributed to everyone, how the money would be divided and most important how Mickey would be running the project.

I can still see him stopping as he was walking by to join us for a football game in the street or a basketball game in the school yard. Playing, joking and teaching. He really represented a generation of amazing people. I know that if my dad were alive he could tell me Mickey stories for hours. The loss of this generation is felt every day. And who of us can fill their shoes. Mickey, we will miss you.

Those wishing to hear the Rabbis speak at the misvah can visit YouTube and search Funeral of

Mickey Kairey or use this link:

<http://youtu.be/154xXNnf-hI>. Those interested in learning more about the recording Pizmoonim can visit <http://pizmonim.org/> One can also hear every Perasha as recorded by Mickey at <http://shareshalom.com>. Mickey will really live on through all of us.

Tehi nafsho Serurah BeSror HaChayim.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

A Sephardic Sage Would Never Make a Woman Switch Seats - Rabbi Marc D Angel

A story is told of an incident on a bus in Jerusalem. A pretty young lady got on the bus and sat down in a vacant seat next to a Haredi rabbi. The rabbi arose in a huff and walked quickly away from the woman. At the next stop, a Sephardic rabbi got on the bus. Seeing the empty seat next to the young lady, he sat down. The young lady was perplexed. She asked the rabbi sitting next to her: "When I sat down next to a Haredi rabbi, he got up and stomped away from me. But you're also a religious man, and yet you sat down next to me. How do you explain this?" The Sephardic rabbi replied: "That Haredi is a rabbi. I am a Hakham!"

This story came to mind when I read the news story of an 81-year-old woman who is suing El Al Airlines. She was seated on an airplane next to a Haredi man who objected to being seated next to a woman. Since there were no other seats available next to a man, he had the stewardess ask the woman to move to another seat. The female passenger was indignant at having been treated in this manner and she is suing the airline for causing her humiliation and violating her rights.

The Haredi man claimed that the Torah forbids him from sitting next to a woman. What Torah is he reading? A great many pious and Torah-true men have no problem sitting next to a woman on a plane or on a bus. They read the same Torah but come to very different conclusions from this Haredi man and others who share his views.

It is deeply offensive to non-Haredim (and I assume also to at least some Haredim) that this man felt so self-righteous that he was entitled to ask that the woman passenger next to him be moved. If he was so sexually aroused by this 81-year-old woman as to be unable to maintain his composure during the flight, he could simply have asked the stewardess to find him another seat. Why did he think he had the right to impose his will on the innocent woman passenger?

But the issue goes back to the story of the rabbi and the Hakham. The "rabbi" is part of a community that has brainwashed its members into thinking that the Torah demands as total a separation as possible between men and women. The underlying thesis is that any intermingling of the sexes will inevitably lead to sinful thoughts and maybe to sinful actions. Because of the ubiquitous and uncontrollable libido, the genders must be kept separate. Even if a particular man may feel no attraction to the woman sitting next to him, he is obliged to follow the communal standard of strict separation of genders. In his mind, this is not just a communal hang-up; it is Torah law dictated by God. And since it is women, not men, who are seen as the "enticers," it is up to women to get out of the way and to dress and act "modestly." In this mind-set, the burden is placed on women to avoid being arousers of men's passions. But the "Hakham" sees things differently. The "Hakham" is not less devoted to Torah, and not less religious in any way. Yet, the Hakham is part of a tradition that promotes a natural, courteous and congenial way of life. He would consider it a terrible sin to embarrass a woman by asking her to move away, as though she were an impure or contaminated being. He would feel comfortable sitting next to any decent person, male or female. If he felt that sitting next to an 81-year-old woman (or a woman of any other age) caused him sexual anxiety, he would find a gracious and courteous way of asking to be moved to another seat, in a way that did not cause shame or embarrassment to the female passenger. If he thought he couldn't handle sitting next to a woman on a bus, he would inconspicuously find another seat.

The insistence on gender separation on public transportation or public gatherings reflects a worldview that is fixated on sex and that assumes the very worst about men and women. While modesty is surely an essential virtue, prudishness and rudeness are not.

The Haredi passenger who caused the female passenger to be moved thought he was within his Torah-true rights. He must have assumed that all the other men in the plane who were sitting next to women (other than their wives) were sinners. It did not occur to him that many of those men were not rabbis but were Hakhamim. They were not less scrupulous in their religious observance, but more scrupulous. Whereas this Haredi has brought great shame on Torah through his sexually-fixated worldview, the pious men and women who sat next to each other naturally and comfortably and respectfully brought honor to Torah.

We need always to keep in mind the fundamental religious teaching about the nature of Torah: "Its ways are the ways of pleasantness and all its paths

are peace." Any behavior that veers from this teaching is a violation of Torah, not a fulfillment of Torah.

Marc D. Angel is rabbi emeritus of Congregation Shearith Israel

Censored by BuzzFeed: Seven Unbelievable Israeli Defense Technologies That Could Save Your Life | Eylon Aslan-Levy | The Blogs | The Times of Israel

The following post was deleted from the BuzzFeed website hours after being uploaded. It was censored for containing a "political agenda". Apparently the notion of Jews defending their own lives from political violence is still controversial. So I'll repost it here instead. Judge for yourself!

If ever you're attacked by a knife-wielding terrorist, these seven incredible Israeli innovations could save your life, tried and tested over five months of near-daily Palestinian attacks in Israel. They don't call Israel the Start-Up Nation for nothing.

1. Nunchucks

Yair Ben-Shabat happened to be holding nunchucks as he walked in Jerusalem by the 185 bus, when a Palestinian terrorist stabbed a soldier on the bus and tried to steal his weapon. "I jumped onto the bus and helped them fight the terrorist," recalls the unlikely hero. "I took nunchucks out and hit him where I had to for them to be able to pry loose the weapon he held." #Zioninja.

2. Umbrellas

When a terrorist began stabbing an Israeli in the stomach and neck at a bus stop in Raanana, a real estate agent clobbered the attacker with an umbrella until he could be held down by fellow passers-by as the police arrived on scene.

3. Selfie Sticks

Matan Choucroun was driving in Jerusalem when he saw a Palestinian ram his car into a bus stop and get out to stab passers-by with a meat cleaver, killing one and injuring six. Matan leapt out of his car, sprayed the terrorist with pepper spray and whacked him over the head with a selfie-stick. The incident prompted satirical TV show Eretz Nehederet to design a mock-up logo for a fictional 'Neutralisation Corps'.

4. Shopping Carts

Mordechai Stern saved his customers by singlehandedly fended off with a shopping cart two knife-wielding Palestinian terrorists trying to enter his minimarket as they shouted "Allahu Akbar!" The

terrorists had already stabbed two Israeli women outside, one of whom — 23-year-old Shlomit Krigman — later died of her wounds.

5. The Terrorist's Own Knife

In a scene straight out of a Tarantino movie, ultra-Orthodox Jew Yonatan Azarihab pulled a knife out of his own neck and used it to kill the Palestinian terrorist who had just stabbed him in Petach Tikva. Like a badass. Azarihab was hospitalized with multiple injuries to his upper body.

6. Guitars

Yishay Montgomery was strumming his guitar on the beach in Jaffa, when a Palestinian terrorist leapt at him from the boardwalk with a knife. Montgomery thumped the terrorist over the head with his guitar, and chased him away till the police could shoot him. The terrorist had already injured at least ten Israelis and murdered one American tourist, near where Vice President Joe Biden was holding a meeting.

Guitar Hero

7. The Mayor of Jerusalem

Before the recent escalation, Mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat, personally rugby-tackled to the ground a Palestinian terrorist on a stabbing spree near City Hall. As his bodyguards pinned the terrorist down, the coolest mayor in the world then administered first aid to one of the victims. The incident spawned a series of memes depicting Barkat as Batman. Na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na Barkan!

Summary of the Parasha

Pekudey - Bezalel and others make the bigdey kehuna. Moshe erects the mishkan

- 1- The parasha gives tallies of all the gold, silver and copper collected for making the mishkan, kelim, and bigdey kehuna
- 2- The efod, abney shoham and hoshen are made
- 3- The me'iyil, ketonet and sitz are made
- 4- The parsha recounts all the parts of the mishkan, kelim, and bigdey kehuna that were made
- 5- Hashem tells Moshe to erect the mishkan and to anoint / sanctify the mishkan and kelim as well as Aharon and his sons with the bigdey kehuna
- 6- Moshe erects the mishkan
- 7- Moshe completes erecting the mishkan setting up all the kelim in their places. Hashem's glory fills the ohel moed

FROM THE JERSEY SHORE NEWSLETTER

“A hundred sockets.” (Shemot 28:27)

The Mishkan had a hundred silver sockets in which the wooden beams of the Mishkan stood. The Ba'al Haturim says that this pasuk is a source for the obligation to say one hundred Berachot a day. The silver sockets were the foundation of the Mishkan, so too the one hundred Berachot are a foundation of our way of life. It is proper to bless Hashem when we eat, when we drink, when we wake up, when we sleep and when we learn Torah, because it all comes from Him.

The Rambam (Laws of Tefillah 7:14) rules that the law obligates all people to bless Hashem one hundred times every day, including on Shabbat. He asks, “How does he do it? He eats some vegetables and he makes a berachah before and after, then he eats some fruit and he makes a berachah before and after, and he counts all the berachot until he completes the one hundred.” The Brisker Rav notes that the Rambam says “and he counts all the berachot,” which means that on Shabbat he must literally count them or else he won't know if he has enough berachot and he might end up missing out on this misvah, and one must be very careful with this law because this misvah contains the secret of attaining true fear of Hashem. The hint to this lies in the pasuk, “Mah Hashem sho'el me'imach ki im leyir'ah.” The Rabbis say the word “mah” could be read “me'ah” (one hundred) berachot, which brings fear of Hashem.

It's a well-known story that once a great Rabbi who was very sick came to Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l and asked him what he should do to invoke mercy from Hashem at this time of crisis. The Rabbi answered that, “I don't know if I can tell this to others, but I know that if I was in that situation, I would be very careful with the one hundred berachot. I would say “Baruch” the right way, I would say “atah” the right way, and “Hashem” the right way. If I would succeed with that, it would be a great mussar for me.” The other Rabbi said that when Rabbi Auerbach said these words, his face lit up like fire! Rabbi Reuven Semah

“These are the reckonings of the Sanctuary” (Shemot 38:21)

Moshe made a reckoning of all the donations to the Mishkan to see that everything was accounted for. The Midrash says that he was surprised to see that there was some silver not accounted for, and sat there wondering where it went. He even heard some people murmuring under their breath about Moshe's wealth and whether it was connected to the lost silver. Ultimately, Hashem called out to Moshe

reminding him where the lost silver was used, and everything was accounted for down to the last item.

We see from here an amazing lesson.

People tend to suspect even the greatest among us, no less than Moshe Rabenu. There is a tendency in human nature to find fault in others. Although this is sometimes disappointing and maybe even disheartening, we should not lose hope in the goodness of human nature. In the long run, the innocent will be proven so, even if Hashem has to make a miracle to clear one's name. If a person knows that he's free of guilt, rather than despair, he should put his faith in Hashem to ultimately exonerate him. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

A WORTHY CAUSE

"These are the accounts of the Mishkan." (Shemot 38:21)

After the Mishkan and all its holy vessels were completed, Moshe told B'nei Yisrael, "Let me present to you an exact account of how I used the materials which you donated." He then gave a complete reckoning of how he had employed every ounce of gold, silver, and copper which they had contributed. The Midrash explains that Moshe felt it necessary to justify his actions before the Jewish people, since he had overheard remarks concerning his honesty and trustworthiness. It is interesting to note that when the people were summoned to participate in the sin of the Golden Calf, the Torah remarks that the people couldn't wait to remove their jewelry to "donate" it for the Golden Calf. Although the end result of their donations was merely one Golden Calf, they didn't complain, and they didn't ask for an accounting of their donations. Regarding the Mishkan, however, all that was demanded of them was a half-shekel per person; nevertheless they complained and spread rumors suggesting dishonesty on Moshe's part!

In reality every Ben Yisrael is inherently good and his genuine desire is to do good. Therefore, when he chooses to donate to a worthy purpose, it is his desire that his donation be used to the proper goal it is intended. However, when one falls into the clutches of desire and contributes toward an unholy or improper purpose, he is bothered and troubled to the point that if his money does not reach the ultimate goal he will secretly be thankful. Similarly, once the Jews parted with their jewelry for the Golden Calf, they no longer cared whether the ultimate purpose was realized. (Peninim on the Torah)

I'LL BET YOU CAN

Forecasting is an American pastime. Who will win the World Series? Which political party will

control Congress? Which stocks will perform and which will decrease in value? The list can go on and on ad infinitum.

In competitive sports, politics, and business, much of what is forecast doesn't come about, because the variety of factors that determine the ultimate result are beyond the scope of the forecaster to weigh. Also, the "givens" that go into the equation are beyond the control of the predictor.

In personal relationships, it is even more difficult to accurately forecast a happy ending. In fact, sometimes a prediction itself determines the final outcome. Labeling a child, a spouse, or a co-worker may prompt behavior on the part of that individual which will lead to the realization of the prediction. Comments such as "You'll never amount to anything!" or "You can't cut it in a company like ours!" or "You're bad at that, and disorganized as well!" are examples of negative statements that can cause a person to lose self-esteem, and, consequently, to fail.

If you want to criticize in order to improve a situation, weigh your words carefully before you speak. Build, do not destroy. Don't label the person, but address the behavior. Do not create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It only takes a positive attitude to be constructive rather than destructive. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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Planning and Executing

The two final Parashiyot of the Book of Shemot, Vayakhel and Pekudeh, appear to simply repeat two earlier Parashiyot – Teruma and Tesaveh. In Teruma and Tesaveh, the Torah records God's instructions for the building of the Mishkan and its furnishings, and the fashioning of the Bigdeh Kehuna (priestly vestments). In Vayakhel and Pekudeh, the Torah simply tells of the execution of these commands. Rather than simply inform us that Beneh Yisrael's artisans followed God's commands, the Torah found it necessary to repeat all the details.

We know that there are no superfluous Parashiyot in the Torah, and, for that matter, there are no superfluous chapters, verses, words, letters or even vowels. Even the crowns above certain letters are there for a specific reason. Accordingly, the Hachamim offered different explanations for why the details of Teruma and Tesaveh and repeated, in full, in Vayakhel and Pekudeh. Undoubtedly, this repetition is intended to convey a certain message.

Rav Avraham Pam (1913-2001) explained that the Torah wanted to emphasize the fact that the plans were translated into a final product, that the good intentions were followed up by successful execution. In Teruma and Tesaveh, the operative word is "Ve'asita"—"You shall make"; in Vayakhel and Pekudeh, the word we find repeated is "Va'ya'asu"—"They made..." The command of "Ve'asita" became "Va'ya'asu." The planning did not remain as theoretical, noble ideas in the people's minds. They were brought to fruition, and executed precisely as planned.

It is easy to have ideas, to make commitments and resolutions, to create images in our minds of the various "Mishkans" that we wish to build. We all have noble plans and intentions. The hard part is executing them. We have all gone through the experience of making commitments over the course of Yom Kippur for the coming year, with all sincerity and seriousness, with the noblest of intentions. Whether it is to improve our relationships with our family and friends, to study more Torah, enhance the quality of our prayers, conduct ourselves more modestly, or refrain from Lashon Ha'ra, we have all had periods of serious reflection and sincere commitments. But when it comes to following through on those commitments, we run into trouble. We become like a rubber band that stretches, but then snaps right back into place. We grow and improve in the weeks after the High Holidays, only to find ourselves by Hanukah back to where we were originally.

The Torah emphasizes for us the greatness of Beneh Yisrael in executing their commitments, in turning "Ve'asita" into "Va'ya'asu."

How can we ensure to follow through on our commitments, and turn all our sincere, noble plans into reality?

One solution is to make commitments that are specific and realistic. A general commitment to learn more Torah will not likely succeed; nor will a commitment to complete the entire Talmud every year. We need to set specific goals that we know are attainable. It is told that a certain great Rabbi, in order to improve the quality of his recitation of Birkat Ha'mazon, took it upon himself to always recite Birkat Ha'mazon from a Siddur for a period of six months. He knew that an indefinite commitment would not likely work, so he decided that for six months he would recite Birkat Ha'mazon from a Siddur, rather than from memory, and he would then reassess after six months.

This is sound advice for those of us seeking to grow and improve. We should set modest, specific goals that we know we can achieve with a bit of effort. With time, we will see success in our attempts to build our own "Mishkan," and that our noble intentions and plans are indeed executed and transformed into reality.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
BETTER TIMES**

One of the more memorable sentences in modern English literature is: "It was the best of all times; it was the worst of all times." This view of life and current society is a variant on the theme of the half empty, half-full glass conundrum. In effect, there are always opposing views as to the state of humanity, society and for us, the Jewish people the world over, in any given generation. In the aftermath of the cataclysmic events of the past century there are two distinctively different narratives regarding the times, Jewishly speaking, that we currently live in.

One narrative sees our times as being far inferior to previous times. This is especially true in the religious, yeshiva-oriented and Chasidic sections of the community. They view life, especially religious life in pre-war Eastern Europe, as having been idyllic, holy and serene.

They subconsciously view much of what is occurring currently in our society as insufficient and hollow. They search for spiritual solace – or whatever else they experience in a primitive rural village in Ukraine, and eschew praying in the Holy City of Jerusalem or at the Western Wall. Whatever we have now is not good enough, imperfect and politicized, while in the good old days back there in Europe all was suffused with piety, holiness and solidarity.

Of course this is a fantasy view of what was and it creates an overly pessimistic view of what actually is today. It turns all of the assets of our current times – our teachers, institutions, state and national independence – into problematic liabilities when contrasted with our imagined fictional past. So the best of times can easily be seen as being the worst of times.

The truth is that there is probably far more study of Torah, at least quantitatively, than was in Eastern Europe before World War II. The *daf hayomi* and other such regular Torah study programs have achieved numbers and popularity previously undreamt of. The numbers of students attending *yeshivot* and women's seminaries dwarf any such numbers that existed in pre-World War II Jewish society.

There are many more Torah journals and books being published than ever before in Jewish history. And the Jewish world that was so poverty stricken, in Europe, the Land of Israel and the United States is now much more affluent, comfortable, and healthier than one would have ever imagined a half century earlier.

And in spite of the resurrection of anti-Semitism the world over, the existence, influence and stability of the State of Israel gives Jews a rallying point and a potent response to those who wish us ill. In 1900 there were 6000 Jews in the Land of Israel. In 1920 there were 60,000 Jews there and in 1948 there were 600,000 Jews in Israel.

Currently there are six million, three hundred thousand Jews living in the Jewish state. So on many fronts, it seems to any rational observer that the Jewish world is stronger than it was seventy years ago.

Though there is widespread assimilation and alienation present in the Jewish world today, there is no longer the flight from Judaism that characterized Eastern European Jewry then. Atheistic communism as represented by the Soviet Union has disappeared in the main and today's defection from religion and observance is a product of hedonism – too much and not too little – and not one of ideology and worldview.

There is a strong Jewish tradition that there is a decline in the spiritual quality of the Jewish world as more time passes from the revelation at Sinai. This leads to the tendency to view the past as being superior in every way than current situations. But it is obvious that this idea is limited to individual Torah greatness. If they were as angels then we are humans but if they were humans then we are but donkeys....but even the donkey of Pinchas ben Yair was able to distinguish between fodder that was tithed and that which was not.

This refers to individual Torah greatness, that our generations do not include a Rashi or Rambam or Gaon of Vilna. But there is no question that the overall position of the Jewish people is better now

than it was in eleventh century France or eighteenth century Lithuania. There are no equals in our time to the great spiritual scholars and savants of the past. But there is also no question that the overall situation of Jewry is better now than what it was then. And that is an important concept to remember and reflect upon.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Don't Sit: Walk

Sitting is the new smoking. So goes the new health mantra. Spend too much time at a desk or in front of a screen and you are at risk of significant danger to your health. The World Health Organisation has identified physical inactivity as the fourth greatest health hazard today, ahead of obesity. In the words of Dr James Levine, one of the world's leading experts on the subject and the man credited with coining the mantra, says, "We are sitting ourselves to death."

The reason is that we were not made to sit still. Our bodies were made for movement, standing, walking and running. If we fail to give the body regular exercise, it can easily malfunction and put us at risk of serious illness. The question is: does the same apply to the soul, the spirit, the mind?

It is fascinating to look at the sequence of verbs in the very first verse of the book of Psalms: "Happy is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful" (Ps. 1:1). That is a picture of the bad life, lived in pursuit of the wrong values. Note how the bad man begins by walking, then stands, then sits. A bad life immobilises. That is the point of the famous verses in Hallel:

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but do not speak, eyes but do not see, ears but do not hear, noses but do not smell. They have hands but cannot feel, feet but cannot walk, nor can they make a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them; so will all who trust in them. (Ps. 115:4-8)

If you live for lifeless things – as in the bumper sticker, "He who dies with the most toys, wins" – you will become lifeless.

Except in the House of the Lord, Jews do not sit. Jewish life began with two momentous journeys, Abraham from Mesopotamia, Moses and the Israelites from Egypt. "Walk on ahead of Me and be blameless" said God to Abraham (Gen. 17:1). At the age of ninety-nine, having just been circumcised,

Abraham saw three strangers passing by and “ran to meet them.” On the verse, “Jacob dwelled [vayeshev, the verb that also means “to sit”] in the land where his father had stayed” Rashi, citing the sages, commented: “Jacob sought to live in tranquility, but immediately there broke in on him the troubles of Joseph.” The righteous do not sit still. They do not have a quiet life.

Rarely is the point made with more subtlety than at the end of this week’s parsha and the book of Exodus as a whole. The Tabernacle had been made and assembled. The closing verses tell us about the relationship between it and the “cloud of glory” that filled the Tent of Meeting. The Tabernacle was made to be portable.[1] It could be dismantled and its parts carried as the Israelites travelled on the next stage of their journey. When the time came for them to move on, the cloud moved from the Tent of Meeting to a position outside the camp, signalling the direction the Israelites were to take. This is how the Torah describes it:

When the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, the Israelites went onward in all their journeys, but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel in all their journeys. (Ex.40: 36-38)

There is a significant difference between the two occurrences of the phrase “in all their journeys”. In the first, the words are meant literally. When the cloud lifted, the Israelites knew they were about to begin a new stage of their journey. However in the second instance, they cannot be meant literally. The cloud was not “over the Tabernacle” in all their journeys. To the contrary, it was there only when they stopped journeying and instead pitched camp. During the journeys the cloud went on ahead.

Rashi notes this and makes the following comment:

A place where they encamped is also called massa, “a journey” . . . because from the place of encampment they always set out again on a new journey, therefore they are all called “journeys”.

The point is linguistic, but the message is remarkable. In a few brief words, Rashi has summarised an existential truth about Jewish identity. To be a Jew is to travel. Judaism is a journey, not a destination. Even a place of rest, an encampment, is still called a journey. The patriarchs lived, not in houses but in tents.[2] The first time we are told that a patriarch built a house, proves the point:

Jacob traveled to Sukkot. There he built himself a house and made shelters [sukkot] for his livestock. That is why he called the place Sukkot. Gen. 33:17).

The verse is astonishing. Jacob has just become the first member of the covenantal family to build a house, yet he does not call the place “House” (as in Bet-El or Bet-lechem). He calls it “cattle-sheds.” It is as if Jacob, consciously or unconsciously, already knew that to live the life of the covenant means to be ready to move on, to travel, to journey, to grow.

One might have thought that all this applied only to the time before the Israelites crossed the Jordan and entered the Promised Land. Yet the Torah tells us otherwise:

The land shall not be sold in perpetuity because the land is Mine: you are strangers and temporary residents as far as I am concerned. (Lev. 25:23)

If we live as if the land is permanently ours, our stay there will be temporary. If we live as if it is only temporarily so, we will live there permanently. In this world of time and change, growth and decay, only God and His word are permanent. One of the most poignant lines in the book of Psalms – a verse cherished by the French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas – says, “I am a stranger on earth. Do not hide your commands from me” (Ps. 119:19). To be a Jew is to stay light on your feet, ready to begin the next stage of the journey, literally or metaphorically. An Englishman’s home is his castle, they used to say. But a Jew’s home is a tent, a tabernacle, a sukkah. We know that life on earth is a temporary dwelling. That is why we value each moment and its newness.

Recently a distinguished British Jew, (Lord) George Weidenfeld, died at the age of 96. He was a successful publisher, a friend and confidant of European leaders, an inveterate fighter for peace and a passionate Zionist. In 1949-50, he was political adviser and Chief of Cabinet to Chaim Weizmann, first President of Israel. One of his last acts was to help rescue 20,000 Christian refugees fleeing from ISIS in Syria. He was alert and active, even hyperactive, to the very end of a long and distinguished life.

In an interview with The Times on his ninety-second birthday he was asked the following question: “Most people in their nineties slow down. You seem to be speeding up. Why is that?” He replied, “When you get to ninety-two, you begin to see the door about to close. I have so much to do before the door closes

that the older I get, the harder I have to work." That is a good formula for staying young.

Like our bodies, our souls were not made for sitting still. We were made for moving, walking, traveling, learning, searching, striving, growing, knowing that it is not for us to complete the work but neither may we stand aside from it. In Judaism, as the book of Exodus reminds us in its closing words, even an encampment is called a journey. In matters spiritual, not just physical, sitting is the new smoking.

[1] This was especially true of the ark. It was carried by staves that passed through rings on the side of the ark. It was forbidden to remove the staves, even when the Israelites were encamped (Ex. 25:15). The ark already had to be ready to travel at a moment's notice. See the commentary of S. R. Hirsch ad loc.

[2] Note that Lot, in Sodom, lived in a house (Gen. 19:2). So did Laban (Gen. 24:23).

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

QUESTION: When Adar comes in we are told to increase our joy. Why is that?

ANSWER: Because it's a season that requires a certain frame of mind. Purim requires joy, Pesach requires joy. In order, however, to be prepared, you must start at the beginning of Adar. You can't be glum and sad, and suddenly when Purim comes, you jump up and down and you celebrate. No! You're doing it with a heavy heart.

When Adar comes in you begin looking for ways and means of generating happiness, and you look at the world. The world is full of happiness. The sunshine causes happiness. The fact that you're able to see. One of the greatest pleasures in the world is the ability to see. It's fun to see. You have two movie cameras taking pictures constantly wherever you look, color pictures. Isn't it fun to see? Oh, close your eyes, a dark sad world. Open your eyes. Oh!! Moving pictures! And they function in synchronization, together. And the pictures are recorded in your mind. You know the pictures that you are taking right now will never be forgotten? I could prove to you that the pictures are recorded forever in your mind. Forty years later somebody will say, "You remember sitting in Rabbi Miller's shul years ago? He was talking about the wonders of creation."

"Oh yes I remember now," and the pictures suddenly flashes out from the filing cabinets of your mind and you see everything once more.

Where was the picture for forty years? It was there, because the pictures you are taking are never

erased from your mind. You might forget, because it goes back in the depths of the cabinets, but the pictures are there. Someday you might take them out and see them again, and reminisce about your youth. You remember even the voices; that's because you have a sound recording in your head.

So you start in the beginning of Adar, piling up Simcha. It's fun to see, (Rabbi Miller takes a big breath) it's fun to breathe. Rabosai, let's all practice the Simcha of filling our lungs with this wonderful air in this little place here. (And everyone takes a deep breath) AHH, that's joy. It's fun to be alive! Baruch Hashem, it's fun to live. It's fun as the heart causes the blood to course through your vessels; it's fun. Everything in life is fun. How silly people are! You know when they realize life is fun? When they are on the verge of dying. Oh, oh, oh, it's all over. Now is the time, enjoy life right now.

It's fun everywhere. When you sit down tomorrow morning at breakfast, it's fun to use those teeth to chew food, teeth are fun. False teeth are also fun. Life is fun, life is happiness, and we thank Hakdosh Baruch Hu for it.

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