

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

HA'AZINU/SUCCOT

SEPTEMBER 28-29, 2012

13 TISHREI 5773

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Alexander August – 13 Tishrei

## THE SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH

This week Rabbi David is in Manhattan so please print newsletters for your friends. Sam Shetrit is in Israel with his family. Baruch Abittan will be with us and will be giving the Derasha on Shabbat Morning and the class at Seudat Shelishi. His class will be entitled "Shaking the Lulav vs. Sitting in the Succah – The Dual Message of Succot"

Friday Night: Candles: 6:22 PM - Minha/Arbith: 6:20 PM

NEW! Shabbat Mornings 8:30AM In Depth Analysis of the Laws of Shabbat for Sephardim with Rabbi Yosef Colish  
Shabbat Shaharit at 9AM

11:00 - 12:00 Shabbat Morning Kids Program for girls ages 4-8 - Stories, Tefillah, Games, Snacks and more . . . Simultaneous Babysitting downstairs with Leah Colish ages 2-4.

Kiddush sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Leon Sutton in memory of Adele Sutton

Shabbat Afternoon Kids Program 5:00PM until Havdala Ice Cream Party, Tanach Stories, Basketball Lineup, Children's Devar Torah, Hoolahoop, Parsha Quiz, 613 Mitzva Memory Contest, Shabbat Charades, Supervised Play and our weekly Raffles! with Rabbi Colish and Riki Waldman

Pirkei Avot with Rabbi Aharon at 5:00 PM –followed by Minha: 5:45 PM –  
Seudah Shelishi and a Class 6:15 – "Shaking the Lulav vs. Sitting in the Succah – The Dual Message of Succot"  
Evening Service (Arbith): 7:15 PM - Shabbat Ends:7:20PM

Saturday Night - Sukka Decorating Party - Delicious Dave's Pizza 1 hr after Shabbat.

Sukkot begins Sunday Night ... Hopefully we'll get some announcements out Sunday  
We need sponsors for the Sukkot meals. We have nothing sponsored so far. Also, if you have a Sukkah, please invite your friends who don't have a Sukkah to dine with you.

Those who ordered Lulav and Etrog – I will have them B'H on Sunday.

Weekday Mornings 6:30AM In Depth Analysis of the Laws of Berahot for Sephardim with Rabbi Yosef Colish

Wednesday Night at the Colish Sukkah 7:30PM Spiritual & Personal Growth with Rabbi Yaakov Siegel

Community Wide Sukka Hop - Children Ages 5-11. Meet Tuesday 3:00 at the Sephardic. We will join up with the Bach and make our rounds to various Sukkot. We are looking for two family volunteers from our congregation. Please speak with Leah Colish to sign up.

please reply to  
[ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com)

**Take a peek into Kosher Culinary Arts School in Jerusalem with my daughter Mikhayla who is going through a rigorous 6 month program. [bitemebymik.blogspot.com](http://bitemebymik.blogspot.com)**

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

### Editors Notes

People often compliment me on the speeches and classes I give and I am very grateful to them for the compliments and even more grateful that the thoughts of Torah have an impact on their lives. But I deserve little of the credit. As I have noted time and I have often said when speaking at new venues, my role is that of a tape recorder. I take what I hear and I repeat it, perhaps adjusting the volume, the order and the intonations.

In Talmudic times the role of the meturgeman applied to an assistant in the academy, who stood beside the scholar and served as his public mouthpiece or amplifier. The rabbi would deliver his lesson or homily in a low voice, and the meturgeman would repeat it loudly for the audience to hear.

As often as possible, I look towards what Rabbi Abittan z'sl would say in a situation, but I am neither a prophet or a psychic medium so I hope that what I am saying is correct. That's why I am so appreciative of Abittan family. I can look to them as a barometer if I am on the right track.

I am so appreciative of having friends and influences including Rabbi Paysach Krohn who gave

me the real rules of speaking to an audience. Of Rabbis whose material is so helpful including, Rabbi Yisrael Pesach Feinhandler, Rabbi Yaakov Hillel, Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky, Rabbi Isaac Dwek, Rabbi Mordechai Aderet, Rabbi Eli Mansour, Rabbi Abba Wagensburg, Rabbi Joey Haber, Rabbi Shabtai Sabato and Rabbi Shlomo Diamond and so many others who words I have the opportunity to hear and in essence rebroadcast. They do the work. I get the credit!

In the last year I have come to appreciate a "relatively" young attorney, Charlie Harary. Charlie's videos and classes are readily accessible on the internet and are made for a myriad of organizations. Last spring when we hosted our Seders for close to a hundred people, I retold his stories on each night. This year on Yom Kippur thinking that one of the other Rabbis would speak during the day, I was able to step up and speak twice recalling Charlie's videos. He has this way of connecting to the "guy on the street" and to everyone else from kids to scholars. He is inspiring, motivating and memorable.

Take a look at his website when you have time .... <http://charlieharary.com>. When I spoke at Neilah the basis of my speech was a video Charlie posted about Derek Redmond- You raise me up version. I only saw the video once and I definitely told the story over with some mistakes so for those who heard me, and those who didn't. ....

Charlie writes relating to Yom Kippur, but I think it relates just as well to Sukkot when we leave our physical homes and move into a spiritual one together with Hashem and the Ushpizin: Derek was a British sprinter, who broke

records and won gold medals. His most famous moment, however, came when he finished last place in the 400 meter semi-finals in the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. Midway through the race, he tore his hamstring and hit the floor. Instead of getting on the stretcher, he somehow stood up and began limping to the finish line in excruciating pain. The crowd rose to their feet to cheer him on. Then, one man jumped on the track and dashed towards Redmond. He came up behind him and grabbed his arm. Derek turned around to see his father, who hugged him and helped him finish the race.

The mistake we make on Yom Kippur (and in life) is that we see God as a stranger. We see him as a judge behind a bench or a king on a throne. While that is surely a role He plays, that's not who He is. God is our dad. He is our father. He doesn't sit behind a table, He stands behind his children.

Yom Kippur is a day when we realize that in the true race of life, the race of spirituality and true inner greatness, we sometimes stumble and fall. We are human and we fail. We let people down. We say the wrong things. We hurt others and ourselves. We are down on the track and are losing the race.

However, all God wants is for us to get up. To push through our emotions that have been holding us back all year and stand up. To take responsibility for our actions. To resolve to be nicer, kinder and holier. To commit to learn more about who we can be. To promise ourselves that this year we will push for more than material success.

Once we do that, once we stand up and limp down the track, we turn around and realize that He is

right behind us. He is holding us up and guiding us to the finish line.

The true feeling of Yom Kippur is joy. It's an inner happiness we feel when we exert ourselves to start down the right path in life and realize that the Judge, the King, the Creator of the Universe is really just our father helping us become who we deep down know we can be.

Here is a Derek Redmond video that someone sent me. It gets me every time I watch it.

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The following was written in 2007, but the message is the same .... Yesterday I was sitting with my cousin Morris and elder gentleman that we do business with. The man was complaining about his two sons, his only children, moving to Los Angeles this past year and taking his grandchildren with them. He felt bad especially with the holidays that his typical contact was in very brief telephone conversations.

We spoke about the hagim and the importance of family, especially a grandparent to a grandchild in bridging the generations and forming a bond with our forefathers from the past. The man is not observant, but traditional in the American sense of Reform Jews and realized that with each passing generation, even that "traditionalism" wanes to almost nothing.

We discussed this holiday of Sukkot and how alive it was in major Jewish communities. Morris suggested that the man take a drive to Brooklyn, to Boro Park or Flatbush and see the incredible Market place like street life in preparation for the Holidays. Where other places have (LeHavdil) special stores that

open for Halloween or Xmas, here he could see special stores that open just to sell Lulavs, Etrogs and Sukkahs.

To see people spending hours looking over Etrogim or the tips of Lulavim and then spending \$50, \$100 or even \$200 on what to the rest of the world look like three for a dollar lemons is remarkable. And then taking such pleasure in these etrogim, in the texture, the color, the shape, and the scent of what the bible calls the fruit of a lovely tree. To many religious Jews, the etrog is the ultimate in beauty.

I repeated a story that Rabbi Wein tells which he suggests has been repeated for 2000 years back to the Yeshivas in Babylonia.

A Rosh Yeshiva – head of a school – calls one of his students in and tells him that he has a wonderful match to suggest with a girl who is smart and kind and nice and that he is sure would work out. The boy agrees to meet the girl.

A few days later, The Rosh yeshiva is puzzled that the boy has not come back to him to report on the date so he has the boy called to his office.

The Rosh Yeshiva asks if he went on the date and his thoughts.

The young man explains that he did go and in fact the girl was very smart, very kind, and a wonderful person, but he didn't think he would be seeing her again.

Why asked the Rosh Yeshiva, assuring the boy that they were 100% compatible.

The boy looked up in an embarrassed way and then blurted out, "but Rebbe, she's not pretty."

"Pretty?", the rosh yeshiva questioned. "are you looking for a wife or an Etrog"?

To one who really values the etrog, the punch line must cause a belly laugh. The fact that it is a well known joke for so many years tells us how much the Etrog represents beauty. And as I am sure you will read, it represents the heart, it represents the righteous Jew that "smells nice and tastes nice", the one who learns and does good deeds. And thus we spend, hours and money finding the right one.

Thanks to my cousin Stevie Tawil, the Lulav Man, for doing all that work for me. ( And he has been doing that work year after year after year.)

Morris cautioned that it was important not to lose the forest for the trees and not to forget the essence of the holiday. And we closed with another story from Rabbi Wein. Instead of retyping it from the story I heard, I found it in the Rabbi's book "SECOND THOUGHTS" on line.

I wish to share with you a beautiful short story about the wonderful festival of Sukkot. The story was authored by S.Y. Agnon, the Israeli Nobel laureate who won the prize for literature a number of years ago, and whose likeness adorns the 50-shekel note in Israeli currency.

It seems that Agnon, who was born in Poland, was a neighbor of a famous old rabbi from Russia. Both of them are now living in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Talpiot. One year before Sukkot, Agnon met his rabbinic neighbor at the neighborhood store selling esrogim -- the yellow citron fruit which is symbolic of the Sukkot holiday. There Agnon noticed how meticulous his neighbor was

in choosing an esrog. Even though he was a person of limited means, the rabbi insisted on purchasing the finest, and hence most expensive, esrog available. After examining many specimens, the rabbi finally chose the one he wished and paid for it.

Walking home with Agnon, the rabbi emphasized to him how important it was to have a beautiful, flawless esrog on Sukkot, and how the beauty of the esrog was part of the fulfillment of the Divine commandment for the holiday.

On Sukkot morning Agnon noticed that the rabbi was without an esrog at the synagogue services. Perplexed, Agnon asked the rabbi where his beautiful esrog was. The rabbi answered by relating the following incident:

"I awoke early, as is my wont, and prepared to recite the blessing over the esrog in my sukkah located on my balcony. As you know, we have a neighbor with a large family, and our balconies adjoin. As you also know, our neighbor, the father of all these children next door, is a man of short temper. Many times he shouts at them or even hits them for violating his rules and wishes. I have spoken to him many times about his harshness but to little avail.

"As I stood in the sukkah on my balcony, about to recite the blessing for the esrog, I heard a child's weeping coming from the next balcony. It was a little girl crying, one of the children of our neighbor. I walked over to find out what was wrong. She told me that she too had awakened early and had gone out on her balcony to examine her father's esrog, whose delightful appearance and fragrance fascinated her. Against her father's instructions, she removed the esrog from its

protective box to examine it. She unfortunately dropped the esrog on the stone floor, irreparably damaging it and rendering it unacceptable for ritual use. She knew that her father would be enraged and would punish her severely, perhaps even violently. Hence the frightened tears and wails of apprehension.

"I comforted her, and I then took my esrog and placed it in her father's box, taking the damaged esrog to my premises. I told her to tell her father that his neighbor insisted that he accept the gift of the beautiful esrog, and that he would be honoring me and the holiday by so doing."

Agnon concludes the story by saying: "My rabbinic neighbor's damaged, bruised, ritually unusable esrog was the most beautiful esrog I have ever seen in my lifetime."

As Morris said, let's not lose the forest for the trees!

Shabbat Shalom  
Have a wonderful holiday

David Bibi

### **Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:**

1st Aliya: Moshe begins by describing the presence of Hashem in nature as being as evident as the rain or dew that nourish the fields and gardens. G-d is entirely just, always good, always compassionate and forgiving. Therefore, all destruction and negativity must be ascribed directly to the ill fated decisions and actions of His children.

2nd Aliya: The Jew must always remember that he was chosen from among all other nations to be nurtured by the direct

ministrations of the Creator. We were born in a "desolate, howling, wasteland" and protected till we were able to assume responsibility for our unique relationship with the Creator of heaven and earth.

3rd Aliya: Unfortunately, humankind's tendency is to forget the degree of their dependency upon Hashem and to create the illusion of self sufficiency and independence. "Yeshurun thus became fat and rebelled..."

4th Aliya: We will then be punished with exile and persecution. Chased from our land and sold into slavery, the Chosen People will experience what it means to be independent of Hashem's direct protection and benevolence.

5th Aliya: However, the other nations will fail in the very same manner that we did. They will assume that their ability to enslave the Chosen People and ravage Israel is proof of G-d's impotence and their own prowess and strength. Therefore, they will be punished and destroyed and the Chosen People will again recognize Hashem's primacy and control.

6th Aliya: Moshe's song ends with the Jewish people singing forth their acceptance and understanding of divine purpose and justice.

7th Aliya: Moshe presents the entire "song" to the nation and reemphasizes that the condition for keeping the Land is adherence to Torah and serving Hashem.

Haftarah: Shemuel II 22:1-51 This Haftarah is always read between Yom Kippur and Succos. It is also read on the 7th day of Pesach and is found in a modified form in Psalm 18.

Dovid Hamelech is singing the praises of Hashem. He has lived a turbulent yet gifted life, and he is giving thanksgiving to Hashem for his numerous victories and successes. In many respects it reflects the same sense of Hashem's complete control as in Parshas Ha'Azinu.

Dovid Hamelech gazes back upon the events of his life with a clarity of vision and understanding. He describes Hashem as his "Rock, Fortress, and Deliverer". (22:2) Dovid recognizes that he too has merited to fulfill one of G-d's promises, no less important than bringing the Children of Israel to the borders of Eretz Yisroel. He has given birth to the Davidic line that assures the building of the Bais Hamikdash and the coming of Mashiach.

In more ways than can possibly be counted, all of history, from the beginning of time till that moment, conspired to effect redemption for the world. Through the divine power of Dovid's song, Hashem is given total credit for every turn and twist of destiny. His every trial and tribulation equals the sum total of Hashem's constant love and protection. "As for G-d, His way is perfect... He is a shield for all who trust in Him." (22:31)

The magnificence of Dovid's song reaches across the millennium to inspire and encourage all of us to recognize Hashem's love and protection. The final words are familiar because they were incorporated into the conclusion of the Birkas Hamazon.

This Parsha and Haftarah perfectly reflect the transition from Yom Kippur to Succos. The climax of Yom Kippur is the end of Neilah when we publicly proclaim the absolute mastery of G-d over all human and natural

affairs. The term "Hashem" reflects upon the G-d of mercy who is intimately involved in the lives of humanity. The term "Elokim" reflects upon the G-d of justice who maintains the inviolable laws of nature. At the conclusion of Yom Kippur we have reached, if only for a moment, the understanding that the G-d of mercy and justice, the G-d of nature and mankind are one and the same. We are able to accept that the entire universe works in concert with Hashem in responding to man's actions. Whatever the outcome, Hashem's purpose is positive and beneficial for both the present and all future generations.

Although this is difficult to accept given the imposed limitations of mortality, we exit from that singular moment of awareness at the end of Yom Kippur and launch ourselves into a two week period of joyous and symbolic service. "And you should rejoice in your holiday," is a commandment unique to this holiday period. We are to revel in the awareness of our dependency upon Hashem. We are to rejoice in the acceptance of G-d's goodness.

Both Moshe in Ha'Azinu, and Dovid in the Haftarah, declare their acceptance of G-d's justice as the ultimate expression of mercy and compassion. We now act out our acceptance by eating and sleeping in a temporary dwelling reminiscent of the 40 years of total dependency in the Sinai Desert. With the shaking of the Lulav, we bind together the symbolic elements of every individual Jew, as well as the totality of the Jewish people, in a communal acknowledgment of Hashem's mastery over all things.

This concept of acceptance is the single greatest challenge we have in our relationship with the

Creator. It is expected that we will struggle with the consequences of divine justice from year to year. Yet, as believers in the reality of "Elokim", we posture and behave as if we are understanding as well as accepting of G-d's justice. We too wish to joyously proclaim every day, not just at the end of Yom Kippur, "Shema Yisroel..." "Hear Israel..." the two manifestations of G-d's reality, Elokim - the G-d of Justice and Hashem - the G-d of Mercy, are really One.

## EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

**Rabbi Reuven Semah**

"You shall dwell in succot for a seven day period...these are the Heavenly Clouds that He surrounded them with." (Shulhan Aruch 625:1)

We fulfill the misvah of succah to commemorate the miracles of the Clouds of Glory that protected the Israelites in the desert. The clouds protected our ancestors from the sun's heat, from winds and rain, from wild animals and harmful insects, and from attack by other peoples. Their clothes were refreshed and renewed by the Clouds of Glory. Since the succah commemorates these Clouds, it follows that the succah has at least some of the miraculous properties of the Clouds.

Our Sages teach us, "Hamista'er patur min hasuccah – One who suffers is exempt from the misvah of succah." That is why we can leave the succah when it rains, and at such times we are permitted to eat and sleep elsewhere. Yet this statement can be interpreted in another way, no less true. Hamista'er – someone who experiences suffering – patur min hasuccah – is freed from that suffering by fulfilling the misvah of succah

properly and with joy. The succah has a certain amount of the power of the Heavenly Clouds.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we were judged and our defending angels did their best to explain away our misdeeds.

"They were fooled into it by the Evil Inclination," the defenders argued. The prosecuting angels strongly disagreed. "They are hardly as naïve as you make them out to be. Let's see how well they do in business," they argued.

As the glorious Yom Tob of Succot approaches, the defending angels score a victory. "Just look at the etrog," they argue. "How much would a gentile pay for this citrus fruit? How much would a Jew pay for it a day after Succot? Yet watch how much the Jews are paying for it now. Look how much they are spending on a lulab, a palm branch that isn't even edible! So, how shrewd can they be in business?" The high prices of the lulab and etrog save us from the negative talk of the prosecuting angels.

Bottom line, the succah removes our physical suffering (besides the great lessons of emunah) and the lulab and etrog save us from our enemies in Heaven. Happy holiday.

### **Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

The Midrash compares the Jews when they wave the lulab, to someone who emerges victorious from a courthouse and waves his hands up in triumph. We see from here that by passing our judgment on Kippur, we are confident of victory and therefore we wave the lulab and other species on the Succot holiday.

We should take that as a symbol that we ought to be proud of our misvot and let them be seen by others. Some of us are embarrassed by our customs and hold the lulab and the other species in an inconspicuous manner so as not to be seen with them. We see from here that this should make us hold them upright in a way that shows we are proud of our misvot. Indeed, the lulab is like the spine of a person which symbolizes the backbone of a Jew, which should be straight and tall. We must always hold ourselves straight and tall and realize that our misvot are what kept us around for all these years. They should make us proud to be a Jew and we should feel that confidence and security in these beautiful symbols. Tizku Leshanim Rabot.

### **HOW ARE YOU DOING?**

One of the most difficult challenges you will ever face is to change the way you are into the person you should be. Spiritual surgery alone cannot cure faults, because bad habits, personality quirks, and inborn traits are so much a part of a person's essence as to be considered second nature. So, how can you improve and grow?

A self-portrait will help. Before you can become who you would like to be, you must clearly paint a picture of who you happen to be. You must see where you stand before you can move in a positive direction.

When Adam committed the first sin and tried to hide from his Creator in the Garden of Eden, Hashem asked the question: "Ayeka? – Where are you?" Why would an all-knowing Hashem ask a question to which He knew the answer?

The simple explanation is that He wanted to draw Adam into

conversation. Therefore, He asked a simple question that He planned to use as an "opener" to the real issue.

The books of Mussar (Ethics), however, explain that Hashem was posing a more philosophical question to Adam: "Where are you holding?" "What is your spiritual level – now?"

Everyone should learn to ask: "How am I doing?" Yes, the particulars are very important and you are held accountable for every action and every thought, but you are judged on general performance as well. Are you growing or are you slipping?

Birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays are a great prompt to jump-start self-improvement. In order to grow, you must know where you are today. Take a spiritual snapshot of yourself and compare it to one you could have taken last year at this time. Compare the two and see how you are doing.

The time is now to get moving in the right direction. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

### **TO TELL THE TRUTH**

"So Moshe died there...and no one knows his burial place to this day." (Debarim 34:5-6)

Why must the Torah tell us that no one knows Moshe's burial place to this day?

It was once common for debates to take place between Catholic theologians and Torah scholars. In the course of these debates, the priests would attempt to question the authenticity of the Torah. Once, such a debate took place between a Catholic priest and the famous Talmudist, Rabbi Yehonatan of Eibeshitz. The

priest asked the Rabbi, "Since many people witnessed the departure from Egypt and the splitting of the sea, I can accept the Torah account of these events as correct, but how can we verify what the Torah says (Shemot 34:25) that 'he remained there with Hashem for forty days and forty nights - he did not eat bread and drink water?'"

Rabbi Yehonatan replied, "The last episode recorded in the Torah about Moshe is that he died and no one knew his burial site. If so, couldn't the Torah have written that he never died, and that he went up to heaven and continues to live on forever? Obviously, the Torah has no inclination to falsify or exaggerate, and everything it tells us is the truth." (Vedibarta Bam)

### **RABBI ELI MANSOUR** Visit [DailyHalacha.com](http://DailyHalacha.com),

The Special Protection of Succot  
There is a beautiful Derasha (homily) said by the Rabbis in interpreting a passage from the daily Amida prayer, in which we describe Hashem as "Melech Ozer U'moshi'a U'magen" ("King who assists, brings salvation and protects"). These four words, the Rabbis teach, refer to the four significant time-periods of the month of Tishri. The word "Melech" ("king") corresponds to Rosh Hashanah, when we proclaim God's Kingship over the earth. The second word, "Ozer" ("assists"), alludes to the Aseret Yemeh Teshuba (Ten Days of

Repentance), when God helps us repent and draw closer to Him. "Moshi'a" ("brings salvation") refers to Yom Kippur, when God mercifully cleanses and purifies us from our sins, thus saving us from punishment. Finally, the term "Magen" ("protects") alludes to Succot. On Succot, we leave the comfort and security of our homes, which are equipped with locks and alarm systems, and live in the unstable, unprotected environment of the Succa, where we are exposed to the elements, placing our trust in God, confident that He will protect us. As the verse states in Tehillim, "Ki Yispeneni Be'suko" – "For He protects me in His Succa." When we leave our homes and enter the Succa, we leave the security of our manmade dwellings and enter the security of God's special protection.

We may, however, offer a different explanation for the correspondence between "Magen" and Succot. Throughout the period of the Yamim Nora'im, we've worked on ourselves and ascended to high spiritual levels. With the conclusion of the High Holidays, we need to "protect" and preserve these precious achievements – and this is one of the main purposes of Succot. We celebrate this holiday in order to protect what we've gained during the season of repentance, to ensure that we retain our high level of spirituality for at least another week, which will then, hopefully, allow us to retain this level for the next several weeks and months. This is the meaning of "Magen" – Succot helps us protect the great achievements that we've made during the period of Rosh Hashanah, the Aseret Yemeh Teshuba, and Yom Kippur.

Immediately after Succot, on Shemini Aseret, we begin reciting in the Amida, "Mashib Ha'ru'ah

U'morid Ha'geshem," which literally means, "He who makes the wind blow and brings down the rain." One Rabbi, however, quipped that once the holidays of Tishri end, "Mashib Ha'ru'ah" – people return the "Ru'ah," the spirituality that they experienced during the holidays, and "Morid Ha'geshem" – they bring down the "Gashmiyut," the indulgence in physical and material pursuits. Let us avoid this tendency and see to it that all the hard work we invested during the season of the Yamim Nora'im will not be for naught. Let us protect and preserve those accomplishments, so that they will continue to motivate and inspire us to reach even greater levels of spirituality during the weeks and months ahead.

### **Rabbi Wein**

This song of Moshe is the song of the Jewish story. It accurately portrays the arc of Jewish history in its glorious as well as its dolorous moments. The Ramban's comment as to the proof of the holiness and accuracy of Moshe's prophetic words – "If someone stood and accurately foretold what would happen many centuries later, would not one in hindsight be forced to admit to the truth of that prophet and his words upon seeing the minute fulfillment of that prophecy" – certainly carries even more weight in our age, a further eight centuries removed from Ramban's time.

Moshe calls forth the heaven and earth to bear witness to his words of prophecy, for he is aware that human logic and memory can never really be trusted.

Unfortunately, memory can be dimmed and lost, and logic distorted and/or ignored. In fact it is these factors – lost memory and flawed logic – that Moshe identifies as the cause of the sins of the Jewish people and of much of the predicted travail that will accompany them throughout their history.

It is not so much that there is a rebellion against God and Torah in our current society as it is that God and Torah have simply been forgotten, erased from the Jewish consciousness – for many Jews they simply do not exist. And in such a climate of almost willful forgetfulness, certainly any attempt to convince others of the errors of their ways by the use of logic is doomed to frustrating failure.

Moshe concludes his visionary song/poem on an optimistic note. Somehow the covenantal relationship between God and Israel will remain binding and unbroken even unto the end of days. There will always be a core group of Jews who will not allow themselves – as well as others – to forget.

Events will constantly jog the Jewish memory and new generations will arise and ask: "Who are we and why are we here?" And the response to those questions can only be found in the eternal memory bank of the Jewish people and their history.

It is a very difficult task to restore memory but the fact that Moshe promises us that God and Torah will never be completely forgotten by all of the Jewish people reassures us that somehow the restoration of Jewish memory is

possible and even guaranteed. And our logic will eventually not fail us as well.

We will survey our world and our situation and come to logical and holy conclusion as to what our policy and path in life should be. A nation of wisdom and insight, creativity and scholarship will not always remain illogical and foolish.

Moshe also encourages us by promising that eventually our enemies will be vanquished and shamed. Their nefarious ambitions will be thwarted and the Lord will balance all accounts with those who attempted to destroy the Jewish people. Good sense, accurate memory, strength of purpose and clarity of ideals will prevail and rule the Jewish world. Moshe's song will continue to be heard throughout eternity.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks  
Chief Rabbi of the United  
Hebrew Congregations  
of the Commonwealth**

That very day the Lord spoke to Moses, "Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, opposite Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel for a possession. And die on the mountain which you go up, and be gathered to your people ... For you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel."

With these words there draws to a close the life of the greatest hero

the Jewish people has ever known: Moses, the leader, the liberator, the lawgiver, the man who brought a group of slaves to freedom, turned a fractious collection of individuals into a nation, and so transformed them that they became the people of eternity.

It was Moses who mediated with God, performed signs and wonders, gave the people its laws, fought with them when they sinned, fought for them when praying for Divine forgiveness, gave his life to them and had his heart broken by them when repeatedly they failed to live up to his great expectations.

Each age has had its own image of Moses. For the more mystically inclined sages Moses was the man who ascended to heaven at the time of the giving of the Torah, where he had to contend with the angels who opposed the idea that this precious gift be given to mere mortals. God told Moses to answer them, which he did decisively. "Do angels work that they need a day of rest? Do they have parents that they need to be commanded to honour them? Do they have an evil inclination that they need to be told, 'Do not commit adultery?'" (Shabbat 88a). Moses the man out-argues the angels.

Other sages were more radical still. For them Moses was Rabbenu, "our rabbi" – not a king, a political or military leader, but a scholar and master of the law, a role which they invested with astonishing authority. They went so far as to say that when Moses prayed for God to forgive the people for the Golden Calf, God replied, "I cannot, for I have already vowed, One who sacrifices to any God shall be destroyed (Ex. 22:19), and I cannot revoke My vow." Moses replied, "Master of the universe,



have You not taught me the laws of annulling vows? One may not annul his own vow, but a sage may do so." Moses thereupon annulled God's vow (Shemot Rabbah 43:4).

For Philo, the 1st century Jewish philosopher from Alexandria, Moses was a philosopher-king of the type depicted in Plato's Republic. He governs the nation, organizes its laws, institutes its rites and conducts himself with dignity and honour; he is wise, stoical and self-controlled. This is, as it were, a Greek Moses, looking not unlike Michelangelo's famous sculpture.

For Maimonides, Moses was radically different from all other prophets in four ways. First, others received their prophecies in dreams or visions, while Moses received his awake. Second, to the others God spoke in parables obliquely, but to Moses directly and lucidly. Third, the other prophets were terrified when God appeared to them but of Moses it says, "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Ex. 33: 11). Fourth, other prophets needed to undergo lengthy preparations to hear the Divine word; Moses spoke to God whenever he wanted or needed to. He was "always prepared, like one of the ministering angels" (Laws of the Foundations of Torah 7: 6).

Yet what is so moving about the portrayal of Moses in the Torah is that he appears before us as quintessentially human. No religion has more deeply and systemically insisted on the absolute otherness of God and man, heaven and earth, the infinite and the finite. Other cultures have blurred the boundary, making some human beings seem godlike, perfect, infallible. There is such a

tendency – marginal to be sure, but never entirely absent – within Jewish life itself: to see sages as saints, great scholars as angels, to gloss over their doubts and shortcomings and turn them into superhuman emblems of perfection. Tanakh, however, is greater than that. It tells us that God, who is never less than God, never asks us to be more than simply human.

Moses is a human being. We see him despair and want to die. We see him lose his temper. We see him on the brink of losing his faith in the people he has been called on to lead. We see him beg to be allowed to cross the Jordan and enter the land he has spend his life as a leader travelling toward. Moses is the hero of those who wrestle with the world as it is and with people as they are, knowing that "It is not for you to complete the task, but neither are you free to stand aside from it."

The Torah insists that "to this day no one knows where his grave is" (Deut. 34: 6), to avoid his grave being made a place of pilgrimage or worship. It is all too easy to turn human beings, after their death, into saints and demigods. That is precisely what the Torah opposes. "Every human being" writes Maimonides in his Laws of Repentance (5: 2), "can be as righteous as Moses or as wicked as Jeroboam."

Moses does not exist in Judaism as an object of worship but as a role model for each of us to aspire to. He is the eternal symbol of a human being made great by what he strove for, not by what he actually achieved. The titles conferred by him in the Torah, "the man Moses," "God's servant," "a man of God," are all the more impressive for their modesty. Moses continues to inspire.

On 3 April 1968, Martin Luther King delivered a sermon in a church in Memphis, Tennessee. At the end of his address, he turned to the last day of Moses' life, when the man who had led his people to freedom was taken by God to a mountain-top from which he could see in the distance the land he was not destined to enter. That, said King, was how he felt that night:

I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the promised land.

That night was the last of his life. The next day he was assassinated. At the end, the still young Christian preacher – he was not yet forty – who had led the civil rights movement in the United States, identified not with a Christian figure but with Moses.

In the end the power of Moses' story is precisely that it affirms our mortality. There are many explanations of why Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. I have argued that it was simply because "each generation has its leaders" (Avodah Zarah 5a) and the person who has the ability to lead a people out of slavery is not necessarily the one who has the requisite skills to lead the next generation into its own and very different challenges. There is no one ideal form of leadership that is right for all times and situations.

Franz Kafka gave voice to a different and no less compelling truth:

He is on the track of Canaan all his life; it is incredible that he should see the land only when on the verge of death. This dying

vision of it can only be intended to illustrate how incomplete a moment is human life; incomplete because a life like this could last for ever and still be nothing but a moment. Moses fails to enter Canaan not because his life was too short but because it is a human life.[1]

What then does the story of Moses tell us? That it is right to fight for justice even against regimes that seem indestructible. That God is with us when we take our stand against oppression. That we must have faith in those we lead, and when we cease to have faith in them we can no longer lead them. That change, though slow, is real, and that people are transformed by high ideals even though it may take centuries.

In one of its most powerful statements about Moses, the Torah states that he was "a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were undimmed and his strength unabated" (34: 8). I used to think that these were merely two sequential phrases, until I realised that the first was the explanation for the second. Why was Moses' strength unabated? Because his eyes were undimmed – because he never lost the ideals of his youth. Though he sometimes lost faith in himself and his ability to lead, he never lost faith in the cause: in God, service, freedom, the right, the good and the holy. His words at the end of his life were as impassioned as they had been at the beginning.

That is Moses, the man who refused to "go gently into that dark night", the eternal symbol of how a human being, without ever ceasing to be human, can become a giant of the moral life. That is the greatness and the

humility of aspiring to be "a servant of God."

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

A Succah, if properly utilized, can be a place of very great achievement. Here are a few ideas as heard from Rabbi Miller ZT"L on how to maximize this opportunity.

1. Keep in mind that every minute you spend in the Succah, you are performing a positive commandment from the Torah. The longer you sit there and contend "I am doing the will of Hashem", you are getting more Mitzvot. The more kavanah/intent the greater the reward.
2. The Succah is a temporary dwelling which serves to remind us that this world is only temporary. It is the place we prepare, through improvement, in order to gain entry to Olam Haba.
3. The Succah is a symbol of being "In Hashem" all of our lives. "Hashem, m'aon atah h'ayitah lanu." "You are our dwelling, You are our complete protection, You are all around us always." "Hashem Echod", there is nothing but Hashem in the world. "Yifros alenu succat shelomecha", we are in Hashem's Succah which is all around us. This is why He is called 'Hamakom', The Place.
4. The humility of the Succah is in order to humble us. Reminding us to act with kindness and patience toward people in emulation of Hashem's patience and kindness to us. The Abot lived in tents in order that they never forget that they are just visitors in this world.
5. The Succah means isolation from the nations of the world. "V'avdil etchem mikol ha'amim", "And I have separated you from all the nations"
6. The 'Peshat', reason for the Mitzvah of Succah, is in order that we should know that Hashem caused Israel to dwell in Succot

and took them out of Egypt. We should look at the sechach/roof and remember, "L'maan yedeu derotechem", that we were once in the wilderness unprotected and yet more secure than any other time in our history.

The only true security is Hashem; that is the lesson of Succot. We enter the Succah and endeavor to gain more True Knowledge with sensory perception, that Hashem alone is our Succah and our sole Protection in all matters, forever and in both worlds.

To Serve Hashem B'simcha/Joy, this is the greatest success!

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