

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

At the end of his new book, Tribe of Mentors, Timothy Ferris cites the following poem by Portia Nelson. It's called 'Autobiography in Five Short Chapters':

"Chapter 1: I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I am lost... I am helpless. It isn't my fault. It takes forever to find a way out.

"Chapter 2: I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I am in this same place. But it isn't my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.

"Chapter 3: I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it is there. I still fall in... It's a habit... But, my eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

"Chapter 4: I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.

"Chapter 5: I walk down another street."

That is probably how life is like for many of us. It certainly was for me. We set off, confident that we know where we are going, only to find that it is rarely that simple. "Life," said John Lennon, "is what happens while we are making other plans." We fall into holes. We make mistakes. Then we make them again. Eventually we avoid them, but by then we may have the growing suspicion that we took the wrong turning to begin with. If we are lucky, we find another road.

Hence the opening of this week's parsha:

"When Pharaoh let the people leave, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearby, for God said, 'Lest the people change their minds when they encounter war and return to Egypt.' So God brought the people by a roundabout route by way of the desert to the Red Sea..." (Ex. 13:17-18).

This is actually quite a difficult text to understand. In and of itself it makes eminent sense. God did not want the people immediately to face battle with the seven nations in the land of Canaan since, as newly liberated slaves, they were psychologically unprepared for war. We now know also that there was an additional factor. There were Egyptian forts at various points along the sea route to Canaan, so the Israelites would come up against them even before

reaching the land.

Three facts, though, still need to be reckoned with. First, the Torah itself says that God "hardened Pharaoh's heart" (Ex. 14:4), leading him to pursue the Israelites with a force of six hundred chariots. This so demoralised the Israelites that they cried, "Were there not there are enough graves in Egypt that you had to bring us out here to die in the desert?... It would have been better to be slaves in Egypt than to die in the desert" (Ex. 14:11-12). Why did God cause Pharaoh to pursue the Israelites if He did not want them to think of going back? He should surely have made the first stage of their journey as undemanding as possible.

Second, the people did face war long before they came anywhere near the land of Canaan. They did so almost immediately after crossing the Red Sea, when they were attacked by the Amalekites (Ex. 17:8). The strange fact is that when they had to fight a battle on their own, without any miraculous intervention from God, they expressed no fear. Inspired by Moses' upraised arms, they fought and won (Ex. 17:10-13).

Third, the roundabout route failed to prevent the people's response to the report of the spies. Terrified by their account of the strength of the native population and the well-fortified nature of their cities, they said, "Let us appoint a (new) leader and return to Egypt" (Num. 14:4).

It seems, therefore, that the circuitous route by which God led the Israelites was not to prevent their wanting to return, but rather, to prevent their being able to return. Leading them miraculously through the Red Sea was like Caesar crossing the Rubicon, or Cortes burning his boats before his conquest of the Aztecs. It made retreat impossible. Whatever their doubts and fears, the Israelites had no real choice. They had to continue onward, even if in the end it took forty years and a new generation to reach their destination.

What this meant was that almost from the dawn of their history as a nation, Jews were forced to learn that lasting achievement takes time. You can never get there by the shortest road. Thanks to the work of



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AND THE WEB AT WWW.AISHDAS.ORG/TA.
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Anders Ericsson, popularised by Malcolm Gladwell, we know that greatness in many fields takes 10,000 hours of practice. (See Anders Ericsson, *Peak: Secrets From The New Science of Expertise*, Mariner, 2017; Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers*, Little, Brown, 2013. Of course, as many have pointed out, this is not true in all fields, nor is it the only relevant factor.)

The history of all too many nations born after the Second World War and the end of empire, shows that you can't create a democracy by United Nations decree, or freedom by a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. People who try to get rich fast often discover that their wealth is like Jonah's gourd: it appears overnight and disappears the next day. When you try to take a shortcut, you find yourself, like the poet, falling into a hole.

The Talmud tells the story of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hanania who asked a young man sitting at a crossroad, "Which is the way to the town?" The young man pointed to one of the paths and said, "This way is short but long. The other way is long but short." Yehoshua ben Hanania set out on the first path, quickly arrived at the town, but found his way blocked by gardens and orchards. He then returned to the young man and said, "Didn't you tell me that this path was short?" "I did," said the young man, "but I also warned you that it was long." (Eruvin 53b) Better to take the long road that eventually gets you to your destination than the short one that doesn't even though it looks as if it does.

Today's world is full of books, videos and programmes promising a fast-track to almost anything from weight loss to riches to success and fame. The life-changing idea symbolised by the route God led the Israelites on when they left Egypt is that there are no fast tracks. The long way is short; the short way is long. Better by far to know at the outset that the road is long, the work is hard, and there will be many setbacks and false turnings. You will need grit, resilience, stamina and persistence. In place of a pillar of cloud leading the way, you will need the advice of mentors and the encouragement of friends. But the journey is exhilarating, and there is no other way. The harder it gets, the stronger you become. *Covenant and Conversation 5778 is kindly supported by the Maurice*

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RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The Pharaoh of Egypt has finally relented and freed the Jewish people from their centuries of slavery and persecution and allowed them to leave his country. Even though he was forced to do so by continuing plagues and disasters that fell upon him and his people, nevertheless freeing the Jewish people was a noble thing that he accomplished. Yet, as is the want of all tyrants and evil people, he does not view his behavior and action as being noble and praiseworthy. Instead he is convinced that he has made a grave error and in order to correct that mistake, immobilizes his army in order to force the Jewish people back into Egyptian slavery.

He has second thoughts about what he did and is determined to revert once again to tyranny and murder in order to "correct" his previous error. It is this process of regretting the good and repeating the evil that will prove to be his ultimate undoing.

In Judaism, second thoughts and regret are usually reserved for the process of repentance for misdeeds and earlier mistakes and sins. The first step in the process of repentance is experiencing full and sincere regret at having been guilty of wrong behavior and forbidden actions. Second thoughts are reserved for good and for improvement, not for backtracking and sorrow over what one has done in his or her life.

The reason that regret can transform previous wrongs into positive action and serve as a token of forgiveness for that action is that second thoughts, the true reflection of what we believe and feel, reveal our true intent and our inner desires. If we are able to regret evil that means that we are determined to pursue good and therefore the Lord will accept, so to speak, our wishes and convert the previous fall into a positive step, in the direction of obedience and holiness.

The Pharaoh's second thoughts reveal his true nature and what he felt and desired. He never intended to release the Jewish people from bondage and only did so under the pressure of the death of the firstborn in the Egyptian nation. However, once that initial shock was removed and his true nature began to exhibit itself, Pharaoh pursues the children of Israel and is determined to destroy them and bring them back into Egyptian slavery.

The Torah teaches us here that our second thoughts in life reveal to a great extent who we are and what path in life we wish to pursue. Many times we are forced to do good things because of social pressures and other unholy motives. When these disappear so does our desire to do good. And the same is true in the opposite vein.

Sometimes we are forced to do things that are really repugnant to us because of outside pressures that we cannot control. But we regret having done so because our inner self only desires good and a sincere attachment to God and His Torah. So, to a great extent, it is our second thoughts that reveal our true selves and reveal to all who we really are. ©2018 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd when Israel saw the great hand that God had wielded against the Egyptians, the people feared God; they had faith in God and in His servant, Moses" [Ex. 14:31]. Why does the heart of the Haggadah almost completely omit mention of Moses, limiting him to one "cameo" appearance? Moreover, that brief reference, a verse from our portion, Beshalach, dealing with the Splitting of the Reed Sea, seems to mention Moses in an incidental manner: "And when Israel saw the great hand that God had wielded against the Egyptians, the people feared God; they had faith in God and in His servant, Moses" [ibid. 14:31]. Certainly the leader of the Exodus should have merited more prominent billing in the Haggadah. After all, he was God's "point man" in implementing the Exodus from Egypt!

That said, if the lone mention of Moses is in a verse about the Splitting of the Reed Sea, we must uncover its significance. Birth is intimately associated with water: the fetus is surrounded by amniotic fluid, the mother's "water breaks" as a sign of imminent birth, and a person who converts to Judaism—whom the Talmud analogizes to a newborn—must completely immerse him/herself in a mikveh of water.

If the birth of the Jewish People occurred at the time of God's Covenant Between the Pieces with Abraham [Gen. 15], then our rebirth took place at the Splitting of the Reed Sea. Paralleling our national birth and rebirth is the birth and rebirth of Moses. Carefully studying his emergence onto the stage of history, we find parallels to the miracle and message of the Splitting of the Reed Sea inspiringly apparent.

The birth of Moses is described early in the Book of Exodus: born to parents from the Tribe of Levi, he is hidden for the first three months of his life. When keeping him hidden from Egyptian authorities is no longer sustainable, he is placed in an ark smeared with clay and pitch, with the ark set afloat "in the reeds" (basuf) of the Nile River [Ex. 2:1-3].

The rebirth of Moses begins when Pharaoh's daughter goes down to bathe in the Nile. As her maidens walk along the river, the princess sees Moses'

basket among the reeds. She sends her maidservant, takes the Hebrew baby, has compassion for him, and allows Miriam, who had been carefully following the events, to find a Hebrew wet-nurse for him [ibid., v. 5-9].

Pharaoh's daughter does not give birth to Moses, but she does save his life, in the process endangering her own life by defying her father's decree to cast all Hebrew baby boys into the Nile. History confirms that totalitarian despots never hesitate to execute their closest family members who dare rebel against them. Pharaoh's daughter thus emerges as a courageous heroine!

This fortunate rebirth culminates with the giving of a name: "And the lad grew, and [the wet-nurse, Yocheved, his biological mother] took him to Pharaoh's daughter; he became the son (of Pharaoh's daughter), and she named him Moshe, saying, "It is because I drew him out (meshi'tihu) from the water" [ibid., v. 10].

The most commonly accepted interpretation of the name "Moshe" is that he was drawn forth from the river, in the passive form. But if so, Hebrew grammar would dictate that his name be Mashui, referring to he who was drawn forth. Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (a.k.a. "Netziv") offers a sharp insight, noting a very different way of understanding these Biblical words: moshe is an Egyptian word that means "son", as can be seen in the family name of Pharaohs, "Ramses": "Ra" was the Egyptian sun god, and in Egyptian, "Mses" means "son". Therefore, Pharaoh's daughter names the baby "Moshe", "son". And it is not without cause that she has the right to call him her son. After all, having drawn him forth from the Nile River on pain of death, she has earned this right. Every biological mother puts her life on the line with every birth; and Pharaoh's daughter endangered her life by going against her father's decree and saving this Hebrew baby.

While his insight is compelling, it leaves us without a verbal connection between the Egyptian name "Moshe" and the Hebrew word, meshi'tihu, "I drew him out". To solve this dilemma, the Torah employs a double-entendre: Moshe the son (in Egyptian), reborn in the midst of reeds, will decisively draw forth (moshe, in Hebrew) his people, the Israelites, at the Reed Sea, facilitating their rebirth.

This is why Moses' lone appearance in the Haggadah occurs at the Splitting of the Reed Sea. Far from merely citing a verse that happens to include Moses' name, the Haggadah is alluding to that most profound parallel of the leader and his people both experiencing rebirth, Moses by Pharaoh's daughter (in the reeds of the Nile), and the Jewish People by God at the Reed Sea.

And perhaps even more significant is what Moses and the Jewish People did with these additional opportunities of rebirth. From the shores of the Reed

Sea, they journeyed to Sinai and received the Torah, becoming messengers of truly revolutionary teachings to the world, such as the moral obligations of universal freedom and human dignity that are as important today as they have ever been. ©2018 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

“**W**here is God?” asked Menahem Mendel of Kotzk, one of the great Hasidic masters. “Everywhere,” replied his students. “No, my children,” he responded, “God is not everywhere, but only where you let Him enter.”

The Kotzker's answer reinforces a distinction that Rabbi Aaron Soloveitchik makes between two terms of redemption—both relate to being saved—hatzalah and yeshuah. Hatzalah requires no action on the part of the person being saved. Yeshuah, on the other hand, is the process whereby the recipient of salvation participates in helping him or herself.

In the portions read during the last few weeks, the Torah describes how the Jewish people, emerging from Egypt, experienced the process of hatzalah. Note God's words -- *ve-hitzalti etchem*. (Exodus 6:6) God and God alone, says the Hagadah, took us out of Egypt. Just as a newborn is protected by her or his parents, so were the newly born Jewish people protected by God.

Much like a child who grows up, the Jewish people, having left Egypt, were expected to assume responsibilities. While Moshe thought that the process of hatzalah would be extended into the future, God does not concur—the sea will split, but you will be saved only if you do your share and try to cross on your own. (Rashi on Exodus 14:15) As the Jews stand by the sea, the Torah suddenly shifts from the language of hatzalah to that of yeshuah as it states *va-yosha Hashem*. (Exodus 14:30)

I remember my son Dov, as a small child at the Seder table, asking: “Why do we have to open the door for Eliyahu (Elijah) the prophet? He has so much power! He gets around so quickly and drinks a lot. Couldn't he squeeze through the cracks?”

At the Seder table, in addition to re-enacting the redemption from Egypt we also stress the hope for future redemption. This part of the Seder experience begins with the welcoming of Eliyahu, who the prophet says, will be the harbinger of the Messianic period. But for the Messiah to come, says Rav Kook, we must do our share and so we open the door and welcome him in. Sitting on our hands and waiting is not enough.

I often asked my parents where their generation was sixty years ago when our people were being murdered and destroyed. Although many stood up, not enough people made their voices heard. Let us bless each other today that when our children and our

grandchildren ask us similar questions such as, “Where were you when Jews were mercilessly murdered in Israel” we will be able to answer that we did stand up and did our best to make a difference.

Let us pray that we will have done our share and opened the door to let God in. We must recognize that we can't only ask for hatzalah, where God alone intervenes, but we must also do our share to bring about a new era, one of genuine partnership between heaven and earth-- a true yeshuah. ©2018 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI DAVID S. LEVIN

Backpedaling

Parashat B'Shalach begins with a sentence that has sparked many comments from the meforshim. The Torah says, “And it was that when Par'oh sent out the people that Elo'kim did not lead (them) on the path of the Philistines *ki* (since, although, because) it was near, (*ki*) because Elo'kim said, ‘lest the people will change their minds when they see a war and they will return to Egypt.’” You may note in my translation that I used three different words for the first *ki* because each one indicates a different approach to the sentence that will be suggested by the meforshim. But even without that problem in understanding, the sentence is still filled with many questions, the first of which must be, “Why were the Jews Turned Back?”

One problem we have is that in reality Hashem has other reasons for turning the Jews back. We know that Elo'kim wishes to punish the Egyptians at the Red Sea and we know that the Jews will receive the Torah on Har Sinai which is far south of this path. We also know that Hashem is aware of this plan before He begins their journey, so why have them go in this direction only to be turned back? We know also that the Jews will face an army at the Red Sea and Amalek several weeks later. Why are those wars not taken into consideration along with this hypothetical war that is mentioned presumably waged by the Philistines? One can also ask if the two phrases that follow the words *ki* are one interrelated reason for not leading the Jews on the path of the Philistines or if these two reasons are somehow separate.

Nehama Leibowitz describes Rashi's approach which attaches the beginning of the next *pasuk* to this one identifying this *pasuk* as a subordinate clause. “And Elo'kim made the people turn around onto the path of the desert of Yam Suf (the Red Sea).” This is the subject of the sentence and the rest is noted almost in parenthesis as the reason for Elo'kim turning around the people. Rashi sees the first *ki* as because and the second *ki* as although. Ibn Ezra, however, sees both *ki* words as because, making everything causative. This

sentence gives us the reason why Elo'kim turned around the nation and led them on a different path. The Ramban disagrees with the approach of Rashi and of ibn Ezra. He sees the first ki as although meaning that Elo'kim would have preferred to lead the Jews on the path of the Philistines, but He was compelled to abandon that approach because He understood that the Jews would be too fearful of war and desire to return to Egypt. In his approach, the B'nei Yisrael were never turned back as they were never really led in that direction.

Chizkuni's approach says that Elo'kim did not lead the Jews on this path specifically because it was karov, the nearest path to the Philistines. The Jews were bound to be fearful of the Philistines because the Philistines had already killed some of the tribe of Ephraim who had left Egypt thirty years early, having miscalculated the time of the promise from the promise at the Bris bein HaB'sarim. But there was another reason also. A treaty had been made with Avimelech that guaranteed peace between the Philistines and Avraham's families for three generations. The third generation of Avimelech's children were still alive. That meant that if the Jews now passed through the land of the Philistines, they would be breaking that treaty. Elo'kim, therefore, led them in a different direction because this path was karov, too soon. This was done so that the Midat Ha'Din, Justice, which is designated by the name Elo'kim, would guide the Jews at this time. Chizkuni felt that Hashem could enable the Jews to pass through the land of the Philistines at this time but only through the quality of Rachamim, Mercy, which is characterized by the name Yud-Kei-Vav-Kei. Since we see that the Torah continuously refers to Hashem as Elo'kim here (as I have also done) Chizkuni understood that Hashem wanted to act only as the Midat HaDin.

The Ramban states at the incident at Mara, that one of the major reasons for leading the Jews through the desert was to teach them derech erez, the proper way to deal with each other. They needed to learn not only how to act with each other but how to speak with each other. This applied to their brethren and to the other nations that they would encounter in the desert. This is also why the Torah tells us that He turned the people derech haMidbar, the way of the Wilderness. The word hamidbar could be pronounced hamidaber, the one who speaks. This would then mean that Hashem taught them the way of the One who speaks. This had to be done prior to the receiving of the mitzvot because of the precept that derech erez kadma l'Torah, the teaching of how one should behave precedes the teaching of the laws of the Torah.

I would like to offer another translation of the pasuk in light of the Ramban's interpretation. "And Elo'kim did not lead the Jews near the derech erez of the Philistines because it was too close to that of the Egyptians. The way that the Philistines behaved was

too similar to the way that the Egyptians behaved. The Jews were already accustomed to the ways of Egypt and Hashem did not want them to be close to people who acted in the same way, or it might make them think that this is the same behavior that all mankind follows. The Jews had to be different both by their laws and also by the way they treated each other. If the B'nei Yisrael had become influenced by the Philistines as they had been by the Egyptians, Hashem would have had to lead the people with Rachamim (Mercy) and not with Din (Justice).

We see now the wisdom of Hashem's reversing the direction of the B'nei Yisrael. As Jews, we have grown to observe the laws of the Torah, to study them faithfully, and to base our entire life on these mitzvot. But we have also learned that how we do something is as important as what we do. When Hashem led us on the derech hamidbar, He taught us that we must live our lives as if Elo'kim, the midat haDin, is the only form of the Deity that is interacting with us. By our accepting this premise, Hashem then tempers all of His actions first with midat haRachamim. That is why Elo'kim began the Ten Commandments with Anochi Hashem Elokecha, I am the Midat HaRachamim which precedes your Midat HaDin. May we always be worthy, zocheh, to merit Hashem's Midat haRachamim. ©2018 Rabbi D.S. Levin

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

During our 40 years sojourn in the desert, we were attacked by the nation of Amalek. While the battle took place, Moshe stood on the top of a hill and raised his hands towards the heavens. This reminded the Jewish people to subject their hearts to the Almighty so that they would succeed and be victorious over Amalek. The Torah states: "And the hands of Moshe were heavy and they took a rock and placed it under him and he sat on it" (Exodus 17:12).

Why did Moshe sit on a rock and not on pillows?

Rashi, the great commentator, informs us that Moshe sat on a rock and not on pillows because he did not want to sit in comfort while Jews were in danger and suffering. He wanted to feel their suffering and to share it. Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz teaches that this is a lesson for us regarding how to feel another person's suffering. Don't just imagine the pain of another, but do something physically to actually feel his pain.

Empathy is such an important attribute that we should make every effort to feel for another person. By being aware of how a little discomfort bothers us, we can have greater empathy for others -- especially those coming to our door or meeting us in the street asking for tzedakah (charity)!

An egotistical person only cares about his own welfare and is totally uninterested in anyone else's

difficulties and problems. He only wants to make certain that he is comfortable. If he is in any distress, he no longer can think about the suffering of others. Here we see that in order to feel someone else's suffering, we should go out of our way to make ourselves a little less comfortable when others are suffering. Our own distress is more real than someone else's. By being aware of how a little discomfort bothers us, we can have greater empathy for others! *Dvar Torah based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2018 Rabbi K. Packouz and aish.com*

RABBI LABEL LAM

The Waze of Hashem

It came to pass when Pharaoh sent the people, that G-d did not lead them [by] way of the land of the Philistines for it was near, because G-d said, "Lest the people reconsider when they see war and return to Egypt." (Shemos 13:17)

"Lest the people reconsider: They will have [second] thoughts about [the fact] that they left Egypt and they will think about returning. (Rashi)

The Jewish People have finally been granted permission to leave Egypt, after 10 powerful plagues. There is a short cut to go to the "Promised Land" and they take a detour that leads them into a trap by the Red Sea and a circuitous route through the desert. Why were they led the longer way?

They were sent by Pharaoh. The umbilical cord had not yet been severed. They were still like a yoyo on the end of his string. The greatest proof for this is when they were trapped by the sea. Pharaoh was accompanied by 600 chosen chariots and they managed to terrorize a group of more than 3 million people. The Jewish People were still under the spell of Pharaoh as their boss. They were not ready to confront the warrior resistance required to enter Eretz Yisrael.

As a nation we needed to go through some enormous training sessions that would fully install the lessons of Emunah and Bitachon -- absolute trust in G-d! They were in need of experiencing, the splitting of the sea, a war with Amalek, the daily gift of Bread from Heaven before they could begin to be ready to face the real challenges of life.

We are granted here a window into the one of the ways of HASHEM. It's helpful to understand what happened here at this point in history and it is instructive for many other situations as well.

I once heard the following profoundly practical answer from Rabbi Nota Schiller the Dean of Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem in response to an oft asked question: "Rabbi, why do bad things happen to good people? Why is there suffering and disappointment in this world?"

Rabbi Schiller pithily stated that when it comes to answering the question of suffering on any scale there is a difference between an answer and an

approach. An answer eliminates the question. If I ask what 2 plus 2 is, the number 4 negates the need for the question. We have our answer.

Any single approach might include understanding life in a greater context from a number of angles. There are a few approaches that can be rattled off here and now. There are transmigrating souls finishing parts of previous missions. There's a "pay now" versus "pay later" plan -- in the face of eternity. Sometimes people are being saved from becoming corrupted and ruined. Then there is the possibility that someone is currently not ready for the size of the challenge. Even though we may not know which approach applies in a particular situation, some approach we may be aware of or another which is way beyond our ken must apply. An approach unlike an answer allows us to live with the question.

I have learned (the hard way) to trust my GPS - - WAZE. One Friday morning I went to pick up my son at the airport. I was taken off the parkway and sent on a long series of side roads. When I was directed to merge back onto the Hutchinson River Parkway from the service road, just behind the ramp to go on was a truck stuck under an overpass. The traffic was backed up for miles. I was spared that whole mess. I picked up my son on time.

A family in Bnei Brak was granted a much needed free vacation in Sefad. When they arrived they were shocked to discover that the rental had been double-booked and someone was already there. Before heading back home, deeply disappointed the father and his son stopped to Daven Mincha.

The son let channeled his family's frustration into his prayers. Impressed by the quality of his devotion, the Rabbi of the Shul took notice of him and thought he might be a good match for his daughter. The idea was pursued. They were introduced and later wed. It was certainly worthwhile to take that detour and follow trustingly the WAZE of HASHEM. ©2018 Rabbi L. Lam & torah.org

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Preparation

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

There are numerous laws that one may derive from this week's Parsha when it states "and it will be on the sixth day when they prepare what they bring" (Shmot 17:5)

Firstly, one should prepare properly on Friday for the Shabbat so that one has enough to eat on Shabbat. Secondly, the food that was not prepared for the Shabbat would be forbidden to use on Shabbat

Our sages also learn from this that one is permitted to prepare on Friday for Shabbat but not from Shabbat to Sunday. Thus many people do not wash dishes or pots on Shabbat because they will not use them again until after Shabbat. Some people also don't

fold their Tallit after prayers and wait until after Shabbat for the same reason.

From the implications of this law, our Rabbis also derive that one is not permitted to prepare from Yom Tov to Shabbat. The only way they permit this is by making an "Eruv Tavshillin" which in essence requires the individual to begin some preparation on the weekday before Yom Tov for Shabbat. (In addition a declaration must be said before Yom Tov, designating certain cooked foods for use on Shabbat).

The situations cited are all examples of preparations by man. However why do we need a special sentence quoted above for this, for it states later in the Torah "Et asher Tofu eifu" (bake what you wish to bake 17:23 in preparation for Shabbat) ?

Therefore our Rabbis posit that here we are speaking about something that was prepared by the heavens such as an egg that was laid on Shabbat (which is one of the main subjects in Tractate Beitzah,) which one may not use on Shabbat and the Yom Tov that follows or from Yom Tov to Shabbat because there was no designated preparation before Shabbat or Yom Tov. ©2018 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

RABBI DANIEL STEIN

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The Torah declares twice with regards to the development of Moshe that he grew up and became a gadol. The pasuk initially states, "The child grew up, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became like her son" (Shemos 2:10), and then again, "Now it came to pass in those days that Moshe grew up and went out to his brothers and looked at their burdens" (Shemos 2:11). The Ramban explains that this description is repeated in order to indicate that Moshe achieved not only physical maturity, but spiritual maturity as well. It would seem that the definition of spiritual maturity is when one is able to see the burdens of others and identify with their pain. However, the pasuk continues, "he saw an Egyptian man striking a Jewish man of his brothers. He turned this way and that way, and he saw that there was no man, so he struck the Egyptian and hid him in the sand" (Shemos 2:11-12). Moshe not only empathized with others, he also jeopardized his own anonymity and security in order to save the life of someone else. This implies that the height of spiritual gadlus and maturity is when one is willing to sacrifice from themselves for others. In fact, Rashi (Avos 5:21) claims that the age of spiritual maturity for boys, bar mitzvah, is derived from Levi, who at the age of thirteen was considered a "man" (Breishis 34:25), because he was ready to pick up a sword and endanger his own safety in order to defend his sister Dinah.

As a result of their willingness to sacrifice for others, Levi, and specifically Moshe, were worthy of

becoming the future teachers and leaders of the Jewish people. In Parshas Vayechi, Yaakov blessed Levi, "I will separate them throughout Yaakov, and I will scatter them throughout Yisrael" (Breishis 49:7). Rashi explains that the tribe of Levi had to be spread and sent throughout all of Eretz Yisrael because their primary duty would be to teach Torah to the entirety of the Jewish people. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (Emes L'Yaakov) adds that it was specifically Levi who was chosen for this mission, because every rebbi and teacher of Torah, must be able to sacrifice from themselves for their students and the community. When Levi took up arms to defend Dinah, he demonstrated the capacity to sacrifice for others, making his descendants uniquely suitable for the role of teachers and leaders within the community. Similarly, in Parshas Vayigash (Breishis 46:28), Yaakov sent Yehudah ahead of the rest of the caravan to establish a beis medrash, a house of Torah study in Goshen. Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman (Avnei Azel) claims that Yehudah was singled out for this task because he pledged to preserve the welfare of Binyamin at great personal expense and peril. Yehudah's mindset of self-sacrifice and mutual responsibility is necessary when inaugurating a school of Torah study.

It is for this reason that Yocheved and Miriam who endangered their own well-being in order to save the lives of Jewish babies were rewarded by Hashem with "houses", as the pasuk states "He made houses for them" (Shemos 1:21). The Gemara (Sotah 11b) clarifies that the founders of the "houses" of religious leadership and royalty, Kehunah, Leviah, and Malchus, would be descendants of Yocheved and Miriam. Interestingly, it was Bilaam who advised Pharaoh to drown the Jewish babies (Sotah 11a and Shemos Rabbah 1:9), and according to Tosfos (Brochos 7a) Bilaam was accustomed to cursing the Jewish people daily by uttering the word "kalem", "annihilate them." Therefore, it is not surprising that Yocheved and Miriam, who thwarted the despicable plan of Bilaam, which was presumably triggered by the familiar formula of "kalem," should be rewarded with the houses of Kehunah, Leviah, and Malchus whose acronym is also "KaLeM." However, on a conceptual level as well, this was an appropriate reward for Yocheved and Miriam, and commensurate with their contribution. Religious leadership and royalty demand that one be prepared to sacrifice from themselves for others. Therefore, in recognition of their act of selflessness on behalf of the Jewish people, they rightfully deserved to be the matriarchs and paradigm for all future Jewish leaders.

In addition, even one act of self-sacrifice on behalf of others, can often outweigh and eclipse a host of other faults and transgressions. According to many meforshim, Dasan and Aviram from the tribe of Reuven were a pair of devious instigators. From their time together in Mitzrayim, throughout their travels in the

desert, they consistently plotted against Moshe. Rashi (Shemos 2:15) writes that it was Dasan and Aviram who informed on Moshe to the authorities, requiring him to flee to Midian. Later, Rashi (Shemos 16:20) identifies the two individuals who defied the instructions of Moshe and left the manna over until the morning as Dasan and Aviram. Rabbeinu Bachya claims that it was Dasan and Aviram who proclaimed, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt" (Bamidbar 14:4). The Torah (Bamidbar 16:1) includes Dasan and Aviram as central figures in the attempted coup and rebellion of Korach. Finally, in Parshas Beshalach, the pasuk (Shemos 14:3) implies that there were two Jews who did not escape with Bnei Yisrael but elected to stay behind with Pharaoh, and the Targum Yonasan identifies these two individuals as Dasan and Aviram.

If Dasan and Aviram were such detestable people who elected to stay behind in Mitzrayim, how did they survive the plague of darkness? Rashi (Shemos 10:22) claims that Hashem punished the Egyptians with darkness in order to conceal the demise of many Jews who were either not worthy of being redeemed or did not want to leave. If Dasan and Aviram were wicked and preferred to stay behind in Mitzrayim why were they not killed during the plague of darkness as well? Moreover, if they chose to stay behind how could they be present throughout Bnei Yisrael's travels in the desert? Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin (Maharil Diskin) explains, that despite all of their sins and transgressions, Dasan and Aviram were spared during the plague of darkness because they sacrificed on behalf of the Jewish people. In Parshas Shemos (5:14) the Torah tells of Jewish overseers who were beaten for not coercing the Jewish slaves to meet the stipulated quota of bricks. According to the Medrash (Shemos Rabbah 5:20), these Jewish overseers were none other than Dasan and Aviram. The beatings they endured in order to protect their fellow Jews from cruel and sadistic quotas, overshadowed all of their other offenses and indiscretions and shielded them during the plague of darkness.

Similarly, Rabbi Chaim of Chernowitz (Be'er Mayim Chaim) suggests that Dasan and Aviram were reunited with the rest of Bnei Yisrael in the desert, even though they initially chose to remain behind in Mitzrayim, because Hashem split the Yam Suf a second time, just for them! The Torah states "Then the children of Yisrael came into the midst of the sea on dry land, and the waters were to them as a wall from their right and from their left" (Shemos 14:22). After the Egyptians pursued Bnei Yisrael into the sea and the waters came crashing down upon them, the Torah states again, "the children of Yisrael went on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the water was to them like a wall from their right and from their left" (Shemos 14:29). The Be'er Mayim Chaim explains that Hashem split the waters of the Yam Suf twice; the first time on behalf of

the majority of Bnei Yisrael who initially chose to leave, and the second time for the sole benefit of Dasan and Aviram. Despite all of the damage caused by Dasan and Aviram, Hashem rescued them in dramatic fashion only because they had withstood suffering on behalf of others. In the merit of a renewed sense of obligation to the community, and a profound sense of appreciation to those who have sacrificed on our behalf and on behalf of others, may we all be blessed with permanent "houses" of Torah scholarship and leadership, and may Hashem redeem us once again with the coming of the Moshiach speedily in our days! ©2018 Rabbi D. Stein & TorahWeb.org

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

After the Jews made it across the sea, this week's Parsha (Beshalach) introduces the Jews singing in joy. Moshe sang with the men (15:1), and then Miriam sang with the women (15:21). Both of them sang, while the people responded. However, when Miriam sang, the Passuk (verse) says that she responded to "them" in masculine form. If she sang with the women, why is the word in masculine form? Also, of all the verses that Miriam chose to repeat of Moshe's song, she chose the verse "sing to G-d because He's great; horse and wagon drowned in the sea." Why did she choose this seemingly random verse?

To understand this, we must ask ourselves why the horses drowned, if only their riders had sinned? Rav Chashin tells of a much deeper exchange between Moshe and Miriam: After Moshe sang with the men, Miriam responded to Moshe in the form of a metaphor by telling him that the horses were punished just like the soldiers on their backs because they facilitated those soldiers. By the same token, Miriam is telling Moshe that the women deserve just as much credit as the men, regardless of their difference in familial roles. Miriam's message couldn't be more true today: Helping someone follow the Torah's laws is as important as personally following the Torah's laws, and is in fact following those laws. If we all try our best to follow the Torah's laws, and help others do the same, we'll all sing as one, in harmony. ©2018 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

