

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

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Haftarah: Yirmiyahu 46:13-28

JANUARY 19-20, 2018 4 SHEBAT 5778

**DEDICATION: By Robert Marcus in memory of his mother Malka Bat Geraz 7 Shevat
 In memory of Chaim Ben Victoria – Hymie Gindi 8 Shevat
 In memory of David Ben Sarah – David Mizrahi – 8 Shevat
 In memory of Rabbi Asher Abittan 8 Shevat
 And in memory of Ida Baruch who passed away this week**

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EDITORS NOTES

**I wrote the following eight or nine years ago while
 in Aruba ... For those of you going on vacation
 this week and those already on some island, ski
 resort, beach or foreign city, it's a good reminder.**

This coming Wednesday commemorates the Yahrzeit of my Rabbi, Asher Chacham Abittan, z'sl. I wonder if it's strange that years later, one feels the loss even more, if not emotionally than certainly intellectually. I had the honor of learning from and in many ways with the Rabbi for 17 years and I take great pleasure that through this newsletter which we have been distributing for almost 25 years to thousands and thousands of people each week, many of you have told me that without even meeting the rabbi, you've come to know him. There are certain gems that shouldn't be hidden away in small beach side towns. Even the greatest Rabbis of this and the past generation marveled at his knowledge, his wit, his sensitivity, his purity, his sense of humor and his ability to teach. As I continue to learn I lament over the fact that I had a treasure chest filled to the brim willing to give me anything and everything and I took perhaps one small stone. I take some solace that hardly a week goes by without me quoting Rabbi Abittan in a class, in a speech or in this newsletter giving the world a taste of who he was. We learn that it gives great pleasure to the soul when Torah is taught in his name. And we pray that the Rabbi's merits will stand for his family, his students and all of Klal Yisrael.

In the world of many Jewish Day schools, this is vacation week, I thought about some halachot and messages that Rabbi Abittan might have gleaned for us while we are sunning in Acapulco, Miami, Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, or here in Aruba, or perhaps skiing in Colorado, Canada or even the French Alps. It applies to those who have stayed home, and those who travelled back to our home in eretz Yisrael as well.

At the beginning of this week's perasha, already having been struck with seven plagues the last of which was fire balls wrapped in hail, Pharaoh finally tells Moses to get out. But he prefaces this by asking, "Mi VaMi", who and who will go out. Moses responds with one of the most famous verses in the Torah and tells him we will go out with our children and our elders our sons and our daughters. Pharaoh offering to allow only the adults out, refuses.

This verse is perhaps the key to the success of the Jewish people representing the connection through the generations. Later in the portion we learn the law to tell your child. We are required to tell our children about the Exodus from mitzrayim and about our own personal exoduses. We are required to teach our children every day. And we often fulfill this in sending them to school where we assign the Rabbis and teachers with our responsibility to teach.

So this week as many of us have taken time to travel as families, it is incumbent upon us to remember to take advantage of this time together. I see here in Aruba parents and grandparents, children and grandchildren altogether.

This is a time for us to be with our children and talk to them. For grandparents to tell their grandchildren what life was like when they were children, and to teach them. Many of us are out of the houses for 12,14, 16 hours a day during the year, now that we have our children with us, let us take advantage of the opportunity to be with them. These weeks we learn about the plagues, the exodus, the crossing of the sea and the giving of the Torah. Tell your kids what it means to be a Jew, tell them of Hashem's

blessing and how we should be appreciative of everything we have.

I remember the Rabbi telling that in Morocco, four families shared an outhouse and they had no running water and comparing it to the miracle of a running sink, shower, bath and toilet in America even if a whole family shared a bathroom to today where we often have a bathroom for each child. We need to appreciate what we have, the miracle and gift of technology. I recall my great uncle Dave Bibi tell of his trips abroad by boat when the journey alone took weeks and we complain that the flight to Tel Aviv is delayed by an hour. To appreciate what we have, kids have to know what it was like in the stone ages when we had no laptops, cell phones or digital cameras and ipods.

My rabbi of blessed memory often taught us that the Jewish people are compared to an eben, a stone. The word eben is made up of two words the first two letters spell ab, father the second two letters, ben or son. And the rabbi continued, if we take the letters individually we see an aleph, a bet and a nun, standing for ab – father, ben - son and neched - grandson. When we bind three generations, the rabbis teach us that it's like a rope with three bound strands which is very difficult to break.

The eben which we form through joining the father, the son and the grandson, becomes the eben over which King David said, Eben Ma-asu HaBonim, Hayetah LeRosh Pinah – in essence this stone becomes the foundation stone for the future Temple. So during all of this week we should take advantage of the opportunity. Believe me, every father has a lifetime of experience to tell their children of and every grandfather has a treasure chest of diamonds. Don't let them regret collecting only a small stone when so much more was there. Let us all fulfill this commandment of telling our children and connecting with our children and may we merit together, parents, children, grand children and great grandchildren to see this eben as the foundation stone for the third Temple speedily in our days.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

**Summary of the Perasha
Nathan Dweck
Bo - Plagues 8, 9 and 10, Korban Pesach**

- 1- The warning for macat Arbeh
- 2- Macat Arbeh and Hoshech
- 3- Hashem tells Moshe to tell Benei Israel to ask the Mitsrim for their gold and silver

4- Hashem tells Moshe to tell Benei Israel to bring Korban Pesach and put the blood on the doorposts. Hashem tells Moshe the mitsvah to celebrate Pesach for generations along with some of the rules.

5- Moshe relays to the zekenim to bring korban Pesach, to put the blood on the doorposts and that Hashem will pass over the Jewish homes during Macat bechorot.

6- Makat bechorot begins. Paroah runs to send out Benei Israel. Benei Israel head out of Mitsrayim! Laws regarding korban Pesach.

7- The parasha of kadesh liy & ve'ayah kiy yebiecha (mitsvot commemorating makat bechorot and yesiat Mitsrayim).

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

“And Hashem said to Moshe, “Come to Pharaoh.””(Shemot 10:1)

Rav Yosef Bechor Shor, one of the Ba'alei Tosafot, writes that the appropriate grammar for this verse should really have been, “Go to Pharaoh,” not, “Come to Pharaoh.” Why does the Torah phrase it like this? The answer Rav Bechor Shor gives is that the verse is grammatically correct, depending on your perspective. For instance, someone would say “Go” if he was not planning to accompany him. However, Hashem was telling Moshe not to worry, for wherever he will go, Hashem will be with him. Therefore, “Come to Pharaoh is appropriate, for Hashem was saying, “Come with Me.”

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick tells the following true story, which occurred a few years ago in Antwerp, that shows just how a husband and wife were able to actualize this message and enjoy the results of Hashem being right there with them.

Chaim and his wife sat down at their table after a long hard day. “Baruch Hashem, we have been blessed so much and I'm not complaining,” the wife announced. “It's just that we now have twelve children and there is no more room in the house, and we really can't afford any more children. Although we're coping, isn't twelve enough?”

The husband lovingly sympathized with his wife and then began to speak about the importance of relying on Hashem. “Since you are healthy and our only concern is a financial one,” he suggested, “I think we should leave everything in Hashem's Hands, for if He blesses us with another child, He will surely provide the means of support.”

The woman accepted her husband's words and within a short period of time, she was delighted to find out she was pregnant again.

On the day the baby was born, in the same hospital, an especially wealthy gentile died leaving no heirs or family. Years earlier, he had declared in his will that all of his money should be given to the

largest family in Antwerp, since he had never married and had no family to give the money to.

Now there were several families in Antwerp with twelve children, but no family with thirteen children. Well, at least there was no family until the day the gentile died, when there was one Jewish family who had officially become the largest family in the city, having just being blessed with their thirteenth child. Rabbi Reuven Semah

When Moshe warns Pharaoh about the final plague, Makat Bechorot, he says that it will happen at about midnight. Rashi, quoting Gemara Berachot, points out that Hashem actually told Moshe that the plague would happen at exactly midnight, but Moshe, when relating the warning to Pharaoh, saw a need to change the wording, and to say “about midnight.” The reason for this is that there was a concern that the astrologers of Pharaoh might slightly miscalculate the exact time of midnight. They might then think that midnight came and the plague didn’t come, when in truth it was still a few seconds before midnight. If that would happen, they would immediately claim that Moshe was a faker and they would deny the validity of his mission.

However, one could ask: even if that would happen, and they would be off by a little bit, when the clock actually does strike midnight, the plague would occur and everyone would see that Moshe was in fact telling the truth. So why did Moshe deem it necessary to change Hashem’s words in order to prevent just a few seconds of their foolish misconception?

Hazal explain that the purpose of the plagues was to demonstrate to the world that Hashem is the One and only G-d and that He runs the entire universe. For someone to doubt Hashem’s existence and power, even for a few seconds, would create a hillul Hashem – a desecration of Hashem’s Name. Even though they would see the truth soon after that, for those few moments Hashem’s honor would be diminished. Therefore Moshe said “about midnight” to prevent this from happening.

We see from here how important it is for us to bring honor to Hashem through our words and through our actions. We have many opportunities to sanctify Hashem’s Name through our interactions with others on a daily basis. In our homes, in the workplace, and even when we are away on vacation, let’s make an extra effort to glorify the Name of Hashem and the Jewish nation in everything we do. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Silent Communication

Silence is a great attribute. Rabbi Shimon says: “All my days I grew up among the Sages, and I

have found nothing better for the body than silence!” (Pirkei Abot 1:17)

The spoken word can be harmful. The prophet Yirmiyahu compared a word to an arrow. Just as an arrow is irretrievable once it leaves the bow, so, too, a word that leaves the mouth is irreversible. Rabbi Shimon points out that the wrong words may cause harm to the body, not only to the soul. A person may suffer great physical discomfort and depression because a word was said in a moment of anger or frustration. Harsh criticism may not leave black and blue marks, but it has the potential to bruise – even more than physical blows.

The Sage Shammai used to preach: “Say little and do much” (Pirkei Abot 1:15). Our holy books say that people are allotted a specific number of words to speak during their lifetime, and when they are used up, life ends. Therefore, if we speak less we will live longer, and – bottom line – do more!

Communication is not limited to speaking. You can convey a great deal by your actions. Doing something helpful for a friend at work indicates how much you like and respect that individual. A little help at home says a lot to your spouse or your parents about how you really feel about them.

When you are about to say something, ask yourself, “Is there something I can do that will better express how I truly feel about this person?” It takes some self-control, but it makes for healthy relationships and a longer life for you. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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After being warned of the impending plague of Arbeh (locusts), Pharaoh enters into a dialogue with Moshe, expressing a willingness to allow Beneh Yisrael to leave Egypt. He asks Moshe, “Mi Va’mi Ha’holechim” – “Who are the ones going?” – and Moshe responds that he intends to bring with him the entire nation: “With our youth and our elders we will go...for we have a festival to G-d.” Pharaoh flatly denies this demand. He tells Moshe that he is prepared to allow the older members of the nation to leave, but not the youth. At that point, the negotiations break down, and G-d unleashes the deadly plague of locusts against Egypt.

Pharaoh understood one of the basic truisms of Jewish survival – it’s all about the youth, the younger generation. He was ready to allow the adults to leave and worship their G-d. He was not worried about them. What he insisted upon was that the youngsters remain in Egypt, exposed to the lures of

Egyptian culture and society. The youth are impressionable, and Pharaoh did want them to come under the influence of the religious observance that Beneh Yisrael had planned to conduct upon leaving Egypt. He wanted the Israelite youth to remain in Egypt, under the strong influence of Egyptian culture, so they would harbor no feelings of loyalty to their religious traditions.

Moshe therefore firmly declared, "With our youth and our elders we will go." Significantly, he first mentioned the youth before the elderly, because the young generation was his priority. For the precise same reason that Pharaoh refused to allow the youth to go worship G-d, Moshe demanded that the youth go – and even made them the priority. From Moshe's perspective, if there would be room on the bus out of Egypt for either the youngsters or the older folks, the youngsters would be given the seats – because they, more than the others, needed to be removed outside the influence of Egyptian society, and brought into the service of the Almighty.

This is a critical lesson for us, especially in contemporary society, where the influence and lure of anti-Torah culture, beliefs and behaviors is so strong and so pervasive. Now, perhaps more than ever before, we must prioritize our children's education. Certainly, we must take care of the adults and elderly, too. But Moshe's proclamation – "With our youth and our elders we will go" – must serve as our motto, as well. The youth's education comes before all else. Impressionable minds in today's society, when people walk around with the very worst that culture has to offer in their pockets, need protection. And we must make this protection our highest priority, just as it was for Moshe.

Tuition affordability is certainly a major challenge facing American Jewry. But let us ask ourselves: if, Heaven forbid, an observant couple had a child who was considering marrying a non-Jew, how much money would they be willing to spend to convince him or her to end the courtship? I imagine they would be prepared to pay whatever sum was needed, even if this meant mortgaging the house and pawning their valuables. When we look at it from this perspective, the price of tuition does not seem quite so daunting. This is the price we need to pay in today's society to protect our children and guide them to a life of Torah observance.

Baruch Hashem, our community is successful because it makes and has always made Torah education its highest priority. This is the model and example we must continue to follow, so that our children can successfully withstand the pressures of

contemporary society and grow to be loyal and worthy heirs of our sacred tradition.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
THE INSCRUTABLE FUTURE**

Human beings are limited drastically by our inability to forecast and see the future accurately while we are engaged in the present. There is no question that world history would read far differently if only the assumptions of the present could be judged by the realities of the future. In the autumn of 1914 the German army stood at the gates of Paris and the Kaiser believed that his victory was at hand and that his troops "would return home before the leaves fall."

The assumption of the Kaiser and the German general staff as well, was that the war could be won by a relatively short and swift campaign. Had the Kaiser and his generals been able to peer into the future and see that the war would last for more than four years and consume tens of millions of people, soldiers and civilians alike, perhaps the Kaiser would not have even entered into his alliance with Austro-Hungary that touched off the Great War.

But his arrogance betrayed him, and convinced of his success he set in motion a chain of events that would destroy Europe over the balance of the century. However, after the battle of the Battle of the Marne, when a French counterattack finally halted the German advance and forced a retreat from Paris, the situation became radically different.

The chief of the German general staff then informed the Kaiser that, in his opinion, the war was lost and Germany should seek the best terms possible in a settlement. The general was prescient in his prediction but the Kaiser ignored his statement and rewarded him by removing him from a position of power and influence.

Not being able to see the future that would destroy his dynasty and his country and plunge the world into a bloodletting of unimagined proportions, the Kaiser was convinced that the present reality – that the German army was the strongest army in Europe – would eventually prevail in his favor. He did not realize that four years down the road the German army would no longer be the strongest army.

I have often wondered what our part of the world would look like today if the Arab nations over the last 70 years would have taken advantage of the peace offers made to it by various governments of Israel. In 1948 before the War of Independence the Arabs had partition lines that were enormously favorable to them and that the fledgling Jewish state had agreed to accept. Instead of accepting those lines the Arab nations attempted to destroy Israel completely and thereby lost territory and resources.

After the War of Independence, the parties agree to armistice lines – today they are called in 1967 lines, but in reality they are the 1949 lines of the armistice treaties between Israel and the Arab states. These borders were more favorable to Israel but still overwhelmingly much more favorable to the Arab population. Again, the Arabs concentrated not on accepting those favorable terms and building a future for their people but rather on fomenting continual wars in an attempt to destroy the Jewish state.

After every war they found themselves in a worse position than they had held before the war. Egypt and Jordan came to this realization and to the agreement that the future was not the destruction of Israel but rather accustoming themselves to the reality of the existence of the state of Israel. Unfortunately, the rest of the Arab world still did not see the future in those terms.

The actions of the present shape the world of the future. In the 70 years of the existence of the state of Israel, actions and policies taken now make for difficulties in somehow arriving at a permanent, fair and equitable peace arrangement. Many mistakes have been made by both sides over the past seventy years.

Most of Israel's mistakes were based on rosy assumptions and the presence of wishful thinking. There is no other explanation for Oslo and the other interim agreements that have been made over the past decades. Their mistake is a fundamental one. There is a belief, as a matter of faith and even of religion, that the Jewish people have no right to a state here in the Middle East and that all sorts of tactics – diplomatic, from terror, propaganda, etc. – will eventually grant them their wish and that the state of Israel disappear from the Middle East. This is a terrible misreading of the future and only serves to prolong the conflict, the pain and cost to all concerned

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Story We Tell

It remains one of the most counterintuitive passages in all of religious literature. Moses is addressing the Israelites just days before their release. They have been exiles for 210 years. After an initial period of affluence and ease, they have been oppressed, enslaved, and their male children killed in an act of slow genocide. Now, after signs and wonders and a series of plagues that have brought the greatest empire of the ancient world to its knees, they are about to go free.

Yet Moses does not talk about freedom, or the land flowing with milk and honey, or the journey they will have to undertake through the desert. Instead, three times, he turns to the distant future, when the journey is complete and the people – free at last – are in their own land. And what he talks about is not the land itself, or the society they will have to build or even the demands and responsibilities of freedom.[1]

Instead, he talks about education, specifically about the duty of parents to their children. He speaks about the questions children may ask when the epic events that are about to happen are, at best, a distant memory. He tells the Israelites to do what Jews have done from then to now. Tell your children the story. Do it in the maximally effective way. Re-enact the drama of exile and exodus, slavery and freedom. Get your children to ask questions. Make sure that you tell the story as your own, not as some dry account of history. Say that the way you live and the ceremonies you observe are “because of what God did for me” – not my ancestors but me. Make it vivid, make it personal, and make it live.

He says this not once but three times:

“It shall be that when you come to the land which God will give you as He said, and you observe this ceremony, and your children say to you, ‘What does this service mean to you?’ you shall say, ‘It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and spared our homes.’” (Ex. 12:25-27).
“On that day you shall tell your child, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt’” (Ex. 13:8).

“In the future, when your child asks you, ‘What is this?’ you shall tell him, ‘With a mighty hand, the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the land of slavery.’” (Ex. 13:14).

Why was this the most important thing he could do in this intense moment of redemption? Because freedom is the work of a nation, nations need identity, identity needs memory, and memory is encoded in the stories we tell. Without narrative, there is no

memory, and without memory, we have no identity. The most powerful link between the generations is the tale of those who came before us – a tale that becomes ours, and that we hand on as a sacred heritage to those who will come after us. We are the story we tell ourselves about ourselves, and identity begins in the story parents tell their children.

That narrative provides the answer to the three fundamental questions every reflective individual must ask at some stage in their lives: Who am I? Why am I here? How then shall I live? There are many answers to these questions, but the Jewish ones are: I am a member of the people whom God rescued from slavery to freedom. I am here to build a society that honours the freedom of others, not just my own. And I must live in conscious knowledge that freedom is the gift of God, honoured by keeping His covenant of law and love.

Twice in the history of the West this fact was forgotten, or ignored, or rebelled against. In the 17th and 18th century, there was a determined effort to create a world without identities. This was the project called the Enlightenment. It was a noble dream. To it we owe many developments whose value is beyond question and that we must strive to preserve. However, one aspect of it failed and was bound to fail: the attempt to live without identity.

The argument went like this. Identity throughout the Middle Ages was based on religion. But religion had for centuries led to war between Christians and Muslims. Then, following the Reformation, it led to war between Christian and Christian, Protestant and Catholic. Therefore, to abolish war one had to move beyond identity. Identities are particular. Therefore, let us worship only the things that are universal: reason and observation, philosophy and science. Let us have systems, not stories. Then we will become one humanity, like the world before Babel. As Schiller put it and Beethoven set to music in the last movement of the Ninth Symphony: *Alle Menschen werden Brüder*, "All men will be brothers."

It cannot be done, at least as humanity is presently constituted. The reaction, when it came, was fierce and disastrous. The nineteenth century saw the return of the repressed. Identity came back with a vengeance, this time based not on religion but on one of three substitutes for it: the nation state, the (Aryan) race, and the (working) class. In the 20th century, the nation state led to two world wars. Race led to the Holocaust. The class struggle led to Stalin, the Gulag and the KGB. A hundred million people were killed in the name of three false gods.

For the past fifty years the West has been embarked on a second attempt to abolish identity, this time in the opposite direction. What the secular West now worships is not the universal but the individual: the self, the "Me," the "I." Morality – the thick code of shared values binding society together for the sake of the common good – has been dissolved into the right of each individual to do or be anything he or she chooses, so long as they do not directly harm others.

Identities have become mere masks we wear temporarily and without commitment. For large sections of society, marriage is an anachronism, parenthood delayed or declined, and community a faceless crowd. We still have stories, from Harry Potter to Lord of the Rings to Star Wars, but they are films, fictions, fantasies – a mode not of engagement but of escapism. Such a world is supremely tolerant, until it meets views not to its liking, when it quickly becomes brutishly intolerant, and eventually degenerates into the politics of the mob. This is populism, the prelude to tyranny.

Today's hyper-individualism will not last. We are social animals. We cannot live without identities, families, communities and collective responsibility. Which means we cannot live without the stories that connect us to a past, a future and a larger group whose history and destiny we share. The biblical insight still stands. To create and sustain a free society, you have to teach your children the story of how we achieved freedom and what its absence tastes like: the unleavened bread of affliction and the bitter herbs of slavery. Lose the story and eventually you lose your freedom. That is what happens when you forget who you are and why.

The greatest gift we can give our children is not money or possessions but a story – a real story, not a fantasy, one that connects them to us and to a rich heritage of high ideals. We are not particles of dust blown this way or that by the passing winds of fad and fashion. We are heirs to a story that inspired a hundred generations of our ancestors and eventually transformed the Western world. What you forget, you lose. The West is forgetting its story. We must never forget ours.

With the hindsight of thirty-three centuries we can see how right Moses was. A story told across the generations is the gift of an identity, and when you know who you are and why, you can navigate the wilderness of time with courage and confidence. That is a life-changing idea.

Rav Kook on the Perasha

The Exodus and Tefillin: The Torah commands us to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt by wearing tefillin (phylacteries) on the arm and head.

“These words will be for a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes, so that God’s Torah will be in your mouth; for God brought you out of Egypt with a strong arm.” (Ex. 13:9)

What is the connection between tefillin and the Exodus? How does wearing tefillin ensure that the Torah will be “in our mouths”?

An Outstretched Arm: Superficially, the redemption from Egypt was a one-time historical event, forging a potent memory in the collective consciousness of the Jewish people and all of humanity. But if we listen carefully to our inner soul, we will recognize that the Exodus is truly a continuous, ongoing act. The Divine miracles and signs that took place in Egypt launched the continual revelation of the hand of God, openly and publicly, on the stage of world history. The Exodus was an outburst of Divine light, potent and vibrant, in all realms of the universe, and its impact continues to resonate throughout the ages.

Before wrapping tefillin on the arm, we reflect that this mitzvah commemorates God’s zero’a netuya, His “outstretched arm” with which the Israelites were extracted from Egypt. What does this metaphor mean?

The word ‘arm’ (“zero’a”) comes from the root zera, meaning ‘seed.’ The Divine redemption of Israel in Egypt was a holy seed, planted at that point in time. That wondrous event initiated the dissemination of its message, unhindered and uninterrupted, over the generations. As we bind the tefillin to our arms, we are reminded of God’s “outstretched arm,” the inner Godliness that continually develops and perfects the world, until it elevates its treasures of life to the pinnacle of Divine fulfillment.

A Strong Arm: The Torah uses a second metaphor to describe the Exodus — the yad chazakah, God’s “strong arm.” This phrase indicates a second, deeper connection between the mitzvah of tefillin and the Exodus. The liberation from Egyptian bondage served to combat the debasement of life, which threatened to drown humanity in the depths of its crassness and vulgarity. Since the materialistic side of life is so compelling, it was necessary for God to reveal a “strong arm” to overcome our base nature, and allow the light of our inner holiness to shine from within. The holy act of fastening the tefillin to the arm

and head helps us transform the coarse and profane aspects of life into strength and vitality, revealing an inner life beautiful in its holiness.

To triumph over humanity’s coarseness, then at its peak in the contaminated culture of Egypt, required God’s ‘strong arm.’ We similarly need to make a strong effort so that the Torah will remain in our minds and hearts. Tefillin are called a ‘sign’ and a ‘reminder,’ for they evoke the wondrous signs and powerful miracles of our release from Egyptian slavery. We must engrave the legacy of those miracles on all aspects of life: deed, emotion, and thought. Thus we bind these memories to our hand, heart, and mind, and transform our coarse nature to a holy one. Then the Torah will naturally be “in your mouth,” in the thoughts and reflections of the heart.

Through this powerful mitzvah, engaging both the arm (our actions) and the eye (our outlook and thoughts), we continue the Divine process that God initiated in Egypt with a “strong arm.”

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z"TL
“And I shall see the blood and I shall skip over you and there shall be no plague upon you”
(12:13)

Why was anything necessary to protect the Israelites from a plague that was sent upon their oppressors? But there is a rule: “When permission is given to the Destroyer, he no longer distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked” (Baba Kama 60A). Hashem’s preference for the righteous is not permitted by Him to interfere with this principle of His. Unless the righteous take shelter in houses which are distinguished by a mark of Hashem’s service. The Destroyer, then, ‘passes over’ the loyal.

The significance of this symbolism is one of the miracles of history: the eternity of Israel as a nation in this world. The Destroyer eventually brings destruction to every nation, one after the other. No nation has survived this inexorable fate of eventual downfall. Egypt (today Egypt is merely a name, but the people and the culture of Egypt’s original greatness have vanished entirely), Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome have disappeared from the face of the earth.

But Israel, that accepted G-d’s service forever, is ‘passed over’ by the Destroyer and they shall continue as a nation forever. Those of Israel that are disloyal shall also go lost forever.

Not only in this life is Israel’s existence forever, but also those that pass into the Afterlife are also forever. “All Israel has a share in the World to Come”.