

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE**BESHALAH****Haftarah: Shoftim 5:1-31****JANUARY 26-27, 2018 11 SHEBAT 5778 DEDICATION****In memory of Joseph R. Bibi – Yosef Ben Esther 14 Shevat**

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EDITORS NOTES

My dad's Yahrzeit is next Tuesday and we begin saying Kaddish this Shabbat. It's difficult to believe when walking by his desk in the office that it's been four years. When looking at this week's perasha and thinking about my dad, it's impossible not to stop at verse 18 at the very beginning of the portion: "Va'yikach Moshe {And Moshe took} the bones of Yosef with him, being that Yosef had Bnei Yisrael swear (that they would in turn exact an oath from their descendants) to bring his bones out of Mitzrayim with them."

One must ask, why make special mention of the bones now? And why is it Moshe Rabbeynu of all people, who goes and gets them? The Exodus is happening and Moses is responsible for every aspect and to answer every question, doesn't he have better things to do at this particular moment? Can't Moses find someone else to do the bone-carrying?

The Talmud in Sotah points out the tremendous love that Moshe had for mitzvot {commandments}. While the rest of Bnei Yisrael were busy with gold and silver, Moshe was busy with the bones of Yosef. The verse in Mishlei {Proverbs} which states: "A wise hearted person yikach {takes} mitzvot," is referring to Moshe Rabbeynu.

Rabbi Ciner quotes the Midrash which relates that while the rest of Bnei Yisrael were busying themselves with the gold and silver; Moshe was searching for three days and three nights to find the casket of Yosef. Serach, the daughter of Asher, saw Moshe and asked why he looked so exhausted. He explained that he hadn't been able to find Yosef's casket and they would not be able to leave Mitzrayim without fulfilling the oath made to him. "Come with me

and I'll show you where it is," she said to Moshe. She brought him to the Nile, told him that the Egyptians had made a casket weighing 500 talents and showed him where they had thrown it. The sorcerers had advised Pharaoh that by doing so it would be impossible to remove the casket-thus ensuring that Bnei Yisrael would never leave Egypt.

Moshe immediately called out: "Yosef, Yosef, you swore that Hashem would redeem your children-do not delay that redemption!" Some say he tossed in a ceramic disc with the Shem HaMeforash and the words Aleh Shor, Aleh Shor – Rise up Ox (Joseph is compared to the Ox). The casket miraculously floated to the surface and Moshe lifted it onto his shoulder. As Bnei Yisrael were carrying the gold and silver out of Mitzrayim, Moshe was carrying the bones of Yosef.

We call the bones of Azmot Yosef, some see in the word Azmot ... Azum or greatness, perhaps it refers to the core of a person.

So if on the week of my dad's Yahrzeit we read about taking the bones, the Atzmot Yosef, what lesson is there for us? I think it is the quote from King Solomon, the wisest of men as quoted by the Talmud and in turn by Rashi. Haham Lev Yikach Misvot. "A wise hearted person takes mitzvot."

We read that given the choice between mitzvot and money, Moses chose the mitzvot. We are often given the choice between mitzvot and money. What do we choose? My dad set an example of balance in one's life, a balance others might consider an imbalance. If one puts eight hours into work and making money, then one puts 8 hours into learning and communal service. Certainly one would make more money in 16 hours of work, but that's not what life is about. He showed us that one has a responsibility to set personal work aside and take on communal work.

Along the same vein, I often get people asking me to direct them on how one can open their business on Shabbat and Holidays. Even those who close for the weekends, still ask about holidays. And the assumption is because we operate businesses with many workers and locations, we naturally use those loopholes for holidays. They point out leases and trade show agreements which require one to be open

on specific days. I always apologize and suggest they speak to another rabbi as in fact I have no expertise at all. I explain that our father followed the example set by his father and we follow what our father taught us. As to the problems, we actually add riders and notes to our agreements allowing us to close on all Jewish holidays and that's what we do no matter the location and no matter the employee. Does it make things difficult? Certainly, but money can't be everything and HaKol BiDei Shamayim – everything is in the hands of Heaven.

In a class recently, a friend pointed out that the first question we are asked after 120 years when we reach the heavenly court is if we did business honestly. I agreed that this is a tremendous challenge we face each and every moment while we work and deal with people. He went on to compliment me and I greatly appreciated his words. Setting aside my rabbi "Work" for a moment he told those that I earn my living making furniture and he had done four homes with us and can say that he only experienced and heard from others of the positive experience.

My dad often repeated *Tov Shem MiShemen Tov* (Better a good name than good oil (or something valuable) and told us how blessed we were to have been born with a good name, but it was up to us to keep that name good and to do that one must act not only *lifnim meshurat hadin* – beyond the letter of the law, but way beyond.

He would quote the story told in the Talmud *Baba Metzia* involving the wine porters of *Rabba bar bar Channa* who, towards the end of a hard day of work, broke the wine barrels they were transporting. *Rabba bar bar Channa* seized their coats as collateral for payment. While they may have dropped the barrels accidentally, that does not mean they were not negligent and thus responsible for the loss.

Nonetheless, the workers complained to Rav, who told *Rabba bar bar Channa* to give them back their coats. When *Rabba bar bar Channa* asked if the law requires such, Rav answered by quoting a teaching of *Shlomo Hamelech*, "so that you may walk in the way of good men" (*Mishlei* 2:20). *Rabba bar bar Channa* gave them back their coats, but that did not satisfy the workers who told Rav, "we are poor, we have worked hard all day and are in great need and we have nothing to show for our work." Rav ordered *Rabba bar bar Channa* to pay his workers. When asked if this is the law, Rav quoted the second half of the verse, "and keep the path of the righteous."

My dad explained that from a purely legal point of view, the poor porters had to pay *Rabba bar bar*

Channa for the damages caused, and had the case reached a court of law – where judges may favor neither the rich nor the poor – such would have been the ruling. But this was not a court of law, but a teaching moment. Considering that the breaking of the barrels was an accident, the workers were poor and desperately needed the money, along with the fact that *Rabba bar bar Channa* was a wealthy wine merchant, Rav ordered him to pay the workers.

What Rav demanded went well beyond the standard requirement of *lifnim meshurat hadin*, of acting beyond the letter of the law. Rav quoted a verse from *Mishlei* about following the path of "good men" and "the righteous".

My father explained that this was what was required to maintain a good name. There is a certainly limit to how much beyond the letter of the law we must act and my dad was always aware of those who took advantage of his nature. And I must say we were often frustrated seeing what we saw as injustice. Nonetheless, he set an example, and he acted and he taught by doing that such is the way of those who want to be on the path of good. And don't we all want to travel on that path? My dad had tremendous *Bitachon*, trust and faith in Hashem which he displayed on a daily basis.

What's interesting is that I recall being critical of my dad being in my eyes, "taken", and smile today seeing how I have become my dad and realize that it's not being taken, but its valuing the *misvot* more than the money.

Still I ask, when will we be able to arrive at the level of the qualities of the great ones who have left us?

May we be blessed to carry the *aztmot*, the greatness of Yosef our father, and act in the way he acted and make him proud of us always!

Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

**Immeasurable Reward By Rabbi David Ashear
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Our Rabbis tell us that we are not able to comprehend the value of even the smallest *Mitzvot* that we do. The entire world does not contain enough to pay us back for even one *Mitzva*. Every little deed we do counts.

I once heard a story many years ago about two older women who made a deal with each other. Whoever would die fi

One passed on and came to her friend saying, "I am not allowed to tell you anything about where I am, but I can tell you that one time we went together to visit someone who was sick and we couldn't find the house, I was ready to give up. Just then, you spotted it. You pointed with such enthusiasm. You cannot imagine how much more reward you are getting for that Mitzva than I am because of that extra enthusiasm."

It should give us a lot of strength to know that Hashem recognizes every bit of effort that we put into His Avodah. Every thought we have in Emunah is so precious. Recognizing the Yad Hashem in our daily lives and being happy with the way that He deals with us is immeasurable.

People wonder, "How can we get paid so much for doing something that appears to be so small?" It is not really a question, however. Already in this world we see examples of such things, as can be seen from the following story.

Many years ago, there was a family in New York, and the father was having trouble making ends meet. It got to a point where he had no choice but to ask others for handouts. He used to send his oldest boy Jacob knocking on doors in Jewish communities requesting Tzeddaka. Jacob would get a couple of dollars here, and a couple there, and it would help support the family.

Jacob always wanted to become a doctor, and his family wanted to support him as much as they could. Every night that Jacob came back with money, his parents would take some out and put it away for his future medical education.

In the winter, it was especially difficult for Jacob to go around. He would be outside for hours in the freezing cold, but he did not have much of a choice. One night, he knocked on a door that had a sign outside- Levinstein family. A young woman opened the door, and Jacob said, "Please, if you could give me just a little Tzeddaka, I would appreciate it." She checked her pockets for money, but didn't have.

Her father yelled down from upstairs, "Noah! Who's there?"

"It's for Tzeddaka!" She said. The father screamed in anger, "Enough with these collectors! They come all the time! Don't give them a penny."

The young lady felt bad, and she told Jacob to come in for a minute to at least give him a drink. She made him a hot cocoa and it tasted so delicious. Jacob could not remember the last time that he had hot cocoa. The warm house and the warm drink re-energized him, and he left very happy, thanking the nice young lady, Noah Levinstein, for her hospitality.

Twenty-two years later, Dr Jacob was the top doctor in his field. He was the head of the unit in the hospital in which he worked. One day, a patient was brought in with a rare, life-threatening illness. Her name was Noah Markovitz, and her father's name was Abe Levinstein. Jacob remembered the name, Noah Levinstein. This was the lady who had given him the hot cocoa years back!

From that moment, Jacob did over and above anything a doctor would normally do for a patient. He personally paid for very expensive medications that the hospital did not provide. He flew in a doctor who he knew would be able to help.

The treatment and care lasted for almost a year, and Baruch Hashem, at the end, she was back to normal. The time came for her to be discharged, and her husband and children were anxiously waiting in the hallway to bring her home. Her husband was given a large bill for all of the treatments, somewhere in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. At the end of the bill it said, "Paid in full with a cup of hot cocoa."

That little deed was something that Jacob would never forget, and he paid her back for it many, many times over because it was so precious to him. All of our deeds are so precious to Hashem- we can't even imagine, and He will pay us for each one of them in the future, many, many times over.

Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

Beshalach - Keriyat yam suf, water, manna, Amalek

- 1- Benei Israel leave Mitsrayim travelling in a roundabout way
- 2- Paroah regrets letting Benei Israel leave and chases after them toward yam suf
- 3- The sea splits. Benei Israel travels through
- 4- The sea crashes on the Mitsrim. Benei Israel sing Az Yashir. Benei Israel complain about the lack of water. Moshe makes the bitter water sweet in Mara.
- 5- Benei Israel travel to Midbar Sin and complain about the lack of meat and other food
- 6-Hashem sends slav and manna
- 7- Benei Israel again have no water and complain. Moshe draws water from a rock. Amalek attacks Benei Israel and is defeated.

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"They traveled three days in the desert and did not find water." (Shemot 15:22)

After the miracle of the splitting of Yam Suf, the Torah tells that Bnei Yisrael traveled three days without finding any water. They then arrived at Marah where they found water, but it was bitter and

they were unable to drink it. When they complained to Moshe, he prayed to Hashem, and Hashem told him how to resolve the problem.

One might think that this is the end of the story, but when we read the next pasuk, we see that right after this incident, they arrived in a place called Eilim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date trees. That means that if they would have just waited a little longer, they would have had an abundant supply of water, and it would not have been necessary for them to file their complaint.

The Torah is teaching us here that when things aren't going the way we might want them to go, we need to be patient. We shouldn't react too quickly and grumble and complain. It could be that the thing that we've been waiting for could be right around the corner. Only Hashem knows when it is appropriate for us to get what we are asking for, and sometimes it's even better that we should not get it at all. We need to trust in Hashem and understand that He is running the show, and through that we will be able to live our lives with tranquility and contentment. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

I Don't Know

Many situations can render people speechless. A confrontation with an important person, a frightening situation, or a set of unexpected circumstances can leave even individuals who are otherwise very talkative, dumbfounded.

Three of the hardest words for people to get out of their mouths are "I don't know." Many people feel that they must know everything about everything and give some answer – any answer, even an incorrect one – in order to avoid being classified as stupid by their friends and associates.

The urge to respond in order to cover ignorance can send people miles out of their way with incorrect travel directions. It can, unfortunately, even result in serious health complications when the perpetrator is a doctor who doesn't know something but gives an answer anyway to a trusting patient.

Our Sages teach that you should train your tongue to say, "I don't know." It prevents you from placing a "stumbling block before the blind." It also gives you the opportunity to learn and grow if you are one of those courageous souls who can admit to a lack of understanding.

When asked for information that you might not have, gather the courage to admit ignorance. Push the words past your lips: "I don't know." It's not so hard. After doing it a few times, it will become easier. As a bonus, you will start to accumulate a vast array of data from others that will turn you into someone who is "in the know!" (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

The Good Earth

"Soil is an especially interesting material. It is composed of many substances, and the purpose of this composite substance is to produce food, clothing, and shelter for mankind. Its vegetation serves to produce food or produce clothing from plants such as flax and cotton. The vegetation is also a source of wood that may be used for baking in stoves, heating in our houses, or building homes. Homes may be built with bricks that are produced from clay that the soil provides. This, the soil with its earth is blessed is like a storehouse of all good things".

Hashem created man from the soil, to teach us that inside of man is a storehouse of endless creativity for mankind. At the same time, He must have humility like the soil. Humility demonstrates gratitude and appreciation to Hashem for man's endless creativity. (Norman D. Levy - based on Rabbi Miller, Duties of the Heart)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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In Parashat Beshalach we read about the Man (food) that fell every day in the desert, and that was the food the Jewish people existed on throughout their sojourn in the desert. There is a Gemara in Yoma, Daf 76, which says that the students of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai asked [listen to the audio clip for the exact quote] why G-d didn't arrange it so that the Man should fall one day a year? Why did it have to be a daily event? He answered with an analogous story to what it is comparable to.

There was a king who had one son, and the king gave his son an allowance once a year. So, the son had a reason to visit his father once a year to pick up the check. The King later changed it and started to give him his allowance on a daily basis. And now the son needed to visit his father every single day. Rabbi Shimon Ben Yochai finished his parable and said the same applies to the Jewish people. A person in the desert at the time, who had 4 or 5 children, was worried that the Man would not come down the next day, and maybe Chas Veshalom famine, peril, or death would come upon them the next day. Therefore, every day he and his Jewish brethren needed to ask G-d and beseech G-d and pray in order that the Man would come down so they can feed their families.

What Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai was saying is that the advantage of the Man coming each day was in order to create a relationship between the Jewish people and G-d. Because now we needed to come to G-d in prayer every day. And that forged a

relationship. If G-d would give it to us once a year, we would only pray once and wait until the next year. But G-d loves us. The Man once a day was a sign from G-d that he loves us, in order that we come to him every day and talk with him and ask for something so that we would be closer to him.

With this, we explained the curse on the snake, the original snake in Gan Eden. It was cursed when it caused Adam and Chava to make the sin. The Pasuk writes that after G-d punished Adam and Chava with their curses, G-d tells the snake that it shall be relegated to eating the dirt of the ground for the rest of eternity. The dirt is going to be its food. The Ba'ale Musar ask, is that a curse? Wherever the snake goes he has food. Human beings must go and travel and look and search high and low in order to find Parnasa, and here the snake, G-d gave him the most accessible commodity as his livelihood, which is dirt. And therefore, the question is asked if such is indeed a curse? And based on what Rabbi Shimon Ben Yochai says in that Gemara, we understand that G-d was telling the snake that he doesn't want to have a relationship with the snake. G-d doesn't want talk to the snake again. Here is the food forever, and now leave me alone. The snake was being denied the ability to have a connection and a communication with G-d. However, Adam Harishon was cursed with the need to go out and work, but it was a blessing in disguise where G-d made it difficult in order that we now must come and pray every morning, afternoon, and night, in order to ask G-d for Parnasa.

So, it's a form of love that G-d causes us to work for a living, as he did in the desert bringing the Man on a daily basis.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
DEMOCRACY IS MESSY**

Even though our wonderful little state is still facing major diplomatic and terrorist persecution and problems, the Israeli public has become so accustomed to them that we hardly take real notice or have undue concern. Currently there really are few major issues that are presented to the public as being overly threatening or very serious.

Because of this we here in Israel have reverted to our favorite sport, which is political infighting. The government coalition is alternately viewed as being

solid or fragile depending on which point of view you wish to adopt. The old religious – secular bugaboo has reared its head once more and as usual harsh and unnecessary invective is being employed by all sides of this debate.

Democracy here in Israel is very noisy, quite messy and often borders on the vicious and personal. Winston Churchill reportedly was the author of the phrase that democracy is a terrible system of government but is the best one that mankind has been able to create until now. So there certainly is something to be said for all of the noise and heat that Democratic debate and different ideas and ideals always generate.

Israel is in a constant state of electioneering and no government in our seventy-year history has ever completed its full term in office. There is just too much joy in running for office while there is little happiness actually being in office. So in spite of the stability and relative quiet and security that we are currently enjoying, the political parties in Israel here in Israel are chomping at the bit to have elections. These elections are expensive, abrasive and usually inconclusive because coalition governments ultimately have to be formed and no party ever achieves a sufficient plurality, let alone the majority to rule.

There are benefits I feel to the way the country is governed, through coalition governments. Many points of view are forced to be heard and compromise is the ruler of the political landscape here. The country on one hand cannot be simply religiously observant and force its way of life on the private individual. On the other hand the country can never be completely secular out of deference to its religious heritage and traditions and in respect to a very large section of its population.

This makes for an uneasy balance. On the fringes of both groups there is constant bickering. It becomes a pawn in the larger chess game of Israeli politics. I feel that it is truly a shame that religious observance and a Torah way of life should be treated as a subject for political sloganeering and posturing. But I imagine that this also is part of the price that we pay for democracy.... and probably no one would want to have it any other way.

We not only agree to disagree but we revel in disagreeing. Yet on the whole, ours is a very peaceful society, full of great and good people and acts of kindness and generosity abounds. And this is true in all sectors of society and crosses over all social boundaries and political differences.

Political horse-trading is inevitable in any democratic society. It is part of human nature and will always be with us no matter who rules or which party is strongest. The greatest controversies, greater even than religious and secular, left or right, occur with the distribution of funds as outlined in the budget of the government and as approved by the Israeli parliament. There never is enough money to meet all the demands from all of the groups that make up our society.

So how the pie is sliced always becomes a matter of great controversy. And since there are pet projects that competing parties and legislators demand to be financed, the process of setting the budget is a laborious and complicated one. Nevertheless, it is probably the best example of democracy at work, for good or for better. There is nothing as enticing as the smell of government money because people foolishly believe that that money is free. But as every citizen of Israel is aware or should be aware, none of it is actually free.

The basic rule of all governmental economics is that there is no free lunch. Our economic system and governmental policy allows us to make this unpleasant truth palatable and it becomes part of the landscape of living in a democratic society. It is messy, expensive but really we would not have any other way

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Longer, Shorter Road

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 Anders Ericsson, popularised by Malcolm Gladwell, we know that greatness in many fields takes 10,000 hours of practice.[1] 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." [2] 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.

[1] 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.

[2] Eruvin 53b.

Rav Kook on the Perasha

Amalek attacked the Israelites at Rephidim, intentionally targeting the weak and those lagging behind. Joshua engaged Amalek in battle, successfully defending Israel against this merciless enemy. Then God instructed Moses:

"Write this as a reminder in the book, and recite it in Joshua's ears: I will completely obliterate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens." (Ex. 17:14)

Why did God command Moses to write down His promise to obliterate Amalek in the Torah? And why did Joshua need to be told verbally? Couldn't Joshua just read what was written in the Torah?

Two Missions: The people of Israel have two national missions. At Mount Sinai, God informed them that they would be a *mamlechet kohanim* ('kingdom of priests') as well as a *goy kadosh* ('holy nation') (Ex. 19:6). What is the difference between these two goals?

Mamlechet kohanim refers to the aspiration to uplift the entire world, so that all will recognize God. The people of Israel will fulfill this mission when they function as *kohanim* for the world, teaching them God's ways.

But the Jewish people are not just a tool to elevate the rest of the world. They have their own intrinsic value, and they need to perfect themselves on their own special level. The central mission of Israel is to fulfill its spiritual potential and become a *goy kadosh*. If Israel's sole function was to uplift the rest of the world, they would not have been commanded with *mitzvot* that isolate them from the other nations, such as the laws of *kashrut* and *circumcision*.

Two Torahs: God divided the Torah, our guide to

fulfill our spiritual missions, into two components: the Written Law and the Oral Law. The written Torah was revealed to the entire world; all nations can access these teachings. God commanded that the Torah be written 'in a clear script' (Deut. 27:8) — in seventy languages, so that it would be accessible to all peoples (Sotah 7:5). The Written Torah was meant to enlighten the entire world.

The Oral Law, on the other hand, belongs solely to the Jewish people. Since this part of Torah was not meant to be committed to writing, it is of a more concealed and less universal nature. In truth, the Oral Law is simply the received explanation of the Written Law, transmitted over the generations. Thus even the Written Torah is only fully accessible to Israel through the Oral Torah. But the other nations nevertheless merit a limited understanding of the Written Torah.

God's Name and Throne: Amalek rejected both missions of Israel. Amalek cannot accept Israel as a mamlechet kohanim instructing the world, nor as a goy kadosh, separate from the other nations with its own unique spiritual aspirations. God promised to 'completely obliterate' ("macho emcheh") Amalek. In Hebrew, the verb is repeated, indicating that God will blot out both aspects of Amalek's rejection of Israel.

Why did God command that His promise to destroy Amalek be written down and also transmitted orally? Since Amalek rejects Israel's mission to elevate humanity, God commanded that His promise to obliterate Amalek be recorded in the Written Torah. The Written Law is, after all, the primary source of Israel's moral influence on the world. And since Amalek also denies Israel's unique spiritual heritage, God commanded that this promise be transmitted verbally, corresponding to the Oral Law, the exclusive Torah of Israel.

When Amalek has been utterly destroyed, the Jewish nation will be able to fulfill both of its missions. This is the significance of the statement of the Sages: "God vowed that His Name and His Throne are not complete until Amalek's name will be totally obliterated." (Tanchuma Ki Teitzei 11; Rashi 17:16)

What are 'God's Name' and 'God's Throne'? They are metaphors for Israel's two missions: spreading knowledge of God — His Name — and creating a special dwelling place for God's Presence in the world — His Throne. Amalek and its obstructionist worldview must be eradicated before these two goals can be accomplished.

(Silver from the Land of Israel, pp. 135-137. Adapted from Midbar Shur, pp. 312-316.)

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

The wonders of the Ten Plagues were dwarfed by the rending of the Sea of Suf. In Egypt they had seen "the finger of G-d" (Shemot 8:15), but now they had witnessed "the great hand" (ibid. 14:31). "Ezekiel did not see in the vision of the Chariot of Heaven as much as a maidservant saw at the Sea" (Mechilta Shemot 14:2). The entire nation soared together with Moses to the heights of prophecy, and they uttered the exalted Song of the Sea which their posterity would repeat forever.

"Let me sing to G-d, for He has become exceedingly exalted; the horse and his rider He has cast into the Sea" (Shemot 15:1). They had feared the horse and the vengeful host of Pharoh, and they had feared the Sea even more. But the Master of the World had caused the Sea to become their ally, and it had destroyed the power of the enemy. This, at first sight, may seem a very small praise to the Creator of the Universe Who casts high celestial bodies into their orbits and Who catapults high comets through space. But we learn here an important principle: one additional grain of True Knowledge outweighs a mountain of vaguely possessed knowledge.

Their gratitude, expressed in the enthusiasm of song, was for the gift of True Knowledge which they had gained. "Let me sing to G-d, for He has become exceedingly exalted" in the minds of His children, by means of the spectacle whereby "the horse and his rider He has cast into the Sea".

For this event immensely elevated their faith in G-d and in His messenger Moses, and now they declared that "G-d would reign forever" (ibid 15:18) over them.

The Women, under Miriam's leadership, intoned this first verse which expressed gratitude for the gift of Knowledge of G-d. The fact that these women did this independently, something unequalled ever before or after, was due to the independent esprit de corps which they had developed in Egypt.

When they combated the pessimism of the downtrodden men and had begun a movement to build up the numbers of the children of Israel, under the inspiring leadership of the prophetess Miriam.

Quoted from "BEHOLD A PEOPLE" & "A NATION IS BORN" by Rabbi Miller ZT'L