

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

PESAH

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DEDICATION: In Honor of Eliyahu Hayim HaKohen

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Eruv Tavshilin

When Yom Tov falls on Friday, Halacha forbids cooking or making any preparations on that day for Shabbat, unless one follows the procedure known as "Eruv Tavshilin." The Eruv Tavshilin is made on Erev Yom Tov; thus, if Yom Tov falls on Friday and Shabbat, one would make the Eruv Tavshilin on Thursday, before the onset of Yom Tov. One takes a Ke'zayit (the volume of an olive) of bread – or, on Pesach, Matza – together with a cooked food – our practice is to use an egg – and sets them aside. He then makes the formal declaration stating that through this Eruv it will be permitted to cook, bake and make any preparations necessary on Yom Tov for Shabbat. Without making an Eruv Tavshilin, one may not prepare on Yom Tov for Shabbat.

Hacham Ovadia Yosef ZT"L writes that even if one did make an Eruv Tavshilin, he should preferably not cook and prepare for Shabbat late in the day on Yom Tov, shortly before the onset of Shabbat. He should endeavor to prepare the food early enough in the day that it could potentially be served to guests who arrive while it is still Yom Tov, before Shabbat. This is an additional measure of stringency; if one cooked food late in the day on Yom Tov, the food is nevertheless permissible for consumption on Shabbat. Preferably, however, one should prepare food earlier in the day.

EDITORS NOTES

We were blessed with a new baby last week to my daughter Aryana and son in law Steven. On Tuesday they honored me as Sandak and named their son Eliyahu Hayim. Steven explained that they liked the name Eliyahu and named the baby Hayim after Steven's grandmother who passed away last year, Dorothy Riholtz, Duba Chaya. She was a very special lady.

I thought of my mother's grandfather, Hayim Cohen of Aleppo and later Beirut. My Aunt Sally would show us pictures of their home in Tripoli on the Mediterranean in the northern part of Lebanon and tell us many stories about her grandfather. I imagined he would be happy to see his granddaughter's great grandson, born a Kohen and carrying his name.

The name Eliyahu Hayim has been carried by some very famous rabbis, covering the world of Judaism.

The first I thought of was Rabbi Eliyahu Hayim of Baghdad who was possibly the rabbi of my own great, great grandfather Ovadia Bibi who lived in Baghdad at the time and was a well know silver artisan.

Rabbi Eliyahu Hayim, perhaps best known as the father of the Ben Ish Chai, inherited his father's official position as Darshan (preacher). He was one of the most prominent rabbis in the city, whose opinion on Halachic matters was sought by colleagues as far away as Jerusalem, Saloniki, and Izmir. He chose not to accept any payment from the community for his services. Instead, he devoted a little time to business in order to support his family. My kind of rabbi !

R' Eliyahu Hayim was utterly devoted to fulfilling the precepts of the Torah in the most simple, practical sense. Some examples of his devotion have been recorded: He entrusted a friend in the Holy Land with money to buy land in order to be able to fulfill the Torah's commandments pertaining to agriculture. He bought a young female donkey in order to redeem its firstborn. He would always be on the lookout for bird's nests through which to fulfill the mitzvah of shilluch haken. R' Eliyahu's business prospered, and, in the guise of the treasurer of a charitable fund, he would contribute large amounts of his own money for charitable purposes. In fact, his devotion to charity was such that he even found a way to fulfill this precept on Shabbat. He would put aside sums of money before Shabbat, and on Shabbat he would stand near the money and pledge it to various charitable causes, distributing it after Shabbat.

For many years, R' Eliyahu was childless. One day he received a letter from the famous leader of Moroccan Jewry, Rabbi Yaakov Abu Chatzeirah (1807-1880) informing him that he would shortly be blessed with a son who would illuminate the Jewish world. The blessing was fulfilled in 1833 with the birth of his son Yosef Hayim (The Ben Ish Chai). Subsequently R' Eliyahu had four more sons and a daughter.

To the West during the lifetime of Rabbi Eliyahu Hayim, lived another by the name of Eliyahu Hayim

Meisel (1821–1912), He was the rabbi of Łódź. Born in Horodok in Vilna guberniia, Eliyahu Hayim Meisel attended the Volozhin yeshiva, where his fellow students included Yosef Ber Soloveichik of Brisk and Yitshak Elhanan Spektor. Meisel received rabbinic ordination at the age of 13 from Yitshak of Volozhin.

At age 17, Meisel began his professional career as the rabbi of Horodok. He went on to serve in a series of Jewish communities, gaining renown both as a scholar and a public activist on behalf of the needy. Following his election in 1866 as rabbi of Łomża, the crowning achievement of his career came in 1873, when he was chosen to be the rabbi of Łódź. During his tenure that extended until 1912, the Jewish community of that city grew from about 10,000 to approximately 160,000 people, comprising more than a third of the industrial city's population.

Although born and bred into Litvak culture, Meisel won the respect and affection of the Hasidic masses in a community dominated by a clique of prosperous, assimilated industrialists and merchants. In addition to overseeing the revision of basic religious needs, he worked energetically to convince many of his community's wealthiest members to join in organizing a series of institutions to serve the growing numbers of impoverished Jews drawn to economic opportunities in Łódź. Two such establishments were the Poznański Hospital and the vocational Talmud Torah school for boys.

Fluent in Russian, Meisel was often a leading member of rabbinic delegations to the central tsarist authorities. The respect and honors he was accorded by government officials reinforced his status among Jews in Łódź and beyond. Although not a prolific author, Meisel contributed numerous letters of approbation to new works of rabbinic scholarship. He also lent his name and signature to many published declarations of rabbinic opinion on controversial issues of the time.

Stories about Meisel credited him with preventing pogroms in Łódź and protecting Jewish interests in the city and beyond. In contrast, among followers of the Bund and other Jewish socialist movements, hostile tales were told about Meisel's actions during the Revolution of 1905, when he was alleged to have intervened on behalf of religiously observant Jews arrested during strikes and disorders, while hinting at how real radicals might be identified by their lack of ritual garments. Nevertheless, his achievements and personality continued to be honored and remembered by many for decades after his death.

I have often told a story over about Rav Eliyahu Hayim Meisel and I would love to repeat it here. One winter in Lodz was particularly cold and prices of firewood skyrocketed, leaving the poor people without any means to warm themselves. The famed Rav of the city, Rav Eliyahu Hayim Meisel, decided to take upon himself to collect money for firewood from the wealthy people of the city.

The first stop was the home of the wealthiest man in Lodz, Mr. Posnanski. When the doorman saw the Rav coming he quickly went to get his boss, who although wearing light clothing, immediately came to the cold door personally to greet the Rav. He invited the Rav in to talk. The Rav returned his greeting but began to talk without moving from the door.

The Rav was making small talk and casual conversation about nothing in particular. He discussed the comings and goings of the city, world news, on and on without seeming to indicate the reason for his visit. Mr. Posnanski stood and listened with respect while his bones began to freeze from the cold.

The Rav kept on going with endless conversation as if he were relaxing somewhere comfortable instead of standing in the freezing cold. After a long while the cold became too much for Mr. Posnanski and he apologetically asked the Rav if they can move into the warm living room. Without budging Rav Eliyahu Hayim said that now he will tell him why he came. He told him about the lack of firewood, and Mr. Posnanski gave him the large amount that he asked for. Only then did the Rav finally accede and followed the host into the living room.

When they sat down in the comfort and warmth, Mr Posnanski asked the Rav why he insisted on speaking for so long at the door in the cold. Rav Eliyahu Hayim said that the world says that a satisfied man cannot comprehend the pain of those who are starving. Similarly those who live in heated homes cannot fathom the pain of those living in frigid apartment with no heat. Had we sat inside you would not have given as generously as you did after standing in the cold for so long and experiencing a small taste of the poor peoples' pain. (Gedolei HaDoros)

And finally a few years later and from the Hasidic world came Rabbi Eliyahu Hayim Rosen (1899 - 1984). He was the founder and dean of the Breslov Yeshivah in Jerusalem. Reb Eliyahu Hayim was born in Pottosk, Poland and orphaned as a very young boy. At five he was sent to study Torah away from home. Excelling in his studies, he was admitted to the

famous Lomzer Yeshivah when only twelve. There he found a Tikkun HaKlali and met a Breslover Chassid who convinced him to travel to Uman. He arrived in Uman in 1914 and was extremely impressed that Rebbe Nachman's followers, though definitely chassidim, paid strict adherence to the Halakhah as delineated in the Shulchan Arukh - without what is commonly known as chassidic "twists."

While in Uman he heard that Rebbe Nachman had said: "The most difficult spiritual devotion is far easier than a simple physical transaction." Not understanding this, he sought an explanation from Reb Avraham Chazan. The then leader of the Breslover Chassidim replied simply, "Hitbodedut is the greatest spiritual devotion one can perform. All it takes is speaking with one's mouth. Even earning just a small amount of money requires more effort than that." From then on, Reb Eliyahu Hayim remained in Uman under Reb Avraham Chazan's tutelage.

A resident of Uman for twenty-two years, he was instrumental in the survival of many Breslover Chassidim in Uman and its environs during the famine which swept the Ukraine in 1933. He organized shipments from the breadlines in Moscow, mailing food back to Uman. He also applied to the Joint Distribution Committee for assistance. This last act caused him to be arrested by the NKVD (predecessor of the KGB) in November 1935, when both he and Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender were charged with making contact with foreign organizations. They were imprisoned, put on "trial," and were under threat of having the death sentence passed against them. However God was with them and a Jewish official in the Ministry of Justice in Kiev was put in charge of their case. Being close to the Breslover Chassidim, this official won them a reprieve. They were permitted to return home, but under "city arrest," forbidden to leave Uman.

Despite this, Reb Eliyahu Hayim returned immediately to Moscow. Even before the famine, in 1931, he had made a request to immigrate to Israel, so that upon his return he found his exit visa waiting for him. Reb Eliyahu Hayim fled to Jerusalem, arriving there in early summer 1936. He took up residence in the Meah Shearim quarter of "new Jerusalem" and established the Breslov Yeshivah in the Old City, in 1937. In early 1953, Reb Eliyahu Hayim initiated the construction of what is today the home of the Breslover Shul and Yeshivah on Meah Shearim Street in Jerusalem. For this, he was ridiculed even by some of the leading Breslover Chassidim. "For whom are you building such a large shul" he was asked. (There were maybe 150 Breslover Chassidim in all of Israel at the time.)

Today, nearly forty years later, his brilliant foresight can no longer be questioned. The synagogue, despite its size, is not quite large enough to house the growing numbers of Breslover Chassidim in our generation.

As an address for the brokenhearted, Reb Eliyahu Hayim was the number one stop. Anyone with a heavy heart who came to see him, walked away wondering why he'd been so troubled. It's not that the problems suddenly disappeared. Rather, they remained and were real, but with Reb Eliyahu Hayim's razor-sharp mind, all the accompanying pressures and anxieties had been analyzed, all the excess factors had been cut away. Now, all the person had to deal with was the one point around which the problem really centered and through which he would be able to correct his situation. He would always say, with a broad smile, "The Torah has Five Books. The Shulchan Arukh comprises four volumes. What happened to the fifth volume? This corresponds to one's common sense, knowing where and how to apply your knowledge."

Reb Eliyahu Hayim's inner strength and joy were ever-present. His level of yishuu hadaat (calmness and serenity) had no equal. His body weakened by typhus and other illnesses during his early years, he was quite weak towards the end of his life. Yet, as the true Breslover Chassid he was, he never missed reciting Chatzot and practicing hitbodedut. When asked how he found the strength for such devotions, he replied, "If you get used to it when you are young, it comes automatically after so many years." He taught us, over and over again, never to do anything without hitbodedut. During his last year, when he was in bed most of the time, he said, "What would I be able to do now, if I didn't have Rebbe Nachman's advice of hitbodedut."

Our new grandson bears a name and has much to live up to, but with such amazing parents, a father who is truly a scholar in every sense of the word, and a mother who is one of New York's Jewish world's super women, in addition to amazing grand and great grandparents, we can expect the world from him. We pray that Hashem allows him to grow to Torah, Chuppah and Maasim Tovim and allows him to reach his full potential.

They say the sandak has a special power to bless on the day of the Milah and as such, I wish each of you a year of health, happiness, peace and prosperity and success in your learning and in serving Boreh Olam.

Shabbat Shalom and Hag Sameyach, David Bibi

Speaking of Freedom

What makes news these days? A quick scan of the headlines reveals the following words: alleged; threatened; inflated; graphic; most shocking quotes; affair; spills all; tweets; tawdry details.

Beyond the headlines, lead stories in once-reputable publications read like supermarket tabloid exposes, often quoting profanities in full with no regard for the dignity of public discourse. The journalistic axiom "if it bleeds, it leads" has spread from lurid content to lurid language.

It would be nice to think that news outlets might adopt standards somewhere above the lowest social common denominator. But our modern economy is driven by ratings, views, likes, and shares. The bigger the audience, the higher the advertising income.

The sad reality is that human nature draws us like moths to the lewd and the crude, to the suggestive and the salacious. If we as consumers lack the self-discipline to filter our own online consumption, it's naïve to think that the media will do it for us.

TURNING A BLIND EYE - It's easy to discount the corrosive effect of salty speech upon our collective character. Some even celebrate as progressive the freedom from moralistic constraints that once limited the free use of spicy vocabulary. But just as there are reasons for linguistic rules that govern grammar and syntax, there are reasons for the social conventions that govern which words and ideas are fit for public consumption.

George Orwell observed that, "If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought." There's no question that language is under siege from every quarter. The mangling of sentence structure destroys verbal clarity. The strictures imposed by political correctness muddy thinking and understanding. And by delighting in profane and debased expressionism, we disconnect ourselves from the refinement that is the hallmark of human nobility.

Ironically, this is the cultural fallout of unrestricted freedom. And it is the continuation of a battle for the soul of mankind that has been raging for over 3000 years.

EXILE OF THE MIND - To be precise, it was 3540 years ago that the incipient Jewish nation went down to Egypt. Initially welcomed and honored upon their arrival, the sons of Jacob and their families expanded

and flourished. But exponential growth and prosperity aroused jealousy and suspicion. Before long, the Egyptians enslaved the Jews, eventually subjecting them to the most oppressive labors and cruelest forms of torture.

After 210 years, one man arose among them. Originally a prince of Egypt, Moses came to the defense of his brethren and, upon doing so, was forced to flee for his life. But his selflessness eventually positioned him to lead his people out of slavery and guide them onto the path toward spiritual and moral perfectionism.

But that nobility of spirit could not be set free in Egypt itself. According to Jewish mysticism, the Egyptian oppression was so profound that "speech was in exile." Without a free moment to think, without the opportunity for introspection and reflection, the Jews were incapable of elevating their speech above the mundane interchanges of slavishness. With their spirits broken by their taskmasters, they had no vision of achievement beyond day-to-day survival. Consequently, their language remained little better than the communicative grunting of beasts.

All that changed with the redemption of Passover. The Hebrew name, Pesach, can be interpreted phonetically as peh sach --- an open mouth. The same freedom that allows us to express ourselves however we choose carries with it the responsibility to choose how we express ourselves. If we permit our speech to become debased, then we debase our thoughts as well. And if we indulge in base thoughts, base actions are sure to follow. When that happens, we become slaves to the self-satisfaction of impulse and desire.

Clear use of language produces clarity of thought. Disciplined speech produces intellectual and moral discipline. Refined vocabulary goes hand in hand with refinement of character. Respectful silence promotes respect for all people and acknowledges the legitimacy of diverse opinions and perspectives.

Ultimately, elevated speech is the expression of true freedom.

Beginning this Friday evening, we celebrate a revolution that changed the world 3330 years ago. Mankind awoke to a new reality as headlines around the world reported how a small and downtrodden people had thrown off the shackles of slavery and embarked on a mission of higher purpose. The lesson of their redemption is to recognize the true value freedom – not as a goal, but as an opportunity to reach for the heavens.

As human beings, we are only free when we gain control over our own impulses, aspire to moral greatness, and commit ourselves to master our thoughts, our speech, and our actions – which, together, constitutes the ultimate refinement of our souls.

Rabbi Yonason Goldson is a professional speaker and trainer. Drawing upon his experiences as a hitchhiker, circumnavigator, newspaper columnist, high school teacher, and talmudic scholar, he teaches practical strategies for enhancing communication, ethical conduct, and personal achievement. He is the author of *PRaverbial Beauty: Secrets for Success and Happiness from the Wisdom of the Ages* is available on Amazon.

Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

Some ideas for a more meaningful chol ha'moed

- 1) Pesach is zeman herutenu and a zeman where we can build out emuna for the year. During the week, in shema kolenu let us pray for emunah. Pray to Hashem help that I should always trust in you and never doubt you. Also since it is a time heroot we can pray to Hashem to help us break free from the things that are holding us back from serving Hashem better (i.e, arrogance, laziness, desire for physical things...).
- 2) Let us try and have a little extra kavana on Pesach when saying az yashir. After going through the seders hopefully our az yashir will be different then it was before.
- 3) One important lesson of Pesach is hakarat ha'tov. Every time we say hallel we can try and take a few seconds before and think the purpose of this hallel is to thank and praise Hashem for all he gave me. Think about our family. Think about our blessings!
- 4) Eat much matsa as possible. Some opinions (Gaon MeVilna) hold every time we eat matsah on Pesach we fulfill a mitsvah de'orayta. When we eat the matsa let us think about the lessons of the matsa. The matsa represents emuna, humility, and overcoming the yester ha'ra.

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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The Forgotten Precondition to Prayer

We read in Parashat Beshalah that when Beneh Yisrael found themselves trapped against the sea by the Egyptian army, G-d spoke to Moshe and said, "Ma Tis'ak Elai" – "Why are you crying out to Me?" (14:15). Rashi explains that Moshe was standing in prayer, and G-d now told him that he no longer

needed to pray, as his prayers were answered. God told him that Beneh Yisrael should travel forward into the sea, which would miraculously split to allow them to cross safely.

Like every verse and every word in the Torah, there are multiple layers of interpretation of G-d's response to Moshe. One interpretation offers us a vital lesson about prayer, and about religious life generally.

Later in Parashat Beshalah, we read of Beneh Yisrael's complaints to Moshe and Aharon over the lack of food, to which Moshe and Aharon replied, "Ve'nahnu Ma Ki Talinu Alenu" – "What are we, that you complain to us?" (16:8). The Sages of the Midrash understood this as an expression of great humility. Although Moshe and Aharon were among the greatest men who ever lived, they nevertheless saw themselves as "Ma" – lowly and insignificant.

The commentators note that if the word "Ma" can denote humility and selflessness, then we arrive at a new and profound understanding of G-d's response to Moshe at the shores of the Yam Suf. The phrase "Ma Tis'ak Elai" can be read to mean, "With humility you cry out to Me." We must cry out to G-d with a sense of "Ma," with a recognition of just how lowly we are in comparison to Him, and how unworthy we are of His assistance and grace.

Indeed, the Rama (Rav Moshe Isserles of Cracow, 1525-1572), in his glosses to the Shulhan Aruch (Orah Haim 98:1), writes that before one begins to pray, he should reflect upon his lowliness. This is a crucial precondition to prayer, but unfortunately, it is something that is often neglected. When we think of ways to improve prayer, we naturally think of the importance of remaining quiet during the service, of proper concentration, and of understanding the words. Of course, these are all crucially important. But we cannot neglect this explicit ruling of the Shulhan Aruch, that we must think about our lowly stature and unworthiness before we stand before G-d to pray.

Why is the feeling of humility so vital to the effectiveness of prayer?

The Kabbalistic word "Sha'areh Orah" teaches that prayers in Eretz Yisrael are more powerful than prayers outside the Land of Israel because they do not have to travel. When we pray in the Diaspora, our prayers need to "journey" all the way to the site of the Temple in Jerusalem, and along the way, they are vulnerable to the negative spiritual forces that seek to interfere with our prayers and prevent them from reaching the Heavenly Throne. When one prays in

the Land of Israel, however, the prayers have a far shorter distance to travel, and thus there is far less risk of their failing to reach their destination. There is, however, a way to ensure that prayers anywhere in the world ascend directly to G-d without any threat of interference. The verse says in Yeshayahu (57:15) that G-d resides with "Daka U'shfal Ru'ah" – those who suffer and those who are humble. When a person experiences pain, such as in times of illness or other personal crises, G-d is close to him; likewise, G-d is close to one who is lowly and humble. And thus such people are far more likely to have their prayers accepted. Since G-d is right near them, their prayers do not need to travel, and can reach the Almighty without interference.

This is why an ill patient's prayers for himself are more effective than other people's prayers on his behalf, and this is also why humility is such an important prerequisite for prayer. Before we begin praying, we must take a few moments to contemplate our lowliness, our inadequacies, our mistakes and our shortcomings. Once we realize our low stature, G-d will come near and eagerly listen and lovingly accept all our prayers, Amen.

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SOD HAPARASHA

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Rabbi Wein - BESHALACH

The centerpiece of this week's parsha is naturally the great song of Moses and of the Jewish people after their moment of deliverance from Pharaoh and the flooding sea. This song of Moses and of Israel is repeated daily throughout the centuries of Jewish life in our morning prayer service.

The exultation of the moment is still retained and felt many generations later in the unmatched prose and poetry written in the Torah. What makes this song unique is that there is no reference to human bravery, to the courage of the Jewish people in plunging into the sea or to the leadership of Moses and Aaron in shepherding the Jewish people through this crisis. Rather the entire poem/song is a paean of praise and appreciation dedicated to the God of Israel.

God operates, so to speak, through human beings and world events. Many times His presence is hidden from our sight. Sometimes it is even willfully ignored. In later victories and triumphs of the Jewish people and of Israel, it is the human element that helps

fashion those victories and triumphs that is acknowledged and celebrated.

But here in the song of Moses and Israel we have an acknowledgement of God's great hand without ascribing any credit to human beings and natural and social forces. I think that this is perhaps the one facet that makes this song so unique. Compare it to the song of Deborah, which forms the haftora to this week's parsha. In that song the prophetess assigns a great deal of credit to the armed forces of Israel, to Barak its general, and even to Deborah herself, a fact that does not escape the notice of the rabbis of the Talmud. No such self-aggrandizement appears in the song of Moses and Israel at Yam Suf.

This is completely in line with the character of Moses who is described in the Torah as being the most humble and self-effacing of all human beings. There is no question that without Moses there would not have been an exodus from Egypt nor salvation of Israel on the shores of the Yam Suf. But it would be completely out of character for Moses to assign any of the credit for these enormous and miraculous achievements to himself or his actions and leadership.

Thus the greatest of leaders and the most gifted of prophets attains that championship of leadership and prophecy by downplaying his role. Moses is well aware of his greatness and his unique relationship with the God of Israel. He is not naïve enough to think of himself as a plain ordinary human being. To do so would really be a form of ersatz humility. But he is wise enough to realize that this exalted status that he has attained is little more than a gift that God has bestowed upon him.

From the beginning of his leadership career, when he attempted to refuse becoming the leader of Israel till his last days on earth, he retains this innate humility, which in fact allows him to be the strongest of leaders and most courageous of prophets. There is a lesson in this for all later generations and for all of us that aspire to positions of leadership and importance. That is why this song of Moses and Israel is repeated daily in Jewish life.

Rav Kook on the Perasha

The Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 23:15) makes a startling claim about the Israelites who witnessed the splitting of the Red Sea:

"Come and see how great were those who crossed the Sea. Moses pleaded and beseeched before God that he should merit seeing God's Divine Image, 'Please, show me Your glory!' (Ex. 33:19). Yet God told him, 'You may not see My face....' But every

Israelite who descended into the Sea pointed with his finger and said, "This is my God and I will glorify Him" (Ex. 15:2).

Could it be that those who crossed the Red Sea saw more than Moses, about whom the Torah testifies, "No other prophet like Moses has arisen in Israel" (Deut. 34:10)? Furthermore, Moses was also there when they crossed the sea — he certainly saw what everyone else experienced!

Total Suspension of Nature - Clearly, the Midrash cannot be referring to the level of prophecy, for it is a fundamental article of faith that Moses' prophecy was unparalleled. Rather, the Midrash must be referring to some aspect of prophetic vision that was only experienced by those who participated in this miraculous crossing.

What was so special about the splitting of the Red Sea? God performed other miracles for Israel, but those miracles did not entail the complete abrogation of the laws of nature. Nature as a whole continued on its usual path; God only temporarily changed one aspect for the benefit of His people.

But with the miraculous splitting of the Sea, God suspended the entire system of natural law. The Sages wrote that this miracle did not occur solely in the Red Sea. On that night, bodies of water all over the world were split. According to the Maharal, Rabbi Yehudah Loew of Prague, water symbolizes the physical world, so that this miracle affected the entire physical realm of creation (Gevurot Hashem, chap. 42). The entire rule of nature was breached.

Immediate Awareness of God's Rule - Our world is governed by the framework of cause and effect. When the underlying rule of nature was suspended during the splitting of the Red Sea, the entire system of causality was arrested. During that time, the universe lost its cloak of natural law, and revealed itself as a pure expression of divine will.

What is the essence of prophecy? This unique gift is the ability to look at God's works and recognize in them His greatness.

As long as nature's causal structure is functioning, a prophet may attain sublime and even esoteric knowledge, but he will never achieve immediate awareness of God's directing hand. Through his physical senses and powers of reasoning, the prophet will initially recognize the natural system of cause and effect. Only afterwards does the prophet become aware that the entire universe is created and directed by an ultimate Cause.

At Mount Sinai, God told Moses, "You will only see My back." What is God's 'back'? Maimonides explained that this is a metaphor for the system of natural law by which God governs the universe. God granted Moses an awareness of the inner connectivity within creation. This understanding of God's true nature exceeded that of any other prophet.

When God split the Sea, all laws of nature were temporarily suspended. God took "direct control" of the universe. Those witnessing this miracle were instantly aware of God's intervention and providence, each according to his spiritual level. Certainly none reached the prophetic level of Moses. But whatever enlightenment they attained, it was perceived immediately. They did not need to first examine the natural system of causality, and from this, recognize the prime Cause of creation.

Therefore, those experiencing the miracle of the Red Sea called out spontaneously, "THIS is my God." Their comprehension was not obscured by the logical system of cause and effect; they witnessed God's revealed rule directly, without the cloak of causality.

SEVENTH DAY OF PESACH AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER ZT'L

The Song of the Sea is read from the Torah every year when the weekly Parashah is read, and it is read on the seventh day of Pesach, and it is recited daily in our prayers; and so it shall be until forever. The spectacle of the splitting of the Sea of Suf gave an impetus to Israel and causes them to go forward until the end of time.

The episode of the splitting of the Sea of Suf afforded one of the most stupendous spectacles in history. The mighty waters which Israel had feared more than they feared Pharaoh, now parted and piled up to shield them like crystal walls on both sides of the uncovered sea-bottom; and Israel, protected by the walls of water against the darts and javelins of Egypt, marched across on the dry path. It was a never to be forgotten day of G-d. All of Nature was in turmoil because its Master was marching with his children. The pillar of cloud which preceded them now moved back to intervene between Israel and Egypt. At the end of the night, fire and cloud descended upon the pursuing army which was now in the middle of the sea-road, whereas Israel had gained the opposite shore. The chariot wheels of Egypt burned off. Now they exhorted each other to flee for their lives, for they saw that G-d was fighting against them for Israel; but it was too late. The trap was sprung; G-d

bade Moses stretch out his arm to send the mighty walls toppling down upon the pursuers, who sank to the bottom like lead, while Israel stood on the shore electrified by the spectacle. The sea which had threatened Israel with a worse fate than Pharaoh's wrath, had rescued them from their enemy; and it now washed up on the shore a huge wealth of booty.

"Then would sing Moshe and Bnei Yisrael". (15:1)

Did the Jews rejoice at the destruction of the Egyptians? Hashem does not rejoice at the destruction of any of His creatures, and it is stated that Hashem did not permit the angels to sing at the drowning of Pharaoh's host (Megillah 10B).

But here we see that Moshe and the Bnei Yisrael sang, and even rejoiced in every detail of the destruction of their enemy. We understand therefrom that men, unlike angels, must utilize such opportunities to gain more Awareness of Hashem, and more Gratitude to Him. Angels cannot make any progress, but Moshe and Yisrael can gain understanding of Hashem and thereby improve themselves greatly.

And that is our function in this life, to improve ourselves.

Not only did Hashem rescue Israel, but He also granted them the exultation of seeing the destruction of their pursuers, while standing safely on the shore. When we see the downfall of the wicked, we gain more Awareness of Hashem's power and His kindness:

"Be elevated, O Judge of the world! Turn back recompense (revenge) upon the arrogant" (Tehillim 94:2).

Quoted from "Behold A People" & "A Nation Is Born"

Jews have a right to their 'own land,' Saudi crown prince says as charm offensive continues

Saudi Arabia appears to be in the middle of an attempt to rebrand the kingdom as progressive and, judging from the headlines since last year, the strategy appears to be working, at least to some extent.

Last September, the kingdom announced it would finally allow women to drive. One month later, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said he wanted to return to a "moderate Islam." Now, in an interview with The Atlantic magazine's Jeffrey Goldberg, the crown prince has acknowledged that Jewish people have a right to their own homeland --- long a taboo for the conservative kingdom that was long known as a fierce foe of Israel's creation.

While Saudi Arabia in the past has talked about recognizing Israel in the context of a peace deal with the Palestinians, the crown prince's straight up acknowledgement that the Jews have a right to a homeland is the clearest statement to date.

On a practical level, Saudi Arabia has de-facto acknowledged that right since at least 2002 when it began sponsoring an initiative to foster a two-state solution - a solution that has also long been supported by the United States, even though with different premises. But officially, Saudi Arabia does not recognize the state of Israel.

While Saudi officials made Israel's withdrawal to its territory prior to the 1967 Israeli-Arab war a precondition for closer relations in the past, that fundamental demand was not explicitly repeated by the crown prince in the Atlantic interview.

"I believe that each people, anywhere, has a right to live in their peaceful nation. I believe the Palestinians and the Israelis have the right to have their own land. But we have to have a peace agreement to assure the stability for everyone and to have normal relations," he told The Atlantic.

The timing for the acknowledgment does not appear to be a coincidence, as it follows months of diplomatic gestures, including the opening of Saudi Arabia's airspace to commercial Israel-bound flights and the acknowledgment of backchannel communications between both governments.

After decades of threatening rhetoric, Saudi officials appear increasingly willing to strike a carefully conciliatory tone as they seek a new ally to confront their common arch enemy Iran and build stronger economic ties.

"Saudi Arabia has traditionally been a place that has produced a lot of anti-Semitic propaganda. Do you think you have a problem with anti-Semitism in your country?" Goldberg asked later in the Atlantic interview, to which Mohammed responded: "Our country doesn't have a problem with Jews. Our Prophet Muhammad married a Jewish woman. Not just a friend --- he married her."

"Our prophet, his neighbors were Jewish. You will find a lot of Jews in Saudi Arabia coming from America, coming from Europe. There are no problems between Christian and Muslims and Jews. We have problems like you would find anywhere in the world, among some people. But the normal sort of problems," said Mohammed, adding that there were "lot of interests we share," including economically.

The crown prince's economic reasoning laid out in the interview will likely play into the hands of critics who have long suspected the kingdom's progressive rebranding to be primarily a marketing ploy. When the crown prince announced a more "moderate Islam" last year, critics cautioned that the declaration might have more to do with boosting the kingdom's economy rather than reversing decades-old practices.

Mohammed, 32, has attempted to position himself as a favorite for the kingdom's younger citizens, who are less religious than older generations and are facing disproportionately high unemployment rates. The Saudi leader is currently pursuing a major reform plan, named Saudi Vision 2030, to revitalize the kingdom's economy. The need for reforms may already have reversed at least some of the leadership's previous ultraconservative stances, including the driving ban for women. The step was widely interpreted as a sign that the modernizers within the Saudi government may have gained ascendancy over the conservative hard-liners. Saudi Arabia's hard-liners have been under mounting pressure to agree to such proposals, as the kingdom has become increasingly engulfed in economic woes.

But the reforms have still been limited. Women's subordination to men remains unchanged and repressions against Shiites have continued --- despite Mohammed's assurances in the interview that all was well between Sunnis and Shiites in the country.

In fact, Crown Prince Mohammed has repeatedly stirred tensions against Iran, a majority-Shiite country. In an interview with the Guardian newspaper last year, he blamed Saudi Arabia's arch enemy Shiite Iran for Saudi Arabia's turn toward Wahhabism, an ultraconservative branch of Islam, which is being promoted by Riyadh both domestically and abroad. Religious scholars say that the Saudi state is deeply rooted in and has long been intimately entwined with Sunni Wahhabism. That same Islam was widely promoted in Muslim countries around the world, thanks to the Saudi state's deep pockets.

In the Atlantic interview, Mohammed nevertheless doubled down on his criticism, saying that "the Iranian supreme leader makes Hitler look good."

One possible interpretation of his remarks? In comparison to Iran, Israel might not be so bad after all.