

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE**MATOT-MASEI****Haftarah: Yirmiyahu 2:4-28, 3:4, 4:1-2****July 14 2018 Ab 2 5778****Rosh Hodesh Ab is today Friday, July 13th****DEDICATIONS: In memory of Victoria Bat Rosa – 1 AB – Victoria Gindi**

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EDITORS NOTES

Today (Friday) is Rosh Hodesh Av. It is the day my grandmother Victoria Bat Rosa, Victoria Gindi, passed away. I wrote in years passed that, my grandmother was the daughter of a Kohen, the wife of a Kohen, the mother, grandmother and great grandmother of Kohanim and in many ways it seems apropos that she passed away on the same day as her ancestor Aharon HaKohan, Aaron the High Priest.

Living Beyond the Veil and Within the Fog – 5776
 Why are we mourning these days?

A couple of weeks ago as we finished reading the Sefer Torah on Shabbat and we were announcing the fast of the 17th of Tevet, someone asked me, "What are we supposed to focus on during the fast and the three weeks?" A great question and I asked the Hazan to pause.

The world speaks of guaranteeing the rights of Moslems to their holy sites in Jerusalem. Few of those making that call remember that in mid-1949 Israel and the Arab states agreed to an armistice in separate agreements, The West Bank of the Jordan was occupied by Jordan and later annexed. The Old City of Jerusalem together with all its holy sites was also in Jordanian hands. Every Jew was forced to leave the Old City and the Synagogues and Jewish places were destroyed.

Less than 18 years later, came the Six Day War and the miraculous liberation of the Western Wall.

A taxi driver described the scene. "I was there. I was a soldier in a unit fighting the Jordanians in the Old City. Our troop advanced into a section of the Old city. Although I had never been there before, and the Arabs had animals grazing and manure scattered between their houses and the ancient walls of the Old

City, I seemed to recognize where I was. Suddenly I realized I was standing at the Western Wall.

"I went to a school that was not religious. I remember we only had one textbook with anything religious in it. It had three religious pictures: the Tomb of Rachel, the Cave of Machpella where Avraham, Sara and the other forefathers are buried, and the Western Wall.

"This was the picture of the place from my schoolbook. I was standing at the Western Wall. Suddenly I couldn't move. My entire body was tingling, and I became overwhelmed by the holiness of where I was. Over my head I felt the presence of the "Shechina" (the Presence of G-d which is said to always dwell at the Western Wall), and I became completely paralyzed.

"Out of nowhere a Rabbi appeared. Rabbi Goren. We were soldiers ready for battle, but he was only a civilian. We ran to cover him. He was carrying a shofar, and was headed straight for the Wall.

"As he reached the wall he said the Shehechianu prayer, and then took his shofar and began to blow.

"We had no orders to capture the Kotel. We just ended up there."

Soldiers ran to the Kotel. Some were brought up in a religious home and they cried. Others who were not religious but had some traditional Jewish upbringing cried. There was one soldier who grew up in the North, in a communist kibutz completely devoid of any religion or tradition. He knew nothing of the Temple, neither its history nor its remnants. He too began to cry.

A religious soldier looked at him surprised and asked: "I know why I am crying, but why are you crying?" The nonreligious soldier answered back: "I am crying because I don't know what I am supposed to be crying about."

I explained that unlike our forefathers, we are living in a different world and almost all of us have lost sight over why we should be crying during these three weeks. And perhaps more than anything, that's why we should be crying. I suggested that each of us

dedicate time over the next three weeks to explore and have an inkling of understanding as to what we lost.

One of the rabbis came over to me at and asked, "what should he be reading?"

There are countless great books out there, I noted. But after having just read the Haftara, I suggested focusing on the words of the prophets and trying to imagine a world where the reality of G-d was palatable, where cures came from prophets and not doctors, and where miracles didn't need to be shrouded in a cloud of plausible deniability. I suggested that he use those words to find a place prior to the destruction after which the fog of confusion and the veil separating us from our Father in Heaven fell upon us.

Earlier this week in our class in the morning we were discussing a Gemarah from the Tractate Sanhedrin Page 102B

When Rav Ashi reached Perek Chelek, he told his students that "tomorrow, we will discuss our colleagues," equating the level of scholarship of these kings (Yarov'am, Achav, and Menasheh) with his own.

Menasheh appeared to him that night in a dream and rebuked him for calling him his "colleague." I remember Rabbi Noah Weinberger of Aish, Z'SL telling the story in his animated way as only he could. "Just imagine, Menashe, this master of idolatry turning to this great sage and yelling at him, 'You ignoramus, how dare you even think to equate yourself with me?'

Now let us pause for a moment.

Who was Rav Ashi? After the death of Rav Papa (apx 370 of the Common Era), Rav Ashi was known as the greatest Torah scholar of his time. He felt that it was his duty to make use of the wisdom granted him by the Almighty, and to write down all the laws and the conversations of the Talmud, in order to perpetuate it for all time. He arranged the "Gemara" (Talmud) in the first thirty years of his leadership, and in the second thirty years he edited it. It was a gigantic task which Rav Ashi handled as only he, the great Torah scholar, could. We Jews dare not underestimate the debt of gratitude we owe him for having compiled the "Sha'as," which we call "the Babylonian Talmud." The story is told that, shortly before his death, Rav Ashi met the Angel of Death on the street and begged him to let him live another thirty days to enable him to review the Talmud just once more, as it is said: "It is good for one to come to the next world with the Talmud in his hand." The

Angel of Death agreed, went away, and returned thirty days later.

And who was Menashe? The son of Chizkiyahu, Menashe, was only twelve years old when he succeeded his father to the throne of Judah. In no way did he resemble his father whose piety and faith were not equaled by any other king who followed him. The young ruler, despite the efforts of his father to train him in the ways of Torah, was immediately surrounded by the clique of court-notables who, during Chizkiyahu's reign, had gone into hiding. Menashe's weak character and susceptibility to idolatry made him a willing tool in the ruthless and selfish hands of these men. Despite the ceaseless efforts and admonitions of the greatest prophets of all times, Isaiah and others, the people of Judea followed in the evil steps of their king. The temples and altars of the idol-worshippers which had been destroyed under Hezekiah were reconstructed. Even into the Holy Temple they brought idols, and some of the basic concepts of Jewish thought and tradition were falsified and distorted. A complete reversal to idolatry as it had been practiced under King Ahaz, Chizkiyahu's father, threw Judea into turmoil of immorality and lawlessness. The believers in the one and only G-d were persecuted, and even the sacred person of the prophet Isaiah was not spared. When he came out sharply against the evil ways of King Menashe and his notables, Isaiah was murdered. Stranger still was that Isaiah may have been Menashe's grandfather.

So back to our story keeping in mind that Rav Ashi represents the "greatest" in our minds while Menashe represents the "worst"!

In the dream, Menasheh asks Rav Ashi, "Where do you cut the bread when you recite the Berachah of ha'Motzi?"

Rav Ashi admitted truthfully that he did not know. He asked Menasheh to teach him the answer, and he told him that he would teach it in the Yeshiva, in Menasheh's name, the next day. Menasheh taught him that the Berachah is to be recited upon the first place that the bread becomes baked. Based on this, in our days, we typically look for the most well done part and that is how we hold.

Rav Ashi then asked Menasheh, "If you are so wise, then why did you worship Avodah Zarah?" Menasheh replied that the Yetzer ha'Ra was so great at that time that "even you would have lifted up your coattails and run to worship Avodah Zarah." The following day, Rav Ashi referred to Menasheh by saying, "Let us discuss our teachers," and he did not say "our colleagues."

We have to ask. What was different about Menashe's time that would have drawn Rav Ashi to sin in a way that he would never even consider doing in his own time? How would it be possible for Rav Ashi to succumb to idolatry? We all look at idolatry as a foolish worship of stones and wood. Would any of us even imagine that we would succumb, much less the editor of the Talmud? And where is the lesson for our own time?

The Talmud in Yoma writes that following the destruction of the Temple, realizing the danger of the inclination towards idolatry, the Rabbis realized that they needed to rid the world of this desire. They ordered a fast of three days and three nights, after which [the yetzer hara] was surrendered to them. He came out from the Holy of Holies like a young fiery lion. The Rabbis clarify that following this event the craving for idolatry left the world.

I explained to the class that morning. We need to understand Hashem created and maintains this world in perfect balance as the Rambam teaches. The world is always 50/50. What does it mean that inclination of idolatry was removed? How are we to understand?

The answer seems clear. In the Talmud the sages recorded ten miracles that occurred regularly in the Temple. Hashem was very real. Prophets heard and relayed his word. Questions could be asked through the Urim VeTumim. There was universal knowledge of Hashem. With Hashem so real, how then could one go after avoda zara? The answer is because; G-d is committed to keep the world in balance. Where the genuineness of the Divine is so tangible, contact and craving for evil had to be just as existent. Idolatry in those days as the Ramban explains was very real. There was a dark side and idolatry was accessing the dark side for one's own power and enrichment. Yes, straight out of Starwars, "The dark side is a pathway to many abilities some consider to be unnatural."

Menashe must have been a brilliant scholar. His father Chizkiyahu who could have been the Mashiach took him each day on his shoulders to learn from the greatest academics of the day, from prophets and wise men, from his own grandfather Isaiah. Menashe knew that Hashem was very real as we see in Divrei HaYamim when he was brought in chains to the Assyrian king and he turned to Hashem to save him. Yet in a world where Hashem was so real, the attraction towards evil was just as real and Menashe succumbed.

How real was Hashem in those days that to balance His own reality He allowed the dark side to exist?

And how much can we understand from the fact that this dark side had to be completely removed from our world? What is revealed in the need for every vestige of it to be taken away and destroyed to maintain the balance once the Temple was taken from us? We can only begin to fathom how much we lost, the prophecy, the miracles and the direct-connect, when the veil and fog of exile descended upon us.

This is why as we begin these nine days we need to mourn and cry. Our reality is no reality. We lost the true reality. We are orphans separated from our home. The lifting of this veil and this fog is what we must pray for. May we be zoche to see that day quickly, Amen!

Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi
(The two bios are primarily from Chabad.org)

Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

Matot - Benei Israel conquer Midyan and prepare to enter Israel (year 40 in the midbar)

- 1- The laws of oaths and vows and how they can be nullified
- 2- Benei Israel takes revenge killing all the men of Midyan
- 3- Moshe says to also kill the women and male children. Laws of koshering kelim (that were taken from Midyan as spoils).
- 4- The spoils of the war are divided up - What the soldiers and Elazar received
- 5- The spoils of the war are divided up - What the rest of Benei Israel and Leviim received. The soldiers bring a korban and gold as thanks for their success in the war.
- 6- Gad and Reuben ask Moshe to have their inheritance on the other side of the Jordan.
- 7- Gad and Reuben agree to come conquer Israel with the other tribes and Moshe gives them the land

Masei - A recap of Benei Israel's journeys, Israel is divided among Benei Israel (year 40 in the midbar)

- 1- Benei Israel's first 7 travels from Mitsrayim to Israel (all took place before matan Torah)
- 2- Travels 8-42 to Eretz Israel.
- 3- The boundaries of Eretz Israel are given.
- 4- Leaders are appointed to take possession of the land for each tribe
- 5- Benei Israel are told of the land they must set aside for the Leviim (who did not receive land)
- 6- Cities of refuge are set aside. Laws are given for one who kills by mistake or intentionally.

7- Menashe expresses concern that Slaphchad's land will be lost to other tribes if his daughters marry out of their tribe

Le'refua shelema Elisheva bat Esther and Eliyahu ben Yvonne Chava

**FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE
"But what you have expressed verbally you must fulfill." (Bemidbar 32:24)**

The Hafess Hayim wrote many books, which he would sell all over. Each time books came back from the printer, he would go over them to make sure that there were no flaws. He was afraid that a damaged book would be sold and then he would transgress the sin of stealing.

Once, the Hafess Hayim asked his daughter to review a few of the books. She apologized, explaining that she was on her way to do something her mother had asked of her. "But in the evening, when I return, I'll be able to look over even 100 books!"

That night, when she returned home, she found exactly 100 books waiting on the table for her to review! When she expressed her surprise, her father said, "You should know, dear daughter, that you have to watch what you say! You clearly said, 'I'll be able to go over even 100 books!' If so, chas veshalom that you should utter a falsehood!"

In 5675 (1915), the Hafess Hayim was in Moscow together with his son-in-law. The Hafess Hayim sat in his hotel and spoke with one of the wealthy men of Moscow, who was a major supporter of the Yeshivah in Radin.

At the time, it became necessary to send an urgent telegram to someone, so his son-in-law went into the next room to arrange the telegram, while the Hafess Hayim remained in his place and continued talking to the philanthropist.

As they were speaking, the man uttered some harsh words against someone. The Hafess Hayim hurried to stop him in midsentence and said, "There in the next room, they are sending a telegram, and they are careful to count each and every word. Do you know why? Because they know that they have to pay for every single word!"

"Do you hear?" the Hafess Hayim asked. "One has to pay for every single word!" Rabbi Reuven Semah

The Torah teaches that if a person kills someone unintentionally, the relatives of the victim might try to take revenge on him. He is therefore required to escape to an Ir Miklat, a city of refuge, where the relatives would not be permitted to harm him. He must remain there until the current kohen

gadol passes away, after which he is allowed to return to his home. What is it about the death of the kohen gadol that now makes it safe for the unintentional killer to return to his home town?

The Rambam explains that it's human nature for a person who is suffering to be comforted to some extent when he sees that others are also suffering in a similar way. When he sees that he is not alone in his suffering, he is able to put things into perspective and cope with the issue more easily. Therefore the death of the kohen gadol, who was one of the highest ranking people of the nation, was a consolation to the relatives, who would no longer feel the need to take revenge.

Every person in the world has issues and problems that he needs to deal with. Sometimes we might feel overwhelmed and close to despair. An important thing to remember is that we are not alone in our suffering. No matter what we are going through, there are surely others who are suffering as much as we are, if not more. This doesn't take away the pain, but it does make it easier to face the problem and to endure it, and maybe even to come up with a solution.

We never want to see others suffer, but by opening our eyes to our fellow man's problems rather than to exclusively focus on ourselves, we might be in a position to help that person overcome it. And more than that, we will be able to have a more realistic perspective on our own issues, and have an easier time getting past it. Furthermore, when we see others who are experiencing hardships that are different than our own, we realize how fortunate we are that we don't have that problem. So even though we have our own issues, we understand that it could have been worse, and that realization gives us hizzuk to withstand it.

May Hashem remove all the suffering from all of the members of our nation, and may we always see happy and joyous occasions. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Perfect Timing

"The tremendous stores of oil in the ground and the bottomless seas were put there by Hashem for people to use. That oil is powering all the vehicles of the world for our benefit, to transport people and goods to where they are needed."

From the time of creation, oil and gas were prepared for man kinds benefit. In this century, we have become dependent on such minerals. With faith, we can come to realize that Hashem has sustenance prepared for man, all in its proper time. (Norman D. Levy, Based on Rabbi Millers; Duties of the Mind)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Breaking the Selfish Instinct

Parashat Maseh introduces the law of "Ir Miklat," the cities of refuge where one would have to live after killing somebody accidentally. A modern-day example might be a case where one lowers a grand piano out of his house through the window with a pulley. The pulley system malfunctions, and the piano flies down the side of the house, killing an innocent pedestrian walking by. In such a case, the Torah requires the person who lowered the piano to relocate to an Ir Miklat. He must leave everything behind, including his synagogue, his community and his business, and move to one of the designated cities of refuge. He must remain there until the death of Kohen Gadol, regardless of how many years it takes.

This Misva teaches a powerful lesson about selfishness. An individual is held responsible for his careless behavior, for not alerting people to what he was doing and failing to ensure that nobody would be walking underneath the piano. And from the Torah's perspective, this kind of carelessness is a direct outgrowth in selfishness. As we conduct our daily business, we need to be alert and look out for the needs of others. We cannot do what we want without thinking about how our actions and words might affect other people. If we are moving furniture out of our house, if we are driving, no matter what we are doing, we must think about others and not only about ourselves.

This might sound simple and self-evident, but unfortunately, it is a message that needs to be repeated and reinforced. We live in a very selfish generation, when people are exclusively focused on their own concerns and desires without showing concern for others. This accounts for the drastic rise of failed marriages, and for the alarming low birth rate in contemporary society. Marriage is all about sharing and giving consideration to somebody else, and raising children, as every parent knows, is all about giving of oneself to another person. In a generation that is not interested in giving, when people are looking out only for themselves, marriages break down and people do not want to have children.

One of the reasons for this trend is the high-pressured nature of modern society. Modern life imposes many perceived obligations upon a person, and in the race against the clock to get everything done, people naturally lose sight of

their responsibilities towards others. This is reflected in the institution of Ir Miklat. The negligent person is brought away from the life he knows and is forced to slow down and think. Far away from his home, business and other responsibilities, he isn't rushed to close a deal or to refurnish his home. He has time to think about others and take their needs into account.

There are many things we can do to try to break the selfish instinct and become more sensitive and caring people. One Rabbi tells his students before they got married to make a point of calling their wives whenever they are in a store to see if they need everything. Even if the husband is confident that his wife does not need anything from that store, he should still call, as a simple way of conveying the message that she is important to him, that he is thinking of her, that he is interested in her needs.

Another method is to get ourselves in the habit of giving compliments. Selfish people are too busy caring about themselves to pay compliments to other people. Accustoming ourselves to give compliments will have the effect of not only making the people around us feel good, but also opening our eyes to the qualities and accomplishments of others, rather than focusing only on ourselves.

Additionally, everybody should try to take some time to do some kind of volunteer work, to engage in some activity that benefits other people without offering remuneration. There are so many worthy organizations and institutions in our community that need manpower so they can do their wonderful work. If everyone in the community chose just one such project to get involved in, this would not only enhance the work of these organizations, but would turn all of us into more sensitive, generous, and giving people.

Finally – and I find it unfortunate that this needs to be mentioned – we must train ourselves to treat our workers with respect and dignity. Whether it's a housekeeper, an employee in the store, a waiter in a restaurant, a broker, or anybody who does a service for us, it is our strict obligation to pay the person in a timely fashion and to speak with him or her with dignity and respect. There is no excuse for not leaving a waiter a generous tip after he serves us a meal, and there is no excuse for speaking to a housekeeper as though she is our slave. We have to think about their feelings, and their

desire to support themselves and their families, and respect those feelings. How would we feel if we worked for somebody who did not pay us, or if somebody spoke to us disrespectfully? This is the kind of question we need to ask whenever we deal with people, keeping in mind their needs and feelings just as we keep in mind our own needs and feelings.

If we live with an awareness of other people's needs, we will be happier and more content in life. Selfish people often expect too much and then feel disappointed and short-changed. But when we are genuinely concerned about others, we are less preoccupied about ourselves, and thus less anxious about filling our every wish. By becoming more sensitive, caring people, we in effect bring greater joy and fulfillment to ourselves and to others, and we help make our community and the world a much happier and more pleasant place to live.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
THREE WEEKS**

According to Ashkenazic custom, the period beginning on the fast of the 17th of Tamuz and ending after the fast day of the ninth day of Av is the longest slice of time dedicated to remembering any historical event having occurred to the Jewish people on the Jewish calendar.

In the general world such days and commemorations are usually limited to one day such as a Memorial Day commemoration. But to have this period of time of mourning and reflection stretched into weeks is a particularly Jewish phenomenon. One of the reasons that such a considerable period has been set aside for sad remembrance is that mourning and self reflection are processes that build themselves on a cumulative basis.

Our emotions and mindset require time to be able to understand and respond to tragedies, both personal and national. If the fast day of the ninth day of Av would arrive without preparation and introduction, it could very well be deemed only a formality and become an insignificant day on the Jewish calendar. It is the buildup that allows for a true assessment of the events in the history of the day itself.

These three weeks that lead to the commemoration and fast day of the ninth of Av are necessary in order that that special day carry with it significance and historical meaning. Almost two millennia have passed since the events of that day of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the holy Temple in the year 70 CE. The fact that that they have been remembered and commemorated over such a long period of time is testimony to the power of the ritual and observance that this three-week period imposes upon Jewish life.

It is interesting to note that the apparent discomfort that this period imposes upon us is relatively of minor consequence. Even the restrictions regarding eating meat and drinking wine during the days immediately preceding the fast of the ninth of Av are of relatively little discomfort to us. Fish restaurants look forward an entire year to these days. Yet, all the restrictions of the three weeks that precede the fast day of the ninth of Av do have a spiritual and emotional effect upon us, even if only subliminally.

Somehow over the centuries and through the dark and abysmal nights of Jewish history, this time of remembrance kept the memory of Zion and Jerusalem, of the holy Temple and of Jewish sovereignty alive and real. Today's State of Israel is a product of this three-week period. There have been many twists and turns in the Jewish story over the past millennia. However, the one constant has been the fact that the Jewish people instinctively realize that wherever they live in the world and no matter how successful and peaceful their sojourn might be, they are not really at home. Home is our ancient land promised to us by Heaven and struggled for by Jews over all of the ages.

There are those who say that since we have been privileged to regain Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel and that Jerusalem is now a large, modern and inhabited city, there is little reason for us to preserve the observances that the three-week period preceding the fast day of the ninth of Av has imposed upon us. In my opinion this would be a classic example of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It is only because of the three-week period that we can appreciate the gift that Heaven has bestowed upon our time, in restoring the Jewish people to their homeland and to national sovereignty.

Without perspective, nothing in life can truly be appreciated. Generations now born, 70 years after the founding of the state of Israel and 50 years after the liberation of Jerusalem, really have no background to judge the wonders that have occurred and continue to occur. This three-week period before the fast day of the ninth of Av allows us to frame the

events of our time and our current situation. It gives us a sense of gratitude and understanding instead of just relying upon sometimes vapid patriotism and formal staged commemorations. The ninth of Av will yet be a day of joy and feasting when Jewish history has finally completed its long journey.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

Etre ailleurs, "To be elsewhere – the great vice of this race, its great and secret virtue, the great vocation of this people." So wrote the French poet and essayist Charles Peguy (1873-1914), a philosemite in an age of Anti-Semitism. He continued: "Any crossing for them means the crossing of the desert. The most comfortable houses, the best built from stones as big as the temple pillars, the most real of real estate, the most overwhelming of apartment houses will never mean more to them than a tent in the desert." [1]

What he meant was that history and destiny had combined to make Jews aware of the temporariness of any dwelling outside the Holy Land. To be a Jew is to be on a journey. That is how the Jewish story began when Abraham first heard the words "Lech Lecha", with their call to leave where he was and travel "to the land I will show you." That is how it began again in the days of Moses, when the family had become a people. And that is the point almost endlessly repeated in parshat Masei: "They set out from X and camped at Y. They set out from Y and camped at Z" – 42 stages in a journey of forty years. We are the people who travel. We are the people who do not stand still. We are the people for whom time itself is a journey through the wilderness in search of the Promised Land.

In one sense this is a theme familiar from the world of myth. In many cultures, stories are told about the journey of the hero. Otto Rank, one of Freud's most brilliant colleagues, wrote about it. So did Joseph Campbell, a Jungian, in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Nonetheless, the Jewish story is different in significant ways:

[1] The journey – set out in the books of Shemot and Bamidbar – is undertaken by everyone, the entire people: men, women and children. It is as if, in Judaism, we are all heroes, or at least all summoned to an heroic challenge.

[2] It takes longer than a single generation. Perhaps, had the spies not demoralised the nation with their report, it might have taken only a short while. But there is a deeper and more universal truth here. The move from slavery to the responsibilities of freedom takes time. People do not change overnight.

Therefore evolution succeeds; revolution fails. The Jewish journey began before we were born and it is our responsibility to hand it on to those who will continue it after us.

[3] In myth, the hero usually encounters a major trial: an adversary, a dragon, a dark force. He (it is usually a he) may even die and be resurrected. As Campbell puts it: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man." [2] The Jewish story is different. The adversary the Israelites encounter is themselves: their fears, their weaknesses, their constant urge to return and regress.

It seems to me, here as so often elsewhere, that the Torah is not myth but anti-myth, a deliberate insistence on removing the magical elements from the story and focussing relentlessly on the human drama of courage versus fear, hope versus despair, and the call, not to some larger-than-life hero but to all-of-us-together, given strength by our ties to our people's past and the bonds between us in the present. The Torah is not some fabled escape from reality but reality itself, seen as a journey we must all undertake, each with our own strengths and contributions to our people and to humanity.

We are all on a journey. And we must all rest from time to time. That dialectic between setting out and encamping, walking and standing still, is part of the rhythm of Jewish life. There is a time for Nitzavim, standing, and a time for Vayelekh, moving on. Rav Kook spoke of the two symbols in Bilaam's blessing, "How goodly are your tents, Jacob, and your dwelling places, Israel." Tents are for people on a journey. Dwelling places are for people who have found home.

Psalm 1 uses two symbols of the righteous individual. On the one hand he or she is on the way, while the wicked begin by walking, then transition to standing and sitting. On the other hand, the righteous is compared to a tree, planted by streams of water, that gives fruit in due season and whose leaves do not wither. We walk, but we also stand still. We are on a journey but we are also rooted like a tree.

In life, there are journeys and encampments. Without the encampments, we suffer burnout. Without the journey, we do not grow. And life is growth. There is no way to avoid challenge and change. The late Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l once gave a beautiful

shiur[3] on Robert Frost's poem, 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,' with its closing verse:

The woods are lovely dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

He analyses the poem in terms of Kierkegaard's distinction between the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of life. The poet is enchanted by the aesthetic beauty of the scene, the soft silence of the falling snow, the dark dignity of the tall trees. He would love to stay here in this timeless moment, this eternity-in-an-hour. But he knows that life has an ethical dimension also, and this demands action, not just contemplation. He has promises to keep; he has duties toward the world. So he must walk on despite his tiredness. He has miles to go before he sleeps: he has work to do while the breath of life is within him.

The poet has stopped briefly to enjoy the dark wood and falling snow. He has encamped. But now, like the Israelites in Masei, he must set out again. For us as Jews, as for Kierkegaard the theologian and Robert Frost the poet, ethics takes priority over aesthetics. Yes, there are moments when we should, indeed must, pause to see the beauty of the world, but then we must move on, for we have promises to keep, including the promises to ourselves and to God.

Hence the life-changing idea: life is a journey, not a destination. We should never stand still. Instead we should constantly set ourselves new challenges that take us out of our comfort zone. Life is growth.

[1] Charles Peguy, *Basic Verities*, New York, Pantheon, 1943, 141.

[2] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, New World Library, 2008, 23.

[3] <http://etzion.org.il/en/woods-are-lovely-dark-and-deep-reading-poem-robert-frost>

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

Mizmor Shir Leyom Hashabbat Tov Lehodot LaHashem... “ (Tehillim 92:2)

“A Psalm, a song for the Shabbat Day:
It is Good to give thanks to Hashem, and to sing to Your name, O Most High.”
What is good? The best thing in the world is to give thanks to Hashem.
That is our job and Shabbat is the time.

We are called 'Yehudim', after the name Yehuda that our great Mother Leah named her son. She said,

“This time I will Thank Hashem”. The Yehudim are the Nation whose purpose is to Thank Hashem. “Ki simachtani Hashem befaolecha...” You've made me happy Hashem with Your handiwork, I sing at the deeds of Your hands.”

It's a wonderful and marvelous world! Look at the beautiful sky. Isn't it a wonderful day? We have to teach ourselves the happiness of life. Life is happy and Hashem wants us to enjoy this great gift of Olam Hazeh (this world).

“Olam hesed yibaneh ” (Tehillim 89:3). The world is built on Kindliness.

We have a kindly Father. Instead of complaining and ignoring all the blessings He is showering on us, let's utilize the Shabbat and sing of the deeds of Hashem's Hands.

Let's thank Hashem for Water, which we cannot live without. Therefore, Hashem created the world with a reservoir covering 65% of the Earth. The Oceans are holding water which is briny and not suitable for drinking. So Hashem brings the Sun's rays, from 93 million miles away, and in eight minutes (“ad mehera yarutz debaro” Tehillim) sunlight comes to the surface of the ocean causing the water to evaporate.

Only pure distilled water vaporizes, rising to form clouds. Hashem causes the winds to blow (“mashiv haruach”) the clouds over the continents and condense. Pure, life giving, rain water is brought to the soil and our reservoirs

This is a wondrous miracle, which we should keep in mind as we drink a glass of water.

It is no less a miracle than when the bitter waters were purified through Moshe by putting a tree in the waters causing them to sweeten, according to Hashem's command. “Vayimteku Hamayim”, “And the waters became sweet”! (Shemot 15:25)

Water causes your eyes to sparkle. It is the water that makes you able to see. Water is the most important element of the blood, causing your blood to be liquid and flow freely to bring nourishment to your body. Baruch Hashem for the glass of Water! The elixir of Life!

Shabbat should make us happy & filled with Bitachon and Peace of Mind, in the kindness of Hashem. Try to appreciate that gift. That is part of the purpose of Shabbat.

Adapted from “Rav Avigdor Miller Speaks”