

**SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE****SHOFTIM****Haftarah: Yeshayahu 51:12-52:12****AUGUST 17-18, 2018 7 ELUL 5778****DEDICATION: In memory of Aunt Rebecca Maslaton Bibi**

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**EDITORS NOTES****Pop, what are you doing in Romania?**

On Thursday afternoon as I drove with my daughters Aryana and Mikhayla from the City to Cynthia and Moey Hidary's wedding at Eagle Oaks Country Club (which was absolutely spectacular), I was telling them stories detailing my dad's business career from chandeliers to furniture. At one point I recalled how my dad and his cousin Joe D Bibi literally picked up one of the furniture factories in Spain and relocated it to Romania. It was in the mid 70's so I was just a kid, but I recalled that because of most favored nation status and some other advantages, they were able to produce at a tremendous savings a collection of their Period French 18th century style pieces. Over the years we have all seen these pieces in countless movies and television shows. At about the same time as the two Joes were developing this venture in Romania, my future father in law, Jerry Werman was setting up what would become the Romanian shoe industry. Jerry spent so much time there, learned the language and was hailed by every government official and truly made an indelible impression on the country and its people. In the years after the Soviet collapse, so many of those he met in Romania sought out his help and assistance as he was there for all of them.

I wondered though, what really brought them to Romania? Why a communist country within the Soviet sphere of influence. And what was the inside story to how such a country would gain most favored nation status?

I didn't need to wonder very long. On Friday morning I opened an email out of the blue from Yerachmiel Tilles which told the story and the roles played by the Skulener Rebbe and Senator Henry Scoop Jackson.

Although Henry "Scoop" Jackson, who served as the senator from the state of Washington for the last thirty years of his life, was not Jewish, his dedication and respect for the Jewish people were remarkable.

Rabbi Moshe Londinski, of Seattle, Washington, worked closely with Senator Jackson. He aided him with fundraising and helped to gain community support for the Senator in his political career.

One Sunday afternoon in early June, in the early 1970's, Rabbi Moshe received a phone call from the gabbai (attendant) of the Skulener Rebbe, Reb Eliezer Zusia Portugal. "I am calling on behalf of the rebbe," the gabbai said. "The rebbe must see Senator Jackson tomorrow at nine in the morning. Can you arrange an appointment?" Miraculously, Rabbi Moshe was able to arrange a meeting with the busy Senator. The Skulener Rebbe had requested that the Rabbi act as an interpreter between the Rebbe and the Senator, so Reb Moshe took the next plane to Washington, D.C.

The rebbe arrived with his attendants in Washington, D.C. They met Rabbi Londinski in the outer office, and they entered the inner office of Senator Jackson together. But instead of speaking to the Senator, the Rebbe whispered something to his gabbai who in turn whispered something to the Rabbi. The latter turned pale. He looked helplessly at Senator Jackson.

"What is the problem?" The Senator asked curiously.

"Well, ah. .." Rabbi Londinski took a deep breath. "It seems that the Rebbe has not had a chance to complete his morning prayers. He needs a place where he can concentrate. Would he be able to use your office for a little while?"

"Of course, no problem!" said the Senator. The Senator immediately stood up and walked with the Rabbi out of the inner office. The two of them stood in the hall, waiting for the Rebbe to finish.

Twenty minutes went by. By this time, both men were pacing the hall. Rabbi Moshe did not know what to say to the Senator. After all, it was his office! Fortunately, the office door opened just then, and the Rebbe himself beckoned them back inside.

Senator Jackson once again seated himself behind his desk. "Now," he said with a smile. "What can I do for you?"

Rabbi Moshe stood next to the Rebbe, ready to interpret every word. The Rebbe opened his mouth to

speak. But after just two short words he burst into tears.

"What is wrong?" the Senator asked in concern. "I do not know," the Rabbi said in bewilderment.

The Rebbe was trying to speak through his tears, but Rabbi Moshe could not understand a single word. He stood, waiting for the crying to stop, but the tears continued to pour down the face of the Rebbe.

Senator Jackson beckoned to the Rabbi. "Tell the Rebbe that I know what he wants!" he said abruptly.

"You do?" Rabbi Moshe exclaimed, startled. "How?"

"Just ask the rabbi what he wants me to do about it," the Senator told him.

The Rabbi stared at the Senator for a moment, but then he obediently turned to the Rebbe and relayed the statement of the Senator. The Rebbe stopped crying. "I want it stopped immediately," he said firmly, in Yiddish.

Rabbi Londinski translated the Rebbe's words. "How does he want me to stop it?" the Senator asked.

Again the Rabbi relayed the question to the Rebbe. "The Senator knows which buttons to press," the Rebbe replied.

The Senator consulted his address book, then reached for the phone, punched in a number and began to speak. And as Rabbi Londinski listened, the matter slowly became clear to him. A few days before, the Romanian government had arrested twenty Russian Jews who were then in Romania and falsely accused them of currency speculation. They were imprisoned and due to be executed in a few days.

The whole situation was a ploy by the Romanian government to pressure the United States into giving them 'Most Favored Nation' status, which would bring the country great financial gain. The Senator, as the head of the Foreign Relations Committee, was also very involved with Soviet Jewry, and he had heard about this action by the Romanian government. So he immediately understood what the Rebbe had come for.

The Senator had the Romanian ambassador to the USA on the phone. He said to him slowly and clearly, "As head of the Foreign Relations Committee, I strongly suggest that you immediately call your Prime Minister. Tell him that if those twenty prisoners are not released within forty-eight hours, I guarantee that

Romania will never see a cent of American aid. Hair will grow on the palm of their hands before they ever receive the 'Most Favored Nation' status!"

The Senator put the phone down and looked up at Rabbi Londinski. "Tell the Rebbe that it has been taken care of."

The Rebbe smiled and warmly shook the hand of the Senator. Within forty-eight hours, all twenty prisoners had been released and brought to Israel.

Once again, Rabbi Londinski had seen the concern that Senator Jackson had for the Jewish people. He was curious about this, and at an appropriate occasion he finally asked the Senator why he cared so much about the Jews.

Senator Jackson smiled. "Three reasons: One, I was a prosecutor during the Nuremberg trials. I saw how much the Jews had suffered in the concentration camps, and I resolved to do whatever I could to help them.

"Two, my mother, a widow, was a housekeeper for a Jewish family in the town of Everett, Washington. They treated her very well. They even gave her extra food and money during the Depression years to help her raise her family. In her will my mother asked that her children should always be good to the Jews.

"And finally, when I was a young boy, there were a few Jews I would always help out on Saturday. They always treated me nicely."

Senator Jackson did not stop with helping those 20 Jews in Romania. Soon after, he, along with Congressman Charles Vanik of Ohio, introduced an amendment to the trade bill, linking emigration to most favored status. Ultimately, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment of the 1974 Trade Reform Act became law. The implementation of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment made one of the first cracks in the Soviet Iron Curtain.

Later, when Russia suffered a famine, and had to purchase millions of tons of American grain, the Communists were made to allow tens of thousands of Jews to leave the country before the purchase could be agreed to. The doors of freedom had been thrust open and the seeds of freedom began to sprout in Communist Russia.

It is the opinion of many historians that the Jackson-Vanik Amendment significantly contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, thereby forever changing the course of history!

And now I understood how both my father and father in law ended up in Romania.

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**I received the following Email from Rabbi Haskel Lookstein. He writes that after his sermon topic ("Abominations and Abominations") was announced, he received the following note from Rabbi Steinmetz, emailing from Budapest where he is leading KJ's educational mission. Rabbi Steinmetz included a beautiful article with respect to the Gay Pride Parade in Israel. Rabbi Lookstein was very inspired by it as was I.**

On the one hand as an Orthodox Rabbi, I question why a gay pride parade is needed in Jerusalem as I question why Long Island had to move its parade to take place each year on a Shabbat at the beginning of the summer in Long Beach as I return home from Synagogue. At the same time I have worked in an industry with many gay people for the last forty years and I count gay men and women among my closest friends and love and care for them as I do for my other friends. I struggle with the merging point of these two worlds and agree that we "cannot diminish the authority of what is black-letter law, but at the same time, we cannot forget the incredible humanism implicit in seeing in every human being a reflection of the divine". I think that in our day and age this is a question many of us struggle with and one we may never be worthy of resolving. I applaud Rabbi Steinmetz on an excellent article.

**The Most Important Sefer Torah in the World  
By Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz  
February 10, 2016**

The Zohar remarks that even a sefer Torah can be subject to luck - some are destined to be used prominently, while others are fated to gather dust and be ignored. If that is so, I know of one of the luckiest Torah scrolls in the world, which, despite the fact it sits humbly in a bomb shelter in Jerusalem, is arguably the most important sefer Torah in the world today.

This sefer Torah was donated in response to a terrible tragedy. Shira Banki, a 16-year-old student, was murdered last summer while marching in the Jerusalem Pride Parade. Her assailant was a haredi Jew who despised gay rights. Sadly, judging from pashkevil (posted) notices put up after her murder, a significant number of people in the murderer's community supported this horrible crime.

At the same time, this murder disturbed many other Orthodox Jews who were disgusted that the Torah was used as a justification for bloodshed. In particular, this horrible crime had a profound impact on Dr. Mark Wainberg, a leading AIDS researcher who is also an observant Jew. For him, this was a

clash of the two worlds he lives in. He's a past president of an Orthodox synagogue and at the same time works side by side with the LGBTQ community in the battle against AIDS.

Mark decided to do something dramatic in response to this awful murder: he pledged to donate a sefer Torah in Shira Banki's memory. Shira had been murdered in the name of Halachah, and the murderer said the Torah was on his side. In response, this sefer Torah declares loudly that the Torah stands on the side of Shira, on the side of dignity, decency and the Jewish People.

After months of preparation, the day arrived. Shira's family asked that the Torah be given to a disadvantaged community. After some investigation, an Ethiopian synagogue housed in a bomb shelter on the periphery of Jerusalem was chosen to receive it. A few dozen members of the synagogue, some members of Shira's family and friends, and members of the Israeli AIDS research community gathered for the dedication.

And there something remarkable occurred. Jews of every background - haredi, secular, Ethiopian, Ashkenazi, American and Israeli - pulled together to dedicate this Torah. Shira's mother, Mika, remarked in her speech that "Just like Jews have suffered together for generations, so it is fitting that when we are finally in our own country that we be together, for good and for bad, without checking each other's tzitzit." And for a moment in this ramshackle synagogue, that hope came true.

That's why Shira's Torah is exceptional. There are those who carry the Torah in the name of animosity and division. But this Torah is different. It's a Torah of unity and humanity. The Talmud compares the Torah to a song ("Shira" is the Hebrew word for song). The point of this metaphor is that like any song, the words are incomprehensible without fully understanding the melody. You need to follow the tune in order to know the purpose and emotion behind those words. The Torah cannot be understood without hearing its inner melody, without hearing the song of the Jewish People.

For a contemporary Orthodox Jew, there are struggles that arise when reading some sections of the Torah, including the prohibition against homosexuality. I cannot diminish the authority of what is black-letter law, but at the same time, I cannot forget the incredible humanism implicit in seeing in every human being a reflection of the divine. As I struggle with these questions, I recognize that I may not merit a way to find a reconciling verse. But nevertheless, I can still find guidance in the melody of the Torah, whose tune is one of kindness, charity, blessing and life. And Shira's Torah sings this melody, a melody the Jewish world so sorely needs.

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**The following from Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski is incredibly powerful and really required reading especially for any parent no matter how old you or your children are**

There IS a Solution via TorahWeb

Emotional disorders may be roughly classified into two groups. (1) Disorders thought to be primarily of biochemical origin, such as depression and related conditions. These are generally treated with psychotropic medications, and the results are often dramatic. (2) Disorders thought to be of psychological origin, which may not respond to medication, and whose treatment is primarily psychotherapy. Of course, there are hybrid cases where both factors are involved.

Psychotherapy may be prolonged. Typically, the therapist seeks to uncover experiences in the client's past which may have impacted on one's emotions. Using various techniques, the therapist tries to correct faulty impressions and undo their effect.

While the majority of clients are satisfied with the results of therapy, there is still an appreciable number who feel that the therapy leaves something to be desired. Although the primary symptoms were relieved, they may complain of a poorly defined residual uneasiness if not frank depression, which does not respond to anti-depression medication. This may affect domestic and social relations as well as education and occupation.

While the presenting symptoms may improve, it is clear that the client is still not back to 100% emotional health, and the therapist realizes that there is little more he can do. He may begin to think of the client as having a personality disorder, albeit not well-defined. I found myself diagnosing many clients as suffering from "low self-esteem." In 1978 I wrote a book, *Like Yourself, and Others Will, Too*, aimed at improving one's self concept.

Conventional wisdom is that low self-esteem is generally due to poor parenting, i.e., failure of the parents to show adequate appreciation of the child, or deprivation of love due to circumstances, such as parental absence or illness. There are a host of negative occurrences that can cause a child to lose faith in oneself. Therapy may be able to reinterpret traumatic events and build self-confidence.

I tried my utmost to help people overcome their low self-esteem, but I was only partially successful.

However, I had to come to terms with my own low self-esteem. The problem here was that I could not point to any factors which I could incriminate as causative. I had a wonderful childhood, and my parents were extremely loving and caring. In addition, I had a nanny, a childless woman who "adopted" me and saw to it that I lacked for nothing. The sun rose and set on me. I was bright and succeeded at everything I did. I was a chess champion at age eight. I was specially promoted several times and graduated high school at sixteen. I should have felt on top of the world.

Instead, I felt I was unlikable. I had to do things that would make people appreciate me. I became a "people-pleaser." I did some crazy things to gain attention. My sensitivity was extreme. When I gave sermons on Saturday, I was dependent on the accolades from the worshippers. If they were not forthcoming, I was crushed. But the approval and recognition I received from my accomplishments gave me only momentary relief.

I graduated medical school with honors. I became director of the psychiatric department of the hospital I wrote many books, but nothing changed. The feelings of unworthiness ate away at my guts. This was an enigma, and there was nothing I could do to shake off this feeling.

At about age sixty, I came across a novel interpretation of a verse in Psalms (118:12) by Rav Simcha Zissel Ziev, a foremost mussar authority. Conventional wisdom is that the yetzer hara is a force created by Hashem to deter people from observing the Torah. The yetzer hara operates by tempting people to violate the Torah, and we must do battle all our lives to resist the wiles of the yetzer hara. Torah-observant people follow a life style of obedience to Hashem's dictates. One can rather easily identify the ideation wrought by the yetzer hara. When a person feels tempted to partake of non-kosher food, or to work on Shabbos, to steal, to have a forbidden relationship or to do anything that the Torah forbids, one can be aware that this is the work of the yetzer hara and one can utilize the Torah tools to resist it.

Rav Simcha Zissel's unique contribution is that in addition to tempting a person to violate the Torah, the yetzer hara may delude a person to think poorly of oneself. There is no frank violation of the Torah in this, and as with every delusion, one is taken-in by this false belief.

A poor self-image is the source of many evils. Rabbeinu Yonah says that gaavah, the worst

personality trait, is a defense against a poor self-image. The person creates grandiosity to counteract his low self-esteem (Rabbeinu Yonah Al haTorah). The desire to control others is also the same. Having power over others may reduce the feeling of inferiority, and this is responsible for many marriage problems. Some people lie to inflate their ego.

Both underachievement and overachievement maybe due to low self-esteem. The underachiever lacks self confidence and resigns oneself to failure. The overachiever seeks to prove that she/he can excel. Any grade less than 100% is taken as evidence of one's inability to perform properly.

There is a paradox of low self-esteem. Highly gifted people may have a lower self-esteem than less-endowed people.

Rav Simcha Zissel's insight explains this phenomenon. A person with meager personality strengths is not going to be given a whopper of a yetzer hora, whereas someone with great assets may be given a more powerful challenge. Hence, the more capable person may actually have deeper feelings of inferiority.

Personal achievements may not eliminate the pain of a poor self-image. One industrialist who was a pillar of the community, confided, "One wall in my house is covered with tributes and plaques. They mean nothing to me."

Indeed, the suffering we experienced and are commemorating on Tisha B'Av has its origin in a poor self image. The spies of Moses said, "We saw giants in Canaan, and we felt as tiny as locusts, and that's how we appeared to them." The Chiddushei Harim said, "The way you feel about yourself is how you assume others perceive you."

Simcha is essential for true avodas Hashem. The yetzer hara scores a major triumph by making a person feel unworthy, which deprives one of simcha.

A psychotherapist can help you deal with those reality factors that are causative of low self-esteem that I mentioned earlier, but he/she cannot help you in the battle with the yetzer hara. It is crucial that when you find yourself with feelings of unworthiness and inferiority that you remind yourself that this is the work of the yetzer hara to disable you. Use the sifre mussar to counteract this.

Always remember the words of the Talmud, "Beloved are the people of Israel, for they are described as the children of Hashem" (Pirkei Avos 3:18). The yetzer

hara is at work 7-24-365 to make you forget this. Don't allow it to succeed. Pray to Hashem for His help in resisting the wile of the yetzer hara.

### Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

**Perek 20, Pasook 1**, in this week's Parasha says when you go out to war against your enemy and you see they outnumber you and are more equipped than you, "lo tirah me'hem", don't be afraid, "because Hashem is with you". The Rambam learns from here that one is not allowed to be afraid. And seemingly being afraid is a sin because it is a lack of trust in Hashem. It is showing that we don't believe Hashem can protect us. And so something we can work on (myself especially) is anytime time we are afraid, whether it be a concern in business or with our children or with life in general, and we feel ourselves getting nervous or anxious is to stop and say Hashem is taking care of me. I trust in Hashem. I am not nervous because I know Hashem will help me and do what is best from me.

### Shoftim - Mitzvot relevant to establishing a society (judges, kings, war) in Israel

- 1- The mitzvah to appoint judges and law enforcers. An individual who worships avoda zara. The rebellious elder.
- 2- The mitzvah to appoint a king in Israel. Halachot of a king
- 3- Benefits and obligations of the Leviim
- 4- A kohen who desires to serve not during his assigned time. The mitzvah not to use sorcery, witchcraft or other avoda zara to learn the future.
- 5- Hashem sends us prophets (in place of sorcery used to learn the future). Laws regarding cities of refuge
- 6- Edim zomemin (false witnesses). Laws when Israel goes to war (who goes to war).
- 7- Laws when Israel goes to war (offering peace, who is killed), egla arufa

What is our goal during the month Elul? What should we be thinking? What should we be doing? What are we trying to accomplish? I heard a nice idea (from R David Nakash) that the goal of Elul is to work on our relationship with Hashem. Elul is roshe tevot "ani le'dodiy ve'dodiy liy" (I am to my beloved as my beloved is to me). Hashem is our "beloved". And Elul is the time to work on strengthening our relationship with him. And so how do we do that? When a husband and wife want to work on their relationship what do they do? They take a vacation. They spend time alone with each other. And this time away

together is meant to strengthen their relationship together going forward.

Elul is our special time to work on strengthening our relationship with Hashem. It is a time to do things with more thought and sincerity. It is a time to take an extra minute in our amida, to spend more time learning, to spend time talking with Hashem when we walk in the street. It is a time to tell Hashem we love him. It is a time to tell Hashem thank you for giving us all we have. It is a time to tell Hashem we want to be closer with him.

In this special time of Elul, let us have kavana in our words and actions. When saying a beracha let us have kavana that we are talking to Hashem. That we are saying thank you for this food I am eating or for being able to go to the bathroom or for anything else we are benefiting from. When we do a mitzvah, let us stop and think I am doing this mitzvah to fulfill the will of Hashem. I am doing this to show how much I care about you Hashem. With this as our kavana the mitzvot become so much more meaningful. It is not just a mitzva. It is an expression of love. Let us take advantage of this month of Elul to work on our relationship with Hashem!

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

#### **FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE**

**“You must be perfect with Hashem your G-d.”  
(Debarim 18:13)**

The Hafess Hayim zt”l noted that a person is required to have total trust “Im Hashem Elokecha,” only when dealing with his Creator. However, when dealing with other people, he must not be naïve and put himself in a position where he is at the mercy of others. Rather, he must keep his wits about him and not permit himself to be deceived. This was the quality of Ya’akob, who was an “Ish Tam,” yet dealt with Laban with cunning.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter zt”l said that one must take time to perfect his character and midot, even if he must sacrifice growth in Torah because of this. He proved this from the halachah that states that if one has a small whole bread and a large piece of bread, he must recite the berachah on the whole bread even though it is smaller (O.H. 168). The same is true in regard to spiritual matters. Being wholesome in character takes precedence over greatness in Torah, since proper midot is a prerequisite to studying Torah. Rabbi Reuven Semah

**“You shall be wholehearted with Hashem, your G-d” (Debarim 18:13)**

Rashi explains that this pasuk is telling us to trust in Hashem, and in what He has in store for us.

Rather than delving into the future, we are told to accept whatever happens to us wholeheartedly. This sounds very nice, but it is easier said than done. How could we be secure in our future when we have no way of knowing what is coming?

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman tells a cute story that helps put things in perspective. A man once went to his Rabbi and told him about a personal problem that he was very concerned about. The Rabbi told him, “There was a man who was walking down the street on the day before Yom Kippur, on his way do the kaparot, with a chicken in one hand and a mahzor in the other hand. Suddenly his eyeglasses fell to the ground. He didn’t know what to do. If he lets go of the chicken, it will run away. And he certainly couldn’t put the mahzor on the floor. He just stood there wondering what to do.”

“So what did he do,” asked the man.

“I don’t know what he did,” said the Rabbi, “but I do know that he’s not standing there anymore.”

The Rabbi was teaching him that very often, a problem that seems earthshattering will pass. We sometimes get so caught up in the situation that we can’t imagine how it can work out. A helpful tactic is to think back to some of the difficult situations we’ve experienced in the past. At the time, we may have felt like it was hopeless, but now looking back, we see that Hashem worked it out in ways that we never dreamed possible.

This is what the pasuk is coming to teach us. We don’t always need to know how things are going to work out. Hashem has gotten us this far in our lives, so there’s no reason to think He can’t continue. This is not to say that everything will always be pleasant, but we need to always remember that Hashem is kind and loving, and we can trust that He will always orchestrate the best results for us in every aspect of our lives. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

#### **Pain and Gain**

It pays to travel. It is not only the different people we meet, or the beautiful or historic places we visit, that make travel so beneficial. It is the fact that when we return home to the good old U.S. of A., we realize that we really have the best standard of living on the planet. Cell phones, pocket computers, hi-tech appliances, and leisure activities all enhance the life of an average American. It’s really great, isn’t it?

Well, history gives us warning. Most of the extinct civilizations of history – the Ancient Egyptians, the Romans, the Greeks – developed great societies and produced a living standard that outdid their contemporaries. In the period it took to rise from oblivion to fame, great effort and even some suffering were expended in order to achieve greatness. However, in each case, once the society became comfortable, the decline in effort, morals, and

success began. The soft, easy life eventually led to the culture's downfall.

There's a lesson to be learned from this repetitious and historical social phenomenon. When you are feeling smug, don't get comfortable in the glow of what you have already achieved. Push yourself to an uncomfortable exertion of effort towards even higher levels of achievement. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

### The Ultimate Healer

"There are occasions when Hashem gives people useful ideas for what appears to be a minor benefit. The discovery of radium led to applications as different as luminous dials, X-Ray machines, and the use of radiation to treat diseases."

During challenging times, we should attempt to realize that Hashem gives man the knowledge to discover applications to heal others. Hashem sends the cure before the disease and with prayer we can realize that He is the Ultimate healer. (Norman D. Levy; Based on Rabbi Miller's, Duties of the Mind)

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR**  
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**Appointing a King "Over Me"**

In Parashat Shoftim the Torah foresees the time after Benei Yisrael settle the Land of Israel when they will want to appoint a king. The Torah writes, "You shall indeed appoint a king over yourself, whom Hashem your God shall choose..." (17:15).

In light of this verse, it becomes very difficult to understand the reaction of the prophet Shemuel when Benei Yisrael in fact request that he appoint for them a king. As we read in Sefer Shemuel I (chapter 8), the people approach Shemuel with their request and he chides them, seeing in their request an attempt to shake themselves free of God's kingship in favor of the rule of a human king. Why does Shemuel react this way to their request, if the Torah explicitly sanctions the appointment of a king?

The Keli Yakar (Torah commentary by Rabbi Shlomo Efrayim of Luntchitz, Poland-Bohemia, 1550-1619) explained that the people's request during the time of Shemuel differed from the request that Moshe foresees here in Parashat Shoftim. Moshe foresees the people saying, "I shall appoint a king over me" (17:14), whereas in Shemuel's time the people demanded, "Appoint for us a king" (Shemuel I 8:5). In Moshe's description, the people ask that a king

be appointed "over them," to rule, lead, guide and govern. They seek somebody to whose authority they would submit, and whose instructions they would follow. But when the people approached Shemuel, they asked, "Appoint for us a king"; they wanted a king "for themselves," somebody whom they could control, a king who would serve them, rather than whom they would serve. Shemuel was a tough leader. He led the people with firm authority, and the people had no power or control over him. They therefore asked for a different kind of leadership, an authority figure without real authority, whom they could manipulate and control.

This is why Shemuel so strongly condemned their request. He understood that they sought not a leader, but a follower. A king of this nature would exert no authority over the people, and they would be free to act as they please and dictate their own rules.

Unfortunately, a similar situation exists in many communities today, who look for a Rabbi whom they can lead, rather than somebody to lead them. They want the Rabbi to serve them, to say only what they want to hear, and not to speak out against their misconduct. These communities don't want a leader; they want somebody whom they can lead.

This is the precise opposite of the job of a Rabbi. The Rabbi's responsibility is to guide, lead and teach, to tell his congregation when he observes improper conduct and to urge them to change. Congregations must appoint a Rabbi "over them," and afford him the authority he needs to lead them.

The Talmud comments that the generation before the final redemption will resemble a dog. Some have explained that when a person walks his dog, the dog actually walks in front of the owner, giving the appearance as though the dog leads him. It is only when they reach an intersection, and the owner pulls the dog in the direction he wishes to walk, that it becomes clear that it is the owner who leads. In the generation of insolence that will precede the final redemption, Rabbis will only give the appearance of leadership. But when a community reaches an intersection, when an issue of grave importance arises, it will become clear that the congregants are the ones who hold the leash and lead the Rabbi. The committee will tell the Rabbi which position to take, which direction to

follow, rather than following his guidance and instruction.

This is not how it should be. Communities do not need Rabbis just to agree with them all the time, to always tell them that they are correct. To the contrary, Rabbis must have the courage to speak out when necessary, and to lead and guide his community along the proper path of Torah and Mitzvot.

**VICTOR BIBI  
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein  
WHAT HAPPENED?**

The Talmud records for us that the great scholar Choni Hamgael slumbered for a period of seventy years. When he awoke he looked around and saw an entirely new and different world than the one that he knew before his sleep. Society had changed drastically, and he realized that somehow, he was unable to adjust to the new world that surrounded it. As a result, he asked that the Lord take him from this world since it was impossible for him to live in it.

I have studied the events and society of the 20th century extensively and in fact I have written a book of history on this subject. And, I am constantly amazed by the enormous changes to the Jewish world and to human civilization generally that occurred during that pivotal century.

At the beginning of the century, Great Britain was the dominant power in the world and, as it says, 'the sun never set on the Union Jack.' It governed almost 1/3 of the human population of the earth and one quarter of the Earth's surface belonged to its empire. Even though there had been substantial Jewish immigration to North America in the latter years of the 19th century, Europe and especially Eastern Europe remained the heartland of Jews living in the world at the time.

The Jewish presence in the land of Israel was relatively miniscule and the entire area was dominated by Arab tribes and clans all under the rule of the Ottoman Turks. However, Jewish immigration to North America continued and the anti-Semitism, coupled with the poverty of Eastern European society, certainly was driving millions of Jews to leave

the areas controlled by the Czar to look for a new beginning for themselves and their families.

The world was then dominated by European empires. As mentioned above, Great Britain was the principal empire in the world. However, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Russia, Turkey, Austria and even to a lesser extent the United States of America all were Imperial powers. Many of these empires were relatively new to the world scene while others, such as Austria and Russia, had existed for many centuries.

Empires sometimes fall suddenly and dramatically, as was the case in our time of the demise of the Soviet Union. History records that sometimes empires decline over long periods of time until they finally collapse of their own internal sins and contradictions. Apparently, all the great European empires that began the 20th century already possessed within themselves the seeds of their collapse and destruction at the beginning of the century.

But, no one really noticed that, and we are only able to assess that this was happening because of the perfection of hindsight that we possess. The 20th century would produce the two greatest and most gruesome wars that human civilization had ever known. The consequences of those wars destroyed the empires that then existed. Both the winners and losers in Europe of those wars were equally exhausted and financially ruined. There could no longer be any reasonable form of empire and of past grandeur. The world that began the 20th century had vanished completely by the middle of that century.

Out of this wreckage there emerged an event so unlikely that even hardened historians observed it with incredulity. That event naturally is the creation of the state of Israel and the restoration of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel after almost two millennia of exile and persecution. Great rabbis observing the wreckage of Eastern Europe after World War I, already opined that there must be a redeeming purpose for the slaughter and wreckage that the war inflicted on the world.

Though it is impossible for us to attempt to read the minds of Heaven, so to speak, it is undeniable that the two great world wars served as the catalyst for the emergence of the Jewish state in the land of Israel. So, someone who was familiar with the world and particularly the Jewish world at the beginning of the 20th century, awakening at the end of that century, would certainly have been amazed,



confused and would have asked in wonder, "What happened?"

We live by the news of the day and always concentrate on the small things that often prove to be so worthless in the long run. We are hard put to really understand the great pattern and picture that surrounds us. Maybe that is what the Psalmist alluded to when he said that at the time of the restoration of Zion we would all be as dreamers, awaking from a deep sleep and wondering what in the world happened that we did not notice

### Rabbi Yosef Farhi TO REACH MY SOUL

When we think about Elul, the first thing that comes to mind is Teshuva. When we think about Teshuva, the first thing that comes to mind is, I have no idea how to do this. Every year, when we try to interpret Teshuva to ourselves, we get the same response. Blank!

Why is it like that? It's something like what happened to me last week, when I spoke to an operator. I asked her what numbers I need to dial to reach her directly next time, without going through the whole operating system and process. She said to me, "I don't know. I never tried to call myself."

We all have thoughts how to get to other people; we think a lot of how we would like to change other people, but we rarely think thoughts of how to change ourselves, or how to get through to ourselves. What buttons do we need to press?

The answer is tricky, because Teshuva is tricky. Real Teshuva doesn't just happen because you know the Shaarei Teshuva manual. You can't change who you are by trying to change who you are. That is not how people change. Why not? Why can't I just regret the past and take on some New Year's Resolutions? Change like that does not work, because to behave differently, you need to think differently. Resolutions don't work, if you don't think differently. And only by challenging your belief system, do you really think differently, do you take a new path. That is the only way to get into the Teshuva game. In our Davening, תעדה ננוח, the blessing of knowledge comes before the blessing of תבונה, the blessing that G-d wants our repentance. Because the way to really repent, the only way, is by challenging "the obvious", or the way you think. (Netivot Shalom) Being challenged by something or someone. By asking yourself the right questions, or by someone else asking you the right questions, or by being in the environment that asks you the right questions. Once

you are blessed by G-d with a new understanding of the truth of your world, G-d is interested in your repentance. And then, we change by default, after realizing a deeper level of truth.

Teshuva comes from the word ובהרהורבבל לא ת, letting something settle within your heart; it is an inward process. It is not as much about repentance as it is about discovering a deeper truth in life. And there is always a deeper truth in life. You need to go inward and find it. The Rebbe from Slonim writes that teshuva is a whole life's journey of asking right questions, and it is horribly misrepresented when translated by the word "repentance". Repentance is about being better. Teshuva is about becoming different. Being different is much more than being better. Most of Rabbenu Yonah's Shaarei Teshuva is the outline, the elements, the process, the Mitzvah; but all that is just the manual of Teshuva. The theory of it. You did not get into the game yet, you did not get behind the wheel, until you do Cheshbon Hanefesh. Until you call yourself. You have to know the right buttons to press; you need to know how to dial yourself. In Chovot Halevovot, the subject of Teshuva is first, and then, there is the subject of Cheshbon Hanefesh, challenging you with the questions that will make you think differently. Cheshbon Hanefesh is the only way to play the game, because it is the only way to change your path, and that is what G-d is expecting of you. בוצעי ויתובשחמ ווא שיאו וכרד שיא Let a man leave his path, and a person, leave his false thinking. G-d does not ask of you only a change in behavior. He asks that you change your path, the way you think and believe, your worldview.

This is a great challenge. Because we can be doing something wrong, even though we think we are doing something right. You can be living a whole life, thinking you were doing the right thing, but being so off. ריתלד ונקפד מישרכו מילדכ Like paupers, we knock on Your Door! In Selichot, we mention how we are so poor in our performance of mitzvot and in our level of observing them. Because even if we are as full of Mitzvot as a pomegranate, it could be that we are lacking in some fundamentals. Our belief system could be way off. Our intentions could be way off. The way we look at the world could be way off. Unless we are studying the Cheshbon HaNefesh of the Chovot Helvovot. This is why Teshuva is something that can be done, and should be done, every day of our lives (Shabbat 153a, Iggeret HaRamban). Even if you are a Tzaddik.

The Chidushei Harim gives us an example of how the "righteous" could be way off, without Cheshbon Hanefesh. R Yochanan taught, Without the Torah, we

would have learnt modest behavior from the cat, not to steal from the ant, ... (Eiruvin 100b) King Solomon taught, Lazy one! Go to the ant and learn her ways, and become wise. That she has no police officer or ruler (to fear). (Mishlei 6, 6)... The Midrash explains this: There was once an ant that dropped a piece of wheat. All of its friends came and smelled it, and not one took it, until the one who dropped it came back to get it. (Devraim Rabbah 5b) The ant brings everything it gathers into a nest to store for the winter. And not one ant will take from another's nest. (Aruch Erech ענצ)

The Chidushei Harim asks, But isn't everything that the ant gathers stolen goods?!? He does not plant, or work the field!? How can the ant be considered the role model for not stealing, if it never made anything of its own, its whole life?

This is what happens when we learn how to think from the ant, and not from the Torah. Without the Torah, it would be a faulty system, because we would learn from the ant how not to steal, while the ant is the biggest thief there is!

The first Cheshbon of Cheshbon Hanefesh is that you are nothing, without G-d. You are just an ant, who is taking from G-d everything that you have, and everything that you are. You have no merit to exist, because you were born without any merits. You are one big Chessed from G-d. That is all you are. What a humbling thought!

This humbling thought is a great prerequisite to Teshuva. Because every sin has some self-justification behind it. As if we are "even" with G-d. G-d does a lot for me, but I also do a lot for Him. WRONG! קידצ התאו ונל הוש אלו ריטפשמ ריתוצממ ונרטו Ashamnu, we do Teshuva on trying to present this self-justification. Because all sin starts from the way we think. And if you change your behavior, your habit will bring you back in a month, a year, or some time in the near future, to your old habit. Even if we refrain from sin in the present, for a little while, we are prone to being activated by a trigger when it comes around. But if you change the way you think, you have made a change for a lifetime. Because when there is no self-justification, YOU have changed.

How ironic that there are precisely 30 instructions in the Cheshbon HaNefesh of the Chovot HaLevot. One for each day of the month of Elul!

These 30 thoughts are the way that you contact yourself. This is the phone number of your soul.

### Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks To Lead is to Serve

Our parsha talks about monarchy: "When you enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "I will set a king over me, like all the surrounding nations," set over you a king whom the Lord your God chooses." (Deut. 17:14-15). So it should be relatively easy to answer the question: From a Jewish perspective, is having a king a good thing or a bad thing? It turns out, however, to be almost unanswerable.

On the one hand, the parsha does say, "set over you a king." This is a positive command. Maimonides counts it among the 613. On the other hand, of no other command anywhere does it say that that it is to be acted on when the people say that they want to be "like all the surrounding nations." The Torah doesn't tell us to be like everyone else. The word kadosh, "holy", means, roughly, to be set apart, singular, distinctive, unique. Jews are supposed to have the courage to be different, to be in but not entirely of the surrounding world.

Matters are made no clearer when we turn to the famous episode in which the Israelites did actually ask for a king, in the days of Samuel (1 Samuel 8). Samuel is upset. He thinks the people are rejecting him. Not so, says God, the people are rejecting Me (1 Sam. 8:7). Yet God does not command Samuel to resist the request. To the contrary, He says, in effect, tell them what monarchy will cost, what the people stand to lose. Then, if they still want a king, give them a king.

So the ambivalence remains. If having a king is a good thing, why does God say that it means that the people are rejecting Him? If it is a bad thing, why does God tell Samuel to give the people what they want even if it is not what God would wish them to want?

Nor does the historical record resolve the issue. There were many bad kings in Jewish history. Of many, perhaps most, Tanakh says "He did evil in the eyes of God." But then there were also good kings: David who united the nation, Solomon who built the Temple, Hezekiah and Josiah who led religious revivals. It would be easy to say that, on the whole, monarchy was a bad thing because there were more bad kings than good ones. But one could equally argue that without David and Solomon, Jewish history would never have risen to the heights.

Even within individual lives, the picture is fraught with ambivalence. David was a military hero, a political genius and a religious poet without equal in history. But this is also the man who committed a grievous sin with another man's wife. With Solomon the record is even more chequered. He was the man whose name was synonymous with wisdom, author of Song of Songs, Proverbs and Kohelet. At the same time he was the king who broke all three of the Torah's caveats about monarchy, mentioned in this week's parsha, namely he should not have too many wives, or too many horses, or too much money (Deut. 17:16-17). Solomon – as the Talmud says[1] – thought he could break all the rules and stay uncorrupted. Despite all his wisdom, he was wrong.

Even stepping back and seeing matters on the basis of abstract principle, we have as close as Judaism comes to a contradiction. On the one hand, "We have no king but You," as we say in Avinu Malkeinu.[2] On the other hand, the closing sentence of the book of Judges (21:25) reads: "In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." In short: without monarchy, anarchy.

So, in answer to the question: Is having a king a good thing or a bad one, the answer is an unequivocal yes-and-no. And as we would expect, the great commentators run the entire spectrum of interpretation. For Maimonides, having a king was a good thing and a positive command. For Ibn Ezra it was a permission, not an obligation. For Abarbanel it was a concession to human weakness. For Rabbenu Bachya, it was its own punishment. Why then is the Torah so ambivalent about this central element of its political programme?

The simplest answer was given by the outsider who saw most clearly that the Hebrew Bible was the world's first tutorial in freedom: Lord Acton. He is the man who wrote: "Thus the example of the Hebrew nation laid down the parallel lines on which all freedom has been won ... the principle that all political authorities must be tested and reformed according to a code which was not made by man." [3] But he is also the originator of the classic statement: "All power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Almost without exception, history has been about what Hobbes described as "a general inclination of all mankind: a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death." [4] Power is dangerous. It corrupts. It also diminishes. If I have power over you, then I stand as a limit to your freedom. I can force you to do what you don't want to

do. Or as the Athenians said to the Melians: The strong do what they want, and the weak suffer what they must.

The Torah is a sustained exploration of the question: to what extent can a society be organised not on the basis of power? Individuals are different. Michelangelo, Shakespeare and Rembrandt needed no power to achieve creative genius. But can a society? We all have desires. Those desires conflict. Conflict eventually leads to violence. The result is the world before the flood, when God regretted that He had made man on earth. Hence there is a need for a central power to ensure the rule of law and the defence of the realm.

Judaism is not an argument for powerlessness. The briefest glance at two thousand years of Jewish history in the Diaspora tells us that there is nothing dignified in powerlessness, and after the Holocaust it is unthinkable. Daily we should thank God, and all His helpers down here on earth, for the existence of the State of Israel and the restoration to the Jewish people of the power of self-defence, itself a necessary condition of the collective right to life.

Instead, Judaism is an argument for the limitation, secularisation and transformation of power.

Limitation: Israel's kings were the only rulers in the ancient world without the power to legislate.[5] For us, the laws that matter come from God, not from human beings. To be sure, in Jewish law, kings may issue temporary regulations for the better ordering of society, but so may rabbis, courts, or local councils (the *shiva tuvei ha-ir*).

Secularisation: in Judaism, kings were not high priests and high priests were not kings. Jews were the first people to create a "separation of powers," a doctrine normally attributed to Montesquieu in the eighteenth century. When some of the Hasmonean rulers sought to combine the two offices, the Talmud records the objection of the sages: "Let the royal crown be sufficient for you; leave the priestly crown to the descendants of Aaron." [6]

Transformation: fundamental to Judaism is the idea of servant leadership. There is a wonderful statement of it in our parsha. The king must have his own *sefer Torah*, "and he shall read from it all the days of his life ... not considering himself superior to his kinsfolk, or straying from the commandments to the right or to the left" (Dt. 17:19-20). Humility is the essence of royalty, because to lead is to serve.

Failure to remember this caused what, in retrospect, can be seen as the single most disastrous political decision in Jewish history. After the death of Solomon, the people came to Rehoboam, his son, asking him to lighten the load that Solomon's projects had imposed on the people. The king asked his father's advisers what he should do. They told him to accede to their request: "If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favourable answer, they will always be your servants" (1 Kings 12:7). Note the threefold appearance of the word "serve" in this verse. Rehoboam ignored their advice. The kingdom split and the nation never fully recovered.

The radical nature of this transformation can be seen by recalling the two great architectural symbols of the world's first empires: the Mesopotamians built ziggurats, the Egyptians built pyramids. Both are monumental statements in stone of a hierarchical society, broad at the base, narrow at the top. The people are there to support the leader. The great Jewish symbol, the menorah, inverts the triangle. It is broad at the top, narrow at the base. The leader is there to support the people.

In contemporary terms, Jim Collins in his book *From Good to Great*[7] tells us on the basis of extensive research that the great organisations are those with what he calls 'Level 5 leaders,' people who are personally modest but fiercely ambitious for the team. They seek, not their own success, but the success of those they lead.

This is counterintuitive. We think of leaders as people hungry for power. Many are. But power corrupts. That is why most political careers end in failure. Even Solomon's wisdom could not save him from temptation.

Hence the life-changing idea: To lead is to serve. The greater your success, the harder you have to work to remember that you are there to serve others; they are not there to serve you.

[1] Sanhedrin 21b.

[2] The source is Rabbi Akiva in Taanit 25b.

[3] Lord Acton, *Essays on the History of Liberty*, Indianapolis, LibertyClassics 1985, 8.

[4] Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, Book 1, Ch. 11.

[5] See, e.g., Michael Walzer, *In God's Shadow: Politics in the Hebrew Bible*, Yale University Press, 2012.

[6] Kiddushin 66a.

[7] James Collins, *From Good to Great*, Harper Business, 2001.

## AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

**"You shall be wholehearted with Hashem your G-d" (18:13)**

'Tamim' means "complete" or "perfect".

Rabbenu Yonah (Shaare Teshuva 3:17) explains that perfection in Trust in Hashem (Bitachon) is here commanded. This comes to exclude the practices enumerated in the preceding verses (18:9-12).

These

practices demonstrate an appeal for the favor of non-existent spiritual forces, and like idolatry, they constitute some measure of disloyalty to Hashem.

But just as it is wrong to transfer any trust to any strange imaginary gods, so also it is forbidden to transfer our trust to our own abilities and resources. Or to trust in men (no matter how righteous and powerful they may be). Or to trust in the forces of nature.

"Complete" Trust in Hashem is required, even when one is energetic and capable of earning his livelihood.

And even when he is diligent in maintaining his good health, and even if he lives in a community or a nation that maintains law and order and is secure against all foreign enemies. Even the young man must look to Hashem every day for his life to continue on the morrow.

Certainly, every man must seek to earn his livelihood and to preserve his health and safety.

But all of his Trust must be solely in Hashem.

Bitachon (Trust in Hashem) is one of the great forms of Peace of Mind.

To know that Hashem is in charge of the Universe.

And in charge of the affairs of mankind.

And in charge of our private individual history.

Hashem is constantly thinking about it and is planning the very best for us.

Therefore, whatever has happened in the past to us has been for our maximum benefit.

Quoted from

"Fortunate Nation" by R' Miller