

Beshalach | Shevat 15 - 21 | January 25 - 31



וידאו בני ישראל קמוק הים יקרה



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והמים ליהם חומה
מימים ומשמים

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The Point of No Return

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Hisorerus During a Time of Hardship

Harav Gershon Edelstein zt"l

Story: The Rebbe Maharash and the Lost Soul

and more...



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Shabbos Zmanim

2023 Early Friday Mincha, 18 Main
at מנחה גדולה and every 15 minutes from 12:30pm-3:00pm

4:47pm Candle lighting	4:57pm Mincha in tent א	4:57pm Chabad Mincha	5:05pm Shkiya
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SHABBOS SHACHRIS MINYANIM:

6:34am Vasikin, followed by a Daf Yomi Shiur 20↑	8:00am Shachris 2 18 main	9:15am Shachris 3 Tent א	10:00am Shachris 4 Bais Chabad 20↑	10:00am Shachris 5 18 main
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2:00pm Pirchei	4:45pm Mincha followed by Shalosh Seudos	5:06pm Shkiya	5:46pm Maariv 1	5:51pm Maariv 2
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Late Maariv Motzei Shabbos Every 15 Minutes!
6:30 pm - 9:00pm | 18 Main

Weekday Zmanim

Zmanim for the week of Jan 28 - Feb 3

Shacharis — 20 min. before Neitz
Mincha & Maariv — 12 min. before Plag and more (see posted times)

	Neitz	Shma Magen Avraham	Shma Gra	Tefila Gra	Chatzos	Plag	Shkiya
Sunday	7:12am	8:57am	9:40am	10:29am	12:09am	4:05pm	5:07pm
Monday	7:11am	8:57am	9:39am	10:29am	12:09am	4:06pm	5:08pm
Tuesday	7:10am	8:57am	9:39am	10:29am	12:09pm	4:07pm	5:10pm
Wednesday	7:09am	8:57am	9:39am	10:29am	12:09pm	4:08pm	5:11pm
Thursday	7:08am	8:56am	9:38am	10:29am	12:10pm	4:09pm	5:12pm
Friday	7:07am	8:56am	9:38am	10:28am	12:10pm	4:10pm	5:13pm
Shabbos	7:06am	8:55am	9:37am	10:28am	12:10pm	4:11pm	5:15pm

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The Sea Split Twice

A number of years ago, Mottie Green shared with me a *chiddush* about the sea splitting. It seems that the sea was split not once but twice; once for the nation and once for Dasan and Avirom. I never knew this and he showed it to me in the Targum Yonatan. After Am Yisrael left Egypt and was resting along the sea, the pasuk states that Pharaoh spoke to Bnei Yisrael. Who was this that he spoke to if they all left Egypt? It was Dasan and Avirom who stayed behind. They thought that Bnei Yisrael were only going on a three-day road trip so they did not bother going. Later when they discovered that they were leaving indefinitely, they realized they missed the boat. They followed in the chase and watched as Pharaoh and his army drowned and then the sea split again just for them.

Dasan and Avirom were the two individuals that were fighting and Moshe called them a Rasha. They then snatched on Moshe and he had to run for his life. During the 40 years in the desert they always caused trouble so why were they needed? Why weren't they left to die like the other 80% in the Makah of darkness? Why did these individuals merit such a great miracle for themselves?

The Gra as repeated in the *sefer Kol Eliyahu* asked a question; in one place the Torah said the Bnei Yisrael went into "the sea on dry land and the water was a wall on both sides". In another place, verse 29, it states Bnei Yisrael went "on the dry land in the sea and the water was a wall on both sides". There are two discrepancies in these *pasukim*. #1 did they go into the sea or dry land? #2 the word wall "*choma*" has two spellings; in the first verse it's with a Vav and in the second verse it is written without a Vav. The Gra asked, why is the pasuk written in two different ways? The Gra explains that the people that had faith in Hashem jumped in when the sea was in place. The people that were lacking in Emuna only went in once the sea had turned to dry land. The wall was spelled without a Vav and can also be read *chama*-anger. The sea was angry at those who waited and did not display emunah in Hashem.

This deepens our question. If the sea was upset at those who waited to jump in, how much more it should have resisted splitting for Dasan and Aviram who waited until after the Egyptians drowned. Why would it split again for them?

Maharil Diskin explains that Dasan and Avirom were Jewish policemen during the enslavement in Egypt. When the work quota was not filled they were held responsible and received many beatings in the place of other Jews. They hated Moshe and Aaron because when they came into the picture things only got more difficult for Bnei Yisrael. As the work quotas increased and supplies diminished Dasan and Aveiram received even more beatings. It seems somewhat justified for them to dislike Moshe and Aaron although they stuck their neck out for the rest of the Jewish people. They stayed behind in case Moshe's plan would fail and the nation would need to return to Egypt.

This was why they merited the sea to split a second time just for them. When a person is willing to take a hit for someone else to save their life they gain tremendous merit. A person can change the course of nature due to his selfless actions.



Seeing the Good

by Rabbi Daniel Coren

Leading up to TU Bishvat, I shared with the Sfardi *Vasikin minyan* after davening some insights in *hilchos brachos*. The general theme that I explained to the *olam* is that of *hakaras hatov*. If you think about it *hakaras hatov* is the foundation of Judaism. Each day in *davening* we say that Hashem's name is *Tov - Hatov shimcha*. Hashem's Name is Good which teaches us that the essence of Hashem is good. As the Ramchal and others explain that Hashem is good and it's the way of good to do good. When Hashem created the world initially He placed Adam in Gan Eden to enjoy the fruits. This represents the purpose of every one of us to receive pleasure; however, the ultimate pleasure is not in this world it's in the next world. In this world, we need to work for the reward and one of the main works we need to do is to be aware of all the good Hashem gives us.

The *Chovos Halevavos* brings home this point in *Shaar Habitachon* that because of the myriad of good that Hashem gives us every moment, even if we kept all the *mitzvos*, we would still not be deserving of reward if not for the fact that Hashem is good and wants to give us good. Hence we can appreciate more how important every *bracha* is on every gift that Hashem gives us. However, it really goes much deeper. To really recognize Hashem and believe in him (as Rav Tzadok writes that through *brachos* we will come to a greater *emuna* in Hashem) means to consciously accept that all that Hashem does is for the good albeit we don't always see it and may not understand until Mashiach comes all of Hashem decrees and punishments.

This actually connects us to *Parshas Beshalach* also known as Shabbos Shira. Firstly, the beginning of the parsha is a continuation of *yetzias Mitzryaim*. ויהי בשלח פרעה the *Ohr Hachayim* points out that there was something missing in the Jewish nation exit from Egypt. They didn't really get to the proper awareness that it's Hashem that is taking them out. This lacking is hinted in the word of the *pasuk* "and Pharaoh sent them out" This is a constant struggle that we have between doing *hishtadlus* and experiencing the world from a "natural" perspective, while at the same time knowing clearly that its Hashem only and nothing and no one can do anything without Hashem allowing it.

To bring all that we have said above together, it's noteworthy that the name of this Shabbos Shira really includes all of the points above. I once heard a beautiful idea from the author of *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh* about the word *shira*. The root is connected to a Mishna in Shabbos that speaks about an animal going out with its shir - which means bracelet. A bracelet is made up of many links. A song is made of many links too. Our life can be viewed as a song made of many links. Some links represent great and joyful occasions, some represent sad and tragic events. The challenge is to see that all links make up one great song

May we see the good even in the bad and constantly grow more in our emuna and trust in Hashem.

Wednesday Night 8pm – Smichas chaver Rabbi Coren Office
Shabbos Morning - Vasikin Minyan & 8:00am Minyan

Celebrating the Future



Rabbi YY Jacobson

The following story happened on this very Shabbos, 80 years ago.

One of the great rabbis of Pre-war Europe was Rabbi Aharon Rokeach (1880 – 1957), the fourth Rebbe of the Belz Chasidic dynasty (Belz is a city in Galicia, Poland.) He led the movement from 1926 until his death in 1957.

Known for his piety and saintliness, Reb Aharon of Belz was called the "Wonder Rabbi" by Jews and gentiles alike for the miracles he performed.

His reign as Rebbe saw the devastation of the Belz community, along with most of European Jewry, during the Holocaust. During the war, Reb Aharon was high on the list of Gestapo targets as a high-profile Rebbe. They murdered his wife and each of his children and grandchildren. He had no one left. But he and his half-brother, Rabbi Mordechai of Bilgoray, managed to escape from Poland into Hungary, then into Turkey, Lebanon, and finally into Israel, in February 1944. He remarried but had no children.

Most thought that Belz was an item of history. Yet, the impossible occurred. His half-brother Rabbi Mordechai also remarried and had a son, then died suddenly a few months later. Reb Aharon raised his half-brother's year-old son, Yissachar Dov, and groomed him to succeed him as Belzer Rebbe. Today, it is one of the largest Chasidic groups in Israel, with hundreds of institutions, schools, synagogues, and yeshivos.

The Belzer Rebbe not once said any of the prescribed prayers like *Yizkor* or *Kaddish* for his wife and children, because he felt that those who had been slain by the Nazis for being Jews were of transcendent holiness; their spiritual stature was beyond our comprehension.

For Reb Aharon, the only proper way to respond to the near-total destruction of Belz and honor the memory of the dead was to build new institutions and slowly nurture a new generation of Chasidim. This is what he did for the remainder of his life.

The First Shabbos

The first Shabbos after he arrived in Israel during the winter of 1944 was Shabbos *Parshas Beshalach*, and he spent it in Haifa.

He was alone in the world, without a single relative (save his brother) alive.

During that Shabbos, he held a "*tisch*," a formal Chasidic gathering, in which Chasidim sing, dance, and share words of inspiration and Torah. The Belzer Rebbe quickly realized that the Holocaust survivors present, who had endured indescribable suffering and had lost virtually everything they had, were in no mood to sing.

In response, the Belzer Rebbe raised the question of why the Torah specifically alludes to *techiyas hameisim*, the resurrection of the dead, in conjunction with the song that was sung celebrating the splitting of the Red Sea?

He gave the following chilling answer.

When the Jewish people sang the Song of the Sea, much of the nation was not present. How many people did not survive the enslavement of Egypt? How many Jewish children were drowned in the Nile? How many Jews never lived to see the day of the Exodus? How many refused to embark on a journey into the unknown?

According to tradition, only a fifth of the Jewish people made it out of Egypt. It is safe to say that everyone who did make it out of Egypt had lost relatives and could not fully rejoice in the miracles they were witnessing. Now, the sea split. Wonder of wonders! Moses says to them, "It is time to sing." But they responded, "Sing? How can we sing? Eighty percent of our people are missing!"

Hence, the Torah says, "Moses and the children of Israel will sing," in the future tense. Moses explained to his people that the story is far from over. The Jews in Egypt have died, but their souls are alive, and they will return during the resurrection of the dead. We can sing now, said Moses, not because there is no pain, but because despite the pain, we do not believe we have seen the end of the story. We can celebrate the future.

Womens Shiur **Tuesday** 9:30am (18 Main)
Chassidus Shiur **Monday & Thursday** 7:45am (18 Main)
Shabbos: Friday Night – before Barchu (20 Upstairs)
Morning 9:00 (20 Upstairs) | After Davening 12:00pm (20 Upstairs)

UFARATZTA



Az Yoshir Moshé

... In general, we should guard our thoughts-speech-actions, refraining from worrisome and disheartening thoughts. We should go in the opposite direction, [thinking,] speaking and doing things that lift us up and bring us happiness. This behavior will settle and become part of one's mindset. And in this way, [as a result] a spirit from above will shower joy and an upbeat heart upon us. And this is what I heard from my grandfather, our teacher and Rebbe [The Baal haTanya]:

The Magid* (*Nishmoso Eiden*) would say, on the *Pasuk* [Yechezkel 1,26] "... like the appearance of a man upon it, from above," that in accordance with how a person projects himself down in this world, so they relate to him from

Act Positively and Receive Positivity from Above [Continued from last week]

above. Therefore, he** recommended that I should refrain from singing sad*** tunes during *davening*. He waited until I finished davening Maariv and then told me the [above] Torah of the Magid. ...

==== *Igros Kodesh Tzemach Tzedek P21 22.*

*The Magid of Mezritch, took over the leadership of the Chasidim after the Baal-Shem-Tov. The Alter Rebbe/ Baal haTanya was his *talmid*.

** The Baal haTanya /Chabad Rebbe, maternal grandfather of the Tzemach Tzedek/ the third Chabad Rebbe. The Tzemach Tzedek would hum tunes during his *tefillos*.

*** Not to confuse sad tunes with slow, passionate tunes.

Note: The above Torah of the Mezritcher Magid, the Alter Rebbe/Baal haTanya said to the Tzemach Tzedek on the last Maariv before the Alter Rebbe was *nistalek*. The Alter Rebbe was *nistalek* on *Motzaei Shabbos*, 24th of Teves 5573/1812.



As we enjoy Shabbos Shira, and sing *Az Yashir*, let us explore some more details about this timeless song.

We have seen that the *shira* begins with the *pasuk* “*Az Yashir*.” What about the end? What is the last *pasuk* of the *shira*? Is the *pasuk*: “*ki va sus pharaoh*,” part of the *shira*? At first glance it seems to be just a part of the narrative and not a part of the miracle. However, this is, in fact, a dispute in the *Rishonim*.

The Ib’n Ezra writes that it is a part of the *shira*. It is not just telling us when it happened; it is telling us about the tremendous miracle that took place. At the very moment that the Egyptians were drowning in the turbulent waters, the Yidden were strolling calmly on dry land. The Ramban, however, asserts that the expressions used are not similar to the poetic language of a *shira*, and is just relating the time or the location of the *shira*.

The *nafka mina* – the halachic difference – between these two opinions would be how to write the last *pasuk*. Should it be written as a *shira*, with spaces, or should it be written as the rest of the Torah is written, without spaces. This is not just a preference; the Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch tell us that if written wrong – if a regular *pasuk* is written as a *shira*, with spaces, or if the *shira* is written without spaces – the *sefer torah* is *pasul*. Indeed, the Rambam includes this *pasuk* in the 30 lines of the *shira*, which have a special way to be written. This is, in fact, how most *sifrei torah* have it.

The *Machtzis Hashekel* discusses this *machlokes* and cautions not to change the *sefer torah*, but to keep the *sefer torah* the way it was written.

There is a fascinating story about this question. When Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin became Rov in Lomza, at a young age, an older *talmid chochom* came to him and told him that he believes that this last *pasuk* is not part of the *shira*. He proved this from the Avudraham, who writes that the *minhag* is to repeat the last *pasuk* of the *shira*, “*Hashem yimloch...*” This is also quoted by the Rama (51:7), which would seem to be a clear indication that we *pasken* that the next *pasuk*, “*ki va sus*” is not a part of the *shira*. He brought another proof from Rav Amram Gaon, who writes that the 18 *brochos* of *shmoneh esrei* correspond to the 18 *pesukim* of the *shira*. Once again, we see that “*ki va sus*,” which is the 19th *pasuk* is not part of the *shira*. Rav Yehoshua Leib told him that he enjoyed his *dvar torah*, and even added that the Mordechai in *Meseches Sukah* also concurs with the Avudraham.

But then the man, excited about his *chiddush*, wished to take it a step further and told the *sofrim* to change the *pasuk* of “*ki*

va sus,” to be written in the way of the regular *pesukim*, and not like a *shira*. He felt this is so important, since if a *sefer torah* is written in the wrong way it is *pasul*. Rav Yehoshua Leib told him that he was taking his *shtikel torah* too far. We do not change the tradition that we have in writing the *sifrei torah*, and challenging the status of the *sifrei torah* would be a disgrace to the holy scrolls. Unfortunately, the man did not relent and continued to go around, convincing the *sofrim* to change the *sifrei torah*. That Friday, while immersing in the *mikvah*, he drowned, getting punished *midah k’neged midah* – measure for a measure. He had disgraced the *pasuk* of “*ki va sus...*” which discusses Pharaoh’s drowning, and he himself drowned.

Singing by Krias Hatorah

Most places read the whole *shira* – every *pasuk* – with a special melody. Some have the *minhag* to only sing a *pasuk* that has Hashem’s name (*Minhag* Pressburg, and in the Lederman *Shul*, which follows the *minhagim* of the Chazon Ish). Others use the special melody where there is a double expression of praise, such as “גָּאֵה גָּאֵה.”

In Summary

There is a *machlokes* if the last *pasuk* – *ki va sus...*” is part of the *Shira*, but we must keep the *sefer torah* the way it was written, and not make any changes in the *sefer torah*.

There are different customs how the *leining* is done, some do all the *p’sukim* with a special melody, and some places only certain *p’sukim*.

Rabbi Scheiner

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- Chavrusa learning - Gemara
- Currently: מסכת חגיגה
- Friday - Shuirim Beinyonei Dyoma and relevant topics

NIGHT KOLLEL | 8:15-9:45pm

- Chavrusa learning - Halacha
- Currently: הלכות שבת

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— Rabbi Shimon Shwab



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יום ה' פרשת תרומה | Thursday Feb 15

יום ה' פרשת תצוה | Thursday Feb 22



The holy Seer of Lublin lived approximately 180 years ago. In those days, the Jewish people lived in ghettos and everyone was religious. But there was one person, Peter, who never went to Synagogue and he was completely irreligious.

One Friday afternoon, the holy wife of the Seer of Lublin didn't have enough money to buy two candles for the Holy Shabbos. All Friday she was waiting for a miracle, but you know, miracles don't always happen. It was already five minutes before the beginning of Shabbos, and she still didn't have the two candles. So she went out on to the street, and she was crying. She pleaded, "Please G-d, don't let me have the Shabbos without candles."

At that moment Peter, who was wealthy passed by in his carriage, pulled by eight horses. He was already late for an important appointment, but he still had a very good heart. He saw her standing on the street crying, stopped the horses, and asked, "Why are you crying?" She said, "It is obvious that you are a rich man, but all I need is two pennies."

"Two pennies? Here they are." He put them into her holy hand.

She said to him, "You'll never know how much you did for me. I bless you; may the light of Shabbos, the light of Heaven, shine into you forever." He jumped back into his carriage and drove off. She quickly bought the candles, and kindled the Great Shabbos Light, and that light is still shining.

Her holy husband, the Seer of Lublin, began to pray. You know, when we pray we think about our business, but when the Rebbe of Lublin was praying, his soul really went to Heaven. He saw a big commotion in Heaven and the Heavenly court said to him, "You always make trouble for us. You always bless the most unworthy people. And now your wife is following in your footsteps. Look who she blessed! Look where the irreligious man is going now!"

The Seer of Lublin said, "You are one hundred percent right. But I would like to ask you one favor. Shine the light of Shabbos, the light of Heaven into his heart for just one hour. And let's see what happens."

Peter was driving along when he suddenly felt a very holy and exalted feeling. He thought, "What am I wasting my life with? Why don't I become a *mentch* [decent person]?" He turned his horses around and decided to go back to the house where the two candles were burning. According to our tradition, he became one of the greatest Rabbis of that generation.

The Wicked Dasan and Aviram

”ויגד למלך מצרים כי ברח העם, ויהפך ללב פרעה ועבדיו אל העם ויאמרו מה זאת עשינו כי שלחנו את ישראל מעבדנו” 14:5

“And it was told to the king of Mitzrayim that the people had fled, and the heart of Paroah and his servants were transformed regarding the people, and they said: ‘What is this that we have done, that we have sent away Yisroel from serving us?’” Paroah sent Klal Yisroel out of his land. After they left, Paroah is told that “the people” fled. Paroah and his servants had a change of heart, so they sent Klal Yisroel out of their land. The *posuk* does not tell us who told Paroah, rather it says, “It was told.” Who told Paroah?

Rashi says that Paroah was not speaking to B’nei Yisroel, rather he was speaking about Klal Yisroel. Paroah’s supervisors told him that they left. Targum Yonason appears to argue with Rashi and says specifically that as the *posuk* says, Paroah was speaking to B’nei Yisroel – namely Dasan and Aviram, who did not want to leave Mitzrayim with Moshe, for they hated him and wanted to kill him.

Chazal tell us that all who did not want to leave Mitzrayim were killed during the *makkah* of *choshech*. If Dasan and Aviram did not want to leave Mitzrayim with the rest of Klal Yisroel, why were they still alive at that time? The Midrash tells us that Dasan and Aviram were the *shotrim*, the officers, who were chosen by the Mitzriyim to make their brethren work harder and oppress them. Dasan and Aviram did not do their job, and were therefore mercilessly beaten. They accepted that pain in order to alleviate a little pain from their fellow brothers. It was this great *zechus* that they had, that although they should have died during *makkas choshech*, they were saved because of the selfless acts they had performed on behalf of Klal Yisroel. The *posuk* says, “ופרעה הקריב” – when Paroah came close – *Chazal* explain that Paroah chasing after Klal Yisroel caused Klal Yisroel to become, “close” to Hashem – they did *teshuvah*. This included Dasan and Aviram. Although Dasan and Aviram did many hideous things and did not want initially to leave with Klal Yisroel, they did *teshuvah*, and were *zoche* to go along together with Klal Yisroel and traverse the Yam. (מהרי"ל דיסקין)

We see the tremendous *koach* of performing good deeds and doing *teshuvah*. Dasan and Aviram showed themselves to be wicked people, yet in Mitzrayim, took the brunt of the beatings from their Mitzri masters in order that other Yiddin should not have as much pain. This was a great *zechus* for them, and they were *zoche* to live through *makkas choshech*, and ultimately be able to leave Mitzrayim. At first, they did not want to leave, but rather chose to remain with Paroah. In a moment of awakening, they did complete *teshuvah*, and were *zoche* to cross the Yam with Klal Yisroel and have the *Shechinah* revealed to them. This is a great lesson for all, that no matter what one has done in his past, he must always know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu awaits his *teshuvah*, and will accept his true heartfelt *teshuvah*, and he can even be elevated to a level of having *ruach hakodesh*. May we be *zoche* to do a true *teshuvah* and be *zoche* to see the second part of the *geulah* from Mitzrayim, the ultimate *geulah*, with the coming of *Moshiach*, אמן!



RABBI BEN ZION SNEH

Rachamei Shamayim

As the Houtis and the Western bloc nations fight it out over the Red sea in today's news – in, according to many, a place bordering on the scene of Kriyas Yam Suf – current events are once again hinted at in the Torah.

A quick look at a map also shows the “*derech erez Plishtim*”, referred to in the beginning of this week’s *parsha*, to be the Rafah Crossing and the area bordering on today's Gaza strip.

Clearly something is going on here. A message of synchronicity.

The *Rachmistrivke* Rebbe *zt”l* brings in his *sefer Amoros Tehoros*, that Klal Yisroel cannot be saved from the menace of their enemies without the prayers of *Tzadikim*.

During the Yom Kippur war, the Rebbe heard from a close *chassid* that the Belzer Rebbe *zt”l* davened with superhuman *kochos* for victory over our enemies. In one case, the Rebbe davened for 16 hours straight in front of the *Shabbos licht!*

As in the *parsha*, where the *yeshua* came with the *emunas chachamim* that Klal Yisroel demonstrated, their courageous actions and their intense prayers – the pathway to our current struggles must be through our actions and prayers, and the prayers of our *Tzadikim*.

Only when we forge this path can our spiritual leaders beseech Hashem for success.

May this week be a week of miracles in Gaza and all over Eretz Yisroel, just as our *parsha* set the tone with miracles in every step of our journey from Egypt.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

Written by R' Avrohom Hillel Reich based on a lesson and story by Harav Ben Tziyon Sneh Shlita

Just so you should know...

WE LOVE CHASSIDIM!

The Guru and the Hasid:

The Stranger-than-Fiction True Story of Swami Vijayananda

By Sara Yoheved Rigler

One sweltering day in the summer of 2008, near Hardwar, India, the pilgrimage city at the headwaters of the Ganges, an incongruous scene unfolded. Amidst the dhoti-clad men and sari-clad women, two Hasidic men from Israel, with long peyot and black kippahs, strode quickly through the crowded streets.

When they reached their destination — the ashram of Anandamayi-ma, India's most adulated woman saint of the 20th century — they hesitated at the entrance to the courtyard. Idolatrous statues dotted the courtyard. As religious Jews, they wondered whether they were permitted to enter.

The 93 Year-Old Guru Garbed in Robes of a Monk

Standing there, they saw the guru, Swami Vijayananda, garbed in the ochre robes of a monk, exit from one of the buildings. He took his seat on a stone bench in order to receive the long line of waiting devotees.

One by one, they approached the 93-year-old guru, bowed on their knees, and took the dust of his feet — a Hindu gesture of honor, whereby one touches the guru's feet with one's hand, and then one's own forehead. Each devotee had barely a minute of the guru's attention to ask or utter a few words. Then, still kneeling, the devotee found a place on the ground some distance away to continue to bask in the presence of the guru.

The two Hasidic men were Eliezer Botzer and his friend Natti, heads of the *Bayit Yehudi*, Jewish Home, a chain of Jewish centers situated throughout India in locations such as Hardwar and Goa, where thousands of post-army Israelis congregate. Although Eliezer and Natti spent a lot of time in India, standing there at the entrance to Anandamayi-ma's ashram they were as out of place as a klezmer clarinet at a sitar concert.

Notices the Two Religious Jews

After a few minutes, the guru noticed the two religious Jews. The next devotee at the head of the line was about to approach the guru, but he stopped him. He gestured to the two attendants who flanked him to block the line. Then the guru beckoned to the two religious Jews to come to him. While the long line of devotees, many of them Europeans, looked on in surprise, Eliezer and Natti directly approached the guru. No bowing, no taking the dust of his feet, no kneeling on the ground. The guru motioned for them to sit beside him on the bench.

Eliezer's question was different than that of the devotees who asked Swami Vijayananda about the purpose of life or the way to higher consciousness. Looking directly at the guru, Eliezer asked, "I heard that you're a Jew. Is it true?"

Was Born into a Hasidic Family

The guru smiled. Yes, he had been born into a Hasidic family in France. Although his grandparents were Lubliner Hasidim, his parents were more modern, but still fully observant. He had gone to Heder (Talmud Torah) and had been raised with all the devout trappings of Judaism. In his twenties, he told Eliezer and Natti, he abandoned Jewish observance. He became a doctor. Then the Holocaust descended. He told them about his Holocaust experiences, and about how he gave his tefillin away to a religious fellow because he wasn't using them anyway.

"Why Did You Come to India?"

"Why did you come to India?" Eliezer asked him.

The guru related that, after the war, he was on a ship bound for the nascent State of Israel. A woman on the ship asked him why he was going from one war to another. "Where should I go?" he asked her. She suggested India, a place of peace, with no anti-Semitism.

In India, in 1951, at the age of 36, he met Anandamayi-ma. Already at that time, hundreds of thousands of Indians venerated her not only as an enlightened soul, but as an Incarnation of the Divine Mother. He became her faithful disciple, taking on the monastic name of Swami Vijayananda. After her passing in 1982, many Indians and Westerners gravitated to him as their new guru.

Looking at Eliezer and Natti, he said, "There are two levels of spirituality: a lower level and a higher level. The lower level is religion; the higher level is the recognition that everything is one."

Eliezer looked back at him and rejoined: "There are two levels of love: a higher level and a lower level. There is love for every person in the world, and there is love for your own wife and family. If you're not able to love your own family, your love of the whole world is fake."

"I agree," nodded the guru.

An Obligation to First Love the Jewish People

"So," continued Eliezer, "You're Jewish. Before you go out and love the whole world, you should practice loving those who are closest to you, the Jewish People."

The guru laughed. That started their discussion. As the attendants looked on nervously and the many devotees in the line fidgeted restlessly, the guru and the Hasids sparred back and forth for a long time. "He was trying to show us that we were wrong," remembers Eliezer, "that religion is not the Truth."

With neither side conceding to the other, Eliezer suddenly switched gears. He asked, "What did your mother call you when you were a child?"

Tears came to the guru's eyes, and he murmured, "Avrimka. My name was Avraham Yitzhak. My mother called me Avrimka."

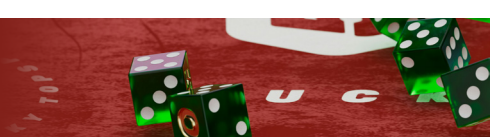
Starts Singing Eishes Hayil

Eliezer continued to probe: "Do you remember a Shabbos table when you were a child?"

The guru closed his eyes. Then, from out of hazy depths 70 years dormant, he started to sing "Eishes Hayil, A Woman of Valor," the song sung before Kiddush at every Shabbos dinner. With tears streaming from his closed eyes, he sang the entire song, from beginning to end. Electricity filled the air of the ashram courtyard, igniting a charged atmosphere that reached both backward in time and heavenward in intensity.

The two attendants, who had never before seen their guru cry, became afraid. They moved to eject the foreign men, telling them that their time was up. The guru opened his eyes, suddenly back in the present, and waved the attendants away. (To be continued...)

THE REBBE MAHARASH AND THE LOST SOUL



Night was approaching as the carriage pulled up in front of the Alexander Hotel, one of Paris's most luxurious establishments. Out of the carriage stepped the Rebbe Maharash, the fourth Chabad rebbe, followed by two attendants and two companions.

Walking into the hotel lobby with an air of confidence, he approached the reception desk and, in fluent French, asked for the best suite available on the casino floor. The clerk was taken aback; the suite was very expensive and usually reserved for nobility. But the Rebbe Maharash did not flinch at the exorbitant price, and was soon escorted to his rooms by a bellboy. He instructed his attendants, R. Leivik and R. Pinchas Leib, to stay with him in the hotel, while his two companions, R. Monye Monensohn and R. Yeshaya Berlin, both men of means, went to a cheaper hotel nearby.

The Rebbe Maharash settled in. The suite was spacious and elegantly outfitted, with fine furniture and valuable paintings. But the Rebbe was not there for the luxurious decor. He had come to Paris to find and save a lost soul, a young Jewish man who had fallen so far into the clutches of gambling and drinking that he had long forgotten his heritage.

After several hours, the Rebbe got up and left his room. He walked along the corridor until he reached the casino.

He scanned the room with his piercing eyes, until he spotted the young man at a table, where he was playing dice. He had a glass of wine in front of him, which he sipped from time to time.

The Rebbe Maharash walked towards him, ignoring the curious glances of the other gamblers. He reached his table, and placed his hand gently on his shoulder. The young man looked up at him with surprise and annoyance.

"Who are you?" he asked.

The Rebbe Maharash smiled warmly at him, and said: "Young

man! One is not allowed to drink non-kosher wine!"

The young man blinked in confusion. He did not understand what the Rebbe Maharash meant.

"What are you talking about?" he asked.

"Such wine dulls the sensitivity of the mind and the heart. Be a Jew!" the Rebbe Maharash continued.

The young man felt a strange sensation in his chest, as if something was stirring inside him. He recognized the Rebbe's words as coming from his own tradition, which he had abandoned long ago.

The Rebbe Maharash then bade the man good night and left the casino, his eyes blazing with passion and excitement.

Exhausted and exhilarated, the Rebbe sat down on a chair in the corridor, not realizing that it was a chair on which one would be carried from one floor to the next (there were no elevators in those days). Only after he was already being carried up to the next floor, did the Rebbe realize and inform the porters that his room was on the same floor as the casino and that he could be brought back down.

Some time later, the young man came looking for the Rebbe. The two remained closeted for many hours together.

What words they exchanged are not known, but the young man emerged from that meeting a new man.

The very next morning, the Rebbe left Paris. His mission had been accomplished.

And the young man? He embraced his Jewish identity, began living as a Jew, and became the father of the well-regarded Klein family of France, known for their Orthodoxy and piety.

Tu B'shvat Chabad.org

The 15th day of the Jewish month of Shevat – or Tu B'Shvat, as it is commonly called – is not the Jewish version of Arbor Day, but is considered the "New Year for Trees," with real implications for Jewish law. The 15th of Shevat serves to separate one year from the next with regard to the laws of *maaserot* (tithes of produce), *orlah* (the fruits of the first three years, which are forbidden for consumption) and *sheviit* (*shemittah*, the Sabbatical year).

For example, the law of *orlah* is that the fruit of a tree may not be eaten during the first three years after its planting. The fruits of the fourth year are called *neta reva'i*, and are sanctified; they must be eaten in Jerusalem or "redeemed" with money. From the fifth year on, the fruits may be consumed in the normal manner.

But how do we calculate when the tree has turned three and then four? From Tu B'Shevat.

Practically, this means that the fruit that grows after 15 Shevat of year four may be eaten only in Jerusalem, and those grown after 15 Shevat of year five can be eaten at home

Why was this date chosen

As is the case with many Torah laws, the *halachah* is based on what happens in the Land of Israel. So, since most of

Israel's rainy season is over by the 15th of Shevat, this date is considered the New Year for Trees. Rashi explains that at this point the ground has become saturated with the rains of the new year, causing the sap to start rising in the trees, which means that the fruit can begin to bud.

The Jerusalem Talmud records an alternative explanation. Until the New Year for Trees, all trees can survive on the water from the previous year. After their New Year, the trees derive their life source from the water of the new year.

Light at the End of the Tunnel

If you are reading this in sub-zero weather, you may find the most comfort in the explanation of Rabbi Menachem Meiri (1249–c. 1310), who points out that the winter season extends from the month of Tevet until the month of Nissan. The 15th of Shevat is the midpoint between fall and spring. Once half the winter has passed, its strength is weakened, the cold is not as intense, and the budding process begins.

So take heart. Yes, it may be smack in the middle of winter, but the 15th of Shevat marks a turning point, a time when under all that cold and snow the sap of the trees is rising, readying for spring. In a sense, the 15th of Shevat signifies that sometimes it is precisely from within the darkest and coldest moments of our lives that the new blossoms burst forth!



Hisorerus During a Time of Hardship

Harav Gershon Edelstein ztkl

...Chazal say (Makkos 10a) on the pasuk, "Our feet were standing at your gates, Yerushalayim." What caused our feet to stand in war? The gates of Yerushalayim symbolize that they were osek baTorah! If so, during the time of this war, when it is truly life-threatening and there have already been tragedies, Rachmana litzlan, we certainly need to increase zechuyos, to protect ourself with our zechuyos, and in the zechus of Torah they will stand in war. But there must be "the yoke of Torah," there must be hasmadah! Just as Rabbi Elazar said, "early in the morning and late at night" — it is a great chiyuv now.

The truth is, Chazal said further (Yevamos 63a), "Calamity only comes to the world for Yisrael." When there are world tragedies, such as floods, earthquakes, and world wars, with casualties, and all sorts of tzaros, Rachmana litzlan, it's happening so that Klal Yisrael will wake up and do teshuvah. The Gemara cites a pasuk: "I have cut off nations; their towers have become desolate. I have destroyed their streets so that no one passes by... I said, "But surely you will fear Me and take mussar..." When it says "אוֹתֵי תִירָאִי" it is referring to yirah, fear; not sight, but fear. Fear Me — gain yiras Shamayim, and as a result of that newfound yiras Shamayim, you will accept mussar; the tragedies will have an effect on you to make changes and they will actively lead to changes in your behavior.

This is talking about when calamities strike other nations of the world, even when they hit non-Jews. Kal vachomer, if the calamities are hitting us here in Eretz Yisrael. In that case, we certainly must wake up and do teshuvah. What must we do teshuvah for? Every single person knows, everyone must make their own cheshbon hanefesh: what are my obligations and what am I doing? Am I doing everything that I can? "Early in the morning and late at night"? Am I guilty of bittul Torah in thought? Bittul Torah in actual time? And what about my davening? Am I davening with kavanah? How much kavanah?...

The Abarbanel on Parshas Bshalach

After having left Egypt, the nation camps in Refidim. Having no water to drink, the people complain to Moshe and G-d gives Moshe the following instructions: "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and in your hand take your staff with which you struck the river, and go. Behold! I shall stand before you by the rock in Horeb; you shall strike the rock and water will come forth from it and the people will drink." The Torah continues: "Moshe did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." (Shmot 17:5-6)

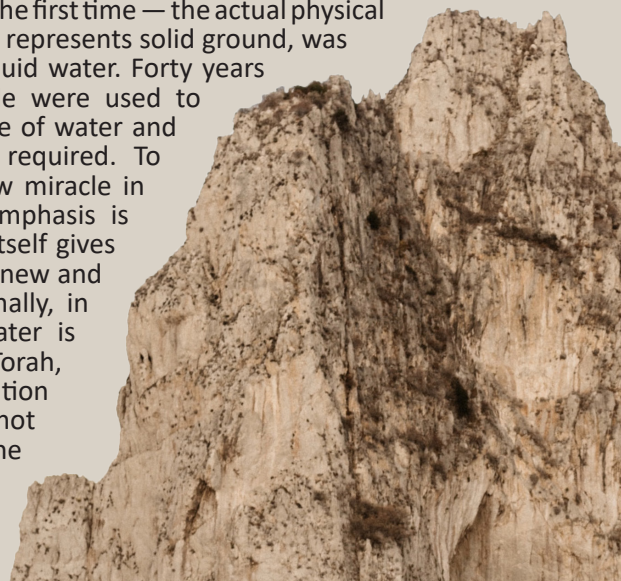
Forty years later, the people are faced with a similar lack of water. However, G-d's instructions to Moshe are markedly different: "G-d spoke to Moshe saying, 'Take the staff and gather together the assembly, you and Aharon your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes that it shall give its waters. You shall bring forth for them water from the rock and give drink to the assembly and to their animals.'" (Bamidbar 20:7-8)

Abarbanel is puzzled by the numerous differences between the two situations. In the first case, the miracle is to be performed only in front of the elders; in the second case, in front of the entire assembly. In the first case, Moshe acts alone; in the second case he is joined by Aharon. Here he is told to strike the rock, while over there he is merely to speak to the rock. Here he is told that the water will come out and the people will drink, without mentioning Moshe or the animals, while over there the rock gives its water and then Moshe gives it to the assembly and their animals. Finally, in our case the rock is referred to in Hebrew as "tsur" while in the second case it is called "selah".

The Abarbanel explains that just as the manna miraculously "followed" the people throughout their forty years in the desert, so too did the water, which was necessary for their survival. The giving of the manna, the giving of the water and the giving of the Torah were three aspects of a single miracle — the demonstration of G-d's glory. In our case — the first example of water being brought forth miraculously — the water is compared to the Torah that we received from the "Tsur" (another name for G-d), whose ways are pure (Devarim 32:4). Because in this case the water is compared to the Torah and its source is G-d, Moshe is instructed to perform the miracle only in front of the elders. This is similar to what happens later when Moshe is instructed to approach Mt. Sinai prior to receiving the Torah: "Go up to G-d, you...and seventy of the elders of Israel" (Shmot 24:1). In the second case, however, the comparison to the receiving of the Torah is absent and the miracle can be performed in front of everyone. The comparison to Torah is also indicated by the fact that our verse makes reference to Horeb, another name for Sinai, where the Torah would be given.

In our *parsha* Moshe acts alone, but in the second case Aharon's assistance was required to organize such a large group. In our case Moshe is instructed to strike the rock in order to dramatically demonstrate the nature of the miracle which was taking place for the first time — the actual physical nature of solid rock, which represents solid ground, was being transformed into liquid water. Forty years later, however, the people were used to the miraculous appearance of water and no dramatic action was required. To further dramatize this new miracle in our *parsha*, the entire emphasis is on the fact that the rock itself gives forth its water, something new and unheard of previously. Finally, in our *parsha*, since the water is being compared to the Torah, there is no need to mention the animals, as they are not the ones to receive the Torah.

(ohr.edu)



A Matter of Perception [For Tu B'Shvat and Parshas Beshalach]

Mendel Kalmanson

On the verse, "They could not drink water from Marah, because it was bitter," the Maggid of Mezeritch makes the following linguistic observation. When translated literally, the Hebrew words for "because it was bitter," *ki marim heim*, actually mean: "because they were bitter." According to this teaching, the real reason that the water at Marah was undrinkable was because *the Israelites*, not the water, were bitter!

This point can be understood on both spiritual and psychological levels.

On the psychological level, the people were in an ugly mood, and correspondingly perceived ugliness in everything they encountered. Their mood had been set by a horrible week. It began with them being forced by Moses to cut short their bounty-gathering on the bank of the Sea of Reeds. While a fortune was to be made from the floating remains of the flamboyant Egyptian army gone under, Moses had stressed that Mount Sinai was waiting.

And days later they were at their wits' end, having traveled through the desert of Shur for three days without water. They were frustrated with Moses, and just a tad angry with his Boss. They were stressed out and looking to vent.

Vent they did, according to the verse: "The people complained against [not to] Moses."

The biblical commentator Rashi has this to say about the prevailing mood of the Jews: "They did not consult with Moses using gracious language, saying, 'Pray on our behalf that there should be water for us to drink.' Rather, 'they complained.'"

They looked for, and found, something to complain about. The water tasted much like their mood. To be sure, the water was "objectively" bitter, but since when is the experience of taste objective?

Thus, while the water could have been bitter, it could also have been not. Sweetness need not have been imparted or imported for the waters to become drinkable; a change of mind, mode and mood could equally have done the job.

On the spiritual level, too, the cure is in the mind.

"They walked for three days in the desert but did not find water."

Water is a reference to Torah, says the Midrash. Thus, metaphorically, the verse teaches that for three days the study of G-d's Word was neglected. According to one interpretation, then, physical water was withheld from the Jews because they stopped partaking of spiritual waters.

A kinder interpretation has it that this was not punishment, but cause and effect. The undrinkable waters of Marah reflected the spiritual state of the people. They had run empty on meaning; they were spiritually void and thirsty, and therefore bitter. That was the cause. The effect was that the water was "undrinkable"—it left their thirst unquenched. For it wasn't physical hydration they were after; it was their soul crying out for nourishment.

No wonder Moses was the subject of complaint. The integrity of sacred symbols, traditions and leaders are often attacked by people when they themselves are spiritually lacking.

(Perhaps this is their unknowing way of reaching out, of trying to establish a connection?)

So, how does one fill an emptiness of spirit? How does one quench the thirst of a soul?

Believe it or not, the answer is simple.

"The L-rd instructed him concerning a piece of a tree, which he cast into the water ..."

The Torah is called the Tree of Life. "Take a piece of it," says G-d, "just one thought, a nugget, and 'cast it into the water,' taste it, dwell on it, process and apply it to your life, and 'the water will become sweet'—your soul will be nourished, and your inner peace will be restored."

That's one solution: sweet and intuitive.

But there's another, more challenging, option. Take a bitter olive branch, a poisonous oleander, and harness its healing powers. Recognize that the spiritual thirst itself, the depth of its yearning, the power of its want, is all itself part of the sweetening process.

Then name the place of your life's spiritual drama "Bitter." Internalize and utilize the power of Bitter, the extraordinary force created by the voids in your life, and drink of it even—or especially—when life's waters are sweet.

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The Point of No Return

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, zt"l



Our parsha begins with an apparently simple proposition:

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the land of the Philistines, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt prepared for battle.

Ex. 13:17-18

God did not lead the people to the Promised Land by the coastal route, which would have been more direct. The reason given is that it was such an important highway, it constituted the main path from which Egypt might be attacked by forces from the north-west such as the Hittite army. The Egyptians established a series of forts along the way, which the Israelites would have found impregnable.

But the *parsha* ends with the battle against the Amalekites.

No complaint on the part of the people, no fear, no trauma, no despair. Joshua leads the people in battle. Moses, supported by Aaron and Hur, stands on a hilltop, his arms upraised, and as the people look up to Heaven, they are inspired, strengthened, and they prevail.

Where then was the fear spoken of in the opening verse of the parsha? Faced by the Amalekites, in some ways more fearsome than the Egyptians, the Israelites did not say they wanted to return to Egypt. The sheer silence on the part of the people stands in the strongest possible contrast to their previous complaints about water and food.

The Israelites turn out to be good warriors.

So why the sudden change between the opening of our parsha and its close? In the opening, God is protective and miracle-working. At the close, God is more concealed. He does not fight the battle against the Amalekites; He gives the Israelites the strength to do so themselves. In the opening, the Israelites, faced by the Egyptians, panic and say that they should never have left Egypt. By the close, faced by the Amalekites, they fight and win.

What had changed?

The answer, it seems to me, is that we have perhaps the first recorded instance of what later became a key military strategy. The idea is that sometimes you have to arrange that there is no way back, no line of retreat, no possibility of fear-induced escape. It is a radical strategy, undertaken when the stakes are high and when exceptional reserves of courage are necessary. That is the logic of the events in this week's *parsha* that are otherwise hard to understand.

Before they crossed the Red Sea, the Israelites were fearful. But once they had crossed the Sea, there was no way back. To be sure, they still complained about water and food. But their ability to fight and defeat the Amalekites showed how profoundly they had changed. They looked only forwards, for there was no return.

Any great undertaking comes with fear. Often we fear failure. Sometimes we even fear success. Are we worthy of it? Can we

sustain it? We long for the security of the familiar, the life we have known. We are afraid of the unknown, the uncharted territory. And the journey itself exposes our vulnerability. We have left home; we have not yet reached our destination. Courage is not fearlessness. It is, in the words of a well-known book title, feeling the fear but doing it anyway.

Sometimes the only way to do this is to know that there is no way back. The point of no return has to be reached. That is what crossing the Red Sea was for the Israelites, and why it was essential that they experienced it at an early stage in their journey. It marked the line of no retreat; the critical point at which they could only move forward; going backward was impossible.

I believe that some of the greatest positive changes in our lives come when, having undertaken a challenge, we cross our own Red Sea and know that there is no way back. There is only a way forward.

Then God gives us the strength to fight our battles and win.

SHMIRAS HALASHON

It Wasn't Exactly a Shining Moment

It wasn't exactly terrible, but it wasn't exactly a shining moment. It definitely was, however, the makings of a great story. If you and some friends engage in a "misadventure," can you tell the story? Because you're including yourself as one of the "guilty parties," you obviously don't feel that the story is really damaging. But what about the others?

Your newly-licensed son wants to drive a group of friends to an out-of-town wedding. Remembering back to your younger years, you recall a similar situation in which you and two cousins drove through the night at warp speed, got pulled over, didn't have the registration to show the policeman and ended up spending the day in a small-town police station. Can you tell him the story?

THE DILEMMA

THE HALACHAH

Even though you are including yourself among the guilty parties in a story, you are not allowed to tell it if it will cast others in a negative light. The cousins may not want others to know that they behaved irresponsibly. Perhaps the story will get back to their children and reduce the parents' stature in their eyes.

Reviewed by Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Lowy, shlita. For discussion only; pls consult a rav. From Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation's Shabbos Menu info@powerofspeech.org.

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JOKES

In Labor

A woman in labor suddenly shouted, "Shouldn't! Wouldn't! Couldn't! Didn't! Can't!"

"Don't worry," said the doc. "Those are just contractions."

Bear Story

A bear walks into a bar and says, "Give me a whiskey and..... cola."

"Fine, but why the big pause?" asks the bartender.

The bear shrugged. "I'm not sure; I was born with them."

Q&A

Did you hear about the actor who fell through the floorboards?

He was just going through a stage.

Did you hear about the claustrophobic astronaut?

He just needed a little space.

Why don't scientists trust atoms?

Because they make up everything.

Where are average things manufactured?

The satisfactory.

What sits at the bottom of the sea and twitches?

A nervous wreck.

How do you keep a bagel from getting away?

Put lox on it.

Toy Store

This weekend while shopping in a local toy store, I came across a long line of people waiting for a promised shipment of dolls from Mattel. As I scanned the line, I noticed a friend waiting with all the others. I knew my friend had no daughters or young relatives, so I figured he must like the dolls himself.

"Shloimie," I said going up to him, "I didn't know you were a collector!"

"I'm not," he replied.

"Oh," I said, "You're buying a gift, then."

"No, not at all," my friend responded.

"If you don't mind my asking then," I said, "Why are you standing in this line?"

"Oh that," he answered. "I've never been able to resist a barbie queue!"

Three Boys

Three boys are in the schoolyard bragging of how great their fathers are.

The first one says: "Well, my father runs the fastest. He can fire an arrow, and start to run, I tell you, he gets there before the arrow".

The second one says: "Ha! You think that's fast! My father is a hunter. He can shoot his gun and be there before the bullet".

The third one listens to the other two and shakes his head. He then says: "You two know nothing about fast. My father is a civil servant. He stops working at 4:30 and he is home by 3:45!"

Job Hopping

I got a job at a company that makes fire hydrants, but I had to give it up. There was no place to park.

Then I went to work for a company that prints calendars. But I knew from the start that my days were numbered.

So I went to work for a moving company. They told me to vacate the premises, so I left.

After that I went to work for a demolition company. I got fired for breaking the cardinal rule of demolitions: Make sure you get the address right.

So I tried acting. I auditioned for the role of Hamlet, but it was not to be.

Broken Eggs and Crushed Bread

I was working at the grocery-store checkout counter, and a woman and her son came through the line. The son unloaded the cart. Two eggs in a carton had been broken, and half a loaf of bread had been mysteriously crushed. His mother chided him, remarking that she would have to make French toast with the injured items. He looked properly repentant until his mother walked off. Then he whispered to me, "A friend told me to try the broken egg/squashed bread routine. That's how he gets his mom to make French toast for him!"



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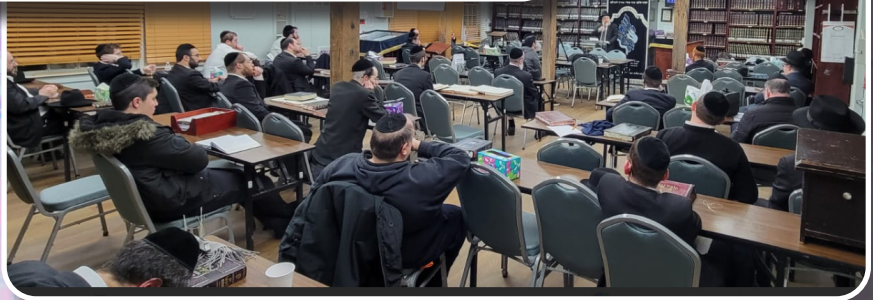
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