

adam, most humble of men. He claimed – and sought – nothing for himself. He attributed everything to the Almighty. Indeed, he gave everything up just to be the servant of G-d. **Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl**, notes Moshe's total humility, his complete subservience to Hashem, from his excluding himself from the miracle of the *manna*. How would he not allow some particle, some slight reflection of the blinding brilliance of such a miracle, not to filter down to himself? For forty years, he was involved in the process of feeding a nation of one and a half million people, and he never once took any credit for himself. Moshe trembled at the thought of receiving any recognition for his part in the miracle. "What are we?" tells it all. He is but an instrument of G-d.

Moshe emphasized Hashem's total leadership. The people stood directly beneath Him, with Moshe not serving even as an intermediary. He insisted that his significance and that of his brother, Aharon *HaKohen*, vanish from their minds. Indeed, the success of Moshe's mission was dependent upon its being recognized as G-d's work – and not that of Moshe. There can be no semblance of human contribution whatsoever.

Rav Hirsch goes so far as to say that for Moshe to ascribe to himself such institutions as *Shabbos*, *Shemittah*, and other *mitzvos* which supposedly make material demands on us – together with the actual forty-year journey in the barren wilderness – would not only be folly, it would be criminal. Man neither has the right to impose his will on others, nor does he have the right to desist from his duty to provide his family with daily sustenance. To leave Hashem out of the command would be a violation of human rights.

Commanded by G-d, demanded by G-d as an everlasting sign of unreserved trust, that which otherwise would be felonious is transformed into profound wisdom and activity of sublime virtue. Indeed, not carrying out the command would be denying G-d and bringing disrepute upon oneself.

Shabbos is the institution in Jewish life that is directly connected with the *manna*. Indeed, the forty-year experience of the Heavenly sustenance called *manna* taught the people that man, with all of his limited – but indispensable – requirements of daily family life, stands directly under the purview of the Almighty. He can whisper all of his worries directly to Him without an intercessor to carry forth the message. *Shabbos* also relies on this relationship. A *Shabbos* observant Jew senses this direct bond with Hashem. Thus, with strong conviction, he maintains his fidelity to Hashem. *Shabbos*, as well as the entire Torah, was to outlive Moshe, because he saw to it that the people were made aware that he was but a "man" – a man, who, with time would disappear, but his relationship with the Almighty was a bond that would continue to eternity.

Va'ani Tefillah

livnei Yisrael am kerovo. To the Bnei Yisrael His near/close nation.

Klal Yisrael is referred to in different terms concerning their relationship with Hashem: chosen nation; servants; His people; His children; and various other terms of endearment. *Am kerovo*, His close nation, means that He has kept us close to Him, despite our iniquities, whether we were deserving of the nearness or not. Hashem never let us go. Essentially, even those who assimilated over the generations, as a result of the pressures brought on by the travail and adversity to which they were subjected, can still return. It might be too late for the individual himself, but not for his descendants. The bond that is expressed by the words *am kerovo* means that, despite all that we have suffered since our inception, we still remain close to Hashem. This is a virtue that will stand in our favor at the End of Days.

True nearness is called *deveikus b'Hashem*, cleaving to the Almighty. How does one cleave to Hashem? When we are close to the sages and exponents of Torah, when we view our *gedolim*, Torah leaders, as representatives of Torah and agents of Hashem, thus gravitating closer to them, we are, in effect, coming closer to Hashem. David *Hamelech* declares in *Sefer Tehillim* (27:4), *Achas shoalti me'eis Hashem*, "One request I make from Hashem..." *Shivti b'vais Hashem kol yemei chayai*, "That I dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life." He did not ask for wealth or distinction – just to live in Hashem's Presence, to be close to Hashem, to be constantly under His watchful eye. What a wonderful request!

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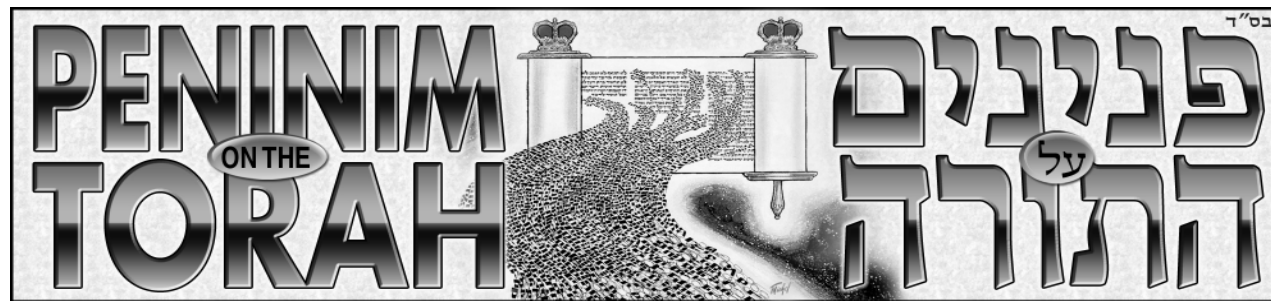
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Parashas Beshalach

תש"ע

פרשת בשלח

TORAH THOUGHTS ON THE PARSHA

ויקה משה את עצמות יוסף עמו

Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him. (13:19)

Simply translated, Moshe *Rabbeinu* fulfilled Yosef's request that he be buried in *Eretz Yisrael*. While the rest of *Klal Yisrael* was preoccupied with fulfilling Hashem's command to request and obtain valuable gold and silver utensils from the Egyptians, Moshe was busy locating and returning Yosef's coffin. The *Megaleh Amukos* suggests a homiletic approach towards understanding this *pasuk*. Moshe took along with him the *atzmiyus*, which is a play on the word *atzmos*, bones – or essence or essential character – of Yosef. What was Yosef's greatest strength? Wherein lay that quality that Moshe, as he was about to assume the reins of leadership over the nascent Jewish people, wanted to emulate? It was Yosef's ability to forgive and forget, to overlook and let bygones be bygones. His brothers had sold him into slavery, an ordeal which had transformed his life, as it separated him from his father for years. Yet, he harbored no *animus*, only demonstrating love and forgiveness towards his brothers. He went out of his way to sustain them, to support them when they came to Egypt. Moshe "took" all of this and incorporated it into his psyche, as he led the people through their forty-year journey in the wilderness. With calm and patience he tolerated their complaints and criticism, their ingratitude and pettiness. He never "lost it" with them, always responding with a smile. Moshe took "Yosef" with him out of Egypt.

Leadership requires patience borne of love and tolerance, which is the manifestation of sensitivity and caring. This contrasts patience and tolerance which are manipulated in accordance with the winds of politics. While many Torah leaders demonstrate these qualities, **Horav Shlomo Halberstam, zl**, the *Bobover Rebbe*, was the embodiment of love for all Jews. He effusively manifested this fatherly love in a manner that lay the groundwork for his outstanding success in rebuilding *Bobover chassidus* in this country and throughout the world, following the horrors and destruction of World War II. When one entered the *Rebbe's* office to pour out his heart or to share with him news of an upcoming *simchah*, the reaction often paralleled that of the petitioner. When he listened to a tale of woe, he would cry as if he was – and he was! – totally immersed in the pain of the

supplicant. Moments later he could be embracing a young man who was finally blessed with a child, the *Rebbe's* joy was equal to that of the new father. He was a *Rebbe*, but he acted as a loving father.

In his "Warmed by their Fire," Rabbi Yisrael Besser very poignantly describes the *Bobover's* fatherly love, his tolerance and patience with all. Once, a *chassid* entered and told the *Rebbe* that he had just been diagnosed with a life-threatening disease. The *Rebbe* arose from his chair, embraced the man and held him tight. Then, suddenly, he began to weep profusely. The sobbing of the *Rebbe* and the petitioner could be heard from outside the room. After a few moments, the *Rebbe* called his aide to bring another handkerchief. His was already soaked.

The tears were not yet dry when a young *chassid* entered with his three-year-old son who was there for his *upsherin*, first haircut. The *rebbe's* countenance changed drastically, as he now embraced the little boy and prepared to imbue this joyful occasion with the majesty and warmth of accompanying a child through another milestone of tradition.

The *Rebbe* acted this way towards all Jews. Once, during the wedding of one of his grandchildren, he entered his room to rest for a few minutes, so exhausted was he from the joyous dancing. Someone who was not a *Bobover chassid* entered the room during a time that was really inappropriate. Just next door, thousands of *chassidim* were waiting for the *Rebbe* to return and honor them with his presence. The young man wanted to take advantage of this auspicious occasion, during the *Rebbe's* elevated state of joy, to ask for a *brachah*, blessing. He was very ill and in great need of blessing. After the man described the seriousness of his condition, the *Rebbe* replied, "Come, let us say *Tehillim* together!" Everyone was waiting outside; the crowd was becoming edgy, but the *Rebbe* was transported to a different world – a world of *Tehillim* and tears for another Jew. After they concluded the *Tehillim*, the *Rebbe* said, "Come let us give *tzedakah*, charity, together." They did, and the young man walked out hand-in-hand with the *Rebbe*.

The *Rebbe* carried the burden of thousands of Jews; he, likewise, rejoiced in the *simchos* of the many who enjoyed joyous occasions. After all, he was their father. He could look at a room filled with thousands of *chassidim* and note a detail about one person. Once, at the height of

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simchah, as thousands of *chassidim* danced in a throng before him, he noticed an elderly *chasid* in front of him. The *Rebbe* immediately called over a young boy and said, “Do me a favor. Go stand between that elderly man and the tall fellow in front of him. This way, he will not have to stretch out his arms that much.”

The *Rebbe* felt the pain of the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. The chair in which he had sat for hours and hours wore out, and it was time for a new one. The *Rebbe* refused, “We must repair this one.” “It does not *pas*, it is unbecoming, for the *Rebbe* to sit in such a chair,” his *gabbai*, aide, said. The *Rebbe* disagreed – and this is what strikes me the most about him – asserting, “*Chazal* teach us that as long as Amalek is around, obstructing Hashem’s complete dominion over the world, Hashem’s Throne, His chair, is incomplete. It is lacking perfection. Hashem’s chair is not whole, and mine should be?” This defines a true leader.

יצעקו בני ישראל אל ד'

***Bnei Yisrael* cried out to Hashem. (14:10)**

Rashi comments, “They adopted the craft of their forefathers – namely prayer.” Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov all prayed to Hashem. Thus, now, when they were surrounded on three sides, they understood that it was “crunch time,” and they turned to the only One Who could help them – Hashem. This was not a novel approach. It was part of their “family craft,” their *umnas avosam*. What is the relationship between the *umnus*, craft, of prayer and the Jewish People?

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, writes that he remembered when part of the city of Mir was threatened by a fire, firemen from all the surrounding communities came running to extinguish the conflagration. Alas, they did not succeed. The fire was too powerful and out of control. During the ensuing tumult and devastation, one of the secular Jews, who had regrettably alienated himself from the religion of his parents, called out, “If the *Ribono Shel Olam* would only send His firemen (namely, rain from heaven), the fire would be quickly extinguished. What can these people hope to achieve at this point?” *Rav* Yeruchem commented his incredulous reaction to this man. Many years had gone by since he had reneged religious belief and observance. Yet, when “push came to shove,” when he saw how meaningless and powerless mortals were in combating the fire, he turned to the One Whom he knew was able to put an end to the devastation – Hashem. This is the meaning of *umnus avosam*. Prayer is part of a Jew’s DNA. Just as the secular Jew cannot dismiss Hashem from his life, because being a Jew means that one is connected to the Almighty, likewise a Jew understands that prayer is an integral part of his life.

Rav Yeruchem puts it simply, “A tailor takes his sewing basket; a carpenter takes his tool chest; a shoemaker takes his special tools; a Jew takes his “prayer,” which is the tool of his trade. It all is transmitted to us through our ancestors. Indeed, the **Bnei Yissaschar** writes that the word “*daven*,” to pray, is derived from *de’Avunon*, that of our fathers, which is a reference to the *Avos*, Patriarchs. This is how they interfaced with Hashem, and so do we. With this in mind, why does *Rashi* emphasize that *Klal Yisrael* adopted the craft of their forefathers? What novel idea is he teaching us? The Jewish People did not initiate prayer. It was

transmitted to them through the generations.

The venerable *Mashgiach* of Mir explains this pragmatically. When one considers the constraint and misery which have become *Klal Yisrael’s* lot throughout the years, we wonder what has kept us going. We are drowning in a sea of anti-Semitism from all sides; some are malignantly overt, while others are subtle, concealed under a veil of diplomacy and benign friendship. Yet, we continue to survive and even thrive. Why have we not “thrown in the towel”? What has generated within us the hope to triumph over the constant adversity which plagues us? It is the realization that we cannot rely on anyone or anything. The only stability in our lives is Hashem, and it is to Him that we turn.

When we allow ourselves to think cogently and clearly, we confront the reality that this sense of assurance is not something that comes to mind only during periods of adversity. Veritably, is it any different when things are seemingly good? Do we then have anyone to rely on other than Hashem? In other words, one who uses His G-d-given capacity to think understands that, regardless of the circumstances, we always rely on Hashem. Even in the best of times, our only source of salvation is the Almighty. Why, then, do we overreact with such intensity and fear during times of travail? Do we need Hashem any more then? That is our mistake. We need Him all of the time.

We now understand the meaning of the phrase, “They adopted the craft of their forefathers.” One might suggest that our prayers are different from those offered by the *Avos*. After all, we pray when we hurt, and they prayed because it was their way of speaking to Hashem. This is our first mistake. *Chazal* are teaching us a profound understanding of the nature of *tefillah*, prayer. The Jews stood at the banks of the Red Sea, surrounded on all sides. Wherever they gazed, they saw the enemy. They had nowhere to go. What does a Jew do when he has nowhere to go? He prays. The *Avos* prayed in a similar fashion. True, they were not plagued by adversity. They prayed to Hashem, however, in a manner that reflected their deep conviction that they had nowhere else to turn. They understood that Hashem is totally in control of everything and that He is the only one to Whom we should pray, regardless of the situation. In other words, the *Avos* taught us to pray to Hashem all of the time – not only when trouble lurks around the corner.

Why should we wait until we are “compelled” to pray? Why not make a practice of “speaking” with Hashem on a regular basis, recognizing that our next breath is in His hands?

Tefillah is more than conversation. What transforms conversation into *Tefillah* is *kavanah*, concentration. Wherever one happens to be – in *shul* or at a rest area on the turnpike – he closes his eyes and applies himself to the words and he is in another world – just the individual and Hashem. *Tefillah* is supplication from the heart. It is an expression from the deepest recesses of oneself. It is sincere.

How does one concentrate? How does one divorce himself from all that is around him, in order that he focus on Hashem and his relationship with the Almighty, so that he can entreat Him properly? In his “*Touched by a Prayer 2*,” Rabbi Yechiel Spero cites an incident in which **Horav Aharon, zl, m’Karlin** was asked how he prepared himself properly for prayer. His reply is intriguing: “I imagine that I

am lying in bed, weak and dying. Slowly my strength is declining, until I die. The *Chevra Kaddisha*, Jewish Burial Society, come and make their necessary preparations. My body is washed, the *taharah*, purification, is performed in the *mikvah*, and I am dressed in my *tachrichim*, shrouds. As they are about to leave, they each stop by my body and ask *mechillah*, forgiveness, in case anything inappropriate was done to my body during the preparations. They place me in the casket, and I am taken out of the room. After a short walk, the casket is in the cemetery about to be lowered into the ground. They are about to begin the final descent to the grave.

“Suddenly, a voice is heard, ‘Stop the *levayah*, funeral! A decree has been issued in Heaven that Hashem is granting this Jew one reprieve, one more chance to open his mouth in prayer.’

“One prayer, that is all. After the prayer, the funeral will continue.”

Rav Aharon looked at the questioner and said, “This is how I prepare for *tefillah*.”

This is an amazing story with a powerful lesson. The efficacy of our *tefillah* is determined by how much we value and appreciate it. If we view our next “conversation” with the Almighty as a one-time deal that would make it or break it; if we perceive it as our one and only chance to make our request, as our only opportunity to express ourselves to Hashem, it certainly would have as much different meaning. Perhaps, that is exactly what we must do.

כי אני ד' רפאן

For I am Hashem, your Healer. (15:26)

How quickly we forget that Hashem is our only Healer. His healing comes to us by way of His agents: the physicians and drugs. Yet, there are still those who forget Hashem’s covert role in the healing process. **Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl**, relates an analogy he once heard concerning the much heralded work going on with *baalei teshuvah*, recent returnees to religious observance. The individual who related the story was one of the most successful *kiruv* professionals, literally having effected change in the lives of hundreds of people. He was asked how this is possible. To what did he attribute his success, given the fact that, in previous generations, some of the most inspirational speakers never had the good fortune of “turning on” another Jew. Perhaps the greatest *tzaddikim*, righteous persons, might have successfully inspired two or three alienated Jews, surely not hundreds.

Rav Pincus gave the following analogy. Large buildings use heavy steel beams to frame the structure. It is impossible for a construction worker to budge one of these girders, certainly not to lift it up many stories until it is put in place. They use a winch to raise up the girder, until it is exactly over its designated spot. Then the worker is able to guide it into place. In other words, when the girder is strapped to the winch, it is the winch that does all the work. The worker only guides the winch.

A similar idea applies to *teshuvah* in our generation. *Rambam* in *Hilchos Teshuvah* 7:5, writes, “The Torah has already assured us that in the End of Days, *Klal Yisrael* will repent and the redemption will follow immediately thereafter.” There is a specific *havtachah*,

affirmation, that prior to the advent of *Moshiach, Klal Yisrael* will repent. That *havtachah* is the winch!

The Jews of our generation are practically lining up to return home. All we have to do is guide them into place, whereas in previous generations the *tzaddik* literally had to raise the penitent up from the muck of secular life. In addition, the person was “weighed down” by his many sins. It was an extremely difficult endeavor, and, therefore, only a few succeeded. Today, we are very fortunate to have “outside help” in bringing them back home.

This analogy applies equally to the healing experience. Hashem is called *Elokim Chaim*, the Living G-d. He is the essence and source of all life. The definition of life is a connection with Hashem. Just as one who enters a store which sells sweet fragrances invariably leaves with a fragrant odor attached to himself, every moment that one lives in Hashem’s world is a moment of attachment to the Almighty.

Ani Hashem Rofecha, “I am Hashem, your Healer.” We must realize that we are not the center of attraction. It is all Hashem. We live as a result of our connection to Him. This thought should penetrate the psyche of the physician. Therefore, regardless of the critical nature of a person’s illness, even one who is officially beyond hope, it is still in the hands of Hashem, Who is the Healer of all flesh. We position the winch; Hashem lifts it off the ground. The actual remedy is in His power. We go through the motions. The word “impossible” is a physical term that applies to the limitations of man. This word is not in the lexicon that describes Hashem. Nothing is impossible for Him. Therefore, one should never despair of salvation – regardless of the “odds.” The fact that there is a dispute among the great *poskim, Halachic* decisors, concerning how one prays for a chronically ill person, who – according to all medical expertise – is beyond help, does not mean that it is no longer possible for him to be saved. Nothing is impossible for Hashem. It is just that there are specific *Halachic* guidelines regarding prayer and its efficacy under certain conditions.

The concept of *refuah* regarding a person is quite different from that of repairing a broken car or an electronic device. As mentioned above, *refuah* means to attach oneself to Hashem, the Source of all life. In this sense, there is no closed door, no impossibilities.

Rav Pincus asks: how should a physician approach his profession? How should he view a patient who – according to medical science and natural law – is clearly not going to live? What should he do? If the physician views himself as a technician, then just as one trades in a car that is no longer functioning, he will, likewise, decide not to waste time and energy on a patient that will, in any event, expire shortly.

This is not the Torah’s perspective. One should believe that by connecting with Hashem, he attaches himself to a source of unlimited *chesed*. Through prayer, one can alter the course of nature and stump the laws of science. It is all in the relationship. A Torah physician understands this. Thus, he never gives up.

ווחנו מה לא עלינו תלתיכם כי ענ ד'

What then are we? – Your murmurings are not against us, but against Hashem. (16:8)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* is referred to as the *anav mikol*