

and never becoming aware of the meaning of *mitzvah*, *aveirah*, sin, etc. He was a person who grew up clueless about Torah and, one day, he discerned his heritage and found out what it means to be a Jew. Is he compelled to atone for his past with a *Korban Chatas*? The *rebbe* to whom the question was addressed responded with a story. An observant fellow, a good person both ethically and morally, was one day informed that that day was to be his last day at work! He was being replaced. The fellow left quite dejected. After all, he had no idea how he would provide for his sizable family. He did not sleep that night. The next morning, he arose early, figuring that he would quickly scan the classified section of the newspaper. How surprised he was to see a crisp 200 *shekel* bill fall out from in between the pages. He checked every page of the paper, then checked the bill. It was real.

The next day, the same thing happened. Inside his paper, he discovered a crisp 200 *shekel* bill. This continued for two months – every day, a 200 *shekel* bill lay between the folds of his newspaper. One morning, his paper was left on his lawn closer to his neighbor's house. He ran over there, insisting on retrieving his paper. His neighbor thought that he had become unhinged. "What difference is there whose paper you have?" he asked. "No, I insist on my paper." "Well, I used your paper as a tablecloth for my children's breakfast!" "No problem. I will take it in whatever condition it is in." After picking up the soiled paper, he went home to once again find his 200 *shekel* bill!

This scenario continued for four years! Why should one work when he receives his livelihood in his morning paper? People began to wonder. Their neighbor did not work; yet, he seemed to have enough money to serve his needs. One morning, as he was about to pick up the paper, he noticed someone's shoe pressing down firmly on the newspaper. The nerve of the person to step on his paper, impeding him from retrieving his livelihood! He was about to raise his voice and tell the individual to get off or else, when he heard a voice say to him, "What about some gratitude?" "What? What are you saying?" the man asked.

"Why do you not say thank you? For four years, you have received 200 *shekel* daily in your newspaper, and not once did you say thank you."

"Please, sir, you must understand, I had no idea who you were. To whom was I supposed to show my appreciation?" he asked.

"This is exactly what bothers me about you. For years, you eat my bread, drink my water, satiate yourself with my food. Did you once think – perhaps I should find out who is my benefactor? You took it for granted that it would always be there. Today, when my shoe prevented you from taking your money, you finally raised up your head to find out who is doing this! Had I not come by, you would never know that I exist, because you would never have looked!"

We go through life taking everything for granted. A

Jew – regardless of his spiritual and physical locus has a responsibility to recognize and acknowledge the existence of Hashem. Therefore, if, after years, he discovers that, due to his unawareness of Torah and *mitzvos*, he has transgressed unintentionally – he must atone for his actions. We should not wait until the "foot" is pressed down on our livelihood to acknowledge Who our true benefactor is.

Va'ani Tefillah

והחזירנו בתשובה שלמה לפניך

V'hachazireinu b'seshuvah sheleimah Lefanecha. And influence us to return in perfect repentance before You.

What is meant by the term, *teshuvah sheleimah*, complete/perfect *teshuvah*? Furthermore, why do we ask that our *teshuvah* be *Lefanecha*, "before You"? Is there a *teshuvah* that is not "before You"? *Achas Shoalti* explains that, according to the *Rambam*, *teshuvah* achieves efficacy only when the person confronts his original sin, in the same place and under similar conditions as earlier; only, this time he does not sin. Same woman; same place, same circumstances; same passion, but he refrains from sin. This is called *teshuvah sheleimah*, complete/perfect *teshuvah*.

Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, observes that, while one may repent, sure that Hashem accepts his *teshuvah*, he might no longer be accepted in Hashem's Presence. It is as if Hashem says to him: "I appreciate your *teshuvah*, and I forgive you, but I am not prepared to allow you to stand 'before Me.'" The punishment is rescinded, but one is not yet welcomed back home. Thus, we entreat Hashem to allow for our *teshuvah* to be *Lefanecha*, "before You." Let us return home.

Dedicated in loving memory of our dear mother and grandmother,

Leona Genshaft

לאה בת רפאל הכהן ע"ה
נפטרה ט"ז שבט תש"ע

by her family

Neil and Marie Genshaft

Isaac and Naomi

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Parashas Beshalach

תשע"ז

פרשת בשלח

וד' הונך לפניהם יוםם בעמוד ענן... ולילה בעמוד אש... ללכת יוםם ולילה

G-d went with them by day in a Pillar of Cloud... and by night in a Pillar of Fire... so that they could travel by day and by night. (13:21)

When *Klal Yisrael* traveled in the Wilderness, they were protected by miraculous forces with which Hashem provided them. A Pillar of Cloud paved the way for them by day, and a Pillar of Fire lit up the road for them at night. Thus, the Jews were hampered neither by obstacles on the road, nor by the darkness of night. The *pesukim* seem to underscore the need for the people to travel at night, as opposed to straightforward day travel. On the other hand, the Torah later (ibid 19:5) states: "And I bore them on eagles' wings, and I brought them to Me." *Rashi* observes that in the first stage of their journey from Ramses to *Succos*, they covered this impressive distance in literally an instant. When eagles were the mode of travel, they were able to cover the 120 *mil* (a *mil* is about 3,000-4,000 feet) in an unusually rapid manner. Why was it necessary to travel at night? They were able to reach their destination in no time at all. Apparently, the journey of *Klal Yisrael* in the Wilderness had a special purpose, one that went beyond just "getting there." The actual journey was purposeful.

Indeed, in his negotiations with Pharaoh, Moshe *Rabbeinu* alludes to the ultimate purpose of the Exodus: "When you bring out the people from Egypt, they shall serve G-d on this mountain" (ibid 3:12). *Har Sinai* was the "mountain" upon which the Torah would be given to *Klal Yisrael*. This was the *raison d'etre* of the Exodus, the driving force for its occurrence. The Exodus occurred in four progressive stages, culminating in the acceptance of the Torah. We commemorate this four-stage experience through the medium of the *Arba Kosos*, four cups of wine, which we drink at the *Seder*.

A *halachah* associated with the four cups of wine appears enigmatic. One is permitted to drink other wine between the first and second cups, and between the second and third cups. It is prohibited, however, to drink other wine between the third and fourth cups. The *Shem Mishmuel* suggests a profound symbolism which is represented by this *halachah*. We are being taught that the first three stages of the redemption, during which Hashem relieved *Klal Yisrael's* suffering, are intimately and indivisibly connected with the final stage, during which Hashem took *Klal Yisrael* to Him as a people. In this manner, He elevated the people to the

status of nationhood, with the Torah serving as the covenant of their relationship. Thus, we may not drink other wines between the third and fourth cups, in order to emphasize the need to connect the dots; the whole purpose of the Exodus was to facilitate nationhood. To ignore this connection is to undermine the very underpinnings of the Exodus. If accepting the Torah was not a given, *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the exodus from Egypt, might not have occurred.

Thus, the forty-nine day period between the Exodus and *Mattan Torah*, the Giving of the Torah, had one single purpose: to prepare the people for the great event that would take place at the end. *Klal Yisrael's* journey from Egypt to *Sinai* was much more than a physical trek; it was a spiritual passage, during which the newly-redeemed slaves would be spiritually elevated and transformed into a nation of prophets prepared to receive the *dvar Hashem*, word of G-d, in a Revelation unprecedented and unparalleled in the history of mankind. Had *Klal Yisrael* not physically and spiritually traveled by both day and night, this sequence leading up to the *Mattan Torah* would have been interrupted, thereby impugning the feasibility of the Giving of the Torah. Therefore, the Torah informs us that Hashem led *Klal Yisrael* both by day and by night, in order to teach that their spiritual development was an unimpeded and uninterrupted journey whose duration began with the Exodus and culminated at *Har Sinai* when Hashem gave them the Torah.

This idea, explains the *Shem Mishmuel*, is supported by a *halachah* pertinent to *Sefiras Ha'Omer*, the Counting of the *Omer*, which takes place daily from *Pesach* (second night) until *Erev Shavuos*. According to the prevalent practice, if one forgets to count on any one given night, he may no longer fulfill the *mitzvah* in its entirety, preceded by a *brachah*. In other words, if he has missed a night, he may continue counting on subsequent nights – but without a preceding blessing. The reason is clear. The days of the *Omer* are a period of time when we emulate the journey the Jews took in the Wilderness – from Egypt to *Sinai*. As mentioned, it was much more than a "trip." It was a spiritual rite of passage during which the nation prepared itself for the Revelation. There may be no interruption during this time; otherwise, the preparation (symbolized by the counting) is defective, obviating our ability to achieve maximal opportunity.

Alternatively, we learn another lesson based upon

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Klal Yisrael's continuous day and night traveling. To put it simply: sometimes one must travel at night. Day travel is so much easier and more convenient. While there is less “traffic” at night, our vision becomes stigmatized, as we have less clarity. Symbolically, day represents clarity of vision, full understanding and intellectual appreciation. Night, on the other hand, symbolizes ambiguity, obfuscation and intellectual uncertainty. The nation followed G-d without knowing what would happen to them, or how they would survive the elements. Nonetheless, they trusted the Almighty and followed – without question.

The nation's strong faith was recognized by Hashem, comparing the love they had for Hashem to that of a bride for her husband (*Yirmiyahu* 2:2). This expression of faith is much like traveling through the night, at a time in which lack of clarity and certainty prevail. Thus, when the Torah says that the nation traveled by day and by night, it is a commentary on the strength of their unparalleled faith.

People experience various tests to their faith. It is most difficult when one must grope his way through a maze just to survive. It is completely another, when everyone gives his unasked for advice, expressing his doubt and negativity, deriding one's decision to go forward – telling him “no” all of the way. This is how *Horav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zl*, the architect of Torah education in this country, explains *Yirmiyahu HaNavi's* praise of *Klal Yisrael*: “I recall for you the kindness of your youth... your following Me into the Wilderness, into an unsown land.” The last phrase – *b'erez lo zeruah*, “into an unsown land,” a land where the “lo,” no/not is sown! A land where negativity prevails, where every challenge appears formidable. *Rav Shraga Feivel* knew quite well the psyche of the American Jew who felt that Torah *Yiddishkeit* could not be sown in America. He neither acquiesced to such defeatism, nor permitted his students to defer to it. He encouraged, cajoled and convinced, imbuing them with a fiery passion and indomitable drive to build Torah in America – despite the prevalent attitude of negativity and pessimism.

The powerful status quo, the result of overwhelming assimilation, had destroyed the self-confidence of the American Jew. Indeed, the overwhelming concern of the Orthodox Jew was to avoid sinking into the morass that had enveloped so many of his co-religionists. They knew fully well that, while they might be able to keep their heads above water, what about their children? Who could save them? The dilemma confronting *Rav Shraga Feivel* was unprecedented. He knew one thing for certain: unless something was done soon, American Jewry would be history. He never gave up fighting the “no”. This is why he succeeded.

Horav Simchah Wasserman, zl, once applied the comparison between Noach and Avraham *Avinu* to explain why *Rav Shraga Feivel* triumphed in an area where so many others had failed. [I should add that failure is a strong word. Perhaps, it would be better to say that they did not undertake or make the attempt due to fear of failure. Veritably, one can achieve no greater failure than he who does not even make an attempt.] While Noach succeeded in preserving his own spirituality – in a generation where depravity and hedonism were the norm – he sadly was unable to save anyone other than his immediate family.

Avraham *Avinu*, however, spread his knowledge of Hashem, teaching monotheism to an entire world. Wherein lay the reason for Avraham's success and Noach's failure?

Rav Simchah explained that it was a matter of perspective. Noach viewed the generation of the Flood as impervious to reproach. He saw them as what they were; he only added that they were resistant to any form of chance. He saw a reality before him which was probably consistent with the truth, and therefore, he gave up without a fight. Avraham, however, refused to accept the status quo. He did not see the situation as immutable; therefore, he set about to create an upheaval that would forever alter human existence.

American Jewry during *Rav Shraga Feivel's* tenure desperately needed another Avraham *Avinu* – an individual who could look “no” in the face and continue. Only by ignoring the status quo could they transform America. *Rav Shraga Feivel* was that leader who overcame negativity armed with the fierce and passionate love of Hashem and His People. The present Torah world is the beneficiary of his tenacity. We are his legacy.

ויאמר ד' אל משה מה חצנך אלי דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו Hashem said to Moshe, “Why do you cry out to me? Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them journey forth.” (14:15)

The *Talmud Sotah* 36 quotes Rabbi Meir who relates that when the tribes stood at the banks of the Red Sea, a debate arose among them concerning who would enter the waters first. Each one vied for the honor of being the *rosh*, head, leader, who would set the example for the rest of the nation to follow. Rabbi Yehudah disputed this interpretation, asserting that being first was the last thing on their minds. On the contrary, they each eschewed being first, leaving the “honors” for the other tribe. They both agree that it was Nachshon *ben Aminadav* of the tribe of Yehudah who took the first plunge. As reward for this heroic endeavor, his *Shevet*, tribe, Yehudah, merited *memshalah/malchus*, monarchy. This is alluded to by the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (114:2), “Yehudah was His sanctuary and Yisrael his dominion.” Why did Yehudah merit monarchy? “The sea saw it and fled.” In other words: When Nachshon of *Shevet Yehudah* entered the water, the sea responded by “fleeing.” Literally – it “split” and *Klal Yisrael* walked through on dry land.

We notice a textual discrepancy that we need to address. *Haysah Yehudah l'kodsho*, “Yehudah was his sanctuary.” *Haysah* is written in the feminine form. If the *pasuk* is referring to Yehudah, it should have written *hayah*, in the masculine form. *Horav Yosef Tzvi HaLevi Dunner*, explains that, while we know that Nachshon was the one who went into the water, it is important to discern why he did and who motivated him to do it. Nachshon was a great man, and he was willing to sacrifice his life to glorify Hashem, but from where, from whom, did he garner the strength of conviction to act with such courage and commitment? He had a grandmother, Tamar, wife of Yehudah, who imbued him with the superhuman strength to act so decisively. She was confronted with the choice of her own painful death or saving herself by implicating Yehudah, who would be publicly humiliated. Rather than hurt Yehudah, she chose self-sacrifice. This heroic act became

part of the DNA of her descendants. Life at the expense of another Jew's pain and embarrassment is not a life worth living. Nachshon was her reward.

Mersiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, for the sake of a *mitzvah*, is a powerful indication of one's love and devotion to Hashem. In his twilight years, the holy *Baba Sali, zl*, was physically very weak. Nonetheless, he maintained his overriding commitment to fulfilling *mitzvos* in accordance with every *halachic* stringency. He fulfilled certain *mitzvos* only by manifesting incredible self-sacrifice. One such *mitzvah* was *Kiddush Levanah*, Blessing the New Moon. One month, the sky remained overcast for days, not allowing a clear view of the moon. On the last possible night for reciting the blessing, the sky was once again heavily overcast. The *Baba Sali* went outdoors, accompanied by a group of his close followers. He waited for hours, and the moon still did not appear. Finally, almost as if out of desperation, he took his walking stick, raised it towards the sky, and waved it back and forth. Suddenly, the clouds spread, and the moon appeared in all of its brilliance. The group immediately recited the blessing. Upon conclusion, the clouds returned, and the sky was once again overcast.

Horav Meir Abuchatzzeira, zl, son of the *Baba Sali*, turned to his father and asked, “Do not *Chazal* say that, when one is the beneficiary of a *neis*, miracle, he pays for it with his accumulated merits? (In other words, by having a miracle made in his merit, the *Baba Sali* was diminishing his own *z'chusim*, merits.) His father replied, “It was not a miracle that you saw; rather, it was the force generated by an act of *mesiras nefesh*. When I was younger and living in Morocco during the World War, the government issued a proclamation prohibiting all citizens from leaving their homes at night. This arduous curfew took its toll on all of the citizens. Many who chanced going out at night became victim to the bombs and gunfire that were common fare during the war. It was the night for *Kiddush Levanah*, and I felt obligated to take a chance. I went out and recited *Kiddush Levanah* – despite the curfew.”

Horav Yeshayah Pinto, Shlita, sums it up. When a person risks his life (sincerely – not just for attention) for a *mitzvah*, that *mitzvah* becomes a part of the cosmic fiber that surrounds him. The *mitzvah* becomes an eternal deposit in his cache of merits; it not only sustains him in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come, but protects him even in this world. Thus, we understand how *Tamar's mesiras nefesh* inspired the behavior of her descendants throughout the generations.

וירא ישראל את היד הגדולה אשר עשה ד' במצרים וייראו העם את ד' ויאמינו בד' Hashem had inflicted upon Egypt; and the people revered Hashem and they had faith in Hashem. (14:31)

This *pasuk* teaches us an important principle for catalyzing fear of and faith in, Hashem: seeing the entire picture, past, present and future; looking at everything in the context that it is part of a larger picture. *Horav Nissen Alpert, zl*, distinguishes between the *yad*, hand, of Hashem, to which (the Torah states) *Klal Yisrael* had not been privy, and earlier images of spiritual expression, such as *etzba Elokim*, the finger of G-d. When *Klal Yisrael* stood at the

banks of the Red Sea and looked back to the past, they realized that they were now seeing the hand of G-d, history in its entirety. The significance of the word *yad*, hand, is that a hand alludes to the ability to see something as a whole, as a complete picture – not as “fingers,” snippets of miracles not tied together to express an entire continuum. For the Jewish People, the past, present and future now all came into focus as a single unified image – in its entirety.

Prior to this, while the Jews were in Egypt – Egyptians saw what was termed as the *etzba*, finger, of G-d. They did not see the *yad*, hand. What this means is that, while they bore witness to many great, wondrous miracles which clearly indicated Hashem's awesome power, all they saw was the here and now. They were unable to appreciate anything beyond the immediate impact of the miracles. They clearly saw and recognized the greatness that was occurring before their very eyes, but they were, alas, unable to take a broader view in order to comprehend G-d's plan in its entirety.

When *Klal Yisrael* stood at the *Yam Suf*, they saw it all in its entirety. They were now able to perceive what had been missing earlier. *Zeh Keili v'anveihu*; “This is my G-d and I will beautify Him.” *Zeh Keili*; they perceived Hashem in the present. *Elokai Avi*; G-d of My Father; Hashem in the past. *Hashem yimloch l'Olam vaed*; “Hashem will reign forever and for all eternity”. Everything came together – past, present and future. It was all one, all due to the *yad ha'gedolah*, great hand, of Hashem. When they saw it all, they were inspired to such an elevated level of *yiraas Shomayim* and *emunah*, faith in Hashem that they leaped into the sea.

ויצא העם ולקטו דבר יום ביומו למען אנסנו הינך בתורתי אם לא

Let the people go out and pick each day's portion on that day, so that I can test them, whether they will follow My teaching or not. (16:4)

The *Manna* that descended from Heaven daily like clockwork was a test from Hashem. Would they receive the *Manna* daily, or would it suddenly stop and leave them without sustenance? Would they not put *Manna* away for the next day? Would they not seek it on *Shabbos*? Would a lack of food impede their relationship with Hashem? Would they become so complacent in their food expectancy that they would balk if it did not arrive as usual in a timely fashion? We have become so accustomed to receiving our daily fare that we cannot imagine what it would be like if, for some reason, it did not materialize. We take so much for granted until it is taken from us. We are then shocked, not knowing what to do; at times, we are even moved to anger. How could this have happened? Why? We conveniently forget the years when everything was going so well. Perhaps, had we been more appreciative, we would have acknowledged our debt of gratitude before we realized that it is neither a given, nor is it owed to us.

A *shailah*, question, was brought up during a *shiur*. The *halachah* is clear that one who sins *b'shogeg*, unintentionally, must atone for his actions by offering a *Korban Chatas*, Sin-offering. The question was raised about a Jew who was born, raised and lived on a faraway island, never having had the privilege of meeting his coreligionists