



B'haalotcha



English version

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THE ART OF LIVING THE PERFECT LIFE

The worst part of you is the perfect part of you. The perfect part of you causes you to procrastinate; it shields you from reaching your best, and it takes out the playfulness and enjoyment from anything and everything important in life.

Our parasha, from beginning to end, displays Moshe's leadership career as imperfectly smooth, with an imperfect generation that lived imperfect lives. This is all part of the process of Beha'alotcha, the process of growth, of success; progress is through being imperfect.

Perfectionism is sourced in haughtiness, and is the expression of an inflated ego. Inflated ego comes from not accepting yourself, with all your weakness. Acceptance and tolerance are the fruits of humility.

Perfectionism is what destroys every relationship. *I deserve a husband who makes more money! I deserve a wife who is the best wife!* How many boys and girls can't go to the Chuppah, because they are not looking for the spouse "that works", but the spouse that is the best? How many marriages are at risk, because one or both of the spouses believe that they deserve better, if not the best?

When the Torah mentions that Moshe was the humblest of men, it mentions it next to the episode that discusses that his wife Tziporah was כּוּשִׁית, "black". What is the connection? Rabbenu Bachye says that Miriam suspected that Moshe had separated from Tziporah, because she wasn't pretty enough for him. To that, the passuk says that Moshe was the humblest of men, and he never looked to see how pretty his wife was, because he

never thought he deserved more than G-d gave him!

Perfectionism is what stops men from taking responsibility for their mistakes. If Adam would have taken the blame for eating the forbidden fruit and not blamed his wife Chava for offering it, what would have happened? Chava, and all women after her, would never have been cursed with being moody! If a man does not want his wife to be moody, but to be C3, cheerful, calm, and caring, he should know, there is only one way. Take the blame, take responsibility, say that you were wrong, and that you're human, and that you learned a lesson - and watch her moodiness disappear like magic. David Hamelech, whose soul was sparked and reincarnated from Adam's, fixed this by taking responsibility for his act with Bat Sheva, although he had a valid excuse for it. (Shabbat 56a) David's humility is what got him out of the trouble that Shaul got himself into for not taking responsibility, for not admitting that humans are, sometimes, just not perfect. Teshuva was created before man, because man was created imperfect. חַטָּא means sin, but also means disinfect, purify. (Bamidbar 8;21) Because the way to purity, is recognizing you made a mistake and you are human.

As imperfect a situation as we have in life, to people from the outside, from a third-person perspective, your life is more perfect than you think. Even if the Mannah and the desert were not as perfect as we wanted, when Yitro came to tell us, from outside, how lucky we are, we realized that "perfect" is dependent on perspective and point of view. When a person feels "where have the good times gone?", for some reason, when you

were back in those sunny days, you don't remember, but you were asking the same question. It seems that the ego makes a person think that, no matter what, he always deserves more than the present situation. This causes a person to be eternally ingrateful and lead a miserable life.

When I ask a person if he feels successful, and he says no, I ask him what success means to him. If the answer is "everything going smoothly", then this is perfectionism and is not realistic. There is a fine line between self-improvement and the search to earn approval and acceptance. It's okay to strive for the ideal, as long as you are also okay when you fall short of it.

A perfect life is a life where you realize that you are perfectly imperfect. According to Judaism, a person should always see himself as **הציון זכאי והציון חייב**, you are always in this middle ground, that one more mitzvah or one more aveirah will build you or break you, no matter how great or simple of a Jew you are! (Kiddushin 40) How many frum-from-birth feel that it is hard to be frum, because they are not frum enough? The fact that you are never religious enough does not take away from the greatness of every mitzvah, of every word of Torah, of every good deed you do! Perfectionism has infiltrated into every part of our lives. Parents would rather have a dog than bring another child into the world, who, they feel, they may not be perfect parents for. Just because the Torah teaches us that you will be brought to judgement after 120, for everything you've ever done, and every thought that you've ever had, it doesn't mean that you will be either a Tzaddik or a Rasha, in an all-or-nothing way. A man who commits 100 sins is nowhere comparable to one who commits 101 sins. (Peleh Yoetz) And a man who reviews 100 times what he has learnt is nowhere near the level of a Tzaddik who has reviewed his learning 101 times. (Hagigah 9b)

The Torah is replete with lessons that a person is rewarded tremendously for each and every good act, for each effort, and Judaism is, not at all, an "all or nothing" religion. We must educate ourselves of the inestimable value and reward of each mitzvah. In our parasha, Miriam is rewarded that the whole nation of 3 million Jews waits for

her for seven days, to finish her Tzara'at quarantine, because 80 years before, when she was a 6-year-old girl, she waited at the side of the Nile for 20 minutes, to see how her brother Moshe would fare. And 7 days is 500 times more than 20 minutes! (See Sotah 11; Tosefot)

We were saved from Egypt in the merit of just two Mitzvoth, Milah and Pesach, **וְאֶעֱבֹר עֲלֶיךָ וְאָרְאֶךָ מִתְּבוֹסֶסֶת בְּדַמְיֶךָ וְאָמַר לְךָ בְּדַמְיֶךָ הִי וְאָמַר לְךָ בְּדַמְיֶךָ הִי**: The Jews were at the 49th level of impurity, but they were redeemed with just these two mitzvoth. Even though many were not ready to perform a Brit Milah, they did it, just because they could not otherwise eat the Korban Pesach, because they couldn't resist the barbeque smell that to which G-d added some Gan Eden fragrance, (not because otherwise they wouldn't be redeemed). And still, G-d redeemed them!

There are three things that will bring the Masiach. Teshuva, Torah learning, and waiting and hoping that he is going to come, specifically in our Kaddish prayer. At times, we feel that our Torah, teshuva, Amen Yehe Sheme Rabba, is not the way it is supposed to be. It doesn't have to be. It wasn't perfect when the Jews were redeemed from Egypt, either! G-d will save us from our enemies, even if the only thing we are doing right is saying Shema! (Devarim 20,3 Rashi)

וְנִינְוֵה בֶן-אֲשׁוּר וְיָבֹן אֶת-בִּינְוֵה (Bereshit 10:11) Ninveh was the son of Ashur. Ashur lived in the time of Nimrod, in the time when Nimrod, king of the world, rebelled against G-d by building a big city, Babylon, with a big tower, to fight G-d. But Ashur ran away, and built a city for his son, Ninveh. And because he acted this way and did not want to take part of the "anti-G-d project" with Nimrod and Babylon, when Ninveh's descendants sinned, many, many, years later, G-d said to Yonah that he should go and prophesy to them, and give them a last chance. G-d said, Your forefather went out of his land in My honor, that is why My prophet, Yonah, will need to go out of his land to give you a last chance.

Cham helped his father Noach in the Ark, and was rewarded that his descendant Mitzrayim had the Jewish Nation as their slaves for hundreds of years,

and that Canaan would live in Israel for hundreds of years! Shem, who was a drop quicker in covering their undressed father Noah than Yefet, is rewarded with the Mitzvah of Tzizit for his descendants, while Yeffet's rewarded is that his descendants will have proper burial in the Gog U'magog war, at the End of Days.

Og helped Avraham, relaying that Lot was in trouble with the rest of Sodom during the "first World War", and was rewarded with 500 years of life and royalty, despite his intention that Avraham would die at war and Og could marry Sarah. Nebuchadnetzar is rewarded with being king of the

Seflie Steps to accept yourself as perfectly imperfect:

1. Decide that a life of self-acceptance is greater than a life of self-hatred. You can't change the past; you can only learn from it. When you really accept yourself for who you are, when you accept G-d for how He made you and what He gave you and is giving you, people will accept you for who you are and for what you give them.
2. Celebrate your strengths, accomplished goals, relationships you have made, hardships you have overcome.
3. It is not about you. It is never about you. Your purpose, your value, is about how great an impact you can make on people's lives, no matter if it is just on one person, in just a small way. It is about how each act, no matter how minute, can be bringing a Kiddush Hashem or Hillul Hashem. The mitzvah is not great because of your greatness, rather the Mitzvah is great because it is G-d you are serving.
4. Pessimists look at the cup as half empty. Optimists look at the cup as half full. Perfectly imperfect people, always bring a smaller cup than the pessimist and the optimist, so their cup is always perfectly full.

CONDUCTOR LEADERSHIP

My mother sent me a speech given by a music conductor. This is what the conductor told his audience.

"At the age of 45, I had already been conducting for more than 20 years, and suddenly, I was struck by this fascinating insight: the conductor of the orchestra does not make a sound! The greatness of the conductor is his ability to make *other people* make great sound. This changed everything for me.

"I wanted to know if I was successful, at bringing out the greatness in others, in my musicians. So, how do I know if I am? I look into their eyes. If the

world, and after him, his son and grandson, because of three steps he took to edit King Merodach's letter, for G-d's honor!

One of G-d's praises in Tana D. Eliyahu is that He is happy with His lot. What? How could it be that G-d is content, even though He would want more? G-d can do whatever He wants?! G-d's lot, His portion, is the Jewish People, **לֵךְ עִמָּנוּ** (Devarim 32;9), and He gives us free choice to crown Him, with every good deed we do. He wishes we would do a better job at serving Him, but whatever we do, He is happy, He accepts us, and loves us!

eyes are sparkling, then I know that I did it. And if they are not, I need to ask the question... Who am I being, what am I doing wrong, that my musician's eyes are not shining?"

It's the same for all leadership. If the eyes of my children are not shining, if the eyes of my students are not shining, if the eyes of my congregants are not shining, if the eyes of my staff are not shining, ... Who am I being, what am I doing wrong? Success is not about wealth, fame and power. It is about how many shiny eyes I have around me... And the way we "conduct" is by the choice of our words, the way we express ourselves..."

David HaMelech refers to G-d as למנצח, To the Conductor. What a beautiful way to describe G-d, a Being that cannot be defined. G-d has been conducting music from the beginning of time. All of what has ever happened, all that is happening, all that will ever happen – all is music conducted by G-d. We, all of creation, are G-d's musicians. And the Conductor of the orchestra does not make any sound Himself. His greatness is his ability to make His orchestra produce great sound. This is a thought that we can meditate on for eternity. (It is no coincidence that David Hamelech, who personified the *Middah* of *Malchut*, of *Bitul*, was the one to refer to G-d as the מנצח, the Conductor.)

What is actually mindboggling is that G-d sometimes allows us to be His conductor, and He actually plays music for us: He changes the natural course of events. *R' Kahana says, in the name of R Yishmael, son of R Yossi, "What does it mean when it says Lamnatzeach? It means, sing to the one who allows us to conduct Him, and He is happy."* (Pesachim 119a). Rashi explains that Hashem gives us the power to conduct Him. How, exactly, do we "conduct" G-d?

When Moshe prays for Miriam's recovery, he does not just pray. He draws a small circle in the ground and stands in the middle of it. He says to G-d, "I will not move from this spot, until you cure my sister לֹא אֶפְרָא אֶת רַגְלֵי מִרְיָם" (Bamidbar 12;13; Avot dR'N).

Moshe, what are you doing? Are you manipulating G-d? Moshe, I thought you were the humblest of them all! How do you "put G-d up against the wall" like that?

The answer is because G-d allows us to conduct Him!! He is actually happy when we conduct, and He "plays" to our music. We are not allowed to do this circle thing. We know that Choni HaMagal also did it. He almost got excommunicated for it by Shimon Ben Shetach, for you need to be very close to G-d to pull such a thing off (Taanit 3;8). We cannot draw circles and talk like that to G-d. But we do put our feet together when we pray, as if we are not going anywhere without G-d. We hold our hands down, as if we are chained. We are saying to G-d, "I can't move from this spot without You. I

can't solve my problems, without You. I can't think, get cured, have *parmassah*, do teshuvah, bring the Mashiach, or make peace, without You. I can't even open my lips; I can't even pray without You. G-d, please, make music! Do Your thing!"

You know, it is actually interesting. Moshe draws a circle, not a square. Choni's last name became HaMaagal, because of the circle he drew, (Agol means round.) Why the circle? Why not a square?

Did you ever notice that G-d did not create square things? Raindrops, flowers, faces, fruits, clouds, grass, trees, sun, moon, stars, planets, etc.... they are all round. G-d created only round things. He expects mankind to finish off the job, to make a square *Mishkan*, with its square utensils, and square *tzizit* and square *tefillin*; i.e., "square" means adding the last touches to perfect things. He wants us to bring His world to perfection. So, when Moshe cries out to G-d, he says, "I am nothing without You!! I cannot perfect the world without YOU! I cannot even get out of the circle that you put me in, without You, G-d! Without G-d, I am powerless". And then, G-d plays His music.

There is something that G-d created on the sixth day of Creation, at the very last second of twilight. He created tongs (Avot 5;6). Why was it so important for G-d to create tongs? You can only make tongs with tongs. You cannot shape metal in fire with your hands. So, who made the first pair of tongs? Who put his hands in fire long enough to shape the first metal, so that we can have tongs to build machines, planes, space shuttles, reach the moon, to make water out of air? G-d. Anything humans ever made, G-d says – Hey, I started you off! I gave you the instruments. Now, it is your turn to make the music. But when we are stuck, when we pray, when we realize we cannot make music without Him, G-d plays our music for us.

G-d, Himself, leads the world silently; He is the Master Conductor. Human leaders, as well, lead best when they lead silently. There is the preacher, the persuader and the orator. And there is the silent leader, the conductor.

Moshe Rabeinu was the greatest leader our nation ever had. He transformed a nation of slaves into a nation of princes. He gave infinite courage to an

infinite nation. What was his greatest talent? He was definitely not a good orator, for his speech was halting. The Torah does not single Moshe out for his courage, miracle work, scholarly level, or love and caring for every one of his people... The Torah mentions only Moshe's humility. **מֵאֵד עֲנִי וְהֵאִישׁ מִשָּׂה מִכֹּל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה** (Bamidbar 12;3)

Why is humility the single trait to be singled out, out of all of Moshe's leadership qualities? Because the greatest leaders are conductors, for only the conductors can bring out the best music from their orchestra, from those they lead. The greatest conductors are the ones who truly lead the people in their lives. They are the humblest ones, not the ones who make noise or attract the most attention. They lead not by what they say, but how they say it. It is not what they do, but how they do it.

Rabbenu Bachye points to the way the Torah spells the word humility here when referring to Moshe. **עני**. What? Why is the word **עני** spelled without the letter Yud? Isn't it supposed to be **עניי**?

The Yud was taken away from Moshe, because Moshe lacked the letter Yud in his humility. **הֲיָבִיא לָכֶם מִן הַצֶּהַר הַזֶּה מַיִם וְיָצִיא לָכֶם מִן הַצֶּהַר הַזֶּה מַיִם** *Will we (Moshe and Aharon) be able to take out water for you from this rock?* (Bamidabar 20;10) Uh, one second. Moshe, YOU AND AHARON are going to bring out water, or G-D will bring out water? The word should have been **יוציא**, which would mean, *He* will take out, and not **נוציא** which would mean, *we* will bring out! Because of that one letter, because Moshe did not mention that G-d will take out the water, his Humility Metal got a little scratch; it was not perfect, even if it was the best ever. If Moshe would have chosen the right way of saying what he said, if he would have let G-d play all the music, and leave himself as only the conductor...Moshe would have been perfectly humble, a true **עניי**.

Silent Leadership is G-d's way of leading. It is the only leadership that really makes the eyes of those we lead shine.

Selfie Steps to lead the people in your life effectively through Silent Leadership.

1. Humility. Shine the spotlight of attention on those you intend to lead, and not on yourself. In life. Conversation. Priorities. Respect their ideas. Let them shine. Act reserved. Stop rambling.
2. Build trust. Win trust by honoring and showing genuine care for the individuals you lead. Be Real. Follow through on commitments.
3. Keep calm. Don't let your emotions get the better of your intellect. The best leaders are the most rational.
4. Focus on actions, instead of words. Look inwardly, into yourself, for where you can improve instead of preaching to others.
5. Choose your words carefully. The way you say things carries more weight than what you say.

HUMBLE POWER

How strange for Moshe to ask G-d, at this point, to kill him instead of punishing the Nation, something he asked of G-d only at the sin of the Golden Calf! Also, why was Moshe saying that he could not help the people? Wasn't he the 'superman' sent from G-d to bring on the 10 Plagues, take the Jews out of Egypt, split the sea, and bring the Torah down from the heavens? Relative to these monumental

achievements, bringing meat for the nation was not a miracle of such proportions that it would be hard for Moshe to ask it of G-d. And how strange for him to say that G-d can't supply the nation with meat!!!

G-d responds that He will take away part of Moshe's prophecy and give it to the seventy elders,

so that they will have a share in prophecy. Moshe knows that 70 can't be divided by 12, and he wanted an equal number for all 12 Tribes. So, Moshe took 6 from each tribe and wrote on only 70 out of 72 notes the word "Elder." Ironically, Eldad and Medad, the two that were left out from the 70, ended up receiving prophecy, and their prophecy was something that shook the whole Jewish Nation to the core: "Moshe will die, and Yehoshua will bring the Nation into the Land of Israel!"

The two reasons that we know why Moshe needed to die and not bring the people into Eretz Yisrael, were the following: A. When he was first sent to Pharaoh, and as a result, things only got worse, Moshe questioned G-d למה הרעות לעם הזה למה זה שלחתי. (see Rashi, Shemot 6;1 and see Siftei Chachamim there) B. When Moshe struck the rock with his staff to get water, and lost the opportunity to bring about a higher level of *Kiddush Hashem* (Bamidbar 20;12). This prophecy of Moshe's death, at this point, seems so out of place. Why did it need to come out right after the Jews complained about the Mannah?

And one more episode, before the Parasha concludes. Miriam spoke to her brother Aharon about Moshe, regarding Moshe's separating from his wife, Tziporah. She questioned if Moshe should be different from other prophets. Specifically at this point, the Torah says about Moshe, והאיש משה ענין מאד מכל האדם אשר על-פני האדמה. *And the man Moshe was more humble than all the men that were on the face of the earth.* Moshe's humility is evident in so many places in the Torah. Why is it necessary to mention it at this specific place?

We opened with the complaining of the Jews. What were the Jews of the Desert complaining about; such holy, wise, angelic men? They did not want to be so angelic!!! They did not want heaven-sent food, and to be dependent on G-d! *After all, Moshe, I am here in the desert with a very large family, and the only food I can rely on is this Mannah! How irresponsible of me to be so dependent! In Egypt, I had normal food, natural food. I wasn't so dependent on G-d, so irresponsible toward my family.*

An assault on the Mannah was an assault on Moshe, in whose merit we have the Mannah. Moshe was the humblest of men, in the sense that no one views himself dependent on G-d, to the same degree that Moshe did. Moshe can get them Mannah, but he can't get them a feeling of security without G-d! No matter how much meat G-d would provide - if a person is looking for a feeling of security without Him, there will never be enough. And, when someone wants security, and tries to manage without G-d, G-d doesn't help him. Instead, G-d says, "If you want to manage on your own, go ahead and try."

This is why at this point, the prophecy came out that Moshe would need to die and would not bring *Klal Yisrael* into Eretz Yisrael. Because this is the point where *the Nation* lost their merit of having Moshe, a Man of Miracles, as their leader. "If you want to manage without miracles, if you want to fight without feeling total dependence on G-d, Yehoshua will have to take you in. Not Moshe." Moshe's needing to die was a catalyst for the next Parasha, the story of the Jews' fear when they heard the Spies say that there was no hope of being victorious over the 7 nations in a natural manner.

Recent studies have shown that the best CEOs are the most humble. For years, philosophers and psychologists frowned on 'humility,' saying that it showed character weakness. This is because the concept of 'humility' is often misunderstood. Humility is defined in the Miriam Webster Dictionary as a modest or low view of one's own importance. For this reason, people have a misconception about humility, thinking that it means to regard yourself as a '*shmatteh*'. R' Shach would say that this cannot be what humility is, because how, then, would we understand Moshe's teaching this *passuk* of Torah to the whole nation, expounding on how he was, is and will always be the most humble person ever???

The *Orchot Tzaddikim* tells us clearly, what humility is and how to achieve it. At its root, real humility is recognizing one's complete dependence on G-d and acknowledging that all the good you have is not because you deserve it, but because G-d, in His everlasting kindness, wants you to have it. The hardcore truth of humility is that we don't

know where we are going in life, until we have one foot in the grave. We do not know if things will be better or worse, although we hope for the best, because we are totally dependent on G-d.

How humble you are, how undeserving you feel, or how dependent on G-d you feel, is evident from the way you respond when faced with disrespect. So many people feel like a *shmatteh* when faced with insult, because they feel that they *deserve* more respect, or they feel that they have importance, independent of G-d. They are just *surrendering* because they don't have any options, power, or courage to do anything about the given situation. That is being a *shmatteh*; that is not being humble!

Of all people, Moshe felt the most obligated to G-d, the most underserving, the most dependent. Proof of this was revealed only now, when the closest person to him, his sister, Miriam, who saved his life, compared him to other prophets, and he did not respond, although he had the power to! Because he felt, "I do not deserve to be a prophet

on a higher level than others; if G-d wants me to lose my level of prophecy, I will lose it, and the strengths that are G-d-given just make me more obligated to Him." This is how we can understand the sequence at the end of our Parasha.

We lost Moshe, because we did not want what he stood for! If we want miracles in life, we need to start feeling more dependent, more undeserving, and more obligated to G-d. G-d never forgets our original faith, our dependency on Him, following Him into the desert without any plan for survival. G-d remembered our *Chessed* with Him and did not annihilate us at the time of Exile in Yirmiyahu's days. **כִּי אִמְרָה יְקַנְחָה זְכַרְתִּי לְךָ תְּסֻד נְעוּרַיִךְ אֶהְיֶה כְּלִילֶיךָ לְכַתֵּךְ אֶחָדִי בְּמִדְבָּר בְּאַרְצְךָ לֹא יְרוּעָה** (Yirmiyahu Ch. 2) He even refers to such faith as doing *Chessed* with G-d. What?! Does G-d need our *Chessed*?! Of course not! But if there is anything that we can do for G-d that even resembles *Chessed*, it is to be dependent on Him, and on Him alone. (See *Homat Anach* from the Chida, *ibid.*)

WISDOM FROM THE MENORAH

Someone once asked one of the heads of Rolex, "So, how is the watch business going?" He answered, "I have no idea. I am not in the watch business! I am in the luxury business!" No one who needs a watch for telling time buys a Rolex. They buy a Seiko.

McDonalds is not in the cheeseburger business. He is in real estate. He gets prime commercial real estate, and holds on to it. He just needs to pay off his properties, so he does that by selling cheeseburgers. Starbucks is not in the coffee business. You can buy a good coffee for almost half of their price. They are in the customer service business, giving you a coffee with a smile; a great way to recharge your day with your coffee.

The common denominator of all these is that they know what business they are in, *at the essence*. After they know WHO they are, they expand from there. When someone has a business problem, it is many times deeper than where to put the next advertisement. It usually depends on defining what

business you are in, what service or product you are selling, and in what way your selling it is unique. Who is your ideal customer? Who is your competitor, and what do *you* have to offer? When you get down to the basics, you are in business. But if you ignore the basics, the essence, your business will run around in circles.

The Messilat Yesharim, one of the best self-help books in the world, starts off his masterwork with the basics. Why are we here, what is the point in life. He expands the rest of the sefer from that point. If your marriage is not like you want it to be, maybe your definition of marriage is wrong. Try to define what a marriage means, what is the point. And then, when you know, you might be able to tweak things. If your learning with your study partner is not turning out the way you would want it to be, maybe find out what is the purpose of studying with a partner. Is it about reading the text one to another, or discussing how each one understands the concept, questioning each other for clarification. If your coaching is not going well,

maybe define to your coach or to your client what your goal in this coaching relationship is, and then go from there. The reason why we get stuck is because we did not clarify the basics.

It is common for yeshiva students who do not understand the Gemarah to ask someone else. They look to Tosefot, before reading on in the Gemarah. They look for what some commentary says. They go outward, not inward. That is ineffective.

But the way that will help you understand something in learning is by reading it again. And again. And again. Going for the essence. Saying it over out loud, crystallizing what you already know. The brain has a kind of a magic: If a person understands some things, but not others, it depends on what we focus. If a person focuses on the things that he has not yet been able to comprehend, the brain begins to doubt even those things that were clear. And, on the contrary, if a person focuses on those things that are clear to him, suddenly, the brain is able to grasp those areas that were problematic.

If you get stuck in learning, in life, in anything, always read in rounds. Start all over again. See the passuk 'inside'; see the Mishna inside. Understand what you have already understood at a deeper level. Ask the six questions, Who, What, When, Where, Why, How, as much as you can, to get

clarity on what you already "know". And then, the brain does its magic. From what you understood, it branches out, just like the Menorah, to things that you did not understand before.

The Menorah represents the wisdom of the Torah. Learning Torah has in it this amazing feature that when you focus on the main concept, other concepts slowly branch out. Just like the Menorah, that had one middle stem from which three branches spread out on both sides. The Menorah needed to be made of one, solid piece of gold, without anything added on to the main piece. *מקשה מהא*. Why? Because the side subjects automatically branch out from the main subject. You just need to take the essence, to take what you've got, and when you focus on it long enough, when you play around with it, you have a beautiful Menorah.

This is also the way to take notes, to think clearly. Make a main goal the middle stem, and the ideas branch out, like the branches of the Menorah. Write down the passuk as the main stem, and branch out from there to all the things that are learnt from it. Use the six questions, like the six stems that branch out from the Menorah. This is why the Torah repeats itself over and over when describing the Menorah, to teach you that just by reviewing what you already know again and again, you will suddenly discover many new ideas. Try it, and let me know how it works for you!

TRAVELS OF LIFE

All traveling can be broken down to three components. Departure from point A. Arrival at point B. And the way of travel. The how – walking, driving, flying, etc. With whom – friend, stranger, family, etc. And with what – suitcase, comp., credit card, smart phone, teffillin, etc. There is a unique type of travel though. The travel of a child. When you ask a traveling four year old, holding his father's hand, "Where are you going?", the response is , "Wherever my father takes me." Where are you right now? "With my father." Point A and Point B are just scenery. "I am with my Daddy, wherever he takes me, and I am traveling with whatever he brings with me."

We are all traveling. From birth pangs till our last breath. Even if one believes that he is settled, it is

only a matter of time until reality disproves this belief. This may sound unsettling, but it all depends on how you answer these questions. Who are you travelling with? Who packed your suitcases, your natural strengths, and weaknesses? What is the purpose of your travels? The answer to these questions depends on your perception of life. If you have Emunah, Faith, you have one answer to all these questions. G-d. If you believe in G-d, you are being led by His Hand. He packed your bags, your natural strengths and weaknesses, things that you discover inside you throughout your life. And the purpose of your travels is to serve Him in whichever scenario He puts you, and be rewarded in the World to Come. This is a very settling thought. All unsettling thoughts of mankind, are

rooted in not believing this belief at the core of all one's beliefs.

The Hebrew word for faith is Emunah. The root of the word Emunah, is Omen, parenting.(see M. Esther 2;7) What is the connection between Faith and parenting? The connection we made above. Also, the word Amen means "I am faithful of it". Like a child believes in his parent that things will be okay, things will work out, so is the faithful Jew believing in his G-d. This is why a believing Jew says in whatever he tries to do in life, "G-d willing" "With the help of G-d". I.e., I am not going anywhere without His Will.

The travels of the Jewish Nation through the desert is discussed this week. The Jews would travel in the Clouds of Glory, in accordance with the Word of G-d. It did not make any difference if He decided to camp for an extended period in a place where things were difficult or move quickly when things were comfortable. Whatever He says is good. No questions. Because we are together with our Father.

According to one opinion of the Rabbis, there is a sixth book of Moses. The whole book is two psukkim *And when the Aaron traveled* and *And when it rested*, the psukkim we say when the sefer Toah is transported in shul . This is why, in the Sefer Torah, there is a backwards Hebrew letter *nun* before and after these two psukkim. To reveal that it is its own Sefer. It is a separate concept, unrelated to what preceded it in the parasha or to what follows. Rashi explains that although these psukkim are out of place, they are here to separate between Puranoot and purannoot, between misfortune and misfortune. After these psukkim, the parasha begins telling us the stories of the trials and tragedies of the Nation in the desert. Before the tests and trials that are after these psukkim, there was a test that the nation tested G-d, and we are separating this one from the ones that follow. What was this test that the Jews tested G-d, that was not even mentioned in the Torah? It was so fine and thin, that you would not notice it even if you were there!

The Ramban writes that the test was the *spirit of departure* from Mt. Sinai after a year of

encampment at the mountain. When they left Mt. Sinai , they were excited to leave like children who are excited to leave school. They said, "He might add on some more Mitzvoth to the 613 that He already gave us." They were happy to leave, as if they had some place to go. This was the first Puranoot, the first trial that the Jews tested G-d. This was actually the core of all the other tests. That we did not believe in our Father that everything is going to be okay. That we think that we are not in His Hands. It was so deep, this mistake, that you couldn't see it on the surface, even if you were there.

This close connection, this concept of Emunah, is the concept of prayer. Prayer is not only beseeching in G-d. Prayer is exercising belief in G-d. Mediation is a powerful way to find serenity in life. There is no better meditation than prayer. Prayer with your whole soul. The only way to pray with immense Kavvana, is through meditation. Meditation on the words, and on the concepts that you are praying. Meditation in prayer is transcending from the belief that I am in control of what goes on in my life, to the words of Veata Moshel Bakol, *And you are in control of everything*. Even if I am out of control, You are in control. And even if I think that I am in control, I am out of control. Even the sorrow that one has in life, it is easier to deal with when one meditates three times a day in prayer *Tov Hashem Lakol Verachamav Al Kol Maasav*. G-d is good to everything, and His Mercy is on all His creations... G-d is everything. And G-d is good.

So how do we leave shul? Are we happy to get onto the next thing? Where are you running? G-d is everywhere! You cannot be successful without Him, you need Him! If you must leave then you just have to, but are you happy that prayers are over, to leave G-d?

The next time the kids in the back seat ask, Are we there yet? Answer them that we are always there. This is where I am supposed to be now. With G-d. It is just scenery that passes us by as we travel through life. Life is like that racing game where the car is steady and the scenery just passes by. We are with G-d. He is everything. And He is good.

LIFESTYLES

One of the biggest problems facing the Orthodox Jew is the belief that a Jew can keep “the 613” while living the lifestyle of “keeping up with the gentiles”. Who is setting the standard of what we want and what we *don't* want in life? The way we live, the path of behavior we take, will affect our fate more than anything else. In order for us to understand how to solve this problem we need to understand where it comes from, and find the tools to defeat it.

The very first thing that Ruth told her mother-in-law, Naomi, when she was certain that she wanted to convert to Judaism was באשר הלכי אלך . *Wherever you go, I will go.* The Midrash Rabbah explains this. “Naomi said to Ruth: My daughter, it is not the way of a Jewish girl to go to the theatres of the goyim.” Naomi told Ruth that to become a Jewess, one cannot follow the celebrities of the goyim and associate with them. Their way is not our way.

Why was this the most important, first message Naomi gave to her daughter-in-law who was about to convert, even before mentioning the 613 Mitzvoth? And why did Naomi need to hear Ruth say, *Wherever you go, I will go*, that she would stop going to the theatres, before Naomi was willing to convert her?

Because the path that you are going in life, the lifestyle you follow, is the expression of your ultimate decision as to what type of Jew you will be. There is a huge difference between an Orthodox Jew and a Torah Jew. What is the difference? Orthodoxy means keeping 613. Not being ‘reform’ or ‘conservative’. *As long as I do not alter even one commandment, I am still Orthodox. But, how I live my life, what car I drive, what type of wedding I make, my lifestyle – as long as it does not transgress the 613, I still fly under the radar of Orthodoxy.* A Torah Jew is something else. The word Torah has a similar root to the word Morah, which means teacher, guide, someone who shows the way. A Torah Jew, then, is a Jew who lives his lifestyle in line with the spirit of Torah. He constantly asks himself, *What is the Torah*

lifestyle that I can adopt? What is the Torah's path? Naomi wanted to make sure that Ruth was going to be a Torah Jew. Not just an Orthodox one.

We sometimes forget how to enjoy the beauty of a Torah lifestyle and focus on the deeper truth of life. And once we forget, the glamour of the celebrity lifestyle flashes at us from every billboard, in every advertisement. It makes it so easy to lose track. There are only two tracks in life, and they are mutually exclusive. We are always going on one of these two tracks. It's just a matter of which one we choose. Allow me to explain.

What is an angel? The word ‘anglos’ in old Greek means messenger. The angel does not have thoughts of his own, nor does he have free choice. He is but a robot. He does whatever you program him to do. The human being is the opposite. No matter how you program him/her, you can never know if they are going to follow your directions. The difference between angels, who do not have free choice, and us is that angels are always referred to as עומדים, standing still, while Humans are always referred to as הולכים, always going. This concept of going is the purpose of your life. The uniqueness of the Human. All of your life, you are going from point A to point B. *You chose* your point B. You can be getting closer to the life of the celebrities, the life of the gentiles, more Olam Hazeh. Or, you can be getting closer to your Neshama, your purpose in this world. The first mitzvah commanded to the first Jew was לך לך, “Go to you”. What does it mean – to go to you? G-d told Avraham to go towards himself, to advance towards his purpose, towards his Neshama. Every Jew comes down to this world with that same command: לך לך. Go toward your purpose. That is the Torah's path.

What is the Gentile's path? Probably one of the most crucial moments in the whole Tanach is the moment when Bitya is at the Nile River to immerse for conversion, and she sees little Moshe in a basket. ותָּרַד בַּת־פַּרְעֹה לָרְחֹץ עַל־הַיָּאֵר וַיִּנְעֹרְתִיהָ הַלֵּלֶת עַל־יָדָהּ: הַיָּאֵר וַתִּרְאֵהוּ אֶת־הַמִּבְּבֵה בַּתְּוֹדֵד הַסּוֹפֵר וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אֶמְתָּהּ וַתִּקְחֶהּ: Bitya decides to reach out to baby Moshe and save

his life. The Talmud points to the words וְנִעְרֹתֶיהָ אֵלֶיךָ *and her maidservants were walking*. Where were they going? Weren't they supposed to be next to the princess Bitya?

R Yochanan answers the question. The word halicha, here, means death, as we see in the words of Esav, הִנֵּה אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת *Behold, I am going to die*. The maidservants said to Bitya, “Are you crazy? If no one else is obeying Pharaoh’s command to kill the Jewish boys, wouldn’t it make sense that at least his own daughter would listen to him?!” When the maidservants spoke with those words, the angel Gavriel came and struck them dead!! (See Sotah 12b, Torah Temimah Shemot 2; 5)

Although Esav was busy hunting food, occupying himself with idolatry and women, always “on the move”, he was moving towards death. הִנֵּה אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת. That was his direction. The life of a celebrity, here and now. If they do not have Olam Haba, they might as well have Olam Hazeh.

Yaakov, on the other hand, was an איש תם יושב אורחלים, a simple man sitting in the study hall. Although he was not moving physically, but he was steadily advancing in the direction of the Torah learning that would lead him to Olam HaBa. All of us have these same two options in life: to live Esav’s celebrity life, a life that ends up as a life of purpose, in the image of G-d. But whatever you do, you are a הוֹלֵךְ. You, a human being, are moving in a direction.

Our Rabbis learn the words of the beginning of the Parasha תִּלְכוּן *follow My statutes*, to mean that you shall *toil* in Torah, learn it in depth. All of the blessings of the Torah are reserved for one who learns Torah in depth. Why does “following in G-d’s statutes” refer to toil in learning? Maybe it just means to live an Orthodox life of 613?

When the Parasha tells us “*to go* in My statutes”, it doesn’t mean externally. It means internally. It

THE GREATEST BABYSITTER EVER

The Mishna in Sotah tells us about the great punishments one can get for doing a sin and about the great rewards one can get for doing a mitzvah. The example the Mishna gives about someone who

means to go into your heart. It means going towards a deeper truth and making it part of your real self. Because that is the way of a Torah Jew.

BH, I have been living in Yerushalayim for 18 years. The greatest damage western culture had on me was to make me believe that “the easier the better”, and “the faster the better”. The Torah is teaching us that, No! אִם-בְּקִלְתִּי תִלְכוּן I want you to *toil* in Torah. If someone offers you a chip to put in your brain that will give you the knowledge of a doctor, a lawyer or a psychologist, why not? Many things in modern times are instant! But it is not so regarding Torah knowledge. G-d wants us to toil to achieve it. Although an unborn baby has learnt the entire Torah, we do not stand up, in respect, for that baby. Why not? R Chaim Shmulevitz says because that child did not toil for his Torah! This is true in regard to all self-development, and in all aspects of lech lecha, going to your life’s purpose. All of the 48 ways to acquire Torah require really hard work and toil. In stark contrast to the requirements for priesthood or royalty, those requirements are presents, not things you need to work on.

The second untruth marketed by western culture is ‘the faster the better’. That is not the case regarding self refinement. The greatest enemy to change is speed. וְאָת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ: If you go in My statutes and you **watch** My Mitzvoth... The Torah does not say to keep the Mitzvoth, לִקְיִים. It says to watch the Mitzvoth, to wait anxiously for an opportunity to observe them. Not to get them over with, when the time comes. But to anticipate them. To count 49 days to wait for the Torah. To count the days toward Shabbat.

Patience. Hard work. Striving for Truth. Real Truth. Living with purpose. Mastering contentment. This is a Torah lifestyle.

got reward for doing a mitzvah is how Miriam, in this week’s parasha, was rewarded by having the entire Jewish nation wait for her seven days when she was punished with leprosy . Miriam got

rewarded for the act she did at the age of six, when she waited to see what would happen to her brother Moshe after she placed him in a basket and laid him in the Nile. She waited twenty minutes, until Bitya came and took Moshe out. She was rewarded many years later, close to a century late. 20 minutes goes into 7 days if you multiply it by 500. She got repaid 500 fold for what she gave. A few questions. G-d pays people back for the mitzvot that they do in the currency that is important to them. Great rabbis live lives of poverty and hardship, because they do not want to be paid in this World for the great mitzvot that they do. They want to be paid in the next world. Someone who does not value the next world as much as they value this world will get paid in this world instead of the next for the good that he does, because that is what is more important to him. להאבדיו פניו אל (ז דברים) Usually, a person of Miriam's caliber does not want to get repaid in this world. Why, then, was she paid back in such a way? Another question. Was this the only thing good that we saw Miriam do? Wasn't she also one of the greatest prophetesses of all time? Out of all the holy and great things that she did, why do we see that she is rewarded specifically for this act of waiting out of care and curiosity to know the destiny of her brother? And why was she rewarded so greatly for such a minute act? The first time the Torah introduces Miriam to us, she is called Puah. Yocheved was Shifra for being a good nurse, and Miriam was Puah for being a good babysitter, for cooing to the infants, soothing them and "for saying to the baby pooh pooh". Despite the greatness of these two prophetesses, they are given names reflecting their childrearing abilities. This is a great lesson for all of us. The greatness of Miriam was not her being a prophetess. It was her being a good older sister, a good babysitter. The Jewish mother has one role in this world: that is, to bring up her children. If she has a good job, top paying job, that is not her role; it is just something extra. If she is bringing up her children right, she is doing her job as a woman. For this reason, Miriam was ranked "top" for being good at child rearing, in a time when everyone needed an extra hand with the kids. This is why the Torah stresses their names in this way of praise, for this is the greatest praise a woman can get. A good mother. Or a good

babysitter. Miriam, in our parasha, was not being rewarded for the mitzvot she did. She was being rewarded for how she did the mitzvah. (This is clear from the beginning of the Mishna there. Shimshon, in the beginning of the Mishna, was punished not for what he did, but for how he did it. The Mishna is talking about the how more than the what.) Her reward was a sign to the world that she succeeded in her life's mission. Why was this act so great? Because she gave her time, even twenty minutes, for her brother who was in distress. When someone waits for another person without needing to receive anything from that person, and just waits out of care, that shows a sense of importance, love or respect to the one being waited for. Miriam gave her time for her brother, so the whole nation showed Miriam that they would wait for her, as well. Because she showed importance to others, she, herself, was important. She was rewarded greatly for her act of waiting, not only because she waited, but because she called herself "babysitter" with pride. It was not degrading for her to be a babysitter; it was her honor. This is the how. Being proud to be a mother. She was not rewarded in this world for the mitzvah of chessed itself, but for how she did the mitzvah. Children take time. They are our guests for twenty years. And then they are on their own. But for those twenty years, they need us. More than money, presents and clothing, they need our time. Personal time. One on one for a couple of minutes a day, when the whole world is nonexistent until they finish telling us what is important to them. Love is showing that what is important to them is important to us. When we wait and listen to them, we are projecting that they are important to us. Kids speak and want us to wait and listen. Just listen and wait. Not that what you are going to answer them, but just the fact that you are listening and you tell them what you heard them say. It shows them that they are important to you. And they feel whether or not you are proud to be a parent, happy to give up your time for them, or not. If we give our children this time, patience and respect, they will pay us back much more when we get old, and need their time, patience and respect. Only then will we be important to them. The little things that we can do to show them that we love them can be so great. All they want is time. Sometimes time means a few minutes of listening,

non-judgmentally, to their feelings, opinions, fears or doubts. And they will pay you back manifold for

the time that you have invested in them..

THE KEYS TO HEAVEN'S GATES

You can and should always talk to G-d. But prayer that works, prayer that opens the right doors to answer your prayers in Heaven, is prayer using the right words, the words that the great Jewish leaders established, understanding and meditating on what we are saying. We would not know on our own the right words to use, or which Names of G-d to mention and focus on. But if we focus on the Siddur, and the structure of the words and sentences that our Sages have pre-established, we can tap into the greatest power in the universe. (see Rekanati Bereshit 32)

We know that G-d's Name YKVK reflects G-d's attribute of Mercy, His not being limited by time or space. The Name Elokim reflects G-d's attribute of Judgement, nature, and that people get what they deserve.

When Moshe prayed to G-d to cure his sister Miriam, he cried out to G-d with only five words, but words that have so much meaning. אֵלֹהִים רַחֵם עָלַי G-d, please, cure her now! This has become the "secret code", the key that opens the door in Heaven to bring a cure. Using the word רַחֵם, twice, is one of the secret codes to open up Heaven's Gates. (Chida) The Name of G-d that Moshe chose was the Name אֵלֹהִים. Why did Moshe use that Name and not any other? Why not the name of YKVK, which reflects G-d's attribute of Mercy? Our Sages who structured the prayer for cure, also, made certain to use that Name of G-d, the Name of אֵלֹהִים כִּי אֵלֹהֵינוּ רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ. Why?

The Baal Shem Tov answers with something mindboggling. We mention in our prayers, each morning in Korbanot, that there are 13 tools to comprehend, interpret and understand the Torah. Kal Vachomer, Gezerah Shavah, Binyan Av, etc. We also know that there are 13 Attributes of Mercy: E-l, Rachum, Chanun, etc. The Name E-l, is the Attribute that is parallel to Kal Vachomer. Here is an example of the Kal Vachomer comprehension tool: Reuven is stronger than Shimon. If Shimon can lift 100 lbs., Reuven can definitely lift 100 lbs. Kal- light, Chomer- strict. If

the light case has a certain stringent law, the stringent law is sure to apply in the strict one as well. Immediately after Moshe asked G-d to cure Miriam of leprosy, with the Name E-l, G-d answered Moshe with a Kal Vachomer, *If Miriam's father would have spit in her face, wouldn't she be embarrassed for seven days? For sure, now, she needs to be seven days in quarantine.*

What does this mean? Why is the Name of E-l, the power of Kal Vachomer? And what does the Name of E-l mean, anyway?

If you want to transform your prayers and bring them up a notch, try noticing how many times you use the Name E-l in your prayers and how the Name of E-l is always used when we are describing G-d's strength of goodness, the most powerful strength in the world. The Name E-l, like its numerical value parallel וידי, *and it was*, reflects the concept of G-d's ability to create something from nothing, in a way that demonstrates His strength. As the Talmud teaches us, the proof that G-d can bring about resurrection of the dead is that if He can create something from nothing, He can surely bring the dead back to life. (Sanhedrin 106) This is a Kal Vachomer, and this Kal Vachomer is why we use the Name E-l, every time we want to demonstrate and unlock G-d's unlimited power of kindness. Because whenever we beg something of G-d and believe that He can do the impossible for us, we use this Kal Vachomer thinking – if He can create something from nothing, what can't He do? If He can create a body, for sure He can cure an existing one! 'A condition of true Bitachon is to believe that He is E-l, the strongest, and without Him, nothing can help or hurt, and nothing is hidden from Him'. (Siach Yitzhak)

It is so interesting. Most medicines originate from things that grow from the earth, plants, herbs or trees. (Aspirin is from the bark of a willow tree. The chemotherapy medication Taxol comes from the Pacific yew tree.) King Solomon wrote a book of medicines listing and describing things that grow from the ground that can cure any possible

sickness. Why, of all things, is it greenery that is recognized as being a cure? It is because greenery made the first Kal Vachomer when it came into existence: If trees grow in separate species, for sure greenery should! (See Chulin 60a). In the merit of that Kal Vachomer, the greenery merited being given the power to cure any sickness, the power of E-I!

This is the reason why G-d answered Moshe with a Kal Vachomer about Miriam. G-d was telling Moshe, if you want to unlock and access the G-dly power of E-I, you need to learn Kal Vachomer! If someone wants to access the Middah of Rachum, of G-d's Mercy, he needs to learn the parallel in the 13, a Gezerah Shava. If someone wants a child, he needs to access G-d's Middah of Chanun, and the parallel of that is Binyan Av. Each one of the 13 Attributes of Mercy comes to life when we learn Torah with the 13 Midot that parallel it.

When we learn Gemara, we are surrounded by the four angels that are the Merkava, G-d's Chariot; note that Gemara is an acronym of Gavriel, Michael, Refael, Uriel. When we learn Torah, when we pray with Kavana, the keys to Heavens Gates, the doors to Beracha, are available to us. And His angels surround us. As King Solomon concludes Shir Hashirim: *הַיּוֹשֵׁבֵת בַּגַּנִּים לְקוֹלֵךְ הַשְּׂמִיּוֹנִי* *The one who sits in the gardens* (Shuls and study halls,) *friends* (angels) *are listening to your voice! Let me hear as well!*

Selfie Steps to being aware how to open Heaven's Gates and when and where they are open, to make use of those times.

1. When the Ark is opened to take out the Torah to read it, Heavens Gates are open.
2. When you open your heart give tzeddaka, even before you actually give it. (B. Batra 10a)
3. At Hatzot, midnight, Heaven's Gates are open.
4. Reading Tehillim opens the Gates. (Malbim intro to Tehillim)
5. The Gates of Heaven are always open for the prayers of the poor and for prayers with tears. (See Yalkut Yosef Tefillah 98;11 footnote 11)
6. Prayers in Israel are near Heaven's Gates; Jerusalem is even closer, and the Kotel is the closest.
7. The Gates open when someone does Teshuva.
8. The Passover Seder Night is a time of opening the Gates.
9. For the Ten days from Rosh Hashana until Neilah of Yom Kippur, the Gates are open.

YOLTO

Rebbi Shimon said, Why didn't G-d bring Mannah for the whole year at once? Why did G-d bring it in daily portions? It is similar to a king who would support his son by giving him all of his sustenance once a year. Then, the son visited his father only when there was something lacking. The king decided to give his son a daily ration, which caused the son to come visit daily. So, too, G-d wanted the Jews to turn their hearts to Him. He gave them their daily portion of Manna, so that each day, the Jew would wait, hopefully, to receive it, so that the family would not starve to death in the desert. This forced the Jew to pray. (Sifri)

This is a very Jewish concept. G-d does not need us to pray in order for him to solve our problems. Rather, He brought us problems because He wants our prayers. According to the Mayo clinic, close to half of hospital beds are occupied by people with real sicknesses that are results from worrying, stress, or other emotional causes (such as jealousy, not accepting reality, or not accepting one's self). People who cannot control their worrying die young. So, why did G-d create the emotion of worry, if its results are so severe? Because he wants us to pray. The human psyche is programmed in such a way that if a man cannot stop worrying, he can't survive: he needs prayer to

stay sane. Without sincere prayer (and not just the lip service ritual), Man can go bananas. G-d does not need us to worry and stress, and He does not need us to solve our problems. He just wants us to realize how much we need Him.

Rabbi Shimon teaches us how to overcome worry. The Mannah was given to the generation that accepted the Torah. The Torah cannot be learnt by someone who is worried about Tomorrow. The On/Off switch for learning is Emotions and controlling them. If you cannot fight worry, you will never reach peak performance of study; you will not be able to focus. The Mannah was the ultimate lesson for all yeshiva students. If you want to stay in learning, you need to be able to ignore the future, leaving it up to G-d. So, how does one do it? By living in the Now.

Mordechai Ben David had a song I can never forget; I remember it clearly, from my youth. He got the words from the Ibn Ezra. העבר אין והעתיד *The past is gone. The future has not yet come. And the present disappears in a blink. So, why worry?* In other words, all worry is from thoughts of the past or future. All bliss is in the Now. All worries boil down to either "Crying over spilt milk", or "Crossing your bridges before you reach them." Past and Future.

Take Yolo for example. Yolo is a new, delicious pudding/mousse in a variety of flavors you may find in the dairy refrigerator, in the supermarket, made by the Tnuva company. It is sweet, smooth, and expensive. It is not good for your diet. But, it tastes great. So, how does Tnuva convince you to buy it again and not worry about the calories, or that fat you will need to burn tomorrow when you restart your diet? When you open the cover of this mousse/pudding, there is another cover that says, "You only live once". Yolo stands for "you only live once", so you might as well enjoy life to the max.

That is a powerful statement. You only live once, and you have Today only once. People spend most

of their lives living in the past, or living in the future, just not to live in the present and enjoy and be thankful for the Now. But, today is the tomorrow of yesterday, and by tomorrow, today will be just a memory. This concept of Now is the cornerstone of being the best Jew you can be. Being able to enjoy and be thankful for today. זה היום עשה ה' נגילה ונשמחה בו. You live today only once, so when are you going to thank G-d for today? When are you going to slow down in Birkot Hashachar and think about what you are saying? Worrying is the antonym of Tefillah. If a person were to pray sincerely, he wouldn't worry. This is why, according to the Abuhav, we stand with our feet together in prayer. It is not only to stand one-legged, as if we were angels. It is to relay the message that we are helpless, without G-d. We can't get anywhere without Him, and everywhere we've gotten until now, is with His help. What a humbling, empowering, thought.

The Mannah is the lesson that if you have food for today, you are okay. If you have a bed to sleep in for tonight, things will turn out all right. Why? Because just as G-d has taken care of you until now, he will take care of you Tomorrow. This is what Emunah means. Emunah is not just Faith. Emunah's root is Omen, a word that is used in this week's Parasha and which refers to a parent or caretaker who nurtures a helpless child. Jewish Faith is the belief that we need G-d for EVERYTHING, and He is involved in EVERYTHING. That is right. As much as it hurts the ego to feel that we are helpless without G-d, it is the most empowering thought, knowing that you have a G-d to pray to. This is a new reason to stay religious. Being irreligious has a very expensive price tag. It is called worry. Be religious, just so that you can have a G-d to help you manage.

So, just remember: YOLTO. You only live today once. Enjoy it. Make the best of it. Start praying. And stop worrying.



THE ONE THING THAT CAN BREAK ANY RELATIONSHIP

Complain. Just the sound of the word makes you frown. It causes us negativity. It saps our energy. The complainer's helplessness and hopelessness somehow creep into the mindset of the listeners, as if they were undergoing some sort of negative hypnosis. This week, the Torah gives us the deepest insight into people who are complaining. The Torah tells us about the Jews in the desert complaining about the Mannah, but the Midrash tells us something else... וישמע' ה באזני רע כמתאוננים העם ויהי'... And the Jewish nation were as if complaining, evil in the Ears of G-d, and G-d heard.. The midrash tells us here that it is only as if they were (letter כ (complaining, for if the Torah would say that they complained, they would never have been forgiven... the of ranks the joined had that) converts other and Egyptian (Rav Erev The והאספסוף אשר בקרבו התאוו תאוה וישבו ויבכו גם בני ישראל ויאמרו מי יאכלנו בשר Jewish People harbored a materialistic desire, and they sat and cried with the Jews, and they said, "Who will feed us meat?" The Midrash Tanchuma asks here, is it actually meat that they wanted? Isn't it true that they tasted whatever they wanted in the Mannah? R' Shimon learns from here that it is not meat that they wanted. They desired forbidden marital relations. (This is alluded to by the word בשר similar to and reminiscent of the words בשרו, which refers to forbidden relations.) אהלו לפתח איש למשפחותיו בכה העם את משה וישמע... And Moshe heard the nation crying, each family together, each person at the entrance of his tent... The Midrash asks us, why were they crying? The Midrash answers: They were crying concerning family matters. They did not lack meat, for they had a lot of sheep and cattle. Rather, they were searching for a way to

separate themselves from G-d, in order to allow themselves to marry those women who had become forbidden to them. Aunts, sisters... Amram, father of Moshe, was married to Yocheved, his aunt, in Egypt, and such marriages had to be annulled after the Torah was accepted. This is what is meant by "למשפחה תיהם", each family together", regarding restrictions in marriage within their families. The reason why they complained about the Manna was just in order to separate themselves from G-d and remain married to those who were now forbidden to them. This is all strange. The Torah elaborates at length about their having complained that the Manna did not give them the pleasures that they had been used to in Egypt: the kishuim, avatichim, hatsir, onions and garlic. The Mannah changed both its taste and appearance in accordance with all other foods, whereas with these five vegetables, only the taste was changed. Other Midrashim tell us that they complained that not needing to relieve themselves after eating the Manna could have a bad effect on their health. If so, how is it that what they were really crying about (the forbidden relations) was not what they were complaining about (five foods that Manna did not resemble)? And, why does the Torah stress G-d and Moshe hearing (וישמע) (the people? The answer is that usually, when a person is complaining, he is not complaining about what is bothering him. There is something on a deeper level than what he is complaining about. Complainers are a type of people; they can find something to complain about, regardless of the circumstance. The reason why it is so draining when a person complains is because, in fact, he could just change the complaint to a positive request.



“Can I ask for meat, please? “ The Jews could have prayed to G-d, instead of complaining. If they would have done that, they would not have been punished. When one is complaining , there is always something deeper to listen to than what is being said. This is especially true when what is being complained about is not something that can be put into a constructive request, or when the complaint does not make sense at all. And, the Midrash tells us that if they would have complained "for real", that would not have been forgivable. Why ? Complaining is letting out fumes – letting out the angry thoughts, without thinking constructively . It is letting out all those thoughts that were hashed and rehashed about the relationship between the one complaining and the thing that is being complained about. The Jews here must have had something more, something deeper than meat that bothered them. It was the relationship between the Jews and G-d: the Jews felt upset about G-d forbidding certain marital unions. They were upset that their relationship with G-d put unwanted restraints on them, and they complained about anything they could conceivably think of, finding fault with Him.

And , as the Midrash tells us, complaining is a way to break any relationship. (Even if the relationship does not break, the desire to continue the relationship is tarnished.) There is a double lesson here. A lesson for the complainer and a lesson for the one that people are complaining to. “Complainers” complain to the people who let them complain. By allowing complaints, we are not doing that person a favor. We could just as well advise (in a gentle fashion) the person complaining to state his complaint in the form of a positive request to the person who he is complaining about. Hashem does not accept people’s complaints. He only lets them ask. I have a friend that told me he got tired of hearing his customers complain. He says he started working in a field where he never ever hears a complaint from a customer. He works for the burial society. There is only a certain amount of time we have to live. One of the worst ways to waste life, and one of the worst places we can get to in life is through complaining. We can get much farther in life if we figure out how to make those things that we complain about into respectable requests.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SONNY AND IRENE GINDI A”H

מרת שרה הינדא בת ר' מאיר נישמת

Parsha in honor of the birthday of Menachem ben Eliahou



