

BESHALACK
JANUARY 1981
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

One of the most difficult things to tell a person is that he is suffering from illusions. We all have dreams and we all need dreams. However, we have to live in the real world. We have to see the world the way it is, not the way we would like it to be. Unfortunately, in our modern world we have divorced reality from dreams. We have created a dichotomy, a sharp division between those who dream and those who do. Life is difficult and there are many things in it we do not want to see. Especially, in America where we feel that everything is possible, we refuse to accept the fact that we are limited in any way. That's one of the main reasons why Americans have such a hard time dealing with death because death tells us all that not everything is possible.

Dreams have to do with idealism, with change, with making things better. and dreams are an essential part of every person. Without dreams, without a song, a person is not important. His life really does not have meaning because he cannot believe that he will make a difference. If nothing can change, then he obviously cannot be a vehicle of change. He cannot impress a higher standard of values on the world. Cynicism or escape is the inevitable result. However, believing that we can accomplish things that are patently impossible, that we can realize our dreams without any effort leads to great (disillusionment and even mental illness. Just because we want something does not mean we can have it. In order to achieve our dreams, we must work at them and we must go step by step always assuring that previous accomplishments are stable before going on to higher levels.

In America today, we are suffering from a great many illusions. We think we can have happy marriages and still run around. We think we can have a government which supplies all our needs without paying any taxes. We

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believe we can have a strong army without any need for a draft or even a high level of defense spending. We believe that we can accomplish everything without any need for self-discipline. Judaism teaches us that we must dream but that dreams must be accompanied by self-discipline. We Jews, almost more than any other group in American society, ^{have} ~~has~~ realized the American dream mainly because we were willing to work for it. We were willing to get the education and spend the time and the hours in order to achieve it. However, the dream has turned out to be hollow. Material things, alone, never satisfy. They are only tools to help us fulfill our dreams of what the world should be. We still need spiritual Jewish dreams. Material things divorced from dreams lead to grasping, selfish, ugly people.

In the Torah portion, Beshalach, we learn about what happens when dreams are divorced from reality. The Jewish people had just been redeemed from Egypt. They, though, were not yet free because Pharaoh's army was still intact and was pursuing them. G-d, though, split the Red Sea and the Jewish people crossed it unharmed. The waters then collapsed upon the pursuing Egyptians and Israel was free. They immediately burst into song. Their dreams were being realized. They now could proceed to the promised land. Immediately afterwards the mood completely changes. The rest of the Torah portion is concerned with complaints. They complain about the lack of water, about their dull food, and generally about life in the desert. They go so far even to say, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt when we sat by the fleshpots". What went wrong here? Why had their dreams turned to such hopelessness? They had completely divorced them from reality.

There are two types of dreams in the world. There is a dream which says everything will be perfect if only I can achieve one thing. There is a hope which is unlimited, a hope which says that I can, with one act,

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dramatically change the world and I can rest from then on. There is another type of hope which is a limited hope which is a limited dream which says that if I prepare myself, if I work, I can make things a little better each day and by so doing, I can make things significantly different for myself and for my family and for future generations, but I must work at it day after day, after day. The Israelites thought that freedom would transform them. They would have no more problems. Freedom only gave them an opportunity to make things better. It did not solve all their problems.

Today we have so many youngsters who turn to dope and drink and immorality because they feel hopeless. They want instant happiness. They want their dreams fulfilled immediately. This is impossible. There is nothing that can be achieved without hard self-disciplined work. Learning is fun but only after you have mastered a subject-not when you are ~~engaged~~ ^{studying} in it. Marriage is rewarding but only after you have worked at it. Dreams can never be separated from life. If they are, then cynicism ensues and hopelessness and guilt take over.

✓ We have another song of Moses recorded in the Torah in the Torah portion, Haazinu. Moshe leaves a farewell message to the Jewish people. He does not leave them a prose message because the song of Judaism, the dreams of Judaism are what allows it to continue. He ~~knows~~ ^{knows}, as we know, that Jews stop being Jews when they no longer believe that Judaism has anything to offer the world. Jewish dreams are essential for the survival of the Jewish people but Jewish dreams cannot exist in a vacuum. They cannot be fed by one-time contributions. They must be nurtured and practiced day after day without let up.

Moshe opens his song by saying, "My lessons shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew". The Torah is compared to rain. Many

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times it is uncomfortable. Many times it is unpleasant but without it, just like without rain, nothing will grow. The Torah requires effort. There is no such thing as an easy Judaism, a Judaism which is always laughter and fun. This type of Judaism will be crushed by life. Judaism is a religion of hope but of limited hope. It says we have a wonderful dream. We can achieve it but we must go step by step. We must work at it, sacrifice for it, apply it in all parts of life and then will see that our life will bloom and flower and be rewarding just as the rain makes the desert bloom and flower. Then we will be happy and then we will be satisfied and will be rewarded. Dreams do come true but only after hard work and then, only, if they are not divorced from reality.

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In the Torah portion, Beshalach, we learn how when the Jewish people were in the desert they ate manna. The manna came down from heaven and it mentions that they collected it Boker. They collected it in the morning. The Rabbis tell us that there were two other times that Boker is mentioned. It is mentioned by the Red Sea and it is mentioned when the Jewish people received the Torah. Everyday is a new day and everyday we should rise to the challenges of the new day. We should renew and reinvigorate ourselves. Every morning we should wake up with confidence that we can solve our problems. The Jewish people in front of the Red Sea were confronted by a terrible problem. The armies of the Egyptians were pursuing them, but they were not to give up. They were to continue to persevere even though things did not look so good. We are never to give up. We are to have Bitochon, faith, confidence that we can overcome our problems. Also, when we wakt up in the morning we should have faith that we are going to make a living. We should do our best and try to earn a living, but we should not just be concerned about earning a living. Boker is mentioned by the manna. G-d will help us if we help ourselves, but He wants us to do more than just make a living. We should not just concentrate all our energies on making a living. There is a third Boker, a Boker that is associated with receiving the Torah. We are to do more in life than just to make a living. We are to help expand the realm of the good by learning Torah. When we wake up every morning we should thank G-d for the opportunity He has given us to be His partner in creation. He has told us that He will help us overcome our problems. He will help us earn a living and, what's more, He will help us learn Torah and become decent human beings. There is so much to know and to appreciate and to learn. Let us all be equal to the task.

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In this Torah portion we have recounted the destruction of the Egyptian army. The Jewish people are now free. They witness G-d's great deliverance. However, immediately afterwards we have a list of complaints. How is it possible that these people who witnessed G-d's great miracles in Egypt and who on the Red Sea saw His deliverance should now sink so low as to even say, weren't there enough graves in Egypt that You had to take us out into the desert? The Rabbis say that the lowliest handmaid had a greater prophetic vision than did all the later prophets yet they turned to complaining one complaint after another. This seems a terrible indictment of them. Actually, though, when we read the Torah portion we can see that we are being told something very important. Three times the word Boker, or mourning, is used. Once it is used on the Red Sea. Another time it is used with the manna and the third time it is used in next week's Sedra when the Jewish people receive the Torah. Boker means mourning. It means the dawn of a new era. There are three things which are required for the dawn of a new era, freedom which the first Boker symbolizes, visions of the future, dreams all wrapped up in that first Boker. Secondly, visible sustenance is needed. A person has to have a way of making a living. Thirdly, in order to have a new dawn we must have just rules which govern society and allow us to have good interpersonal relationships. The Jewish people had dreams. They had their freedom but it would all go for naught if they could not earn a living. A person cannot live on dreams alone. Most certainly dreams cannot be effected without morality. Today, too, we see Jewish dreams being awakened, a dawn of a new era. Israel is once again free. However, unless she has the wherewithal to allow her people to earn a living it will all go for naught. People cannot stay in a country if they cannot earn a living. There are many people here in Houston who have their roots in Israel because during World War I there was a terrible famine and many people had to leave. We are called upon to

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help raise money so that Jews throughout the world and especially Israel can earn a living. We are also called upon to support Jewish educational institutions because without Torah there, too, can be no dreams. You can always tell a man's heart by looking at his hand. The story is told about a fellow who went to the doctor. He told him he had terrible chest pains. Immediately the doctor took something and wrapped it around his hand. The man said, "Doctor, what are you doing? It's my chest that hurts not my hand". The doctor said, "I'm taking your blood pressure". We, too, can tell if a person has a good Jewish heart by whether he sticks his hand in his pocket. We all need to contribute to make sure that the Jewish dream lives. We should not be like the fellow who staged a benefit and gave a rousing performance before a packed theater. He then made an appeal. The response was very poor. He then said, "Today I was making an appeal for the poor. Unfortunately, they are all here". Let none of us be poor in deed or spirit and let us do our share.

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In the Torah portion, Beshalach, we learn how the Jewish people sang a song at the Red Sea after Pharaoh's army was destroyed. Afterwards we learn about a series of complaints, complaints about water and food and about the hard life in the desert. Without the song the Jewish people had in their hearts they could never have endured the hardships. We, after all, live in reality. We cannot just live on our ideals, but without our ideals, our inner vision, reality would crush us. The Jewish people went three days without water. That is a long time. Inner vision is absolutely necessary in order to overcome life's problems. That's why we learn about the song first. Three places in the Torah is the word Horaim used. It is used in this week's Torah portion when Moshe lifts up his staff and the waters of the Red Sea part. It is also used by Elisha when an artisan lost his tool. He could no longer work. He no longer had his tools. Elisha said, "Horaim, lift up, oh sea". He had dropped his tools in the sea. The sea is a hard taskmaster. The sea is a symbol of cruelty. Big fish eat little fish. Sudden squalls come up. The sea is unrelenting. There is water everywhere but nothing to drink. The third time the word Horaim is mentioned is by Isaiah when he says, "Lift up your voice". From these different places we learn what the purpose of education should be. We learn that education should give people an inner vision. It says, "Lift up, Matcho, lift up your staff". Staff in Hebrew also means tribe. A person also has to learn to have relationships in order to have inner vision. He has to tie his lot in with others. He must have values. The second Horaim teaches us we must have skills and the third that we must have the opportunity to be ourselves, to lift up our voice. Unfortunately, in our modern world we have forgotten all about our first Horaim. Our public schools only teach us skills and to be ourselves. They do not teach us any values. Recently a young man came to me who was a Phi Beta Kappa with a very good job. All he did everyday was go from his job to his apartment and for walks. He had no goals in life. Nothing was worth anything to him. He had skills but what should he use them for? In this Torah portion we also learn about the three meals we are to have on Shabbos. We learn it from the repetition of the word Hayom three times. The Rabbis teach us that the reason we have

these three meals is to remind us of the three aspects of Shabbos. Shabbos teaches us that (1) G-d is the creator; (2) that He gave us the Torah and that (3) we are working for the future, for the Messianic era. A person has to feel that he is wanted, that he is needed, that he is important, that G-d needs him to do a task; (2) that there is right and wrong in the world and (3) that his actions can bring a better world. This young man did not have these ideas. He did not have this inner vision. He was on the verge of suicide. Suicide today is the leading cause of death, after accidents, for teenagers and college students. In the past many people have maligned Hebrew schools. It is true that Hebrew schools were not as good as they should have been. They did not teach the proper skills. However, they did teach values. Unfortunately, many people compare the Hebrew schools to the public schools. They try to claim that since the Hebrew schools were not teaching skills properly, the children were not learning anything in them. This was false. Then they cut the Hebrew schools from six days to three days stating that for some reason that less is more. Our public schools, unfortunately, only teach skills. They do not teach values, and unless people have values they cannot lead happy, fulfilling lives and many of them will turn out to be menaces to society. I am reminded of the famous story of a missionary who went to teach the cannibals. When he came back to England they asked him whether he was very successful. He said, yes, he was very successful. They asked him if the cannibals stopped eating other human beings. He said, "No, but I taught them to use a knife and fork". Unfortunately, that is the story many times with our public school systems. It is only teaching us to use a knife and fork. We need more things than that.

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A leader must have the qualities of showing direction, of being able to make peace within warring factions, of giving comfort and hope to the people. Moshe in this Torah portion, Beshalach, struck the rock because G-d told him to. In the Torah portion in Bamidbar he was supposed to talk to the rock. There the people needed encouragement and hope. Here in our Torah portion they had just come out of Egypt and they needed to be pushed to accept responsibility. Every age has its own problems. The problems of today are not the problems of yesterday. Moshe could not enter the Promised Land because he no longer knew what the people wanted. He could no longer prepare them for the problems of their day. It is my hope and prayer that our leadership will be able to show us the proper direction while always maintaining peace in the Congregation, and also always offering the comfort and hope that we all need. This reminds me of a story of a fellow who had a heart condition. While he was out his wife received a telegram that he had won \$1,000,000 in the New York lottery. She did not know what to do. She was afraid that if she told him he would have a heart attack, so she called her doctor. He told her, "Listen, your husband is going to have a regular examination tomorrow. I'll talk to him and in the midst of the examination I'll tell him about his \$1,000,000 win." The next day the doctor examined her husband and he looked up at him and said, "How are you spending your time now that you are retired?" He looked at the doctor and said, "Oh, I walk a little and every so often I buy a lottery ticket". The doctor said, "What if I told you you won \$1,000,000 in the lottery?" The man put his arm around the doctor's shoulder and said, "Doctor, if you told me I won \$1,000,000 on the lottery I would give you half" at which point the doctor had a heart attack. Sometimes we face the wrong problems. We have to always look at all issues from all sides and solve them in a way that is best for the future.

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In this Torah portion, Beshalach, we learn about the great song that the Jewish people sang after they were saved from the pursuing Egyptian army when the walls of water through which they had walked cascaded down upon the Egyptians. Before, when the Jewish people were trapped between the sea and the advancing Egyptian army, they cried unto G-d and G-d told them, "Why are you crying to me? Speak to the Children of Israel and they shall travel." We believe that G-d helps those who help themselves. This is like the story they tell about a time in the future when astronomers discovered that at the end of 24 hours a huge meteor would strike the earth and a tidal wave would swamp all the land. All the religious leaders of the East got together and declared a day of prayer. All the religious leaders of the West got together and declared a day of fasting. All the Rabbis got together and decided that we all had to, within 24 hours, learn how to breathe under water. Of course, they prayed, too. This, of course, just illustrates that we are called upon to act not just to sit back and accept our fate. Obviously, at the Red Sea G-d helped a lot, but G-d wants us not to give up hope. He wants us to persevere and to try. We are not to sit back and be passive. Other religions tell us we are just to be resigned to our fate. That's why Marx called religion the opiate of the people, but we are to try even against impossible odds to do what we know is right. American Mizrahi Women have done wondrous things. They are caring now in Israel for 16,000 children and they have undertaken many projects when they did not even know how they would be able to find the wherewithal to complete them. They have been fulfilling an important component of our religion. Also, in this Torah portion we learn how when the Jewish people left Egypt Moshe, instead of busying himself with collecting gold and silver as the other people were, concerned himself with collecting the bones of Joseph. Not only did he take the bones of Joseph with him, but they were placed in a prominent part of the camp. The Midrash says that right next to the Ark which contained the Ten Commandments was the Ark which contained Joseph's bones. Why should this be so? By the way, the same word for coffin in Hebrew is also ark. The reason for this is obvious. You honor a person not by getting him a fancy multi-thousand dollar coffin, but by living his teachings in your life and you honor the Ten Commandments and the Torah the same way, by implementing their teachings in your life, not by putting them

in a fancy shrine. What, though, is so important about the bones of Joseph? In Hebrew the word for bones, "Atzmos", also means strengths. They took the strengths of Joseph. Moshe wanted to impress upon the people that they needed these strengths if they were going to be able to build a new life. Joseph was a man who knew that Judaism and the Jewish way of life had something yet to teach the world. He could have assimilated easily. He could have disappeared as a Jew, but even when he appeared before Pharaoh what he said was, "Ivri Anochi" "I am a Jew". This was even more than Moshe because when Moshe ran away from Pharaoh and came to the Land of Midian he did not say "Ivri Anochi", he said "Mitzri Anochi" "I am an Egyptian", and for this reason the Rabbis say he was not buried in the Land of Israel. Moshe is telling them, "You want to build a land, you want to build a new society? Remember you are the continuation already in his time of several 100 years of history. Remember your distinctiveness." We also are to remember from the strengths of Joseph that we are not to hate each other and turn on each other. Joseph was sold into Egypt because of the envy of his brothers. We all have to realize that even though Jews have different views on many things and dreams and aspirations, that we are all Jews and that we must treat and love them all equally. Unfortunately, even in modern Jewish life there are certain even Jewish groups who would cast out other Jews both from the right and the left. There are those who would say that certain Jews are too backward and medieval, while other Jews would say that certain Jews are goyim, etc. This is not right. Joseph treated his brothers well when they came to Egypt. We must learn to treat all Jews well if we are to build a land even if we are to disagree with them. We also learn from the strengths of Joseph that we can be Jews and modern at the same time, that we do not have to give up the technological advances of the world to be Jews. Joseph rose to the highest position in Egypt, but he still remained Jewish. He used modern methods and modern techniques and so can we. Finally, Joseph was able to transmit his heritage to his children. This is an extremely difficult task. It is not easy to transmit your heritage to your children. Joseph, though, was successful in raising Menash and Ephraim to be Jews even though for a long time he was alone in Egypt. The American Mizrachi Women combines all the strengths of Joseph. It

realizes that you must teach children about their heritage if they are still to be Jews. I remember one person telling me that he was sure his children were going to be Jews. I asked him why, and he said, "Because they know how to speak Hebrew". I told him that was not guarantee. There are 600,000 Arabs in Israel who know how to speak Hebrew, but they are not Jewish. The American Mizrachi Women knows that we have to teach about the distinctive things of our tradition. They also know that we have to be willing to listen and accept all Jews, that we must be modern as well in our techniques and be up to date on the latest sciences, and they know that importance of transmitting our heritage. They not only know its importance, but they are very successful in doing it. I salute all the ladies of the American Mizrachi Women. May they be blessed with added strength, courage, and insight to continue their important work. Amen.

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In the Torah portion Beshalach we learn about the great song that the Jewish people sang after they were saved from the Egyptian army. Pharaoh once again changed his mind and pursued after the Jewish people to bring them back to Egypt. G-d caused the Red Sea to cascade down upon them and the Jewish people were saved. The Jewish people spontaneously burst out into song. Immediately after we learn about the song, we learn about the many complaints that the Jewish people had against G-d and their plight in the desert. They complained about lack of water and food and meat, and many other things. It seems to me that the reason why these complaints are placed immediately after the song the Jewish people sang is to teach us that without a song it is impossible to get over the common ordinary trials and tribulations of life. Why many marriages fail today is because the husband and wife cannot look beyond finances or mortgage payments, carpool, or the other inevitable frustrations to see the great song which marriage could be. The same goes for institutions that break down and partners who fall out when they no longer can see the great song which brought them together in the first place. There is something strange, though, about the way the complaints are listed. It says, "and they complained, all the congregation of the Sons of Israel, against Moshe and Aaron, and they said to them, 'Would that we have died by the hand of G-d in the Land of Egypt when we sat by the fleshpots, when we ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out to this desert to kill all this congregation with famine.'" Later it says, "and G-d said to Moshe, 'Behold, I am raining upon you bread from heaven and in morning you will see the glory of G-d.'" Afterwards Moshe said to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the Sons of Israel, 'Come close to G-d for G-d has heard your complaints,'" and it was as Aaron spoke to all the congregation of the Sons of Israel that they turned to the desert and the glory of G-d appeared in a cloud. Afterwards it says that Moshe told them about the bread and the meat. What's going on here? What does the glory of G-d have to do with this, and why did Aaron tell them one thing and Moshe tell them another? The Rabbis explain that here the Jewish people really had two complaints. One of them

was valid and one was not. The first question they had was, "G-d, why did you bring us out from Egypt to kill us in the desert? G-d, we do not understand Your ways. Why did you save us from slavery only to perish in the desert?" This is a theological question. This was a valid question directed for G-d. Abraham asked a similar question. "G-d, You promised me a son and that from my son would come a great nation, and here You are asking me to sacrifice him?" We have many questions against G-d. Why did He create pain and suffering? Why did He create death? We do not let G-d off the hook. We know that there is an answer and that one day we will know it. These are valid questions. However, the complaint here, too, was about luxuries. They never had meat or bread in abundance in Egypt. These complaints were a product of selfishness. Aaron, who was a lover and pursuer of peace, dealt with just the first question of the people. That's why it mentions the glory of G-d. The people knew that somehow G-d would save them. They knew there was an answer even though they did not understand G-d's ways. Moshe, on the other hand, was a true leader of the people and had to deal with their selfish ways. He dealt with the complaints of the meat and bread. Of course, the Torah teaches us that when a person is suffering we do not listen to a lot of his complaints. He just has to blow off a lot of steam. In a marriage many times you do not take notice of a person's rantings and ravings. They just have to blow off steam. If you take them too seriously you will not have a marriage. The people had some valid complaints, but they had some non-valid complaints. Moshe knew how to distinguish between them. One of the hardest things in life is to know what people mean, not what they say. Many times people say all sorts of things when really they mean something else. Many times they rant and rave when they are hurt and only want attention. Many times we make mistakes in life because we do not look at the whole person. We look at their style or some superficial things. Schools and institutions also make terrible mistakes. Sometimes on one test they exclude good students. You have to look at the whole person. In this Torah portion, too, we learn how the Jewish people got a double portion of Manna on Friday so they could celebrate Shabbos. That's

why to this very day we have two challahs on the table for the Sabbath meal. We learn from the sentence, "and Moshe said, 'Eat it today because it is the Sabbath today to G-d. Today you will find it in the field.'" The Rabbis learn from this mention of the word "today" three times that we are to have three special meals on the Sabbath, and also that there are three different Amidahs which we say on Shabbos which are different than a holiday. On every other holiday we have the same Amidah for Shacharis, Mincha, and Maariv, but on Shabbos we have a special one for each. The one for Maariv speaks about G-d being the Creator. The one for Shacharis speaks about our receiving the Torah, and the one for Mincha speaks about Messianic days. Our job is to always remember that we have a creative capacity. The world may sometimes say bad things about us. Jews are considered tools of the devil, terrible people by a lot of portions of the world, but we know that is a lie. People make individual judgements about us, too, that we know are not true. We should never lose hope. We should always believe that we can do things and create things, that we are only bound by the morality of the Torah, and that we should always have hope. It is important in life that we learn to make the right distinctions, that we learn what people means and not what they say, that we never lose confidence in ourselves no matter what others will say about us, and remember that as long as we live morally there is always hope. The story about a ship that saw light in the distance. The captain immediately radioed, "Bear ten degrees north." The light said, "You bear ten degrees south." The captain was furious and radioed, "I am a captain. Bear ten degrees north." The reply was, "I am a first seaman. Bear ten degrees south." The captain was really boiling. He said, "I am the captain of a battleship. Bear ten degrees north." The reply came, "I am the keeper of a lighthouse. Bear ten degrees south." Many times people may try to bully us into doing things that are not right, but we should always stand our ground. Neither peer pressure or bad comments should cause us to veer from the true course.

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In the Torah portion Beshalach we learn how the Jewish people sway from intense belief to disbelief, that when they left Egypt and they saw the great miracle that G-d did at the Red Sea, how the waters of the Red Sea came cascading down on the Egyptians after they had pursued the Israelites to the sea, the Jewish people then, it says in the Torah, "believed in G-d and in Moshe, His servant". Three days later, though, we came to the heights of despair. We had gone without water for three days, and the people were complaining bitterly against G-d. In fact, throughout this Torah portion we learn how faith and doubt alternate. This Torah portion really talks about faith, the faith that a person must have not only in G-d but also in himself, the faith that a person must have in other, the faith that a person must have in order to function. Unfortunately, the Jewish people in this Torah portion acted like a manic depressive. A manic depressive is one who goes from abnormal highs to abnormal lows, a person who feels one moment that he can conquer everything, that he has faith in himself, confidence in himself, faith in the world and in the future and in G-d, to a dismal depression a few days later where he feels that nothing is worthwhile and he must give up and surrender all initiative and effort and just succumb, in certain cases even to suicide. Of course, we all suffer swings in feelings, but a manic depressive is one who does this in an abnormal way. The problem with being a manic depressive is that you lose judgement. Your judgement is flawed. When a person is in a high he thinks everything is possible. Manic depressive give everything away. They try to achieve impossible tasks. On the other hand, when they are low they think that they can achieve nothing. They have terribly low self-esteem, etc. The worst thing about being a person without faith is that your judgement is flawed. You give way to the wrong things. You are not able to correctly assess a situation.

This was, of course, the problem of the Jewish people when they left Egypt. They did not know how to properly assess the situation. When the Jewish people left Egypt G-d told them He was going to take them a circuitous route so that they should not see war. They were not prepared for war, and they, of course, would flee and want to go back to Egypt. Pharaoh, though, misunderstood G-d's motives and felt the people were lost and he and his people as one man decided that they erred, that they were wrong when they thrust the Jewish people out of Egypt, that they had to pursue them and bring them back. What was this giving up all the labor supply for just a few plagues? So they pursued the Jewish people and they tracked them. The Jewish people were on a peninsula in the middle of the Red Sea. The Egyptian army was pursuing them on one side and water was flooding them on the other three sides. The Jewish people did not know what to do. They were fearful, and Moshe said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand and see the salvation of G-d which He is going to do for you today because just as you see Egypt today you will not continue to see it anymore forever. G-d will fight for you and you be quiet." The rabbis say that although the Egyptians were united in their drive to re-enslave the Jewish people, the Jewish people were divided into four different groups. There was one group that said it was hopeless and they should give up and throw themselves into the sea. A second group said they should go back to Egypt and become slaves. A third group said they should fight to the last drop of life. A fourth group said they should protest and scream and yell so they would elicit public and world opinion on their side and be saved. To all these groups Moshe said, "Don't be afraid." To those who wanted to commit suicide and jump in the water he said, "See the salvation of G-d. Don't give up." To those who said they should go back to slavery he said, "You will not see Egypt anymore." To those who wanted to fight to the last drop of blood he said, "G-d will fight for you." To those

who wanted to protest to elicit the world power's opinion on their side, he said for them to be quiet. All these tactics are sometimes called for, except perhaps for the first, which seems to be active suicide, but perhaps it meant that they would fling themselves in the water and perhaps some of them would swim and make it. All these other groups have some justification sometimes. However, they all share a common thread, and that is the thread of despair, of giving up. The Jewish people did not know how to accurately assess the situation. They did not know what to do.

The typical Jewish response now is different. It once was told that an astronomer predicted that the earth was going to be hit by a comet. After the earth was hit by the comet a great tidal wave would sweep the world. This would happen without 24 hours. They asked one leader what should happen in these 24 hours and one lady said we should all pray. They asked a second leader and he said we should all fast. Then they asked the leading rabbi and he said they should all learn how to learn to live underwater in 24 hours. The Jewish approach has always been positive to try to overcome your problems. It is difficult, though, to have faith when things seem to be caving in all around you. It is difficult to have confidence in yourself. It is difficult to assess a situation and see what can be saved. Sometimes you may have to fight to the last drop like in the Warsaw Ghetto, but that was an act of desperation. Everyone was going to be killed. The only thing that could be saved was Jewish pride. All you would do is take a few Germans with you. Therefore, it is wrong when they say that the people went to their death as sheep. They fought when they could, but most of them did not even know what was happening. The Germans were so clever they masked their true motives. Even those who fought knew they were fighting to the death. There was no hope.

When a person assesses a situation, he must have hope, he must be able to see himself free from the situation. He must be able to see a way out. The Jewish people, after the Egyptian army was destroyed, sang this beautiful song that we say every day in the davening. "And they believed in G-d and in Moshe, His servant." As I said earlier, though, three days later they stopped believing and they started complaining because they came to a place and they had no water. The rabbis say that at Mora G-d gave them some laws. He gave them some instructions even before they arrived at Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and the Torah. This was to counteract their lack of judgement, to counteract this manic depressive type of attitude they had.

G-d gave them three commandments. The rabbis say the first one was the Shabbos, the second was honoring father and mother, and the third was to establish courts of justice. The reason G-d gave them these things was because if they would understand these three mitzvahs completely they would not succumb to this rash judgement. They would not be on an artificial high and, more importantly, they would not be depressed and think there was no hope or solutions. Of course, it may be true that there are no solutions to many problems, but partial solutions are better than no solution. Eventually if we make a partial solution now and a partial solution later, within a generation or 100 years or 200 years, the problem will be solved. We must never give up. We must try to seek solutions, if not a complete solution at least a partial solution.

G-d gave them the Shabbos because Shabbos teaches perspective. On shabbos we stop all our workday activities and we enjoy a spiritual experience and learn what is important and what is not important. Sometimes a person gets bogged down in experience so much he has no perspective, and, because

he has no perspective, many times he turns anger against himself contemplating suicide or violence against others or tries to solve his problems by shouting and yelling. That will not work. In order to solve our problems and have faith in ourselves and faith in others we have to have perspective. That is what Shabbos gives us. It is a pause in the weekly routine where we can gain perspective.

Secondly, G-d commanded us about honoring one's father and mother. In order to overcome your problems you have to have a warm family. You have to have friends and relatives, a support group. All of us need moral support. Unfortunately, in America today we do not believe that. We believe in rugged individualism. Most of education is devoted to breaking down the family, to telling us that it is a crime to live in the same city as your parents, to telling us that you cannot go home anymore, that the important thing in life is individual talent and forget about your family. We know that people cannot live that way. People need the support of their family. Many of the terrible child abuse and wife abuse and husband abuse that we see today would not occur if people had the support of their families.

Thirdly, we have to have a keen sense of justice. If a person has a keen sense of justice he will be able to overcome his problems and other people's problems. It is not just a sense of justice for himself but a sense of justice against himself. We have to realize sometimes that there are certain things we cannot do. We have to keep our word unless the person we gave our word to lets us out of it. We have to act morally and justly and decently if we are to maintain our dignity. Unless we maintain our dignity we will not be able to rid ourselves of our depression. We should stop hating ourselves. We also have to treat other people with dignity,

which would allow us then to treat people correctly in all events in all times. This is what is needed. In order to have faith in ourselves and faith in others and faith in G-d, we have to have perspective, we have to have the support of family and friends, and we have to have a keen sense of justice. If we have these things, G-d has told us that we can avoid these euphoric feelings and these terrible depressive feelings, that we will be able to solve the problem. It may take time, but we will be able to do it. We do not have to engage in suicidal tendencies. We do not have to be willing to fight to the last drop. We do not have to be willing just to scream and yell or to go back to a situation which is intolerable, like slavery, but we can solve our problems. We can do it if we have perspective and we have the support of family and friends, and if we have a keen sense of justice. We should always remain optimistic but realistic at the same time.

I am reminded of the story they tell about a young man who went to his boss asking for a day off. The boss looked at him and said, "What excuse do you have now? In the past four months you have already taken four days off for your grandfather's funeral different days. What's the reason you want off today?" The young man said, "Well, my grandmother is getting married again." That, of course, is an optimistic attitude. We should always be optimistic. We should always feel we can solve our problems even though we may have to content ourselves with only partial solutions at the beginning, but none of us should ever swing from wild euphoria to deep depression. Remember, we should have faith in ourselves and faith in others and faith in G-d, most assuredly faith in G-d, and in this way we will be able to solve our problems, and we will not have to give way to depression or false euphoria. May all our problems be solved soon.

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In the Torah portion Beshalach we learn how the Jewish people left Egypt. It is appropriate that we read Beshalach now at this time when we see how Russian Jewry is trying to leave Egypt today. They know that the ground is burning underneath their feet. They know there is great instability in Russia. Already there have been pogroms. They know that they must get out now before it is too late, and we should all help them.

This Torah portion starts out with the words, "Vayehi" and the rabbis say that the word "Vayehi" can also mean Tzores, trouble. If it would say, "Vayoho - and it was" that would connote joy. When it says "Vayehi", also meaning "and it was" and is used in this form it connotes tzores, trouble. The rabbis ask, why is it that it uses this expression when it talks about the Jewish exodus from Egypt? The rabbis explain because it says "and it was when Pharaoh sent out the people", but the people, themselves, had already gotten used to slavery. Actually, slavery had ameliorated somewhat because of the plagues. The rabbis say that many of the Jewish people were starting to make a lot of money in Egypt. Actual slavery had ceased six years before because of the economic collapse of Egypt which was caused by the plagues. There were many Jews who did not want to leave Egypt. It was only because Pharaoh sent them out that they left, and that happens many times. Many times our people wait until the very last moment until they leave a place. Many times we have to be thrust out. When we had an opportunity to leave before we did not take advantage of it. Sometimes then it is too late, like happened to the German Jews in the 1930's. Many of them waited too long, and then, of course, they were herded into concentration camps and gassed to death.

Also it says here "Eso Am", the people. It does not say "Am Yisroel", the people of Israel because any time it uses the word "Am" it refers to the fact that the Jewish people are not living up to their dream, that the Jewish people find that there are great difficulties in pursuing their Jewish dream, that the Jewish people are not worthy of their dream, that the Jewish people, in this instance, are not really interested in living Jewish lives. That is why it says, "And G-d did not lead them the way of the land because it was close," because G-d said, "lest the people repent when they will see war and return to Egypt". The troubles and difficulties of being free would be too much for these people, and they will want to go back to Egypt. They will have forgotten the dream of the Jewish people. They will have forgotten what freedom can mean for them. Freedom means that they will have the opportunity to practice their religion, to get closer to each other and closer to G-d, to instill moral values into the world, but it is difficult. It is difficult to instill this dream in the world, and there are going to be a lot of obstacles, a lot of problems. There are going to be a lot of physical problems.

Therefore, there are actually two components to the realization of the Jewish dream. The first component, of course, is to have the dream. The second component is to have the wherewithal, whether it be intestinal fortitude or physical resources or stick-to-it-iveness or persistence in order to implement the Jewish dream. There are going to be many problems that come in the way of implementing the dream, and not always is our people up to the challenge. That is why we need each other to help each other so that we can realize the Jewish dream. Freedom, itself, would not be enough because with freedom comes a lot of problems, and you have to know what to do with your freedom. You have to know that you want

to implement your freedom in a positive way. You want to be able to know that all the sacrifices you are going to make when you are free are going to be worthwhile. We know what happens when people do not have dreams. Another rock star just committed suicide last night I read in the papers. Why should a rock star commit suicide? A man who has millions of dollars and the adulation of the world? He apparently he had lost the dream and did not have any goals in life. Life, itself, does not have any meaning for him. When the Jewish people left Egypt many of them forgot about the dream. They did not know why they were leaving.

In our day Russian Jewry has a dream, but we have to help them realize the dream because otherwise to many of them the dream is very fragile, and unless they are going to have jobs and homes and the resources in order to develop their talents they will forget about the dream and become bitter. In the United States we have all the resources that we need in order to implement our dreams. The only problem is that in the United States Jewish dreams are disappearing. Many Jews do not have the Jewish dream. We all know that if all the Jews were to have remained Jewish who came to America there would be 60 million Jews in America today. Among the founders of Texas were many Jews. They even say now that 7 or 8 Jews were at the Alamo with Davy Crocket. We know that in order to us to realize dreams we first have to have the dreams. To many Jews in America Jewish dreams are dead.

Therefore, we have to have two components. We have to have the dream and the wherewithal to implement our dreams. That is why we learn that after the Egyptian army was destroyed, the Jewish people sang a great song of triumph. It says that they believed in G-d and Moshe, His servant.

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Then we find that 3 days after they sang this great song of triumph, and the rabbis say that they had great visions of the Almighty then, that the lowliest maidservant had greater visions than later prophets of Israel, but, yet 3 days later they were willing to chunk it all. They had gone into the desert for 3 days and they could not find water. Obviously they still had some provisions with them, but they lost hope and did not think they were going to be able to find water. The rabbis say that Moshe threw something bitter into these saline waters that they came across and the waters became sweet. I wish we could find that same substance today. What it meant is that in order for the waters to be sweet they had to have the dedication and devotion and hard work and effort of the Jewish people, and this was hard to come by because the Jewish people did not have a dream. They were given their freedom but they did not know what to do with their freedom. That's why the rabbis say that at Maror, this bitter place, G-d gave them law and judgement. The rabbis say that He gave them three things. He gave them Din, laws between man and man, how to live correctly in society; He gave them Shabbos, how to connect with G-d; and He also gave them how to raise a family, how to honor a father and mother. The Jewish people have a dream. They have a dream of world peace, of humanity living together in a moral atmosphere, of all human beings living together in brotherhood. We also have the dream of being able to relate to G-d and to improve our own character through relating to G-d. And we have the dream of family, of seeing the naches and joy that comes to us from children and grandchildren. People who do not have children and grandchildren, people who are not steeped in these particular values, do not understand the joy that can come from children and grandchildren, but those who are steeped in these

values understand it. The Jewish people had to have a dream, but even after they had a dream they started to complain. Why did they complain after they had a dream? Because they did not have the resources in order to implement the dream. Therefore, they complained, where is the food? Where is the bread? Where is the meat? In the later part of the Torah portion G-d commands the manna to come down so the Jewish people are assured that they will have the necessary physical resources in order to continue.

Today, my friends, we have to provide the necessary wherewithal to Russian Jewry so there will not be another holocaust. We live in a period like the 1930's. There is great instability now in Russia. The Jewish people know that pogroms have been planned and pogroms have already been carried out. Jews have been attacked in Baku and Kiev, and on national television Panyat was given time and Panyat is a terrible anti-Semitic organization. There wherewithal has to be provided to get these people out, and the wherewithal has to be provided in order to help them with their jobs in Israel. Also, we, too, in America have to maintain our dream. In this generation we were given the important task of saving lives, and, of course, saving lives is the most important thing of all, and we have to save lives. We have to physically exist. The Jewish people had to get out of Egypt before they could become a light unto the nations, but we have to also make sure that we keep the dream alive in America. These are the two tasks that we have before us: to physically save the Jewish people and make sure that the dream stays alive in America, that we still have educational institutions which make sure that our children maintain themselves as Jews. That is the challenge that we have today, and that is the challenge which we all must live up to. We must know, and we

in America are free, the freest Jewish community there ever was, that our freedom is not for nothing. Our freedom is to pursue Jewish values. We must also make sure that the Jewish people, that the Jewish people are able to get out of Russia. They are not going to be able to come to the United States. There is already a quota, but they will be able to come to Israel, and we must be able to help them so that truly they can pursue the Jewish dream. The Jewish dream has two parts. One is the dream, itself, and the other is the financial wherewithal to implement it. G-d knew that the Jewish people had the dream when they left Egypt, at least partially they had the dream, but He knew that they did not have the wherewithal in order to implement that dream, that the dream had to be deepened with Shabbos and morality and family, and the dream also had to come with it physical resources to implement it. Let us hope and pray that our generation will be up to the challenge, that our generation will save lives and will keep the dream alive by supporting Jewish education.

I am reminded of the story they tell about a man who went to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist asked why he was there and the man said he was there because his family sent him. They said he was nuts. The psychiatrist wanted to know why his family said that. The man said it was because he liked wool socks. The psychiatrist said he liked wool socks, too. He didn't like nylon or cotton. He only liked wool socks, too. He didn't understand how that made the man crazy. The man said, "Good, I don't think it does either. How do you like your wool socks? With sugar? With salt? With fruit? How do you like your wool socks?" In our day and age there are only two ways that we Jews can fulfill our tasks and that is to save lives, provide the wherewithal to save lives, and, two,

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to keep the dream alive in America by supporting Jewish education. May
we be worthy of these goals so that Judaism will survive and the Jewish
people will survive. Amen.

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Today we read the Torah portion Beshalach. This Shabbat is also known as Shabbat Shira in commemoration of the great song that the Jewish people sang at the banks of the Red Sea after the Egyptian army was destroyed. We actually chant this song every day in our prayers. The question, though, can be asked, why should this Shabbat be known as Shabbat Shira? After all, there were many important things that are discussed in this Torah portion. For example, the exodus from Egypt occurred in this Torah portion. We learn also about the splitting of the Red Sea. We learn about the Man that fell and supported the Jewish people in their 40 years of wandering in the desert. We also learned how G-d supplied them with water, how in this Torah portion Moshe was told to hit the rock, and we also learn about Amalek. Why isn't this Shabbat called the Shabbat of the exodus from Egypt or the Shabbat of the splitting of the Red Sea, or the Shabbat of the Man^{the Shabbat} or of the water or of the war of Amalek? The rabbis tell us that the lowliest handmaiden at the Red Sea had a greater prophetic vision than did the prophets whose names are recorded in the Tenach, like Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc. It says, "And the people believed in G-d and in Moshe, His servant." Their souls were open.

In this week's Torah portion we also learn how according to the rabbis the

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Jewish people were given parts of the Torah, the Shabbat, the laws of honoring one's parents, civil laws. This they received three days after they left the Red Sea when they came to a place called Marah. They had been without water for three days, and the water they found there was bitter. G-d sweetened the water, and, according to the rabbis, gave them the laws of Shabbat and honoring one's parents and civil laws.

This Torah portion is called Shabbat Shira because the important thing that happened in this Torah portion is that the souls of the Jewish people were touched. It is very important that we touch the souls of people even before we teach them about the laws of the Torah, even before we teach them about the laws of Shabbat and civil laws, etc. because if a person's soul is touched, then he will be able to absorb this material and make it part of himself. Rabbi Soloveitchik teaches us that our soul is composed of two parts: an intellectual part and an emotional part. To touch our souls we need not just ideas but also feelings. Unless we are able to fill our souls with positive feelings, our souls will seek out negative feelings. Rabbi Calman Calonomus Shapira has taught us that our souls need positive feelings. Without positive feelings, we cannot

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correctly absorb Torah.

That's why it is so important when we teach our children that we touch their souls. If we can touch their souls, then we can make a great impression upon them. Just teachings subjects, even if it is Hebrew and Talmud, etc., will not make an impression upon them unless we first touch their souls. That's why stories and song are so important. Shlomo Carlbach was one who taught us about this. Actually, the Lubavitch Rebbe started all his Chabad Houses, his outreach programs, based on the house of love and prayer and Shlomo Carlbach operated in the 1960's in San Francisco. To change people, to make people want to come close to Judaism, you have to touch their souls. Once you touch their souls, then the laws of Shabbat and civil legislation and honoring one's parents fall into place. We know that it is important to have a material base. Manna is important. We know that the Jewish laws are important. We know that we must have freedom, but the most important thing is to touch the souls.

That's why the rabbis say the study of Agadata is so important because Agadata draws out the souls of every human being. Once we open the souls of our

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children, we will be able to teach them and draw them. You can know everything about Judaism and be an excellent scholar, but not be spiritual or religious at all, but if you are spiritual and religious, you will want to learn. We also know that once your soul has been touched, no matter what the vicissitudes, in spite of everything, you will continue to believe and act. Not even the wars of Amalek will dissuade you. The truth of the matter is that all the Chassidim in Brooklyn and in Israel are almost without exception survivors of Auschwitz. It is like the fellow who was thrown out of Spain. He and his family went on a ship in 1492 and the ship was attacked by pirates. He was taken and sold as a slave in Morocco. He escaped into the desert. He was bereft of his family and fortune. He looked up to heaven and said, "G-d, no matter what You do, You cannot make me stop believing in You." Once one's soul is opened, his faith will endure. The most important thing we must do is to touch the souls of our children. This is what the rituals of Judaism accomplish.

I am reminded of the story they tell about Sherlock Holmes and his friend Watson. Sherlock Holmes insulted Watson and Watson said, "What type of an

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education do you think I have?" Sherlock Holmes replied, "Elementary."

Once, though, Sherlock Holmes and Watson went out camping. In the middle of the night there was a loud clap of thunder and they both woke up. Sherlock turned to Watson and said, "Watson, what do those stars mean to you?"

Watson said, "They represent hope in the dark. They show that G-d is interested in us." Watson then turned to Sherlock and said, "What do they mean to you?" Sherlock replied, "Someone has stolen our tent." When it comes to imparting Judaism, it is important to have intellectual conceptions, but it is more important that we touch our souls. If we touch our souls, then Judaism will last forever. Let us all hope and pray that we will always touch the souls of our children so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.

Stones, Straw, Lead, Treasures, Joseph's Bones to Jewish Survival

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One of the basic tactics of our enemies is to always try to pit one Jew against another, to always try to convince us that one type of Jew is kosher and another type is treif, while, at the same time, preparing to harm or kill us all. Our enemies also are constantly trying to demonstrate to us that our own interests are parochial and unimportant and should be discarded, and they also are constantly trying to convince us that our Jewish dreams are false and unworthy of us.

In the Torah portion, Beshalach, we learn how, when all the people were asking for gold and silver from their Egyptian neighbors, Moshe looked for and found the bones of Joseph and took them with him. The Torah uses the word Atzmos. It could have just said Moshe took the body or the coffin of Joseph with him. Why does it say Atzmos? Atzmos can also mean strength. Moshe took the strength of Joseph.

Also, we learn in the Shira, the song that the Jewish people sang at the sea, that the Egyptians sank to the depths like a stone. It also says that G-d consumed them like straw, and it also says that they sank like lead in the

waters. Which was it? Did they sink like stones or like lead or like straw?

Why do we have these three expressions?

Finally, we know that Boker is mentioned three times in the Torah in connection with the Jewish people. The first time it is mentioned in the Torah is in this Torah portion when it says, "It was in the Boker, morning watch that G-d looked to the camp of the Egyptians. It also mentions Boker later on in this Torah portion when it talks about the manna, "And in the Boker, morning, you will see the glory of G-d." It also mentions morning when we received the Ten Commandments, "And it was on the third day when it was Boker, morning, there was thunder and lightning and a heavy cloud on the mountain." Why do we mention morning three times? The common interpretation of this is that we need three things to ensure Jewish survival: physical safety, a way of making a living, and Jewish values. But why use the word Boker?

The rabbis tell us in the Medrash that Joseph left three treasures. These were his strengths. The first treasure Korach took, and he misused it. The second the Emperor Antonius took, and he later gave it to Rabbi Yehuda HaNosi, and the third is stored up for the time of the Mashiach. Joseph left for us the treasure of Jewish unity. He forgave his brothers for the sin they did against

him because they truly had done teshuva. He knew that it is only with Jewish unity that we Jews could overcome the problems especially of the Galut.

Without Jewish unity, we are in trouble. Korach took this great treasure and misused it. He said all the Jewish people are holy, and he tried to unify the Jewish people without recognizing any differences.

Unfortunately, in our own day, we have Jewish people and groups who try to demonize other Jews or other groups who do not agree with them. When the Jewish people crossed the Red Sea, the rabbis say they did it by tribes.

Jewish voices should not be stifled. We have to learn to have unity within diversity. Joseph did not try to make his brothers into his image. He allowed them to be themselves. We, too, must allow all Jewish groups to express their opinion, even if we disagree with them. The great gift of Joseph is unity within diversity.

Joseph's second gift was that we have to take care of our own interests as well as other people's interests. We learn how, when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he told them that he was an Av to Pharaoh, a father to Pharaoh. He told them, "And G-d has placed me as a father to Egypt and a master to all his house and a ruler in all the land of Egypt." However, when

the brothers told Jacob that Joseph still lived, all they said was that he was a ruler in all the land of Egypt. Jacob's heart rejected this statement. He did not believe them. It was only when they spoke to him all the words that Joseph had spoken to them, that he was also a father to Egypt, that Jacob believed them.

What is the difference between a father and a ruler? A ruler does not take into account the needs of the individual. He looks at the whole state, and if certain people are hurt, too bad. He does what is good for the whole state, or he does what is good for his own interests and not necessarily the interests of his subjects. A father, on the other hand, always looks out for the best interests of his children. It might not be good for him, but if it is good for his son or daughter, he will tell them to go ahead and do it. A father may tell his son to take a job in a distant place, even though it is not good for the father because he will not see him very often.

When the brothers told Jacob that Joseph was the ruler over all Egypt, his heart fainted because he could not believe that his son, Joseph, would not take into account the interests of those close to him. Joseph did take into account the interests of Pharaoh, but he also lowered the taxes of all the

people to just 20%. He was a father also to the people, but because he moved the people around, when the Jewish people later were enslaved the people did not take up for the Jewish people because they had lost their original land and had been transferred to other places in Egypt.

Joseph did take care of the interests of his brothers, too. He put them in Goshen. He protected them. He just did not look out for Pharaoh's interests alone. He looked out for Jewish interests as well as Egypt's interests. That's what we must always do. We Jews have constantly made the mistake of looking out for other people's interests and not for our own. We had it good in Poland for 500 years until the Greek Orthodox Cossacks rebelled against the Catholic Poles in 1648. The Cossacks took their wrath out on us because we were the Poles' middle class, their tax collectors, etc. One-third of the Jews of Poland were killed, some in very cruel ways. Even today in Israel, there are many Jews who are interested only in the rights of the Arabs and not also in the rights of our people. The second gift of Joseph was that we have to look out for our own interests as well as our neighbors' interests.

Antonious was a very good friend of Rabbi Yehuda HaNosi, but after he died things got bad for our people in Israel. As the Pirkei Ovos says, be careful of the ruling authorities. They will use you when they need you, but when they

no longer need you, they will spit you out. We must make sure to protect our own interests as well as our neighbors' interests.

The final treasure of Joseph was Jewish dreams. In spite of the fact that he was the ruler in all of Egypt, he never gave up on his Jewish dreams.

Unfortunately, today there are many Jews who have given up on Jewish dreams. They just want universal dreams, but nobody has universal dreams except for us Jews. Everybody else goes through their family, their community, their nation, their heritage before getting to universal dreams. In Israel today, there was a textbook that was issued about the World War Two period, which mentioned Hitler, Stalin, etc., but not Ben Gurion and had hardly any mention of the Holocaust. The Knesset had to force the department of education to withdraw this textbook.

Why is it that in the Shira it says that the Egyptians sank like straw, lead, or stones? It is because the Shira is referring to three classes of Egyptians. The Egyptians who sank like straw, which means that they had a hard death, were those Egyptians who refused to allow the Jewish people to gather together, to be united. When Pharaoh issued his order, "You shall not continue to give them straw," the word Toseefun, to continue, has an extra Aleph so that the

word can also mean to gather. The rabbis interpret this word to mean that not only were the Jewish people denied straw, but they were also denied the right to gather together, to worship, to talk, to have social occasions. Jewish unity was banned. This was a terrible thing, and those who enforced this ban died like straw.

Those Egyptians who prevented the Jewish people from pursuing their own interests and only allowed them to pursue Egyptian interests died like stones. The word that is used for stones in Hebrew is Even. This word also means millstone. Millstones are used to mill grain. They would not allow the Jewish people to even mill their own grain. These Egyptians died like stones.

Those who tried to prevent Jews from having Jewish dreams, they sunk like lead, the easiest death, the reason for this being that nobody can prevent Jews from having Jewish dreams except we Jews ourselves. Their prattling had no practical effect except to confirm what some Jews wanted anyway. It is important that we maintain our Jewish dreams. There are those today who do not want us to keep our Jewish dreams. They want us to share Jerusalem. Why should we share Jerusalem? Are the Moslems going to share Medina and Mecca with us? Of course they can have their mosques on the Temple

Mount, but Jewish sovereignty should be retained. Moshe took the strengths of Joseph, his three treasures: one, Jewish unity, two, the fact that Jews have to look out for their own interests as well as universal interests, and, three, that we should never neglect Jewish dreams.

The first Boker talks about Jewish unity within diversity. The tribes crossed the Red Sea individually. The second Boker talks about the manna, which the Jewish people had to collect every morning. Jews have to look out for their interests as well as the world's, and finally, the third Boker on Mount Sinai speaks about the Jewish dreams which we all must have. We must constantly work to implement the values of Sinai. Boker also means in Hebrew to scrutinize. We have to make sure that our enemies, through the use of clever words and actions, do not cause us to pit one Jew against another, or cause us to forget our own interests or cause us to lose our Jewish dreams.

I am reminded of the story they tell about the Minister of Religion in Communist Russia who was going to entertain the Chief Rabbi of Israel on a visit. As the minister was walking to work, he saw a little girl with some puppies. He asked, "What kind of puppies are these?" She replied, "These are Communist puppies." He was very pleased with this. When the Chief

Rabbi came, he took him outside to see the little girl. The minister asked, "What kind of puppies are these?" The little girl answered, "These are Jewish puppies." The minister replied, "But I thought this morning you told me they were Communist puppies." The little girl said, "Yes, but that was before they opened their eyes."

Let us all hope that all Jews will open their eyes, and they will realize that Jewish unity, pursuing Jewish interests as well as universal interests, and having Jewish dreams are necessary for the survival of all Jews. May we all pursue these three treasures so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day.
Amen.

Beshalach - Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

This past week, world Jewry suffered a terrible loss. Rabbi Steven Dworken passed away. He was a very good man. He was there for everyone. He totally believed in the principles of modern orthodoxy as defined by Rabbi Soloveitchik. He believed in secular education. He worked closely with all Jews and Jewish groups. He stood foreshore behind Israel, and he made sure that Jewish women got the benefits of an excellent Jewish education, which included Talmudic studies. He also made sure that the ranks of the RCA would open only to those who subscribed to these principles. He was a warm, kind individual who went out of his way to help people.

In this week's Torah portion Beshalach, we learn how the Jewish people were commanded not to take the direct route to Israel, but to take a roundabout route so they should not see war. Why should this be so? After all, at the end of this Torah portion, they did fight Amalek. They did not avoid war. What was the difference between the beginning of this Torah portion and the end of this Torah portion?

The difference was that in the interval between the beginning of this Torah

portion and the end of this Torah portion, the Jewish people sang a song at the Red Sea after the Egyptian army was destroyed by the returning waters of the Red Sea. They also came to a spot called Marah where the water was bitter. G-d showed Moshe a tree to throw into the water to make it sweet, and there the Jewish people were given laws and instructions. The root word for the word show is the same as the word Torah. We know that the Torah is compared to Shira, to a song, and also to water. The Jewish people, after the Red Sea, became united. They had a common goal. They sang a common song. When they crossed the Red Sea, each tribe crossed in its own path with water separating each tribe. They were not united. Now, they were united, but the Torah is also compared to water, and water can be not only positive but also destructive. After all, the Egyptians were destroyed by water, and the Jewish people afterwards came to a place named Marah, which means bitter. The Baal Shem Tov explains that it was not the water that was bitter; it was the people who were bitter. The people did not know how to change their song into a positive force. Therefore, G-d sweetened their water, their Shira, by giving them decrees and ordinances. The rabbis say that this was civil law, Shabbat, respect for their parents, or the laws of the red heifer, which taught them how to avoid spiritual contamination.

By the end of this sedra, the Jewish people had learned how to make the Torah not only a song, but also how to make it a positive force, not a negative force. That's why they could now fight Amalek.

Unfortunately, there are people today who still would make the Torah a negative force and not a positive force. We all know that we suffered a Holocaust in Europe and lost six million Jews physically, and in this country we know of the great assimilation which has overcome our people. I have read articles in which the authors say, "Let them go. We don't need them. We shouldn't try to reach out to them and bring them back."

This is not the RCA's way, and this was not Rabbi Steven Dworken's way. The rabbis teach us that Moshe Rabbeinu was chosen to lead the Jewish people because he ran after every stray sheep and brought it back to the fold. G-d said this is the kind of leader I want, one who will run after every stray Jew and try to bring him back. Why did we have to fight against Amalek anyway? How could Amalek attack the Jewish people? They were surrounded by the clouds of glory. However, the tribe of Dan and others were still worshipping idols, and were outside the clouds of glory. Moshe, though, did not hesitate. He sent the army and Yehoshua to protect them,

even though these were heretical Jews. Moshe not only wanted the Jewish people to associate with them, but also to fight for them.

This is the RCA's way. We are interested in helping all Jews, saving all Jews, standing firm with our brethren in Israel, making sure that all Jews have the necessary tools, both secular and religious, to combat our enemies, and to relate to our people. Rabbi Steven Dworken was totally dedicated to these principles, and elevated the name of Torah throughout the community. He followed in the footsteps of the great rabbis of yore from Moshe Rabbeinu, and was interested in every Jew. We all suffered a great loss. He fulfilled his duties in a humble manner, but he was a great man. May his memory always be a blessing.