

## **FOLLOW ME!**

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This week's Torah portion discusses the transition of power from Moses to Joshua. When Moses is asking G-d to appoint a new leader, he asks that it should be someone "...who shall go out before them... and who shall go in before them, who shall lead them out and who shall bring them in

They need a leader 'who shall go out before them'. As Rashi explains, unlike the leaders of other nations who would sit in their homes and send their armies off to war, Moshe himself was involved, in the thick of things, he was with them 'all the way'.

It used to be said about the Israeli Army that whereas in most armies the commanding officer says 'Forward, soldiers!' in the Israeli Army the commander says 'After me'. This parallels the idea from this week's Parsha - leading from the front!

## **FACES OF DOGS**

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What about the phrase 'who shall lead them out...'? The Talmud tells us that in the days before the coming of Moshiach, "The face (i.e., the leadership) of the generation will have the face of a dog." Rabbi Yisroel Salanter explained what this means. When a person and their dog walk, the dog runs ahead. It appears at first glance that the dog is the leader. However, as soon as the dog comes to a choice of direction, it turns around to see where its owner wants to go, and changes direction accordingly.

Each of us has leadership potential on some level. We ourselves, as individuals, have to ensure we do not become like dogs, looking over our shoulders at everyone else to see where they want to go, but know the right direction to take and stick to it.

Each and every one of us is responsible for our part of the world, our environment, our 'space'. At the very beginning, the Code of Jewish Law, the Shulchan Aruch, instructs us 'not to be affected by the scoffers'. Each of us has our job to do, our part of the world to transform and to affect. We cannot look over our shoulders, waiting for everyone else to decide and we certainly cannot rely on anyone else to do it for us.

We have to do all we can to transform this world into a better place, ultimately, a dwelling place for the Divine.

Shabbat Shalom

Mordechai

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DEDICATED TO ALL THOSE INJURED IN THE ATROCITIES IN THE HOLY LAND.  
MAY EACH AND EVERY ONE BE GRANTED A SPEEDY RECOVERY.  
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#### WEEKLY THOUGHTS PAMPHLET

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#### SAND AND PRECIOUS STONES

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This week's Parsha begins the fourth book of the Chumash, Bamidbar - literally 'in the desert'. This book deals with our ancestors' travels through the Sinai Desert. Since we are approaching the festival of Shavuot, this also ties in with the Giving of the Torah which took place in the Desert.

The Midrash explains a number of reasons why the Torah was given in a desert. Had the Torah been given in a settled area, the implication would have been that it was linked somehow to that neighborhood, that it belonged exclusively to the people of that place. By giving the Torah in the ownerless desert, it would be clear that Torah does not belong to anybody in particular, rather whosoever chooses can acquire Torah and make it their own.

In addition, a desert conjures up an image of a coarse, uncultivated wasteland. This is symbolic of our physical world. Through the Torah, by using the world around us for the service of G-d and the betterment of humanity, we elevate and refine this 'desert', making it into a rich, fertile land - a dwelling-place for the Divine.

#### RECKONING

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One of the other names the Talmud gives for this book is 'Chumash HaPekudim' - literally 'Numbers'. It is named after the census of the Jewish nation which takes place in this week's Parsha. By choosing this name for the entire book, the Talmud is telling us that this census forms one of the key points of the entire Chumash Bamidbar. What is so important about the census?

By counting something, this demonstrates its importance. A wealthy individual may count his money repeatedly, just to feel its importance and pride of place. By counting the Jewish people, this brought out our importance as a nation.

Counting accomplishes more, however. By counting - each person is counted as one' no matter what their qualities (in other words we focus on quantity rather than quality) - we are bringing out the essential common denominator within each of us. Each one of us is created in the image of G-d and every one of us is as important and essential as the next person. At the core, we are all the same. When we see apparent differences between individuals, this is true only on a superficial level, in the emotional characteristics or the externalities. Essentially, deep down, we are all the same. This is seen from the idea of a census - a 'head count' - where each individual is accorded equal importance.

#### EVERYONE'S HERITAGE

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A diamond which needs polishing retains its value - there is nothing intrinsically missing, it just needs cleaning up and the surface, external layer, needs improvement. The same idea applies to each and every one of us. There is nothing lacking, G-d forbid, at our very core, our very essence. If there may appear to be surface problems or differences, they are just that - on the surface only. Underneath lies the same precious stone, waiting to shine. When we look at others in this manner, we come to realize that since we are all essentially identical, no individual may claim any superior right over the Torah. It is the heritage of every Jew equally, man, woman and child, be they an accomplished scholar or not. It is a fallacy to think that the Torah 'belongs' to the 'religious people' - whether this attitude comes from the 'religious' community or the 'secular' community. The Torah is our common heritage - we are all children of One Father, One G-d - and it belongs to all of us.

#### YOM YERUSHALAYIM - JERUSALEM DAY

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This Friday is Yom Yerushalayim, when the Western Wall and the Old City of Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) were regained. Who could forget the moving pictures of soldiers of all religious stripes arriving at the Western Wall for the first time, kissing it and praying fervently? Alas we hear of more and more tragedies occurring daily in the Holy Land. It adds an additional dimension to our thrice-daily prayers for the rebuilding and peace of Yerushalayim. Ancient maps marked Jerusalem as the center of the world. The Jewish people, all over the world, face Yerushalayim in prayer. It reminds us of the eternal bond between the Jewish people and the Holy City, never to be forgotten. In these troubled times, our thoughts and prayers are with our brethren all over the world, wherever they face danger and especially in the Holy Land. May we witness true peace and security for the Jewish people in all four corners of the World, as well as in Israel.

Shabbat Shalom

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\*\*\*\*\*VIRUS WARNING!!!! PLEASE SEE BOTTOM OF E-MAIL\*\*\*\*\*

**JOURNEYING THROUGH LIFE**

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This week's Parsha speaks in great detail about the journeys of the Children of Israel through their years in the wilderness. The Torah specifies each and every one of the 42 journeys which they undertook.

The Torah does not just tell us things for no reason. There is always a lesson which we can take away for our everyday lives.

All of us have embarked upon many journeys throughout our lives, both physically and spiritually. We make many stops along the way. These stops are important, they are rungs on the ladder, stages on the way to our destination. It is all too easy, once we get there, to forget about the stages we passed along the way. Sometimes we forget about the people who helped us along the way. This week's Parsha reminds us that even though we may have reached our destination, we should always be cognizant of the path which brought us there and not to take for granted those who have encouraged and guided us throughout our "journeys". Those previous stages may seem like mere 'stepping stones' now that we have reached our goal, but they are nonetheless important. At the time, they represented a journey, progress, a step closer to our destination. They are still important now as without them we would not be where we are today.

A young boy was traveling from Jerusalem to the Galilee. He arrived at a four-way crossroads and discovered, to his horror, that the sign had fallen down.

Now he had no way to know which road to take to reach his destination.  
What was he to do?

The answer was simple. He knew where he was coming from - Jerusalem.  
By arranging the sign so that Jerusalem pointed to the path he had  
just come from, he was able to figure out which way to go.

When we know where we have come from, we can know where we are going  
to. This week's Parshas remind us of this. May we all strive, and  
ultimately reach our destination.

Shabbat Shalom

Mordechai

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Dedicated to Menachem Avraham Kapuler, may he grow  
to be a source of nachas and joy to his parents and  
grandparents and all Klal Yisroel

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\*\*\*\*\*VIRUS WARNING\*\*\*\*\*

I receive about a dozen e-mail viruses A DAY from people on this list!  
May I recommend to anyone who has not already to get a good antivirus  
program (try Norton at [www.symantec.com](http://www.symantec.com) or [www.mcafee.com](http://www.mcafee.com)). In  
general, be very careful about e-mails with attachments. Viruses will  
appear as attachments which will try to open when you read the e-mail,  
often as .exe, .bat or .scr files. Never agree to open the file and  
always delete e-mails with such attachments. If you get e-mails with

unexpected attachments, or very large e-mails which appear to be simple text (a simple message should not be 150k) this is often indicative of a virus. Until you open the attachment, no virus is run. Once you do, however, you risk infecting your system and losing data. Hope this helps a little bit!