

Living with the Times by Rabbi Shalom White

Tishrei - The father, the boss and the spouse

The father, the boss and the spouse all have one thing in common; they all want something from you. They all will tell you what to do, and if you don't you will for sure hear about it!!!

Yet you will hear something different from everyone: The father will say, "why didn't you take out the rubbish, you didn't hear what I said to you, you completely ignore me".

The boss will say, "so maybe you have a good excuse why this wasn't on time, anyway don't leave today without finishing your work".

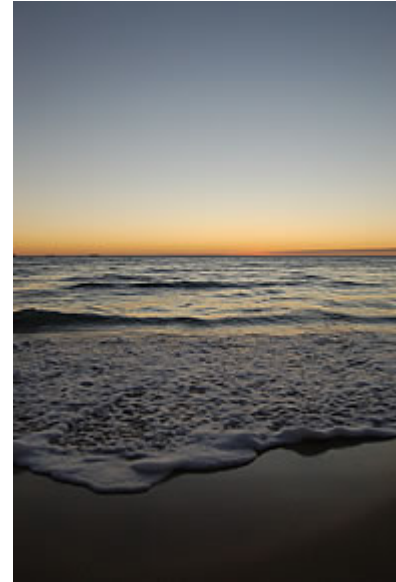
The spouse will say "oh why didn't you, you know that it was important to me, you know, you just don't understand me, ever".

The father doesn't mind whether the rubbish was taken out or not, he just wants his child to acknowledge his existence, to listen to him.

The boss needs the work to be fulfilled, that daily deeds completed in order that the company should work properly.

The spouse needs to be understood, to feel that they are loved and cherished in the relationship, to know that there is an internal feeling towards each other.

On Yom Kippur we stand in front of our father, boss and spouse, and we ask from Hashem to pardon us for not acknowledging His existence, to forgive us for any debts we have left during the year, and to atone us for not understanding Him properly.

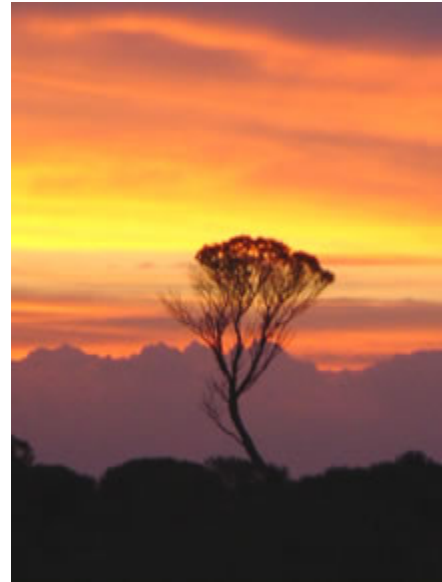


Cheshvan I - It only takes one

In high school we all learnt about great people in history, leaders etc that made a change in the world. People who had an idealistic outlook at life caused the establishment of the state of Israel.

Just look into history and you will find quite a few people that had agendas outside of their own corner. Where did all these people go? What happened to society?

The Torah tells us that one such person was Abraham. He didn't look to see what everyone else was up to and then decide whether the way he acts suits his neighbours but rather he was one. He asked himself is this a suitable way to act or think.



Abraham decided for himself what would be his lifestyle as his agenda was not dependant on others. Are we truly independent or are we clones of what other people think?

Abraham was brought up by idol worshipers but had a mind of his own. He took time to think, is this really true? Is this moral? Just because everyone does it does not give it permission and legitimacy. Abraham came to his own conclusion even though he was ridiculed and made fun of. He didn't shift his ideas, as he knew what was right even though he was "one".

Cheshvan II - Mission impossible!

Our mission in life sometimes feels like mission impossible. The only difference is that when the bad guy comes to get you, the fancy weapons that they have on the movie aren't in your backpack. Many times when our boss is angry at us we would like to pull out the gas from our pocket and knock him or her out.



Or the kids are getting on our nerves and you want to spray freezing gas on them. Our mission is a little bit harder than mission impossible!

Abraham sent Eliezer his servant on mission impossible to find a shiduch for his son Isaac. Abraham wanted the best for his son, but he knew this wasn't an easy task. Abraham knowing this gave to Eliezer everything he had. All the money and treasures that Abraham owned he gave to Eliezer to help him succeed in his difficult mission. Nothing could stop Eliezer in accomplishing his mission as he had all he needed. At the end Eliezer was successful in finding a lovely girl for Isaac.

When Hashem sent us into the world on our own private mission impossible, He sent us with everything which we need to overcome any of the bad guys along the way. He intrusted us with the greatest divine treasures to overcome all obstacles. We just need to discover them in our own selves. Just like Eliezer succeeded in his challenging mission so to we are promised that we can also succeed and strive through our mission impossible.

Kislev I - Isaac's Lesson – Confronting the Evil that is Esau



Certainly in the last century we have been exposed to some of the most fierce and extreme capabilities of the Human Being. As the world's network develops exponentially and news-worthy material is channelled around the globe to every home, we are inundated with news from places we would otherwise doubt even existed. Further, because the most profitable news is usually negative, it is hard to live through a day without hearing of some catastrophe happening in some other part of the world.

It appears that the proponents of these violent and terror-inciting episodes are people whose answers to life's frustrations are unendingly cruel and aggressive. Their whole life system is fuelled with desires to win via fury.

For many of us, putting aside the information we receive about such extreme violence, we sit back, enjoy the pace of business and spend our Shabbos and

Sundays with our loving families. Deep in the back of our minds is a small unsettled feeling of how exactly to deal with the world's dysfunction.

A really long-standing solution is found in this week's parashah, Toldot. This week, we are introduced to the characters of Jacob and Esau. Not only are these 2 brothers individual personalities, but as with all biblical figures, they are representative of universal forces.

The Chassidic Masters explain that Esau was a “man of the field.” He was raw, unforgiving, rebellious and chaotic. He understood violence and invoked its very essence when he sought to resolve life's challenges.

Jacob on the other hand represents the force of orderliness, peace, calmness and rationalism. His entire approach was one of expertly blending the energies of the world to gracefully get his way and achieve his goals.

Even though it is explained that Esau had a fire burning within him that was more powerful than Jacob, we still find that Jacob prevails in all the altercations between the two brothers. He wins the birthright, the blessing from Isaac, the women, his mother's love and the battle during his dream.

The forces of disruption that we confront today are the continuation of the unchannelled fire that was Esau. The personalities who encourage the violence, hatred and destruction, propel the legacy of Esau. But, if we are to truly learn from the Torah, then we are to recognize the antidote to the dysfunction of the world. Jacob is the medicine. And being the progeny of this patriarch, we carry the remedy. The key is to learn how to reveal and administer it to the world. The way to do so is to approach life with the same calmness, clarity, peaceful-seeking perspective that Jacob did. In this case, if we fight fire with fire, we will be consumed. Rather, we must act rationally and stick to what we know. That is, cherish order and justice, tolerance and beauty.

Kislev II -Be a Mensch, Become a Leader

The natural reaction for Yosef, after being wrongly imprisoned, would be utter contempt for Egypt and its government.

Thus, when Yosef was joined by the chief butler and chief baker, two of Pharaoh's high ranking ministers, it would have been only natural for Yosef to shun them and hate them.



Yosef, however, did the very opposite. Not only did he bear no grudge against them, but he took an interest in their own well being. Yosef was sensitive enough to notice that something was troubling them. Yosef saw them depressed and asked them "why do your faces look so down today?"

This act of kindness brought about the release of Yosef from prison and later on to becoming the prime minister of Egypt . As is later told, they both had bad dreams to which Yosef revealed a true knowledge in understanding their dreams.

Just by saying good morning and asking how are you, truly showing an interest in another person's wellbeing can have such a great effect and can bring out so much good in the world.

So Nu!!!

Kislev III - They Fought For It, Lets Use It!

Throughout all times and places freedom of religion was always an issue. The Romans, crusaders, communists and Muslims have always oppressed and been against religions which differ from their own.

With the mercy of Hashem we live in a country which allows freedom of religion by law. The only real oppressor of religion in our society is our society and peers.

In school how many times did you ever want to help someone that is being picked on or bullied and yet you stood back and let it happen just because you wanted to be cool. In our daily lives this occurs a lot, what will my neighbour say, what will my boss think and so on.



Shevat - What's Your Shtikch?

The Talmud relates a story of a Talmudic sage who would dance at weddings holding Hadas branches. The other sages would call this Shtut dsaba (the folly/nonsense) of the old man.

This went on until he passed away and a heavenly fire separated his death bed from the others.



Those same sages that would mock went back on their words and said “look at the power brought about by the Shtut of the old man”.

The Tabernacle was built with wood from a tree called Shittim (same root as shtut). Hashem made each and every one of us special; we all have something which no one else has. Our duty is to reveal that speciality and use it for holy purposes. Hashem doesn't want clones to serve Him rather humans with personality. For this reason he gave each of us our own personality.

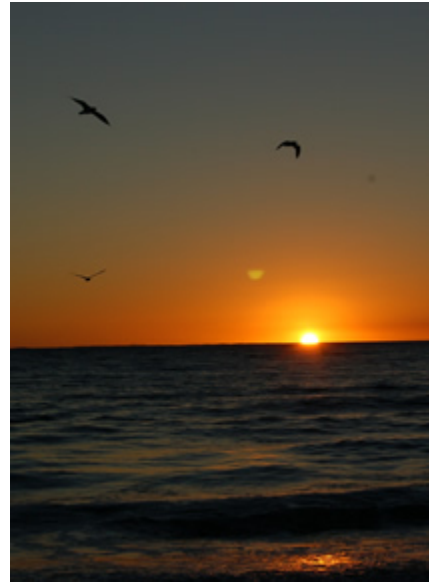
The Torah says "make for me a Mikdash, and I will dwell within them", 'in it' is not written rather 'in them', in each and every one of us Hashem dwells. Through being the best we are at who we are, we give Hashem a dwelling place inside us, in a place that is unique to you! Gut Shabbos

Adar - Hashem Has Faith in You

Parents have the ability to give their children a high self esteem or to completely ruin it. The parent never means to do this but they do it out of love. I know someone that until the age of fourteen never crossed the road because his parents were worried that he wasn't capable. After he got his licence they bought him a Volvo "tank", again they were scared he wouldn't drive well.

All of this was done out of the highest love. Yet what will happen when this child will be on his own and his parents won't be there?

Will he make the right decisions, he won't know how as he never was in these situations alone.



The torah tells us that Hashem spoke to Moses in the Ohel Moed, Rashi tells us that there was a miracle and Hashem's voice could only be heard in the Ohel Moed, Rashi says that this wasn't because Hashem spoke softly rather there was a miracle that His voice could not be heard outside.

What is the reason for such a miracle?

Hashem was telling Moshe I will tell you what to do and how to do it, My advice. But you when you go out of this holy place there you cannot hear Me telling you what and how to do things it's your choice you can do what I tell you or not do it. I however trust and believe that you will follow my instructions and take my advice.

We read and know what Hashem wants from us, but we make the choice. The lesson we need to know is that Hashem has full faith in us that we will make the right decision.

Have a wonderful week.

Sivan I - Why All The Fireworks?

When we think about receiving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai we can't help but ask what is so special about the Ten Commandments? Don't steal! Don't murder! Don't lie! Hashem went to all the trouble of performing many miracles, gathering together all the Jewish souls to give them simple morals which they knew anyway.

These morals are the basis of all societies in the world.

It is true that before Hashem gave us the Ten Commandments the Jewish people kept them, but they kept them because they thought that these laws are moral.

Once Hashem gave us these laws at Sinai, they were no longer kept because of a feeling of morality; rather because Hashem says to do so.

What is the difference?

Germany was amongst the founders of human rights and was the first country to set laws with concern to cruelty to animals. Yet the same country committed the most abhorrent and inhumane acts carried out by any modern nation.

When morals are based on human judgment, the yardstick of morality can waver, as it did in Germany. So too the human can feel selective on when morality does and does not apply. On the other hand, when Hashem tells us what is moral then the commandment is kept whether it suits you or not. No matter what, one can not steal! No matter what, one cannot murder!

This is a good enough reason to make a big deal out of the Ten Commandments as only through this understanding are morals kept eternally.

Have a wonderful week.



Sivan II - Its Never Too Late

This weeks parsha tells us about the Second Pesach.

What is a Second Pesach?

Yes those that couldn't keep the first Pesach as they were busy with taking care of dead bodies (they were the Chevra Kadisha) complained to Moshe Rabenu, why should we miss out just because we were ritually impure.



"We also want to make the Pesach" so Hashem gave them and the generations that followed a second chance. This will be explained by the following story:

A shepherd was tending flock in the hills of Judah. He became thirsty and went to his favorite brook in the hills to take a drink. As he was drawing the crystal clear water in his palm and putting it to his mouth, something caught his eye. He saw drops of water falling on a huge stone – drip, drop – and directly where the drops were falling there was a deep hole in the stone. The shepherd was fascinated. He gazed at the drops and at the stone.

"What mighty power there is in a drop of water," thought the shepherd. "Could my stony heart ever be softened up that way?"

"Hello, Akiba! What are you gazing at?" It was Rachel, his master's daughter. She was wise and kind and fair.

"Look what the little drops of water did to the rock," Akiba exclaimed. "Do you think there is hope for me? Suppose I began to study the Torah, little by little, drop by drop. Do you think my stony heart would soften up?"

"Oh yes! Akiba. If you persevere, if you keep it up as these drops of water."

But I am forty years old! Is it not too late to start?"

"Oh no, Akiba. It is never too late. If you promise to learn our holy Torah, I know you will not be ignorant for long."

The shepherd gazed at the drops of water for a long time, and then his mind was made up.

And this is how Akiba the shepherd became the great Rabbi Akiba, the greatest and wisest scholar and teacher of his day, who had 24 thousand pupils!

He often told them that it was a drop of water that changed his life.

The Second Pesach teaches us this idea, even someone that is impure or too far from the temple still has a Second chance to make the Pesach, no matter who or where you are it is never too late Hashem will give you a Second chance.

Av I - Old nation or young nation?

An old man reminisces on the past, the successes and the downfalls. He celebrates the past and finds a comfortable haven. He relives the past again and again. He sees it all in the past.

A youth ponders over the future, his dreams and goals.



He celebrates his future and is full of passion and life. Nothing stands in front of him; no being can block him from living his future.

Where do the Jewish people fit into the equation? We are the oldest nation in existence, yet we live like a youth dreaming of his future.

How can we live in such a paradox, celebrating the past yet living like a young man with his whole life ahead of him?

A relative of mine related to me a very touching story, this story happened in South Africa. Doron was preparing for his Bar Mitzvah; this is the most important moment in the life of a young Jewish 13 year old. His family unfortunately weren't able to attend. Doron's father Lenny planned to make it a nice modest event. Even Doron's mother had passed away, so his father would be the only member of his family in attendance.

Lenny's father (also in South Africa), a week before the Bar Mitzvah, became very sick. Lenny was advised by his Rabbi that it is more important to be by his father in his last moments, even if it means missing his son's Bar Mitzvah. On the day of the Bar Mitzvah, Lenny was standing by his father at his bed. Suddenly his father asked him to bring a pair of Tefillin. Lenny and his brother were in shock.

They couldn't remember the last time he prayed. Putting the leather straps onto their sick father was not easy; every limb was like lifting a dead weight. With tears in his eyes he cried like a young child. He explained to his sons that today he sees the future in Doron, he sees everything that he suffered, everything that has happened, and all of this is being continued. He wanted to connect the past with the future, the old with the young. Today the past and the future meet. A short time after, Lenny's father passed away.

Our history is our future.

When we see acts of anti-Semitism happening in our day and age, this is only a sign that our future will be much better. All of the nations that tried to destroy us have been destroyed. The Jewish nation is like an egg: the more it is boiled the stronger it gets. We build on our history. In such times as the "three intermediate weeks", the time where we are in mourning over the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash and Jerusalem, we also live with the future in our minds and hearts, the future of the nation. The Talmud says that the Mashiach is born on the 9th of Av, the day of the destruction. This is the future of the Jewish people. Because we are so old our future is very bright.

Av II - There is none beside Him or me?

There was once a businessman called Yankel that would sell woodcuttings. He chose this work, as he would only have to work a few times a year and this would leave him free in order that he could learn and be with his family. He was a successful businessman and lived a nice life.



He once did a business deal with a fellow Jew. This was a big deal and the amounts were quite large. His fellow Jew was getting very excited and caught up with the whole deal - he was worried what would happen, if and when etc. When Yankel made the invoice, he set down the costs and expenses. Yankel, being a Chassidic Jew, decided to help his friend out. At the bottom of the invoice, where the sum total was, instead of writing the amount, he wrote "There is none beside Him!"

After hearing this story as a young boy, I was working for a Rabbi over the summer, when I had a holiday from yeshiva to make a few bucks. The Rabbi

trusted me very much, so he let me fill out my own hours and wage. It was this week's parashah where this particular verse was mentioned, so I decided to do the same with the Rabbi for a joke. I wrote down my hours, how much per hour, and the total equals: "There is none beside Him!"

I got a phone call that evening from the Rabbi, he sounded very emotional. He thanked me very much and explained that lately he had been caught up with so many things that he hadn't been able to put time into the things, which are really important, like his family and wife. My wages made him realise this.

Don't worry; he paid me all the money plus a nice tip that I won't forget!

Sometimes greed and personal gain can cause us to forget the important things that make us up. If we lose the important things we will lose ourselves. One needs to remember that all the money and all the power he can get is not our main priority.

Av III - The Wandering Jew

Us Jews are called the walkers, no don't get me wrong I haven't been drinking Johnnie Walker. We are called the walkers, the movers, the shakers and so on. The angels are called the standers, the stagnate.

Have you ever met a backpacker in Australia?



They are quite interesting people. Where are you going, what are you doing, they don't know. The one thing that they do know is that they are on the move. They can't be at one place too long, there is more to see, more to experience and one place they have not yet overcome. They are driven. They can just pick up their bag and head off to a place that they haven't been before. They don't worry about what will happen, they know one thing; they have to move.

There is something very important to be learnt from them. When was the last time you decided to make a change in your life? Everyone is scared to make changes, they are scared to leave their own safe haven. Yet sometimes we have to move, to change. Just like the young backpacker with his bag on his back

heading off into the horizon.

Every Jew is a wanderer, they can never be satisfied with where they are, there is always more to gain and experience. The angels on the other hand are perfect that's why they are called angels. They have nothing to gain and they also have nothing to lose. They are quite boring, doing the same thing everyday, no progression, no moving. This is one of the disadvantages of being perfect. The Jew was made imperfect for this reason.

When standing outside of a room where music is playing, how do you know that there is a person playing with all of his soul and not just a machine? The answer is quite simple, when a mistake is made, only a human can make a mistake. Yet we pay hundreds of dollars to hear this human playing with all his soul. Hashem created us imperfect and this is the reason why he treasures us so much.

Keep on moving

Av IV - David Melech Yisrael Chai V'kayam

There are three names in Hebrew which are given to a cemetery, Bet Hakvarot (the place of burial), Bet Olomim (place of eternity), and Bet Hachaim (place of life).

There are three parts of a person in this world, physical, emotional, and spiritual.



When a person passes away these parts get buried in separate places. The body, which is physical, is buried as it is finished. Once a man passes away anything physical of the man now becomes useless it needs no more than to be buried.

Then we get to the emotional part of the person. Emotions are things that cannot be forgotten; they can be felt at any time or place. Feelings can be felt many years after. An emotional person can't just be buried, the feelings and emotions don't just stop rather they are eternal. They are placed in place of eternity, as they are eternal.

Then we come to the soul, the soul is not only eternal rather it is still alive and

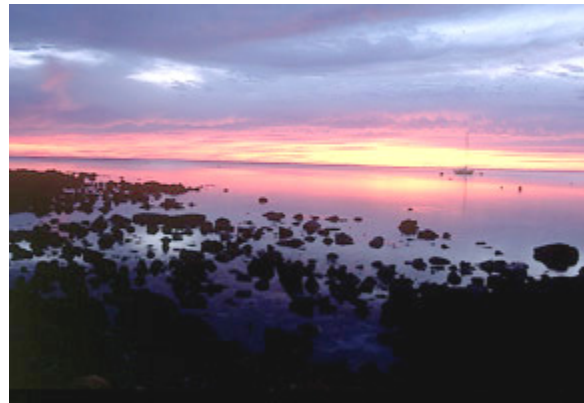
still gives life and sustenance to those connected to him. The soul causes multiplication and growth. It lives on and on, the soul can never die.

When sitting at the Blue Fringe concert and the band sang the song David Melech Yisrael Chai v'kayam (David the King of Israel is alive and well) the response in the theatre showed that David is still alive. The life that was at the concert wasn't just emotions rather it was life. Even though King David was buried many years ago that was only his body yet his soul has never left us, his soul gives us hope and life at all times.

I would like to thank **Bardine and Allan Saber** for bringing out the band and instilling life back into the Perth Jewish community.

Elul I - Month of Elul - Sincerity

David thought he was a good husband, he would never do anything wrong. Dina, his wife, was not at all happy with David, as he would never do what she asked him to do. This sounds quite ridiculous, how can David consider himself a good husband if Dina feels that he never does what she asks.



The answer is quite simple; whenever Dina would ask him to do a task, he would always find a justified reason why he didn't fulfil her request. David never did anything wrong, it was always justified, yet he also never did anything right. Dina never had her real needs met, she could only listen to all the excuses. If David really cared for his wife, then he would realise that there are things that are really important to her and try harder to do what she asks of him. It is easy to excuse ourselves from duties, yet a healthy relationship can't be built on excuses no matter how justified they are.

The relationship between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem is likened to that of a man and wife. The month of Elul is the time to look at our relationship between Hashem and us. We need to make an account of what has been happening in the past year: have we been nice to others, helped when needed, honest with others etc. Everything we do or don't do comes with a million reasons, explanations and excuses. The question that needs to be asked in Elul is, am I

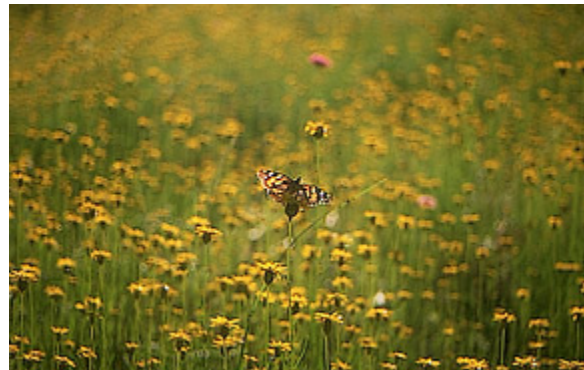
really a good husband? Are my wife's real needs being met?

When someone wants a good relationship, one needs to be sincere and true to him or herself. We must ask ourselves, are we truly trying to do what's right?

King David in Shir Ha'shirim (song of songs) writes, "I am for my Beloved and my Beloved is for me". King David is teaching us an important lesson in relationships. One needs to be for their beloved, 'sincerely', and then their beloved will be for them. The initials of this verse are Elul. The month of Elul is the time to recollect and see if we are truly for our beloved.

Elul II - Life of Olympics

The world is like a ball. The ball, or globe, is given to every Jew, as the Talmud tells us that each person should say, "the world was created for my sake." The purpose of life is to bring the globe into the goal of the king." However, it is not in Hashem's plan that bringing the globe into the "gate of the king" be accomplished without opposition.



On the contrary, there are those who surround us ready to destroy us. This implies the existence of an opposing team challenging the Jew at every opportunity. In the same way that the Jew wants to put the ball in the gate of the king, so too his adversary has his own plans to put it in the doorway of gehenom.

However it is specifically the threat posed by this opponent that charges the Jew with the motivation to win. Chassidic teachings explain that the desire for victory pushes us to reach much deeper within ourselves and discover our hidden potential. Just as a king in wartime empties his treasury in order to win, it is the battle with the adversary that spurs us all to find new abilities.

This type of conduct is evidenced in sports, specifically in soccer, where two teams oppose each other's efforts to score a goal. The money they receive does not primarily motivate the players. Rather it is their personal desire for victory that is the main motivator.

As in sport, in life one can't move sluggishly. We must keep moving with vitality, running and jumping to overcome the challenge. This type of service is carried

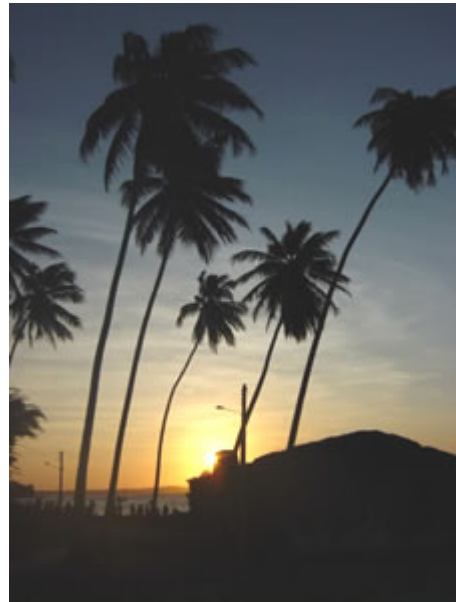
out not just with the brain or heart but also with action of the feet. Only by means of putting our Jewish learning into vigorous practice can we hope to emerge victorious in our quest to put the globe into the gate of the king.

(The Rebbe)

Elul III - Human perfection

"You are standing here today, all of you, before Hashem: your heads, your tribes, your elders, and your officers... the drawer of water Why is the passage, which begins "you are standing" from this week's parashah juxtaposed with the curses of last week's parashah?

The reason is because Israel had just heard 98 curses, so their faces turned pail as they said, "who can bear these?" Moses began to console them saying "you standing today"; although you have caused much anger to Hashem, He has not made total destruction of you and behold you exist before Him. Like this day that exists, and it becomes dark and light, so did He give you light, and so in the future He will give you light.



(Rashi)

A house can't be made out of half-baked bricks; a line can't be drawn with an unstraight ruler, yet a community is made up of people, humans. Where one can be the head and another can be a simple drawer of water, even though no one is perfect, this is a perfect community.

(Rebbe)

Elul IV - A lesson in leadership

Moses "The Leader" of the Jewish people faced many challenges leading the Jewish people. Yet Moses in this week's parshah is confronted with an

interesting challenge.

Korach and his followers also want to be given important roles, to be the High Priest, but there can only be 1 High Priest.

How would you deal with such a problem?

Greatness and respect are given to those that deserve them. A king is not merely someone that goes with a crown, rather he is a leader of a nation. A champion is not someone with a trophy on his wall rather he is a winner. A Rabbi is not a title rather an acquirement of knowledge.

We all envy the respect and honour great people receive, yet do we have the excellence to wear them.

Moses knew this and said to Korach, "lets see what have you got....!!!"
