**Parshas Bhaaloscha – בלתי אל המן עינינו**

**Freedom of Choice**

The average adult makes numerous choices every day. Rarely are any of those choices so consequential, so as to be life-altering. Sometimes, the choice is somewhat momentous, such as a pivotal career choice or buying a new home. Deciding what you will have for dinner tonight probably does not register much on the Richter scale of life’s choices. Why then, did Klall Yisroel’s move to enter Eretz Yisroel come to a dead halt for just that – “Not another dinner of מן again!”

Chazal teach us that the debacle of קברות התאוה and the מתאוננים was much more than Kvetching about the unappealing daily menu in the Midbar. Even if they were fed up (no pun intended) with the מן, why make a stand now, when they were days away from entering Eretz Yisroel? If all went as originally planned, the Yidden were about to assume self-sufficiency. The מן was a temporary provision that would have halted a year after it began. It was only after this string of disasters, ending with the tragedy of the Meraglim, that the Yidden continued to subsist on the מן for another thirty-eight years. The complaints and Kvetching actually emanated from a deeper and more substantial sentiment. Subsistence on the מן, involved a constant and uninterrupted dependence on the Ribono shel Olam. The אוכלי המן had no need for any self-reliance, ingenuity or talent to earn their daily bread. The only goal that had to be set, was strengthening the commitment to grow in Torah and Yiras Shomayim. The greater the desire for קרבת ה', the more delightful was the experience of מן. The more someone wanted to chart his own course and destiny, without having to rely on the Eibishter, the more frustrating it became to depend on Hashem for the most basic needs.

The year of living on מן, was a boot camp for the self-reliance that was to come, once they settled in Eretz Yisroel. The Yidden would plant, harvest, build and create – never forgetting אם ה' לא יבנה בית – if it isn’t Hashem who is building the house, שוא עמלו בוניו בו – then the builders labored for nothing. Whatever talent, craft or wisdom we possess, we cannot achieve success and accomplishment, without יד ה'. The מתאוננים were the people who wished to break free and forge their own destiny. To feel pride and satisfaction in what you can do, is one of the most powerful intellectual needs a person can have. Look at me. I can fly! Lurking behind that, sometimes, is an insidious Yetzer Hora for Hefkeirus and independence from obligation and אחריות.

Often, people seek the freedom of choice by striking out on their own, outside the framework of their community or Kehila, out of range of the Rabbonim, Rabbeim or other forms of commitment and responsibility. They don’t want to have to answer to someone else. They don’t wish to base the path they choose, on someone else’s approval or oversight. It may not really be a desire for free choice, more than a wish to take the Ribono shel Olam out of their life, Chas V’Sholom. It may be a wish not to be bound by yet another Siman in Shulchan Aruch. They want to keep the Eibishter in Shul and then walk out to follow their own interests, as they determine, והיא לא תצלח. Such an escapist attitude is doomed to failure, as happened in the Parsha. The sure-fire path to the Promised Land, is to live with the unshakable truth that Hashem, the כל יכול, has your route mapped out for you. The Ribono shel Olam imbued you with all those talents, abilities and כוחות הנפש. Go forward as the Yidden traveled – על פי ה' יחנו.

Back in the early 1900’s, the draw to the “Goldeneh Medina” of America, became a dream for thousands of Yidden yearning to be free of the crushing poverty, squalor and deprivation of Europe. So many, if not most, left the Eibishter in Europe too, רחמנא ליצלן. This is why many Rabbonim discouraged going to America to seek their fortune. One such a Yid got that gleam in his eye and he put together the funds to book passage on an ocean liner. All packed and ready to go, he relented to the advice of his friends to go in to the Heiligeh R’ Yisroel Chortkover zt”l. Not to ask the Rebbe’s advice, mind you. Frankly, he avoided asking in the first place, afraid that he would be advised not to go. He would go, however, just to get a Bracha for success and a safe voyage. Aha, said the Rebbe. So you are going to America. Let me give you a שליחות מצוה as a Segulah for protection. The fellow was very excited to do something for the Rebbe and score such a שמירה. What is it that the Rebbe wants me to do, he asked. Please be sure to give my regards to the G-d in America. Somewhat confused, he asked, isn’t He the same G-d that is right here? So true, responded the Rebbe. If so, why go to America to seek Hashem’s help. The Eibishter is here and he can give you Hatzlacha right here, without going to America. The Rebbe’s words sunk in and made their mark. So, he swallowed the wasted expense of the ticket and remained behind when the ship set sail. Good thing. He was booked for the fateful, maiden and only voyage of the Titanic.

בשם ה' נעשה ונצליח. Have a wonderful Shabbos, yk

**L’Ravcha D’Milsa Parshas Nasso**

**Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Bhaaloscha-15 Sivan**

**Yehuda, son of Yaakov Avinu** Birth, in 1565 BCE, and Yahrtzeit, in 1446 BCE (or 1436 BCE)

**Maran HaGaon Rav Yitzchak Dov Koppelman,** (1905-2011) one of the most outstanding Rabbonim of our generation, and one of the oldest Roshei Yeshivah, the Rosh Yeshivah of Lucerne, Switzerland passed away at the age of 106. Born in the Kharov, Ukraine in 1905, Rabbi Koppelman held the distinction of not only being the oldest living Rosh Yeshiva of our time, but also as being someone who was beloved and respected by all.  Not one to be involved in politics, R’ Koppelman was concerned only with disseminating the light of Torah everywhere he went.  People all over the world responded to this venerable tzaddik with love and warmth, rushing to hear the pearls of wisdom that were his divrei Torah and shmuzen.

R’ Koppelman opened his first yeshiva in Heida before World War II and was a talmid muvhak of R’ Shimon Shkop at the famed Yeshiva Shaar Hatorah in Grodno, where he learned for eighteen years. In addition to transcribing many of the Rosh Yeshiva’s shmuzen, R’ Kopelman saved many of R’ Shkop’s manuscripts from invading Nazi armies by hiding them in a concealed pocket in his coat until after the war.  These Talmudic writings were the basis of the volume Chiddushim of Rav Shimon Yehuda HaKohen, a sefer that is used in yeshivos to this day.

After enduring five years of hard labor in Siberia during World War II, R’ Koppelman set to work reigniting the flames of Torah and in 1946 he established Yeshiva Eitz Chaim in Kapellen, Belgium.  Together with R’ Chaim Yaakov Rottenberg, he traveled to Prague where he assembled a core group of approximately ten talmidim and brought them back to the yeshiva.  In time, many other refugees from all over Europe joined the ranks of those who were learning in Kapellen.  In later years the yeshiva moved and is presently located in Wilrijk, a suburb of Antwerp.

After spending more than ten years in Belgium, R’ Koppelman moved to New York where he founded Yeshiva Shaarei Yosher in Williamsburg, currently located in Borough Park.  The yeshiva is named after the well known sefer by the same name written by R’ Shimon Shkop.

In 1948, R’ Koppelman took over as Rosh Yeshiva for R’ Moshe Soleveichik at the yeshiva in Lucerne, Switzerland, which had been founded as a retreat from the outside world, enabling students would be able to focus solely on their learning.  Sixty three years later, third generation talmidim return to the same beis medrash in Lucerne that their grandfathers once attended, still hearing shiur from the same Rosh Yeshiva.  The yeshiva boasts talmidim of all types, from all over the world, including Europe, North America, Australia and Israel.

R’  Koppelman was close to the Satmar Rebbe, R’ Yoel Teitelbaum, zt’l and it is difficult to comprehend how a person who lived at a time when he had the zechus of being able to hear the Chofetz Chaim in person, was still vibrant enough to travel as recently as 2011, when R’ Koppelman paid a visit to New York.

**Sunday, Parshas Shelach -17 Sivan**

**Rav Aharon of Karlin**, the Beis Aharon (1802-1872). The son of Reb Asher of Stolin. He was named for his illustrious grandfather, Reb Aharon of Karlin, the first Karliner Rebbe, and thus he is also known as Reb Aharon the Second Perlov of Karlin. He was also known as the Mlynover Rebbe and the Freilicher Rebbe (the latter a term describing his disposition). Later in his life, he was forced to move to Stolin, several miles away from Karlin, and the dynasty has been known as Karlin-Stolin since then. His insights were anthologized in the sefer Beis Aharon.

**Moonday, Parshas Shelach -18 Sivan**

**Rav Yerucham Levovitz**, mashgiach Yeshivas Mir (1936). Jews first began to settle in the town of Mir early in the 17th century, but the town itself is mentioned in records for 1345. There were over 800 Jews in Mir by 1806. By the end of the 19th century, there were more than 3,000 Jews in Mir (62% of the town population). The Mir Yeshiva was founded in 1815. During WWI the Mir Yeshiva headed by Rav Eliezer Yehuda Finkel, moved to Poltava, in the Ukraine and did not return until 1921. Reb Yerucham was born around the year 1874 in Luban, Belarus. In his teens, he went to learn in Slabodka, becoming one of the top students of the Alter, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel. In his early 20s, he attended Kelm, under Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv. After Reb Yerucham's marriage, he learned in seclusion for eight years, covering the entire Shas. Then he became the mashgiach of the Chafetz Chaim' s yeshiva in Radin. He became mashgiach at Mir in 1910, a position he kept for 26 years. Among his talmidim were Rav Shimon Schwab and Rav Dovid Povarsky, who later became rosh yeshiva of Ponevezh. His shmuessen were published posthumously by his students, in Daas Chochma U'mussar, Daas Torah and other sefarim.

**Rav Aharon Cohen** (1905-1961). Born in a small village near Kovno, Lithuania, his father, Rav Avraham Mordechai HaCohen, was a rebbe of small children, and his grandfather, Rav Yosef HaCohen, was known as the Masmid of Eishishok. When Germany conquered Lithuania, his family moved to the Ukarine and Rav Aaron learned at Lomza. After the war, he returned to Kovna and learned at Slabodka. In 1925, he joined the first group of talmidim sent by the Alter of Slabodka to Chevron. The Rosh Yeshiva at Chevron, Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, took him as a son-in-law. He served as Rosh Mesivta for 30 years. His monumental work was called Beis Aaron.

**Tuesday, Parshas Shelach -19 Sivan**

**Don Yitzchak Abarbanel** (1505)

**Wednesday, Parshas Shelach-20 Sivan**

**100 Days to Rosh HaShanah**

The Mogen Avrohom declares this as a day of fasting and Selichos for the terrible Gezeiros of the Crusades and Cossacks of Ta”ch V’Taa”t (1648-1649). The Mesorah states that it was revealed to the Tzadikim that this calamity befell us because of the Chillul Hashem of talking in Shul. Some say because this date can’t fall out on Shabbos. It also corresponds to the day that the thirty day decree of Kivros Hata’avah (Parshas B’Haaloscha) came to an end. A number of communities still observe this Minhag.

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