

+++++

The Lower East
Parshat HaShavua sheet
A collection of Divrei Torah
from around the Internet

+++++

=====

Parshat Vayeishev

=====

Latest time for Kriyat Shema – 9:31

OH BABY!

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Baby. In the sixties it was a term of poetic affection meted to any living organism that a particular party was interested in. In the school yard, its chant — and a directive to stick its head in a sauce usually reserved for a roast — is a verbal taunt usually invoked by one of two immature sparring partners. But when the Torah refers to someone as a child or a na'ar it is taken very seriously. Often it raises a flag. It is reason to analyze and deduce. The word na'ar is often translated a child. It is hardly used for an infant and rarely for a mature adolescent. But when applied in those circumstances, the commentaries note its usage, and they comment.

In fact, when infant Moshe is found in a reed basket floating on the Nile, the Torah tells us that the daughter of Pharaoh heard a na'ar crying. ([Exodus 2:6](#)). Rashi comments on the apparent anomaly. After all the word na'ar is not used for an infant. He explains by quoting Midrashic sources that Moshe had a voice like a mature lad. This week, the term na'ar is also used, and on the surface it is not complimentary. “Yoseph was 17-years-old and was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock, but he was a na'ar with the children of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives.” Again the expression na'ar raises a flag. The Medrash obviously feels that that term should be reserved for children younger than teens. And so the Medrash asks, is it fitting to label a 17-year-old a Na'ar? It teaches us that at that age Yoseph acted immaturity; dressing his hair and adorning his eyes to look handsome. (Ramban feels that the term na'ar would apply, as he was youngest of all the brothers except for Benjamin, a mere child at the time.)

The Sfas Emes asks a powerful question. If the term na'ar is out of place for anyone even approaching his late teens then an earlier verse surely needs clarification. In Parshas Vayeirah Avraham travels for three days together with his sons Yitzchak and Yishmael, and his servant Eliezer, pursuing Hashem's command to bring his son as an offering on Mount Moriah. As he finally sees the mountain, he knows it is time to conclude the journey alone with only Yitzchak. So Avraham tells Yishmael and Eliezer, “remain here with the donkey, and I and the na'ar will go yonder.” ([Genesis 22:5](#)). Yitzchak was 37-years old at the time, yet not one commentator is troubled that his father calls him a baby! Why?

A man once approached my grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, quite distraught. “I know this may not sound like a major problem,” he began, “but my 17-year-old daughter is very upset with me. It has come to a point that she hardly talks to me. It began a few nights ago. My wife and I were with a number of old friends at a wedding when my daughter walked by. I introduced her to them by saying, ‘This is my baby.’ “I could see that at the moment she became very upset. Moments later she pulled me to aside and was crying. ‘You still think I’m a baby!’ she sobbed. ‘I am almost eighteen already, and all you do is call me your baby! Won’t I ever be a grown-up in your eyes?’ Ever since then she doesn’t want to talk to me.” The man shrugged as he pleaded with the sage. “I really don’t want to make this into a major issue, but I’m not sure how to resolve this. Perhaps the Rosh Yeshiva can guide me.” Reb Yaakov put his hand on the man’s shoulder. “You live in Flatbush, don’t you?” At the time Reb Yaakov was staying at his youngest son, Reb Avraham’s home, and he invited the man to visit him there together with his daughter. He assured him that he would not discuss the incident but was confident that by the time the visit was over the matter would be resolved.” The next day the man and his daughter visited Reb Yaakov at Reb Avraham’s home. Reb Yaakov invited the man and his daughter into the dining room where they discussed a variety of issues from school work to life in pre-war Europe everything but the incident at the wedding. About 10 minutes into the conversation, my uncle, Reb Avraham, came down the stairs. Reb Yaakov looked over to him and invited him to join the conversation. But first he introduced Reb Avraham to his guests. “This is my baby!” exclaimed the revered sage as he gave a warm hug to his 55-year-old son. Needless to say, the impact on the 17-year-old girl changed her perspective on her father’s comments. Fifteen minutes later they left the house with a renewed and invigorated relationship!

The Sfas Emes answers his question very simply. When the Torah in a narrative describes someone as a na'ar it is a flag for concern. It needs explanation, whether complimentary or otherwise. But when a father calls a child his na'ar there is no need to explain. It is simple and more than acceptable. And Hashem Himself refers to his children that way. “When Israel was a na'ar and I loved him, and since Egypt I have called him my child” ([Hosea 10](#)).

Defining Greatness

by Rabbi Noah Weinberg

"Jacob settled in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan" (Bereishis 37:1).

After Jacob sought to dwell in tranquility, the troubles of Yosef sprang upon him. The righteous seek to dwell in tranquility. Said the Holy One, blessed is He, "What is prepared for the righteous in the World to Come is not sufficient for them, but they seek [also] to dwell in tranquility in this world!" (Rashi on Bereishis 37:2)

Jacob wanted some peace. After a difficult life – confrontation and struggle with Eisav and his angel, dealings with the dishonest Lavan, and the defilement of his daughter Dinah in Shechem, to name just a few – surely it was reasonable to desire a period of tranquility. But God answers, "*Olam Haba*, the Next World, is not enough? You want peace in this world, too? No way!" And Hashem brings upon him the misfortune of Yosef's disappearance for 22 years.

What was Jacob's mistake? He certainly did not want to retire and spend his waning days golfing in Florida. He wanted to live *b'shalvah*, in tranquility, so he could learn Torah without distractions and interruptions. He wanted to grow closer to Hashem without stress or conflict. In short, he wanted a piece of the Next World in this world. What was wrong with that? Since God's reprimands always come to focus our attention on what we are doing wrong, we can discern Jacob's mistake by working backward and examining his punishment. Jacob's desire for tranquility caused Yosef to be taken away. After Jacob's sons showed him Yosef's torn, bloodstained coat, Jacob assumed that Yosef was dead, and he became inconsolable: "He refused to comfort himself, and said: 'For I will go down to the grave [*avel she'olah*] mourning for my son'" (ibid 37:35).

Based on the word "*she'olah*," grave – which can also mean *Gehinnom*, purgatory – the Midrash teaches us that Jacob thought Yosef's apparent death was a sign from God that he needs to journey through *Gehinnom*, since he had a tradition that he would be assured a place in the World to Come if all twelve of his sons would remain alive in his lifetime (Tanchuma, Vayigash 9; see also Midrash Shocher Tov, *Vayigash* 44:29).

What did Jacob really want? He wanted to feel that he accomplished his mission. He fathered the 12 tribes, and built the foundations of the Jewish people. To him, tranquility was knowing that his job was completed and that he could now focus exclusively on learning Torah. But God replied, "You are not done until this world is transformed back into the Garden of Eden. You cannot live in peace when the world is filled with idol worshippers and is in such moral decay and turmoil. Your job is not at all done. It only ends once you leave this world and receive your reward in the Next World."

Let us contrast this lesson about Jacob with the next few verses that introduce us to Yosef. "These are the chronicles of Yaakov: Yosef, at the age of seventeen years, was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock, but he was a youth with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Yosef would bring evil reports about them to their father. Now Yisrael loved Yosef more than all his sons since he was a child of his old age, and he made him a fine woolen tunic. His brothers saw that it was he whom their father loved most of all his brothers so they hated him; and they could not speak to him peaceably. Yosef dreamt a dream, which he told to his brothers, and they hated him even more" (Bereishis 37:2-5).

Yosef has a prophetic dream that he is going to be a king over his brothers. What information does the Torah give us to shed light on why Yosef deserves to become king? In these few sentences the only action attributed to Yosef is that he brought evil reports to his father Yaakov regarding his brothers. What was the evil report? Rashi tells us:

Any evil he saw in his brothers, the sons of Leah, he would tell his father: 1) that they ate limbs from living animals, 2) that they demeaned the sons of the handmaids by calling them slaves, and 3) that they were suspected of illicit relationships. God punished him, measure for measure, for misjudging and speaking badly about his brothers. As Rashi says:

For these three reports he was punished: For [the report that his brothers ate] limbs from living animals, "they slaughtered a kid" (Bereishis 37:31) when they sold him, and did not eat it alive. For the report that he related about them that they called their brothers slaves, "Yosef was sold as a slave" (Tehillim 105:17), and concerning the illicit relationships that he related about them, "his master's wife lifted her eyes." (Bereishis 39:7).

God made it abundantly clear to Yosef that giving these reports was wrong. How, then, does this explain why Yosef should be king?

The Torah is teaching us a very important lesson: Yosef was trying to correct his brothers. In the end he was mistaken and was punished for his misplaced criticism, but his motivation was good; he wanted to help his brothers. He saw an issue and he took personal responsibility for it. That is what made him king. When you take responsibility for the world, you become master of the world. You are its caretaker.

If Jews in the world are trapped in Syria or Iran, can we live in peace? If Jews in Israel are being bombarded by rockets, forced to run for cover in bomb shelters, can we live in peace? If we care about the Almighty, can we rest if His children are estranged from Him? We cannot sit in peace when there is so much suffering.

Although he made a mistake in judgment, Yosef nonetheless took responsibility for his brothers, and by doing so he merited to become their leader.

The ascendancy of Joshua as the leader of the Jewish people is another example of how taking responsibility is the key to leadership. Although Joshua was 56 years old at the time of the giving of the Torah, he is nevertheless described as a *naar*, a lad: "God would speak to Moses face to face, as a man would speak with his fellow; then he would return to the camp. His servant, Joshua son of Nun, a lad, would not depart from within the Tent" (Shemos 33:11).

A *naar* is a youth, a lightweight, someone not very important. Why is Joshua described in this derogatory manner? It was the Jewish people who described Joshua this way. They pointed a finger at him and said, "This guy is immature, he's a nobody." What did they have against Joshua? They thought he was unimportant because his primary role was in assisting Moses. The Midrash says that the Jewish people learned Torah every day from Moses, Aaron, and the Elders. They would all come together in the tent to learn Torah, and go home at the end of the day to eat and discuss what they learned. After everyone was long gone, Joshua would stay behind to clean up, organize all the benches and chairs, and put away the books. He wanted to make sure there would be no wasted time the following morning. So the Jewish people viewed him as a maintenance man, the guy who cleans up because he has nothing else to contribute. (Yalkut Shimoni, Pinchas 776) They were wrong.

As King Solomon said, "*Notzer te'ainah yochal piryah* – the protector of a fig tree will eat its fruit" (Mishlei 27:18). The one who cares enough to take responsibility, without concern for his own standing, will be the next leader (based on Tanchuma, Pinchas 11).

Imagine entering an exclusive art gallery where everything costs a fortune. Many wealthy, distinguished people are milling around, and it is impossible to discern who the owner is. Suddenly water starts gushing out of a broken pipe and a man quickly takes off his jacket, rolls up his sleeves, and starts fixing the pipe, getting soaked in the process. Now everyone knows who the owner is. He is the one who cares. He is the one who takes responsibility, rolls up his sleeves, and gets dirty fixing the pipe if that's what's needed.

Notzer te'ainah yochal piryah, the protector of a fig tree will eat its fruit. The leader is the one who thinks about the needs of *Klal Yisrael*. He thinks about the tumult that will ensue the next morning when everyone returns to learn and the chairs are in disarray. Yehoshua was no lightweight. Servicing Moses and taking responsibility for the needs of the Jewish People, whatever they may be, is precisely what made him the next great leader of the Jewish people. "God said to Moses, 'Take to yourself Joshua son of Nun, a **man** in whom there is spirit, and lean your hand upon him'" (Bamidbar 27:18). The *naar*, the boy, became a man.

Jacob wanted to sit *b'shalvah*, in tranquility, to learn Torah and grow. After dedicating himself to building the Jewish people, and all the suffering and conflict that it entailed, he yearned to climb to greater spiritual heights, unencumbered by the needs of the community, and finally focus on his own growth. Now, he thought, it was time for the 12 tribes of Israel to take the lead.

God corrected him and showed him that as long as you are living in this world you cannot retreat from your responsibilities and focus only on self-perfection. "You are My partner," God reproved him, "and I am suffering. My children still do not know Me; the job is not yet done. Your responsibility for the world ceases only once you enter the Next World." So Jacob was punished with the disappearance of his son Yosef in order to teach him this lesson.

In contrast, Yosef was concerned for his brothers and took responsibility to correct them. Even though he was mistaken in his judgments, he merited to become a king because he took responsibility for them. Joshua, a descendant of Yosef, was concerned for *Am Yisrael* and as a result became the leader of *Klal Yisrael*.

We must ask ourselves: What responsibility can we undertake to help the Jewish people? We need to feel the pain God feels, so to speak, over the assimilation and intermarriage of His children. When you truly care you will take responsibility. And when you take responsibility, you attain greatness and become a leader.

“And they took him and cast him into the pit; now the pit was empty there was no water in it” (37:24)

In the Gemara (Shabbos 21b), there are two consecutive teachings by the same amora. The first lesson is that a menorah placed above 20 amos is invalid. The second lesson is that when the posuk says that the brothers threw Yosef into a pit with no water in it, the implication is that there was no water, but there were snakes and scorpions. Why were these two lessons taught together? A menorah that is over 20 amos high is not visible to passersby and thus is lacking the ability to publicize the miracle of Chanukah, a vital component in the mitzvah of lighting the menorah. Similarly, the pit into which the brothers threw Yosef was more than 20 amos deep and they did not see the snakes at the bottom. If they had seen the snakes, they would have taken note of Yosef’s miraculous survival and understood that Hashem was protecting him. However, because the pit was too deep, they did not notice the miracle. This is the connection between the two lessons. We also have to stop and notice the miracles which Hashem constantly does around us. We can easily miss them if we do not pay attention. Chanukah is a time to be thankful for the miracles that happened many years ago, but also to remember that Hashem is always performing miracles on our behalf.

They sent the fine coat and they brought it to their father and they said: “We have found this; now recognize whether it is your son’s coat or not” (37:32)

Chazal (Sotah 10b) point out that the same exact expression with which Yaakov was asked to identify Yosef’s garment appears in the following chapter when Yehuda is asked to identify the collateral that he left with Tamar. Yehuda was punished for the pain that he caused his father by being confronted with the same exact phrase a few years later, causing him great embarrassment. However, the same is true for a kind word as well. If a person compliments others and speaks nicely with them, Hashem will repay him and ensure that he is on the receiving end of the same kind words.

“The Medanites sold him to Egypt, to Potiphar, a courtier of Pharaoh, the chamberlain of the butchers” (37:36)

Why is this posuk about Yosef’s destination inserted at the end of this chapter, especially considering that the Torah then digresses to Yehuda’s story before returning to the narrative of Yosef in Egypt? The Tzror HaMor explains that this posuk is connected to the previous posuk, which states that Yaakov cried over his son’s fate. After relating Yaakov’s reaction, the Torah tells us that Yosef was brought to Egypt and sold to Potiphar. Yosef’s sale to a nearby location rather than some far-flung island and his relative comfort in slavery as the head of Potiphar’s household was a direct result of Yaakov’s tears. Hashem saw his crying and eased the burden on his son as a result. Every tear is heard above and makes an impact, whether we feel it or not. As Chazal teach, the gates of tears are never locked. Our tefillos are always heard if he have the proper intent and emotion when davening.

“It was, as he drew back his hand, that behold his brother emerged. And she said: With what strength you asserted yourself! And he called his name Peretz” (38:29)

R' Yaakov Kamenetzky says that the birth of Peretz, the forebear of Moshiach, is symbolic of how Moshiach will arrive. There will come an event that will cause everyone to believe that Moshiach is imminent. Nevertheless, Moshiach will not come right away and will come from somewhere else. The Rambam says that we have no way of knowing how the arrival of Moshiach will play out, but we can try to glean something about it from the stories of our ancestors. Even when Moshiach does not arrive, we should not despair. We must confidently believe that Moshiach is coming very soon and that Hashem will ensure that he comes at the appointed time.

“Now Yosef had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, Pharaoh's chamberlain, chief of the slaughterers, an Egyptian man, purchased him from the Yishmaelites who had brought him down there” (39:1)

The Chofetz Chaim writes that even though many terrible things happened to Yosef in this parsha, all of these events were engineered by Hashem to accomplish His ultimate goal. The same is true when it comes to the history of the Jewish people. While we may live through challenging times that are very difficult for us, in the future, we will be able to have a clearer perspective and understand how all the things that happened to our people during the long centuries of exile were necessary to achieve Hashem’s plans.

By Rabbi Mayer Friedman

A Sermon Before Napoleon

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

At the end of the parsha, Yosef finds himself in prison with two ministers of Pharaoh. They each had a terrible nightmare and were unable to come up with satisfactory interpretations. When the Sar HaMashkim [chamberlain of the cupbearers] recited his strange dream to Yosef, Yosef gave him the following interpretation:

The three tendrils are a three-day period. In another three days Pharaoh will count you and will restore you to your post, and you will place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as was the former practice when you were his cupbearer, at which time if you would think of me with yourself [ki im zechartani...] when you will have benefited, and you will please do me a kindness and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building. For indeed I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews and even here I have not done anything for them to have put me in the pit." [Bereishis 4:12-15]

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik comments on the flow of these pasukim. We would expect Yosef to first interpret the Sar HaMashkim's dream and then ask for a favor that if Yosef's interpretation indeed comes true, the Sar HaMashkim should help get him out of jail. Rav Chaim explains that the words "ki im zechartani..." — introducing Yosef's request for assistance — are actually part and parcel of Yosef's dream interpretation. The linkage of this pasuk with the previous pasuk indicates that it is all part of the message of the dream. "ki im..." may be translated "so that..."

Rav Chaim then related a story that goes back to the time of Napoleon. Napoleon had won a major battle and made a big party. He invited everybody to speak in honor of the great victory. Speaker after speaker got up and no one said anything worthwhile. Napoleon then inquired if there was a Rabbi in the town and summoned him to expound on the occasion.

His lieutenants went out and found some Rabbi from a small nearby village and brought him to the banquet, ordering him to say something in front of Napoleon, the most powerful person in the world. It happened to be Parshas Vayeshev. The Rabbi related the story of Yosef in prison with the royal ministers. He commented as follows:

Under normal circumstances, when someone in a high position of government is accused of a terrible crime, the most that he can expect to accomplish is to receive an acquittal and then go off into obscurity. In the natural course of events, it is never expected that such a disgraced official will get his old job back.

The Sar HaMashkim, one of the most prestigious posts in ancient times, was rotting away in jail for a crime that he committed. All of a sudden he has a strange dream and Yosef tells him 'not only will you be freed — you will get your old prestigious job back as if nothing happened.' This is very strange — it just does not make any sense. Why should the Sar HaMashkim have believed Yosef?

Yosef told the Sar HaMashkim: "Do you know why you and I are in this jail cell together? Do you know why you were stuck in this pit in the first place and why you will be restored to your old position of glory? It is all KI IM ZECHARTANI — in order that you remember me to Pharaoh and help me get out of here.

The only reason it will happen is because it is part of G-d's master plan — so that I should be able to get into the good graces of the King of Egypt. Therefore, it is important that you listen to me and play your destined role — to mention me to Pharaoh. The Rav then told Napoleon Bonaparte: How is it that you are so successful in conquering the world? It is because you have been good to the Jews. You emancipated the Jews and brought them freedom. This is the reason you have gotten as far as you have. Your key to success, Napoleon, is to continue being the friend of the Jews and continue with your noble work.

Nobody is a Nobody and Everybody is a Somebody

By Sheldon Stern

In 1969, the Miracle Mets shocked the heavily favored Baltimore Orioles and won their first world championship. During the regular season the Amazins, as they were called, were led by their ace pitcher, Tom Seaver, but he wasn't particularly sharp during the World Series. Fortunately, a group of unsung heroes, or to borrow a term from Saturday Night Live, "Not ready For Prime Time Players" came to the fore and led the team to victory. This week's Parsha takes that idea one step further. We're introduced to a nameless, faceless "stranger" who found his way into the ultimate record book, the Torah.

In verse 37:14 Yaakov sent Yosef to check on his brothers. Ever the obedient son, Yosef did as requested, but he had to, as Billy Joel sang in his classic, "The Stranger" "disregard the danger" of meeting his hostile siblings. When he arrived at Shechem they were nowhere to be found so he "ran into" another "stranger" who told our protagonist that his brothers had taken their animals to graze in Dosan. The rest, as they say, is history.

But who was that "masked man"? Chazal tell us that he was a Malach sent to actuate Hashem's plan for Yosef to end up in Egypt. That may well be, but it doesn't preclude looking at him, as per the Lynrd Skynrd song, just "A Simple Man." But there's a question that comes to mind, "Is giving someone directions an act that merits entering the pantheon?" The Gemara said that four people never sinned, Yosef's brother Binyamin, Moshe's father Amram, Yishai the father of King David and Kilav who was Shlomo Hamelech's brother. Rabbi Miller noted that in each case the relation was far greater and he derived from this that Hashem prefers for us to use our time in this mortal coil to accomplish rather than taking extreme measures to avoid sin. The understanding is that when people are active they'll likely be an occasional slip up, but that's okay, provided they do the necessary Tshuvah. So let's return to our man of the hour. If we look at the narrative, Yosef didn't ask him where his brothers were, he took the initiative. Verse 15 states that Yosef was wandering in the fields and a "man" asked him, "What are you looking for?" So that's the secret, he was proactive. When Eliezer came to Paddan Aram to look for Yitzchak's Shidduch he was sold on Rivkah when she offered drinks, not only to him, but also for the camels. Avraham is the paradigm of the Baal Chesed. Despite the intense pain from his Bris, and the searing heat, he went out looking for guests. So yes, the act of directing Yosef, was in itself, rather pedestrian but it was his attitude that was exemplary. Billy Swan's song, "I Can Help" said it best, "It would sure do me good to do you good, let me help."

I'd like to share the story of Yossele the Miser. He lived in a section of Krakow and was exceedingly wealthy however, he refused to donate a penny(kopeck) to the communal charity fund. As you can imagine he was universally reviled. When Yossele died the Chevra Kaddisha decided to bury him in an area reserved for the paupers, as a show of disrespect. About a week later a number of strange occurrences were reported to the town's Rav, the illustrious Yom Tov Lippman Heller. "Every Erev Shabbos I go to the butcher and collect my meat order but this week, he told me that my credit is no good." And the same thing happened when I went to the baker. When he heard a number of the same reports, The Rav put two and two together. Yossele had been supporting the community, but he chose to do it anonymously. As the Rambam teaches, this is the greatest form of Tzedaka, helping others without informing them so that they don't feel beholden to their benefactor. So now we understand why the Torah revealed nothing as to the transient's identity. The Gemara tells us that Dovid described himself as a worm. Avraham did him one step better by saying that he's dust and ashes, but Moshe topped them all. He said, "I'm nothing." By allowing the stranger to remain completely anonymous Hashem was able to give him the greatest reward, a first row seat in Gan Eden.

It follows logically that if there are those who grab the brass ring, many others allow their chance(s) at greatness to pass through their fingers. Ploni Almoni immediately comes to mind. Yes, he had valid, at least in his own mind, reasons to shirk his obligation, but as Paul sang in his wonderful, "Too Many People," "that was your first mistake, you took your lucky break and broke it in two." It's instructive to consider what Mordechai told his beloved Hadassah, "Hashem will save the Jewish people, because we're eternal. You have been given an opportunity to be the vehicle whom Hashem uses, but if you refuse, you won't even be a footnote in history." But some may protest, "I'm not fit to be Moshiach's progenitor, nor to be queen of the world." So the Torah gives us Reuvein. The Midrash teaches that Yaakov's firstborn said, "Had I known that my actions would be recorded in the Torah I would have personally gone into the pit to extricate Yosef and then I would've carried him home." But why didn't he think that he'd, as Bowie wrote, "really make the grade"? Didn't Yaakov teach his children that every person is a world unto himself, each fit to have his own Sefer Torah written for him? Morgan and Morgan touts itself as America's leading injury law firm. In one of their slew of commercials, Mr. Morgan relates that a woman called him up and said, "I know you won't take my case, because I'm a nobody." He responded, "At Morgan and Morgan, nobody is a nobody and everybody is a somebody." And to bring this point home we have the Stylistics classic, "You Are Everything" and everything is you" So this is part of the eternal battle that Ramchal addressed. The Yetzer hora tries to convince us that we're irrelevant, and our actions have no consequences. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The lesson for us is obvious. Some years ago a fine Rabbi who lives on the LES sponsored the printing of posters which chronicled the Sof Zeman Kriyas Shema. At the time I wasn't even aware that there was such a thing as set times for Shema or for the morning Berachos, but that changed thanks to this fellow. I'm not mentioning his name in deference to our Parsha. The greatest Zchus is to serve Hashem with no thought of recompense, but I'm eternally grateful to him and to everyone who has helped me in my journey to find nirvana. As the Dead sang, "What a Long Strange Trip It's Been." Not long before John was murdered he wrote in Beautiful Boy, "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans." I'm fully aware that each of us is pulled in so many directions, but a person has to find some quiet time and think of something he can do to benefit others. As Paul wrote, in his collaboration with Stevie Wonder, "Ebony and Ivory" "We learn to live when we learn to give each other what we need to survive, together alive." To be sure the Yetzer hora will fight you tooth and nail. He'll remind you of the great song from Cabaret performed by Liza Minnelli and Joel Grey, "Money Makes the world Go Round." But there are always opportunities for the little guys to make their mark. To quote the Nike commercial, "Just Do It."