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Parshat Beshalach

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OUT OF BOUNDS

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

In this week's parsha the B'nai Yisrael are given the manna. It falls every day from Heaven – except on the Sabbath. The Jews may not collect it on the Shabbos and thus a double portion falls from heaven on Friday. “See that Hashem has given you the Sabbath; that is why He gives you on the sixth day a two-day portion of bread.” In addition the Torah proscribes the Jews from traveling distances on the Shabbos. “Let every man remain in his place; let no man leave his place on the seventh day” (Exodus 16:29).

Rashi explains that this refers to the t'chum Shabbos, a Shabbos ordinance that confines one's boundaries under certain settings to 2,000 cubits from the initial point of origin. One cannot walk farther than that distance on Shabbos.

Though this is not the forum for a discussion of the intricate laws of Sabbath borders, including certain limitations to the restrictions, one basic question arises: There are many intricate laws regarding Shabbos activities. None were yet mentioned. Why discuss the concept of confinement to an approximate one-mile radius before the Jews learned about the most basic prohibitions of the Sabbath such as lighting new fires or carrying in the public domain? In fact, this law of t'chum does not carry the severe penalties associated with other transgression. Why, then, is it the first Shabbos law that is introduced?

Once a religious man came to the Brisker Rav, Rav Yitzchok Zev Soleveitchik, and asked him whether he should join a certain organization comprised of people whose views were antithetical to Torah philosophy. Well intentioned, the man felt that his association would perhaps sway the opinions of the antagonists and create harmony among the factions. He would be able to attend meetings and raise his voice in support of Torah outlook. The Rav advised him not to get involved. The man unfortunately decided to ignore the advice. Within a few months, he was in a quagmire, because policies and actions of the theologically-skewed organization were being linked to him, and were creating animus toward him throughout the community. For some reason he could not back out of his commitments to the organization. He was torn. How could he regain his reputation as a Torah observing Jew and ingratiate himself to his former community? He returned to the Brisker Rav and asked him once again for his advice. The Rav told him the following story. There was a young man who aspired to become a wagon driver. He approached a seasoned waggoneer and began his training. After a few weeks, he was ready to be certified. Before receiving an official certification the veteran decided to pose a few practical applications. “Let's say,” he asked his young charge, “that you decide to take a shortcut and deviate from the main highway. You cut through a forest on a very muddy trail. Your wheels become stuck in the mud and your two passengers become agitated. The horses are struggling to pull out of the mud. They can't seem to get out. What do you do?” The young driver looked up in thought. “Well,” he began, “first I would take some wooden planks and try to get them under the wheels. “Ah!” sighed the old timer, “you made a terrible mistake!” “Why?” retorted the neophyte driver, “I followed procedure in the precise manner! What did I do wrong?” The old man sighed. “Your mistake was very simple. You don't take shortcuts into muddy forests!” The activist understood the Brisker Rav's message.

Rav Moshe Feinstein of blessed memory explains that before the Jews were even given the laws of Shabbos they were taught an even more important lesson in life. Before you can embark on life's journeys and even approach the holy Shabbos, you must know your boundaries. So before discussing the details of what you can or cannot do on Shabbos, the Torah tells us where we can and cannot go on Shabbos. Sometimes, keeping within a proper environment is more primary than rules of order. Because it is worthless to attempt to venture into greatness when you are walking out of your domain.

A Stiff-Necked People

By Rabbi Berel Wein

People are hard to change. It is much easier to invent great technological innovations than to change people's minds, habits and attitudes. And since human behavior sets the tone of world society much more than does technological progress, very little has really changed in the story of human civilization over the past few thousand years. War, violence, unreasoning hatreds, moral failings, both great and small, are all the stuff of our daily newspapers and media reporting. It seems that little has changed in the human condition since the world of our father, Avraham . All of the problems that he had to struggle against are apparently still present with us in our modern era. And this truth is brought home to us in the Torah reading of Bshalach.

One would think that after the blows and plagues that Pharaoh and the Egyptian people sustained in the campaign of Moshe and Aharon to free the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage, Pharaoh and the Egyptians would have learned their lesson. They should have been happy and relieved to be rid of the Jews and the blows and plagues associated with them.. Then why do Pharaoh and the Egyptian army pursue them into the desert and attempt to return them to Egypt? What logic justifies such a suicidal policy? And the answer is that it is habit, stubbornness, hubris and the refusal to allow facts and changing situations to affect one's decisions and attitudes. Pharaoh was determined to crush the Jewish people by slavery and pain. The Lord intervened in a clear and impressive fashion to block the plans of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Pharaoh and the Egyptians knew that the Lord prevented the actualization of their plans. Nevertheless, in spite of this clear situation, neither Pharaoh nor his people change their behavior, alter their goal, admit their fatal error. Because people are stubborn and are not easily moved from their previously held opinions and plans, the facts of the matter rarely suffice to cause a change in behavior. Hence, Pharaoh's pursuit of Israel into the desert and his otherwise inexplicable headlong rush towards his own destruction.

This same rule of human nature applies towards the Jewish people as well. The Jewish people were and are notorious for being "stiff-necked." Ideas adopted by Jews, even when disproved by the facts of history and society are still not easily discarded in the Jewish world. God can split the Red Sea, rain down manna from heaven every day, preserve millions of people in a trackless desert, and there will always still be Jews who say "Let us turn our heads around and return to Egypt." Their minds are made up and they don't want to be discomfited by the facts of the situation. How else to explain that there are Jews in the world still committed to the Marxist dream, or who believe that Jewish continuity can be achieved by lowering all standards and requirements for Jewish marriage or conversion? The ideas of the Enlightenment, most of which have bankrupted in our time, the bloodiest of all human centuries, are still treasured by a large section of Jewry whose ancestors fell victim to its siren song over the last two centuries. It is as though much of the Jewish world has learned nothing from the events and crises that have befallen the Jewish world in this century. All of the prattle of Secular Humanism, of the new better world of discarded ritual and unnecessary tradition, of easy faith and feel-good religions, of immediately obsolescent relevance, of hootenanny guitar-playing services of prayer, all of this is still promoted as effective Judaism even though it has all contributed to a mighty destruction of the people of Israel, both quantitatively and qualitatively. A large portion of the Jewish world yet insists "Let us turn our heads around and return to Egypt."

Stubbornness can be a positive trait. It is the very stiff-neckedness of the Jewish people that has preserved us through the long night of our exile and difficulties. Jews did not convert nor give up their faith because their powers of tenacity and stubbornness stood them in good stead. But stubbornness for the sake of stubbornness is wrong and usually purposeless. The lessons of past failures, of fallen gods and glittering but false ideologies, should serve to instruct us and allow us to leave the bondage of Egypt and its culture, and all of the other Egypts and their cultures, permanently. The miracles and hand of God in history should not be ignored because of misplaced stubbornness.

Complaining About The Quality Of The Miracle

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

I would like to share a Medrash in Shemos Rabbah that does not refer directly to a verse in Parshas B'Shalach, but rather refers to a pasuk in Psalms regarding an incident in Parshas B'Shalach: "Our fathers in Egypt did not contemplate Your wonders, they were not mindful of Your abundant kindnesses, and they rebelled by the sea at Yam Suf." (vaYamru al yam b'yam suf) [Tehillim 106:7]

The Medrash is troubled by the expression "vaYamru al yam b'yam suf". This appears to be saying something more than the fact that they rebelled at Yam Suf. The redundant mention of the term "sea" (yam) seems to indicate that there were two rebellions at Yam Suf. The first rebellion was marked by the fact that no one wanted to descend into the Reed Sea. It was not until the leader of the tribe of Yehudah led his tribe into the water, triggering the miraculous splitting of the sea, that the other tribes followed into the Yam Suf. The Medrash notes the special role of the tribe of Yehudah at this time in the words of the later psalm "When Israel left Egypt... Yehuda became His sanctified one..." [Tehillim 114:1-2]

This first rebellion is alluded to by the initial words “vaYamru al yam”. What do the extra words “b’yam suf” add? The Medrash states that the second rebellion involved complaining about the muddy ground which they had to walk through after the Yam Suf split open. Of course it was muddy! Anyone who has ever walked along the beach when the tide is going out knows that the sand where the water has recently been is muddy. The Jews complained that their shoes were getting full of mud. In the words of the Medrash, “Reuvain said to Shimeon ‘In Egypt we were immersed in mortar and at the Reed Sea we are immersed in mortar. In Egypt we had the mortar that accompanied the bricks and here at Yam Suf we have the mud caused by the splitting waters.’”

This Medrash is amazing. Actually, it is not the Medrash that is amazing. It is the reaction of the people quoted by the Medrash that is amazing. Let us put ourselves in their shoes – literally and figuratively. The Egyptians are behind us; the Yam Suf is in front of us. There is nowhere to go. We cry out to Heaven – “What is going to be?” The Divine Word comes back: “Speak to the Children of Israel and let them go forward.” One of the greatest miracles in the history of mankind occurs – the splitting of the Reed Sea. What is our response? “Our shoes are getting dirty from the mud.”

How can any person, given these circumstances, complain about mud? The answer is that people can complain about anything. Negative people can be negative about anything and everything – even Krias Yam Suf. It is all a matter of attitude. This was the “Dor De-ah” [Generation of Knowledge]. We should not abuse the people of the generation of the Exodus, but apparently this was a character shortcoming that plagued this particular generation. They were never happy.

The Jews in this week’s parsha complain about the mann. This is repeated in Parshas BeHaloscha. “Mann for breakfast, mann for lunch, mann for supper, nothing but Mann! Oh for the good old days of Egypt!” In the middle of the description of the section of mann in BeHaloscha, the pasuk says “And the mann was like coriander seed and its color was like the color of b’dolach” [Bamidbar 11:7]. Rashi mentions that this pasuk is an editorial interjection. The pasukim before and after this interlude describe what the Jewish people were saying. Suddenly, in the middle of the discussion, the Torah comments: “And the mann was like coriander seed...”

Rashi explains: Come and let the world see what my children are complaining about. The mann is so special and so beautiful and yet they even complain about the mann. Mann was both a physical and a spiritual food. It tasted however the person wanted it to taste. It was a food that did not produce body waste. There was absolutely nothing wrong with it. It came at no cost; there was no effort in preparing meals. No mess, no fuss, low cholesterol, high fiber, non-fattening – anything one wanted! And nevertheless they complained about the mann.

These are the same people who could complain that they had mud on their shoes from the bottom of the Reed Sea. It is the same psychological phenomenon. Such people will never be happy. There are such people in the world.

The Kotzker Rebbe has a very sharp comment that we have quoted in the past but is worth repeating. The pasuk in this week’s parsha states: “They came to Marah, but they could not drink the waters of Marah because they were bitter (ki marim hem). Therefore they named it Marah” [Shemos 15:23]. The simple meaning of the expression ‘ki marim hem’ is ‘because the waters were bitter’. The Kotzker, however, interprets the pronoun ‘hem’ [they] to refer to the people. The people were bitter and they complained about the water, just as they complained about the mann and just as they complained about the miracle of the splitting of the sea. Nothing was good in their eyes. It is tragic to have such a personality. Unfortunately we all know people like that and unfortunately we all act like this to a certain extent.

A Chassidic tale is told of a Chassid who was suffering from many misfortunes and he consulted his Rebbe to ask him for help in coping with his lot in life. The Rebbe advised him “I cannot answer you about your suffering, but Reb Zushia can. Go to Reb Zushia.”

When the Chassid came to Reb Zusia’s town, he was shocked to arrive at a depressing and dilapidated shack with leaks, a dirt floor, no heat and no furniture. Reb Zushia came to the door. He was severely stricken with boils all over his skin. He was wearing rags. The image of Reb Zushia and his impoverished hut made the visiting Chassid’s heart sink lower than it already was from his own suffering and troubles.

Reb Zushia asked kindly and calmly what he could do for the visitor. The visitor explained that he was referred by his own Rebbe to ask how one can handle suffering and develop a “Gam Zu L’Tova” [this too is for the best] attitude.

Reb Zushia replied, “Me, explain suffering?” He gently shrugged his shoulders in wonder and said, “How would I know? I have never had any suffering. One cannot learn a ‘Gam Zu L’Tova’ attitude from a person who has everything. I have everything!” There are two types of people in the world — those who see the glass as half empty and those who see the glass as half full. Some see a thorny rose bush and admire the beautiful roses, and some see it and complain about the fact that the roses have thorns. We all have to decide what our attitude will be. But we must remember that if everything is bad in our lives, it may very well be ‘ki marim hem’ — because we ourselves are bitter.

“When Pharaoh sent out the people, Hashem did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, though it was close, for Hashem said: Lest the people regret when they see war and return to Egypt” (13:17)

Hashem took them the on the longer path because even though it seemed to be the less direct route to Eretz Yisrael, Hashem knew that the people would encounter situations on that path that might cause them to turn back to Egypt. Hashem orchestrates things that do not appear to be good on the surface, but we have to realize that He is trying to make it easier for us to be successful and we have to take advantage of those opportunities.

“He harnessed his chariot, and took his people with him” (14:6)

Whenever the Torah says that one person took another person, Rashi explains that it does not refer to literally taking the person physically by force. Instead, it means that one person used his words to convince someone else to do something. That is how Pharaoh took his people with him to pursue Bnei Yisrael. He gave an inspiring speech and promised to reward them so that they would come forward and volunteer to join him. Words carry great power and history bears testimony to many leaders who have used their smooth talking as a way of convincing people to do terrible things. But we know that this power can also be used positively. The “voice of Yaakov” is a hallmark of the Jewish people because we can use our words of Torah to counteract the enticements of the yetzer hara. We can also use this same power of persuasion to encourage our fellow Jews to do good things. Our words can be used to help ourselves and to help others. Perhaps this is the meaning of the posuk (Mishlei 18:21) which says: “Life and death are in the hand of the tongue.” We can use our words to encourage people to do great things and give them life, but the opposite is also true. Our tongues can help other people down the path of life or death.

“...The Children of Israel cried out to Hashem. They said to Moshe: Was it for want of graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the wilderness?” (14:10-11)

Ramban asks: How could it be that after praying to Hashem to save them, the people immediately turned around and complained to Moshe, rejecting the good things that he had done for them? It must be that these two pesukim describe two separate groups of people. When the Jews saw the Egyptians approaching, some of them cried out to Hashem, while others instead turned against Moshe and made angry accusations against him. Two people can face the same situation, yet they may respond very differently. For example, two people might lose their jobs and one will respond by turning to Hashem for assistance while the other speaks angrily and inappropriately about his grievances. How we respond to the circumstances that we face in life is of tremendous importance and defines who we are.

“Yisrael saw the great hand that Hashem had wrought against Egypt, and the people feared Hashem and they believed in Hashem and Moshe, His servant” (14:31)

Why did Bnei Yisrael only come to recognize the great things that Hashem had done in Egypt many months later after the miracles at the sea? Sometimes, we do not appreciate things until a long time has passed and we develop a different perspective. While Bnei Yisrael were in Egypt, still mired in the mindset of slavery, they could not fully absorb the magnitude of Hashem’s miracles. Standing at the sea and witnessing the complete annihilation of the Egyptians, they were finally able to take it all in and fully appreciate the amazing things that the Hand of Hashem had done in Egypt.

“Hashem said to Moshe: Inscribe this as a memorial in the book and recite it into Yehoshua’s ears, that I will surely obliterate the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens” (17:14)

Here Hashem promises that “I will wipe out the memory of Amalek.” However, in Parshas Ki Seitzei, Hashem commands: “You shall wipe out the memory of Amalek.” How can we resolve this contradiction? We are not able to be successful on our own without Hashem’s help and participation. The two pesukim are not contradictory because Hashem gives us the strength to fulfill our obligation. Whether we refer to our fulfillment of the mitzvah as our action or Hashem’s action, it all amounts to the same thing because our actions are only facilitated by Hashem. Thus, it is appropriate for Hashem to say that “I will destroy Amalek” in connection with the obligation of the people to carry out this destruction.

By Rabbi Mayer Friedman

Heavenly Bread

by Rabbi Ari Kahn

The road from Egypt to Mount Sinai was not an easy one. The difficulty was not only due to the nature of the terrain the Israelites had to cross, or even the fact that their former masters pursued them in a murderous frenzy; the basic logistics of the care and feeding of such a large populace proved to be a formidable challenge. Having Divine logistical support proved quite advantageous, as they made their way under the protective cover of clouds of glory, the sea split miraculously at their approach, and their drinking water flowed from a rock.

While all of this help was, quite literally, a Godsend, there was one type of assistance that went beyond their physical needs, providing sustenance that was spiritually transformative as well: the manna. The manna fell every morning, six days a week, with a double portion on the sixth day; on the seventh day, no manna fell. The lesson of Shabbat was "hard wired" into the food they ate, giving their most basic physical sustenance religious significance.

Although Shabbat was first introduced in the early verses of Bereishit, we have no evidence that the Divine perspective on creation to which Shabbat bears witness – that God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh by ceasing to create – had somehow trickled down to human awareness or practice. Before they left Egypt, did the Jews know about the Sabbath day?

There is a rabbinic teaching (Sh'mot Rabbah 1:28) that the Israelite slaves were granted a weekly day of rest in Egypt. On the advice of an Egyptian prince named Moshe, Pharaoh instituted a six-day workweek for the empire's slaves, as a means of increasing their productivity. It is altogether possible that no one, Egyptian or Israelite, suspected that this day of rest had religious significance, not to mention religious origins or motivation: Pharaoh would most certainly not have acquiesced to Moshe's suggestion had he known that he was granting a religious freedom.

But what of the slaves themselves? Did they see their day of rest from the toils and tribulations of slavery in physical/social terms, or as a religious/spiritual necessity? Once freed, did they conclude that their new society had no need for a day of rest because they were no longer physical laborers? Their new reality was so completely different to the reality they had known in Egypt: Their food fell from heaven, and the "work" they had to do to access the manna only vaguely resembled standard agriculture. They "harvested" fresh produce each day without the back-breaking tilling and sowing, planting, pruning, and myriad other laborious tasks that every farmer knows so well. In fact, their food did not even grow from the ground; it came down from heaven. In a sense, there was something almost "Eden – like" about their existence. Was there a need for a day of rest in this idyllic existence, they might well have wondered?

The manna gave a clear and resounding answer: Yes, even in the desert, protected and sustained by miracles, there is Shabbat. Apparently the Shabbat experience in the desert was designed to be very different from the Shabbat they had known in the dark days of slavery. In Egypt, the most important element of the seventh day had been the cessation of labor; the spiritual and theological experience of emulating God and giving testament to His act of Creation was arguably eclipsed by the sheer relief from excruciating physical labor.

In the desert, when they are free almost entirely of physical constraints, God comes into focus. The manna is the ultimate teaching aid: The first lesson is that all food ultimately comes from God. Consider the slave mentality: They had, for hundreds of years, been building great edifices for the Egyptian empire. Despite the misery of their lives, they were able to see the tangible results of their labor, and to draw a direct correlation between effort and result. Though they did not benefit from their accomplishments, they were able to measure their progress and perhaps even take pride in what they had built. But the slave can feel alienated from God; slaves do not sense a partnership with the Almighty. On the other hand, the farmer, whose livelihood is dependent upon the cooperation of "nature," is acutely aware of each and every one of the problems that can destroy a crop. The farmer has a far more organic sense of partnership with God, and a far more natural need to pray, to communicate with his or her "senior partner."

In the desert, the Israelites were not farmers; they had no need to do work of any kind – and yet, they "harvested" the manna. Their sustenance would still be the result of a sort of partnership with God, and the method through which their physical needs were met served as both a respite from the years of servitude and an introduction to the new reality that awaited them in the Promised Land. The desert experience allowed them to internalize the concept of a partnership with God, and to prepare themselves for the reality that awaited them in the Land of Israel – a reality that combines physical and spiritual sustenance; a reality which taught them to look heavenward for sustenance. Through the manna, they learned the most basic lessons: God created the universe and everything in it in six days and rested on the seventh. He alone is the source of all sustenance, both physical and spiritual, and on Shabbat, when we give testament to God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe, we recharge not only our physical strength, but our spiritual resources as well.

This Indecision's Killing Me

By Sheldon Stern

A current thread on line considers whether the "N" word is overused in the Orthodox Jewish community. Oh no, not that "N" word, I'm referring to the appellation Nazi. For example, do Candace Owens, Tucker Carlson and Nick Fuentes make that dubious grade? Let's leave that for greater minds to consider. Before Hitler and his henchmen sullied world history, the common epithet for our enemies was Amalek. Rabbi Dovid Hollander ZL once told me, "Don't try to understand a Rosho, because you're not a Rosho." While I would never question that Sage's advice, I think it's instructive to examine the individual whose descendants have been our bane throughout the millennia.

Amalek was born to Eisav's son Eliphaz and Timna. Timna was the daughter of Lotan a chief of the Eisav dynasty. The Midrash teaches that she wanted to become a concubine of Yaakov, but her request was rebuffed and she then married Eliphaz. This is key. The Midrash tells us that when Yaakov left his parents to travel to Aram for a shidduch he encountered Eliphaz. To say it was an awkward meeting would be a gross overstatement. Eisav had drummed into his Bchor from birth that Yaakov had to be eliminated. Let's consider that point. When we see a Muslim woman, we're immediately struck by their head coverings. Where does this custom come from? We can trace it to Hagar. She was allowed to enter Avraham's family because of her modesty. And this tradition has gone unabated. For Eisav, his selling point was Kibud Av. Therefore, Eliphaz was faced with a real dilemma. On the one hand, it was unthinkable to disobey his father, but at the same time he had warm feelings for his uncle. Our forefather provided the solution; he instructed Eliphaz to take all his possessions, thereby rendering him a pauper and so he could tell his father that indeed he had "killed" his brother. We can imagine then that Eliphaz didn't play the hate Yaakov card at home. But as for his mother, that would be a horse of a different color. We're all familiar with the expression, "Hell hath no fury as a woman scorned." Therefore we can assume that when Eisav came for a visit, or perhaps he even lived with them, Amalek got the full "Dirty Yaakov" treatment in stereo. But here's the question, "Why did he choose to follow his mother, thereby violating the family tradition of honoring one's father?" The Midrash tells us that on the day that Avraham died Eisav committed the three cardinal sins. But our Sages offer some mitigation for his actions. In the case of killing he dispatched the archvillain Nimrod. So what's the problem? Would anyone criticize the person who put a bullet in Hitler's brain? But Chazal presented a different spin. It wasn't the act of murder that they castigated, it was that he enjoyed it. In Devarim 29:17 Moshe addressed the people, "Perhaps there is among you a root that produces hemlock and wormwood." What our leader was alluding to is that some people have this urge to do evil which they can't or won't control. And this is very revealing. Rabbi Miller said that he visited Germany when he went to study in Europe. The famed educator noted that the people would give him a seat on the bus, in recognition of his status of a Rabbi. So yes, they were noted for their manners and civility, but when stoked that evil root turned into a raging, all-consuming flame. And it all derived from Amalek choosing to go against the family tradition and listen to his mother. Hashem then, by ordering the eradication of Amalek, is telling us that such an evil source cannot be rehabilitated, and so there is only one solution.

So what does this teach us? Sure we can spend our time on line cursing out Mamdani, but that doesn't accomplish anything. The Clash was England's greatest punk rock band. In 1981 they put out, "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" It featured the line, "This indecision's killing me." As we discussed, Amalek's undoing came from a single wrong decision. The Ramchal tells us that every moment of our lives we're engaged in a knockdown, dragout battle with our Yetzer hora. Ultimately, the result comes down to the decisions we make. Rabbi Akiva famously said, "Veahavta Lereicha Komocha." This isn't merely the name of a Miami Boy's Choir song. The Gemara tells us that what set our greatest Tanna apart is that he was Maavir Al Midosov. He didn't stand on ceremony. As Chazal say, "The wise man's eyes are in his head." This means that a Chacham sees the bigger picture. He says to himself, "What do I really gain by demanding acceptance of my position? Doesn't it make more sense to give in and let peace reign?" Yes it makes sense but it's a bitter pill for many to swallow. Not long after I began studying with Rabbi Friedman, I brought a friend along hoping that he'd share my enthusiasm. Each class featured a Mussar Schmooze. On this occasion Rabbi Friedman said, "Let's imagine that there's some guy who's giving you problems, and you can't imagine ever getting along with him. What you should do is show him kindness, and this will usually turns things around." My friend exploded, "Let me tell you something. When someone starts with me, I finish him off." Oh for sure, he was one and done. So this is the great challenge we all face, training ourselves to make the decisions that are pleasing in Hashem's eyes. Now it's true that Rabbi Friedman's approach isn't always practical but it should be our first resort. Boruch Hashem, the Shtetle/features its own Rabbi Akiva (Eisenstadt.) who is a true Talmud of his namesake. He sees the good in others, no matter their background, because he sees the big picture, Jews loving each other. When we attack that rotten root which impels us to do battle we're killing our personal Amalek. In 1980 the B-52's scored with the clever, "You're Living in Your Own Private Idaho." As I write this there's a thread in which the author noted the vile comments of so many of the posters. Keep in mind that they're all ostensibly observant Jews. The truth is that they're living in their own private Amalek. Even if we have that bitter root, we have the Torah as an antidote. When the urge to say or do something malevolent rears its ugly head, remember what Nancy Reagan said and, "Just Say No." I'll mention a final thread, I definitely spend too much time on the internet. Someone asked for the source of anti-Semitism. As you can imagine, the usual contenders were cited. It's the liberal, woke left. No, it's the Candace Owens, Tucker Carlson, Nick Fuentes faction of the Republican Party. Of course, radical Islam got the most votes. I then offered my two cents, "Anti-Semitism comes from Hashem Middah Kineged Middah. When Jews hate each other Hashem sics our enemies on us." We can't eliminate all our enemies, but we can remove the Amalek inside of us. Dovid Hamelech taught that Hashem is our shadow. This means that He behaves with us as we act towards others. If we take Rabbi Akiva's mantra to heart, and instead of always trying to gain the upper hand, we think of our fellow's feelings., the anger on both sides will abate. And it's quite possible that if we do that Hashem will react in kind and bring Moshiach.