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Consistency

The Shirat HaYam climaxes with prayer for the future:

Nations heard and shuddered... fear and dread falling upon them... until your people crossed over... You will bring them and establish them in... the place You dwell in, in the holy places that you have founded (15:14-17).

G-d will be King for ever and ever (15:18).

The Rashbam and Ibn Ezra both view “G-d will be king for ever and ever” as a separate prayer. Once *Am Yisrael* settles in the Promised Land, G-d should be recognized as King over the entire Creation. The *Shira* tells us that during *Keriat Yam Suf*, nations sat up and paid attention to the absolute power that G-d was dramatically demonstrating. As the Ramban brings out, G-d was showing that He is Master of the *Universe* by supporting those who serve Him and destroying those who rebel against Him. So may it be way into the future generations that G-d will heed the

good deeds of the righteous and the sins of the wicked, supporting those who strive to do what is right according to the spiritual principles of the Creation. Thus G-d will be King for ever and ever.

Yet the Mechilta, a much earlier Midrashic source, is not entirely happy with the future tense

Hashem yimloch le-olam va-ed, that G-d will be King for ever and ever. This Midrash sees this look into the distant future as a cause for criticism. Had Moshe and the people declared: “G-d rules for ever” no nation would be able to threaten them. As the Chatain Sofer expands, even within the *Shira*, there is an implication that the impact of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* would not be permanent, that *Am Yisrael* could suffer *churban* and *galut*, as the whole world’s recognition of Hakadosh Baruch Hu as King was expressed as being in the future only. Many unpleasant things might well happen on that long journey into the future, with the ultimate destiny being a mere dream.

There is a vital lesson here. It is to keep eyes on the final destiny - always, however far into the future that might be. In life’s work. Whatever the project is. It might include a quality mastery of Shas and Poskim. It might be discovering and innovating a cure for a particular form of cancer. It may be leading a team to tackle a particular crisis in the community, for example *shidduchim* barriers for those in their late 20s and 30s. It could very likely be raising a family as fully-fulfilled *B’nei*



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Torah and Yirei Shamayim. Whatever the project, visualize yourself as having reached the goal and then plan and do what it takes to get there, even if it takes many years. Bear in mind that there are many supportive intermediate targets on the way. All these goals not only yield the proverbial pot of gold (and very much more) at the end, but their intermediate markers pay rich dividends on the grounded and single-minded focused journey to the objective.

Let's briefly look at a possible example. Torah learning has always been part of your life, but now you're seeking serious quality mastery of Shas and Poskim. That doesn't happen overnight. Work and family severely limit available fatigue-free hours.

Shas and Poskim are mentally demanding. Shas before Shacharit tackled at Daf Yomi (for example) or Omud Yomi rates take 7½ or 15 years respectively, with the additional challenge of remembering what you've learnt (I write brief summaries for quick regular review). Whilst most *dapim* can be reasonably grasped in an hour or two, some demand formidable patience, persistence, and endurance. Similarly with Poskim. A page of Mishna Berura for half an hour between Mincha and Ma'ariv can be monumentally challenging after a frustrating day at work or in the home, when it's quite a struggle to keep eyes on the Siddur during Mincha.

In addition Gemara and Halacha are not in a vacuum; you want to be conversant with Torah Bichtav, perhaps going through the

Parasha plus a couple of chapters of Nach on Friday nights. You also want to get a sense of the times and events in which our Torah sources developed and unfolded and – most important – the *mussar*: the ethical, spiritual, and personal development principles that are shine brightly through our traditions and bring perspective to our Torah learning in terms of it being a positively life-filling force..

Overwhelming, indeed. But constantly seeing yourself as Torah-conversant with Quality Mastery of Shas and Poskim is a vital part of the journey in itself. In making it your destiny, you make it your identity, as you're striding the way, and a very long one at that. You're not just learning when you feel like it. You're looking at that destiny along the path of work and focused commitment. You see each step, each *daf* and halacha mastered as another brick in your own Torah-constructed palace. You form deepening personal connections as you gravitate to those with similar goals and to those who can help you to that reality.

This then is a vital key. To constantly and consistently see your identity as already being inside your target as you strive to achieve it making it part of you, step by step. Imagining yourself already there enables you to slowly gravitate to there, and take the challenges and frustrations in the strides to that destiny. ■

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Rosalind & Ian Jacobsan and family
on the birth of a great grandson