

Nitzavim Vayelech 2023

Speak Up, Step Up

2 minute read | Straightforward

For a long time, there was a prevailing but now discredited theory that history is written by a few great men, and that these privileged few are driven to greatness through some intrinsic superiority, be it religious, economic, intellectual, or some other advantage.

The Torah has never taken this view:

אתם נצבים היום כלכם, לפני ה' אלהיכם: ראשיכם שבטיכם, זקניכם ושתריכם, כל, איש ישראל. טפכם נשיכם—וגר, אשר בקרב
All of you are standing before Hashem your God today: heads; tribes; elders; officers; all the men of Israel; children; women; the strangers in your midst; the wood choppers and the water carriers; so that you should enter into the covenant and oath of Hashem your God, which Hashem your God makes with you today... (29:9-11)

One of Judaism's great innovations is that our God is the God of all people, and cares about all people.

R' Boruch of Medzhybizh teaches that the Torah's call to action is not just to the wise and industrious, and instead requires each of us to participate in realizing its vision; from the most natural born leaders to the most marginalized groups as well – ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושתריכם / טפכם נשיכם.

We believe that God's call to action presents itself every day – אשר ה' אלהיך, כרת עמך היום – and that it emanates from Sinai itself – בכל יום ויום בת קול יוצאת מהר חורב ומכרזת –

We will make mistakes, we will stumble, and we will fail, and someone else would do it better. But it doesn't matter.

Because whatever your talents and shortcomings are, you have a unique voice and contribution that you alone can offer – לא עליך המלאכה לגמור, ולא אתה בן חורין לבטל ממנה –

The only person who will never make mistakes is someone who does nothing at all.



Usually, we default to talking about skill and talent. That's when we say things like he is the smartest, or she is the quickest.

Sometimes, we talk about luck. That's when we say things like someone was in the right place at the right time, or they finally caught a break.

But we all know there is more to it than that.

Talent and luck are part of what it takes, sure. But when we look at top performers across all fields, there's something that outweighs both – mental game.

We recognize that top performers have an insatiable desire to persevere that carries them through the troughs of adversity and resistance and into the heights of achievement and success. They have both reactive and proactive qualities; they can endure difficult situations until they persevere and overcome adversity, obstacles, or pressure. They then go on to maintain focus and motivation when things are going well to achieve their goals consistently.

Talent and skill have normal distributions; some people have more, and some people have less. But research has consistently shown that strength or smarts aren't the most accurate predictions of achievement. Instead, it was grit – the perseverance and passion to achieve long-term goals – that made the difference.

We've probably seen evidence of this in our own lives. There's that friend who squandered their talent, and then that other person who gave their all to accomplish their goal, no matter how hard it was or how long it took. In other words, talent is overrated.

R' Shamshon Raphael Hirsch notes that humans are created in God's image, meaning humans possess a capacity for free choice that distinguishes us from all other creatures.

R' Noach Weinberg teaches that desire, the free will to persevere, is evenly distributed, meaning that every one of us has an equal ability to choose, which ought to be hugely empowering. It means any of us can accomplish real greatness, and it starts with just choosing to want it badly enough.

The notion that humans have free will is the radical proposition that cuts to the very core of Judaism:

הַעֲדוֹתַי בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַחַיִּים וְהַמְּוֹת נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַבְּרָכָה וְהַקְּלָלָה וּבְחַרְתָּ בַחַיִּים לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה אִתָּה וּבַרְעָה – I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life, so you and your children will live! (30:19)

As the Rambam wrote, every one of us could choose to be as righteous as Moshe himself if we genuinely wanted to. Avos d'R' Nosson teaches that the entire Torah is within everybody's reach – עמלה של תורה, כל הרוצה ליטול יבוא ויטול / מורשה קהלת יעקב.



You have to believe in yourself and in your ability to do it – וְצַדִּיק בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה. The Ramban suggests that it's heresy to doubt yourself!

R' Tzadok HaKohen explains that believing in God necessarily requires that you believe in yourself. God put you here to do something, so God obviously believes in your ability to perform. It follows that if you don't think God believes in you, you don't properly believe in God!

Your mental game plays a more important role than anything else in achieving your health, business, and life goals. That's good news because while you can't do much about the genes you were born with, you can do a lot to develop mental toughness. Mental toughness is a learned trait that anyone can develop.

There is undoubtedly some natural inclination that makes self-mastery easier for some people, but it is not a limiting factor in itself, however. Everyone's ability to think, plan and execute is enough if they make use of it.

Regardless of the talent you were born with, you can become more consistent and disciplined, and you can develop superhuman levels of mental toughness.

It's something you build, but it's also something you maintain and grow. Newly conquered territory becomes your new comfort zone soon enough.

When things get tough for most people, they find something easier to work on. When things get difficult for mentally tough people, they find a way to stay on course. There will always be extreme moments that require incredible bouts of courage, determination, resiliency, and grit, and even the best of us will fail. There will never be a human who only succeeds and does not fail – כִּי אָדָם אֵין צַדִּיק – בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יִחָטָא.

Every tough-as-nails person has faced sink-or-swim moments, and they didn't choose to sink, float, or tread water. They chose life; they chose to swim. Every descendant of Jewish history is the heir to an intrinsic and inescapable legacy of people who chose to live proactively and not reactively. The bedrock of contemporary Jewish life today was substantially laid by Holocaust survivors, people who chose life, building anew in the wake of the devastation they endured.

But for most of life's circumstances and challenges, toughness simply comes down to being more consistent than most people. Every day, cultivate your mental game a little and make life-affirming and life-enhancing choices.

Choose life – וּבַחֲרַת בַּחַיִּים.

Because hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard.



The Covenant of Kings

3 minute read | Straightforward

One of the most basic and essential rules of interpretation is understanding that the Torah is written in language humans can read and understand – דיברה תורה כלשון בני אדם.

R' Shamshon Raphael Hirsch explains that the Torah writes within the boundaries of human understanding, not objective truths known only to God.

The Rambam utilizes this theme prominently, famously suggesting that the Torah co-opted animal sacrifices only because they were culturally familiar methods of worship in the Ancient Near East. The Ralbag similarly recognized the value of understanding the ancient world of the Torah to give us enhanced context and understanding of the Torah's teachings.

Apart from animal sacrifices, another ancient practice that would be culturally familiar was the notion of the covenant.

In the Ancient Near East, kings would formalize their diplomatic relations with treaties or covenants. These treaties were drafted between equals and sometimes between a superior and a subordinate state or suzerain and vassal. The structure of the Torah's covenants has striking parallels to the suzerain-vassal treaties. If we unpack the layers of the system, we can unlock a deeper appreciation for it.

The main elements of suzerain-vassal treaties are identifying the treaty-maker, the superior; a historical introduction, such as prior beneficial acts the superior has done for the subordinate; the stipulations, typically the demand for loyalty; a list of divine witnesses; and blessings and curses. The treaty was proclaimed in public along with a ceremonial meal and stored at a holy site. A periodic public reading would remind the subordinate citizens of their duties.

The similarity between the Torah's use of covenants and other treaties extant in the Ancient Near East isn't merely interesting trivia – it's political dynamite.

For most of ancient history, the head of state was also the leader of the cult – god-kings and priest-kings were standard. The king or the priestly class had a monopoly on the rituals of religion, and the common serfs were passive observers living vicariously through these holy men.

In sharp contrast with that background, the Torah's rendition of a covenant is striking not in its similarity but also its difference.



God does not seek a covenant with Moshe, the head of state, nor Ahron, the Kohen Gadol. God does not even desire a covenant with the Jewish People; the party God treats with is no less than every single individual, which is explosive because it's shocking enough that a God would care about humans in general, let alone each of us in particular. And by making a covenant with us, God goes even further and asks us to be His partners.

A covenant between God and individuals doesn't just illustrate the dignity of every individual; it also bestows a second facet to our identity. By elevating common people into vassal-kings, we are all royalty – כָּל-הָעֵדָה כְּלָם קְדוֹשִׁים / מִמְּלֶכֶת כְּהֲנָנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ. This also echoes a broader ideological theme that idealized a community of educated and empowered citizens – וְשִׁנְנֵתָם לְקִנְיָךְ / וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבָנֶיךָ.

R' Shlomo Farhi notes that we take self-identity for granted today, but historically, self-identity was subsumed into community and culture. In a world where the individual self barely existed and mattered very little, it's radical to say that God cares for us individually because it's not apparent at all – בְּשִׁבְלֵי נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם. This tension between God as distant yet close is captured in our blessings, where we call Hashem “You” in the second person, indicating familiar closeness, and then “Hashem,” with titles in the third person, indicating distance.

Striking a covenant with individuals democratizes access to God and spirituality, creating a direct line for everybody. Parenthetically, this echoes the Torah's conception of creating humans in God's image – everyone is, not just a few “special” people.

We are all royalty in God's eyes, and we are all God's partners.

God is Biased

4 minute read | Straightforward

One of Judaism's signature beliefs is in our personal ability to make amends – Teshuva.

It's hard to overstate the significance of this belief.

In sharp contrast, Christianity does not have a framework for humans to make amends; humans are born and remain in a state of sinfulness as a result of the corruption of original sin, which is the theological basis of Jesus' death as an atonement.

Teshuva is a fundamentally different worldview.



Teshuva and the personal abilities of atonement and forgiveness are groundbreaking because, in the ancient world, humans lived in fear of their gods. You would try to do right by them, in the hope that they would do right to you; you don't offend them, so they don't smite you. The relationship people had with their gods was explicitly transactional; and from a certain perspective, what we might call abusive.

But in a framework where atonement and forgiveness exist, God isn't looking to catch you out at all, and the new possibility exists for a very different relationship – not just master and servant, but now something more like parent and child.

Why do we believe we have the ability to atonement and earn forgiveness?

Quite simply, we believe we can make amends because the Torah consistently not only emphasizes that God is not impartial; but that God is biased towards creation – וְכַטּוֹב הָעוֹלָם נִדוֹן / עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יִבְנֶה.

The priestly blessing explicitly talks about God's preferential treatment; Rashi explains it as a wish for God to literally smile at us – יָאֵר ה' פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵי וַיְחַנֵּן, יִשָּׂא ה' פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵי.

As the Shem mi'Shmuel explains, God's compassion amplifies the steps we take to make amends – וְעָשָׂה חֶסֶד לְאֲלֹפִים.

The Torah speaks plainly about how compassion will drive God to personally gather up every lost soul and return and restore them from wherever they are:

וְשָׁב ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֶת-יְשׁוּבוֹתֶיךָ, וְרָחַמְךָ; וְשָׁב, וְקִבְּצֶךָ מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים, אֲשֶׁר הִפְיָצֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ, שָׁמָּה. אִם-יִהְיֶה נִדְחָךָ, בְּקִצְצֵה הַשָּׂמִים מִשָּׁם יִקְבְּצֶךָ וְשָׁב ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ, וְיִחַן לְךָ – ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ, וּמִשָּׁם יִקְחֶךָ וְיָגִיד לְךָ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים, מִכָּל הַמְּקוֹמֹת, אֲשֶׁר הִפְיָצֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ. (30:3,4)

Rav Kook teaches that the first promise is about a physical return to Israel, and the second promise is that God will also return us from the outer edge of the spiritual universe – קִצְצֵה הַשָּׂמִים. The Sfas Emes teaches that Hashem makes this promise regardless of whatever it is that brought us there to that spiritual wilderness – whether it's upbringing; bad choices; poor self-control – none of it matters – מִשָּׁם יִקְבְּצֶךָ / וּמִשָּׁם יִקְחֶךָ.

The High Holy Day prayers prominently quotes Ezekiel telling his audience, and us, what it will take to avert harsh judgment:

וְהָרָשָׁע כִּי יָשׁוּב מִכָּל-חַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְשָׁמַר אֶת-כָּל-חֻקוֹתַי וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה חַיָּה יִחְיֶה לֹא יָמוּת. כָּל-פְּשָׁעָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לֹא יִזְכָּרוּ לוֹ – Moreover, if the wicked one repents of all the sins that he committed and keeps all My laws and does what is just and right, he shall live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions he committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness he has practiced, he shall live. Is it my desire that a wicked person



shall die?—says the Lord God. It is rather that he shall turn back from his ways and live. (Ezekiel 18:21-23)

As R' Jonathan Sacks notes, there is no mention of sacrifice, no mention of a temple, no magic ritual or secret; it's never too late to change, God will forgive every mistake we've made so long as we are honest in regretting it and doing our best to make it right.

As the Izhbitzer teaches, there are no mistakes, and the world has unfolded up to this moment as intended; which, quite radically, validates sin retroactively, although it should be clear that this teaching has zero prospective or forward-looking value. You are where you are supposed to be today, you were supposed to make that mistake; and now your task is to move forward from it. God is willing to let go of our mistakes; we needn't hold on so tight.

As R' Simcha Bunim of Peshischa points out, there's nothing surprising about humans making mistakes and doing the wrong thing. The big surprise is that we don't take advantage of our ability to atone and make amends every day – לא בשמים הוא / פי-קרוב אליך הדבר מאד, בפיה ובלבבך, לעשותו.

The conclusion of one of the most moving parts of the prayers unambiguously says that even a person who sinned their entire life can still repent on his deathbed – כי לא תחפץ במות המת, כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחייה ועד – יום מותו תחכה לו, אם ישוב מיד תקבלו.

It's literally not possible to alienate yourself from the Creator Who permeates Creation. As R' Akiva taught, God Himself cleanses us – ומי מטהר אתכם, אביכם שבשמים, ... מה מקנה מטרה את הטמאים, אף הקדוש ברוך הוא – מטהר את ישראל.

It's not even difficult! Our sages authorize a wicked man to marry a woman on the condition that he is righteous, on the basis that he might have had a moment's thought about changing for the better. The Minchas Chinuch notes that this potential thought doesn't include the confession and follow through required for complete rehabilitation; but the Rogatchover and the Brisker school suggest that the mere thought alone of doing better removes the designation of wicked from a person – because God is biased.

By designing creation with a framework that includes atonement, forgiveness, and Teshuva, God freely admits bias towards the children of creation. In fact, our sages say that a repentant can achieve what saints cannot.

God invites the children of creation to come home – שובו בנים שובבים – There is no need to hold yourself to a higher standard than God.

If you think you can probably be doing a little better in certain respects, you might be right and it could be time to raise your standards.



It's not hard, and it's not far away. Creation has been designed for you to make amends, has been waiting for you to make amends.

What are you waiting for?

Fear Redux; Faith Redux

6 minute read | Straightforward

In the context of religion, faith is a natural consequence of professing to believe in God. If there's a Creator, there must be some plan, and so the thinking goes, we should have faith in it.

Faith means the notion of confidence or trust in a person, thing, or concept; in this case, the Creator –
אמונה / בטחון.

But how we talk about faith doesn't always make sense.

People get afraid and worried about everyday life, like whether they can afford to pay their bills or if their loved one will recover from sickness. The root of every human fear is the notion that we are fundamentally powerless against the forces of the universe.

There can sometimes be a toxic Emunah culture that stifles, suffocates, and squashes real people with real feelings. That sounds like when people say things like don't worry, God has a plan, or it's for the best, trust God, and have faith that everything will work out. As the famous song goes, the main thing is to have no fear at all – והעיקר לא לפחד כלל.

Whether spoken or unspoken or even in your own thoughts, there is an invalidation or judgment here; to the extent you feel doubts or fears, you really have to work on your faith because if you had faith in God, you wouldn't feel afraid – because faith and fear are incompatible and mutually exclusive.

But is that so true?

Firstly, there is a basic problem with the notion that fear is intrinsically wrong. Although many fears are learned, the threshold capacity to fear is part of human nature, a subconscious instinct, which, like desire, does not lend itself to moral judgment; it's simply the basic reality of our lived experience.

Fear is our response to a stimulus occurring in the present or in anticipation or expectation of a future threat perceived as a risk. The fear response arises from the perception of danger leading to a



confrontation with or escape from or avoiding the threat, also known as the fight-or-flight response, which in extreme cases of horror and terror can be a freeze response or paralysis.

Fear is visceral and instinctual, hard coded into our DNA, predates human consciousness, and results from an external stimulus, not a character flaw. The survival instinct originates in the most primal parts of the brain – נפש בהמית.

This is a complete defense of feeling our fears.

Moreover, fear is one of the tools the Torah uses to obtain compliance from its readers – וְתָרָה אֶרְיָהּ בְּכֶם וְעָצַר אֶת־הַשְּׁמַיִם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה מָטָר וְהִצְדָּמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת־יְבוּלָהּ וְאֲבָדְתֶם מִהֲרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר ה' נָתַן לָכֶם.

Fear is arguably why many people practice religion; Pascal's wager argues that a rational person should live as though God exists because if God does not exist, a person only loses a little luxury or pleasure. In contrast, if God exists, a person stands to receive infinite pain or gain in Heaven and Hell.

But far more powerfully, the greats experienced fear too, as the Torah and our prophets testify, which should demolish any misguided self-righteous attempts at invalidating fear.

Fear is not a negative emotion; it is not something we should avoid associating with our great ancestors. Fear is a human emotion, and our great ancestors were humans who felt fear and responded to those fears in ways we can learn from.

When God promises Avraham a grand future, Avraham wonders what God is talking about because, as a childless older man, he naturally experiences doubt, fear, and insecurity about the future – מִהֲתִתֶּן־לִי / בְּמָה אֲדַע כִּי אֵירָשָׁנָה. As beings bound by time, our existence is limited from one moment to the next; everyone worries about the future.

When Yakov and his family finally escape Lavan's clutches, they are intercepted on the run by Esau with 400 warriors, and Yakov is afraid – וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד. He has good reason to be afraid – he can send gifts, give weapons to children, and send half the family a day ahead, but he understands the imminent reality that his family might get massacred – הֲצִילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו כִּי־יִירָא אֲנֹכִי אֹתוֹ פֹּנֵי־יְבוּא וְהַכְנִי – אִם עַל־בָּנָיִם.

When Yosef frames his brothers as part of his ruse to see if they regret his abduction and trafficking, they express fear when they begin to realize that they are entangled with a powerful person who poses a serious threat to them – וַיֵּצֵא לָבֶם וַיְהַרְדּוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו –

When the young Moshe steps beyond the palace life of his childhood into the world of his people's suffering, he steps in to save someone from an oppressive Egyptian officer, killing the Egyptian. Realizing that he has crossed the point of no return and stands alone against the might of the Egyptian empire, Moshe feels afraid – וַיִּירָא מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲכֹן נֹדַע הַדָּבָר –



When Mordechai sends word to Esther about the new legislation authorizing the genocide of the Jewish People, he tells Esther to intervene and go to the king. But Esther doesn't go immediately; she responds that going to the king without summons is a death sentence. She is afraid to risk her life, and Mordechai must persuade her to overcome those fears to save the Jewish People.

Let there be no doubt that we are talking about giants here, the greatest of greats, heroes of heroes. And they felt fears we can easily recognize as familiar.

It is cruel, not to mention incredibly self-destructive, to idealize a lack of fear.

As one great writer had a child ask his father, can a man still be brave if he's afraid? Says the father with piercing clarity; it is the only time a man can be brave.

Toxic masculinity is a cultural pressure that says men shouldn't cry or get scared; our Torah says they do.

As Fred Rogers taught, anything human is mentionable, and the mentionable can become more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they can become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary.

A core part of the Jewish mission is the pursuit of wholeness – שלימות / תמימות. It is an act of psychological violence to kill off the emotional aspects of another, or in the case of yourself, self-mutilation. When you cut away the parts of the self capable of feeling a wide range of emotional responses, people wind up disconnected from themselves and the people around them. You get broken people not emotionally in tune with themselves or their surroundings. By definition, wholeness must be compatible with the full spectrum of human emotion; one of the most important tasks of our era is to reconnect with and reunite the severed parts.

The life of our greatest heroes was an emotional life that was visited by fear and doubt. The difference between the best of us and the rest of us is what they did about it. The Torah's stories reassure us that we're not alone and that our feelings are natural and normal.

Fear and faith are compatible, and they exist along the same spectrum. Faith is not blind or mindless; the Torah testifies Avraham's faith in the middle of his doubt and insecurity – וְהֵאֱמַן בְּה' וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה –

As the Torah draws to the conclusion of its great story, Moshe hands over the reins to Yehoshua, and encourages him in front of the Jewish People, to be brave and strong in the face of fear; God tells Yehoshua the exact same thing – חֲזָקוּ וְאַמְצוּ אֶל־תִּירְאוּ וְאַל־תַּעֲרָצוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא הַהִלֵּךְ עִמָּךְ לֹא יִרְפָּךְ וְלֹא יַעֲזֹבְךָ – / לֹא תִירָא וְלֹא תַחַת / וַיִּצְוּ אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נוּן וַיֹּאמֶר חֲזָק וְאַמְצָן כִּי אִתָּה תִבְיָא אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לָהֶם וְאָנֹכִי אֵתְּיָךְ עִמָּךְ.



As the Abarbanel teaches, there is no contradiction between fear and faith. Faith in God cannot make a person immune to the powerful natural emotional instinct of fear. Faith means that despite those fears, you act with your highest faculties, guided by Torah, reason, and knowledge, not by fear.

What makes our greats great is that while they sometimes felt afraid, they didn't stay afraid. They didn't live in fear or act from a place of fear. In the high-stress moments, they felt it, but it is never mentioned again; they choose to act with confidence, faith, security, and trust that there is a divine plan, the difference between feeling afraid and being afraid.

We see this played out in the aftermath of the scout report of the Land of Israel; the Jewish People are consumed with fear and terror that they will be massacred, that their women and children will be captured, and they want to flee back to Egypt. Too afraid to listen, Yehosua and Caleb's reassurances fall on deaf ears – וְאַתֶּם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־עַם הָאָרֶץ כִּי לֶחֱמֹנוּ הֵם סָר צֶלֶם מִעֲלֵיהֶם ה' אֶתְּנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Controlling your emotions doesn't mean avoiding or denying complex or difficult emotions. It means doing things with your emotions as the passenger, not the driver. When a moment of anger, fear, or sadness comes, feel it, recognize it, and understand it, but don't lose it.

Avraham was right to be anxious about the future; Yakov was right to be scared his family would be massacred in the morning; Moshe was right that one man can't resist an empire alone; Esther was right that going to the king without an invitation was a death sentence.

In more recent memory, the Jewish world of today is built on foundations laid by Holocaust survivors. These people experienced unthinkable horrors beyond even the greatest subject matter experts. It has been said of the generation that survived the terror of the Holocaust that it was perhaps the greatest act of faith by the Jewish People to trust God and have Jewish children once more.

When you're afraid, it means you take a threat seriously. It's pointless to try to stop feeling nervous. Instead, like our heroes, recognize it for what it is, a call to harness all your faculties on the task at hand. Like pain, worry when you don't feel it.

Judaism and the Torah are situated in the world of action. We bear the timeless and consistent legacy of people who faced their fears and acted with boldness and hope, who felt scared in their darkness yet persisted until the light.

Our great ancestors took action, hoping things would work out, but not with any knowledge or certainty. As our sages point out, they often fear their sins and shortcomings. Their extraordinary acts of faith look like people who feel afraid but do their best to bring about a better outcome, which is well within our reach.

Courage is not the absence of fear but the triumph over it.



I present TorahRedux l'ilui nishmas my late grandfather, HaGaon HaRav Yehuda Leib Gertner ben HaRav HaChassid Menachem Mendel.

I hope you enjoyed this week's thoughts. If you have questions or comments, or just want to say hello, it's a point of pride for me to hear from you, and I'll always respond.

If you liked this week's edition of TorahRedux, why not share it with friends and family who would appreciate it?

Neli

PS - *TorahRedux is my pride and joy, the product of thousands of hours of learning, research, writing, editing, and formatting. My business, Hendon Advisors, allows me to dedicate time to TorahRedux, and I welcome your assistance in furthering my goal to keep publishing high-quality Parsha content that makes a difference. I source and broker the purchase and sale of healthcare businesses; I kindly ask for your blessings and prayers. If you are a buyer of healthcare businesses or can make introductions to healthcare operators who might buy or sell, just reply to this email to get in touch.*

Redux: *adjective* – resurgence; refers to being brought back, restored, or revived; something familiar presented in a new way. Not to see what no one else has seen, but to say what nobody has yet said about something which everybody sees.