



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

BESHALACH / בשלח

WHY DO THE ARABS CONTROL THE OIL?

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A PROJECT OF THE SHLUCHIM OFFICE

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BESHALACH

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A newspaper columnist recently pointed out something absurd about the War on Terror. While, on one hand we are fighting terrorism full force, on the other hand, by depending on Middle Eastern oil, we are actually sponsoring terrorism in the world.

As soon as we stop buying their oil, their entire economy will collapse and leave them with nothing.

Why is this situation so? Why is most of the world's oil controlled by the forces of evil, but in Tel Aviv there is not a drop of oil? Why did G-d make it this way?

In the classic film *The Ten Commandments* there is a character named Dasan, who constantly creates problems for Moses. Who is this character and what's his story?

Let's look into our Parsha.

We read this week about the great miracle in the desert: G-d rained *manna* from the sky upon the Jews and Moses instructed them, "Don't leave any over 'til the morning." But some men didn't listen, and their *manna* swarmed with maggots and stunk the next morning. The Torah tells us how Moses was angry with them.

Who were these people? Who would make the great effort to do the opposite of what Moses said? Rashi says they were Dasan and Aviram.

This was not the first time Moses suffered from Dasan and Aviram.

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Early in his life, Moses went out to see the suffering of the Jews. He saw an Egyptian hitting a Jew, about to kill him, so he quickly killed the Egyptian instead. And the next day, when he saw a Jew hitting a Jew and chastised him for it, the Jew basically said, "Who made you judge, jury and executioner? Will you kill me like you killed the Egyptian?!"

Rashi tells us that these two Jews were Dasan and Aviram. It was they who informed Pharaoh of Moses's deed, forcing Moses to flee to Midyan.

Later, we meet Dasan and Aviram once again.

Many years later, Moses and his brother Aaron demanded of Pharaoh to "Let my people go!" As a result, Pharaoh made the Jewish slavery harder. A delegation of Jewish overseers visited Pharaoh to complain about the new and more difficult workload, and as they exited Pharaoh's palace, they met Moses and Aaron about to enter.

The Torah tells us, "They met Moses and Aaron and said to them, 'You have put a sword in Pharaoh's hand with which to kill us.'"

Who were these Jewish leaders with the chutzpah, the nerve, to berate Moses and Aaron? Give a guess: Dasan and Aviram.



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Much later in the Torah, at the episode of the spies, the Midrash explains that the Jews wanted to appoint new leaders and go back to Egypt. They talked of replacing Moses and Aaron with Dasan and Aviram.

And after that, we have the rebellion of Korach against Moses and Aron, which was instigated by Dasan and Aviram. Indeed, when King David describes that rebellion in Psalms, he doesn't even mention the name of Korach – he just talks of Dasan and Aviram, implying they were the main instigators.

So how could two individuals repeatedly cause so many problems for Moshe? How did G-d give them the strength to repeatedly incite the entire community and succeed in creating problems?

The Tanya explains that G-d created the universe with paralleling forces of good and evil down to every detail.

We see this in the Exodus story itself: When the good Moses did miracles in Egypt, Pharaoh's evil magicians replicated them.

Throughout the Torah we find these parallels: Jacob was paralleled by his brother Esau. Isaac was paralleled by his brother Ishmael. Cain was paralleled by his brother Abel.

From the very beginning of the universe, everything good has its evil opposite.



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If there were only be only good role models like Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Aaron and not Ishmaels, Esau's, Dasan and Aviram... everyone would choose good. There would be no free will.

If you'd win the Lotto every time you came to shul, everyone would come! If everyone who put on Tefillin would get richer, everyone would put on Tefillin! There would be no reason in the world *not* to come to shul or put on Tefillin. And ultimately, there'd be no free will.

But when life is the opposite—when those who don't put on Tefillin win the Lotto and live it up; when you *don't* win the Lotto by coming to shul, but you still come—then you have true free will.

The same is in the Torah: If Moses split the sea, brought down the *manna*, and spoke with G-d at Sinai with no opposition, naturally everyone would have followed him—there would be no second option to choose from. There would be no test of free will whether to listen.

For the sake of free will, G-d needed an opposition for Moses and Aaron. Who were they? The two brothers Dasan and Aviram, who were also Jewish leaders in Egypt and whose purpose it was to challenge Moses and Aaron all along.

The same is true in our day and age. G-d gave the terrorist (forces of evil) the oil upon which whole world depends. Thus, there are two equal and opposite forces: America, a "kingdom of kindness," a powerful country that supports Israel, and on



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the other hand, all the fundamentalist extremism that fights against Israel and America.

The rest of the world has the choice of good and evil. Which will they go with? The extremist bloc? Or America? This is true free will.

But this is nothing to be afraid of. The Rebbe explains (Likutei Sichos Vol. I pg. 247) that there's an essential difference between good and evil. Evil is temporary—a transient entity that exists as long as it's needed for there to be free will. Good, on the other hand, is true and eternal.

So it is incumbent upon us to remember that just as Moses ultimately defeated Dasan and Aviram as the ground itself swallowed them, leaving us no memory of them... just like the Nazis were removed from the world... and just like the Communists passed from history, so too in our day there is nothing to fear at all.

At the end, good will triumph and terror will end. *Amen.*