



"If you search for it like silver, and seek it like buried treasures, then will you comprehend knowledge of God, and the fear of God will you find."

King Solomon, Proverbs 2:4-5

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## Gladness and Exultation

RIVKA OLENICK

"Serve the Lord with gladness, come before Him with exultation." Psalms 100:2

What is the emphasis or repetition in "Serve the Lord" and "come before Him" which has the same meaning. The sentence also reads: "with gladness" and "with exultation" that also has the same meaning. The sentence could have been written as two separate statements: "Serve the Lord with gladness." Or: "Come before Him with exultation." What is being emphasized and repeated in the one sentence?

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## The Chosen People

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM  
with commentary by  
RABBI REUVEN MANN

**Reader:** I am trying to expand my knowledge in religions. Could you give me an explanation of the phrase "The chosen ones"? Who are they? Why are they the chosen ones? Are they superior, in ways, to other people in the world?

**Mesora:** Let me clarify your last statement; man is man. When compared with all other nations, Jews have no additional human features.

You question the term "chosen people". I ask, "what does 'chosen' imply"? I would say that one who has merited distinction based on his own acts, and is ascribed credit by another, may be termed "chosen" by the other.

Does this compliment apply to each individual Jew? Let us consider:

Abraham lived in a society permeated by idolatrous practices - he too worshiped idols. Upon later analysis of what is real and true as he observed the world, Abraham arrived at the conclusion that there can be only one God, he beholds infinite wisdom, His wisdom reflects in all He created, He is just, kind, merciful, and He is not of the material of this world - He is not physical. Noting man's clear distinction as the only rational being on Earth, Abraham further understood that God desires man to use his mind above all else. Abraham arrived at proofs for his reasoning, such valid proofs that God desired His words be carried out in the world through Abraham and his descendants, to whom Abraham would teach the ways of God. This is expressly stated in Genesis, 18:19, "For I know (him) that he will command his children and his household after him and they will keep the way of God to do charity and justice...."

For the singular reason that Abraham approached this life - and ultimately his relationship with God - using rationale, intelligence, and proofs, God therefore chose Abraham - and thereafter his

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### ASK YOUR CHILDREN:

"Is it better to fight with someone, or tell them how you feel so you can be friends?"  
Have your children email us with their answers: [questions@mesora.org](mailto:questions@mesora.org)

## MESSAGE TO MESORA AND THE JEWISHTIMES

AMBASSADOR ALAN KEYES



In these days of terrible travail for Israel and for the civilized world, I want to commend Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim and the supporters of Mesora and the Jewish Times for all their fine work in defense of truth, decency and humanity.

Israel is under assault from forces without and within. This assault has become intertwined, ideologically, politically, and militarily, with assaults upon America. As human beings and children of our Father God, we must unflinchingly oppose terrorist violence, whatever pretexs or causes it may hide behind. And we must all shoulder shared responsibilities in these momentous days of Israel's and America's mutual struggle for survival against implacable enemies.

Energetic adherence to God's Will, faithful upholding of God's Law, determined respect for God's Authority over the affairs of His creatures are righteous and, I deeply believe, pleasing to our Creator. They are also imperative to the proper, ardent advancement of the cause of justice and peace in the world -- as they ever have been in His plan for the human race, since the beginning of the world.

I am a Christian, and a Catholic. Rabbi Ben-Chaim and I share an understanding that true religious faith and practice are supported, indeed commanded, by human reason. We all must respect our God-given capacity to know and defend the right. We all must protect the sacredness of innocent human life. We must honor God in all that we are and all that we do. Moral principle is accessible to the human mind and enshrined in the human heart, and we are obligated by our Creator to uphold the rational and saving commandments of His moral law. In our various vocations, this is the truth for all humankind. And at this moment in human history, for the future of Israel and America, we must insist on this truth.

I have said before, and I continue to believe,  that the civilized world will prevail against ignorance,  barbarism and hate. If we are faithful and true,  we will win the war against terror, and secure for  humanity the better destiny our Creator has  designed for us to achieve. Keep faith,

## Gladness and Exultation

RIVKA OLENICK

(continued from page 1)

Unfortunately, many people believe there cannot be gladness or exultation when serving God or coming before Him. People mistakenly think that the involvement in the commandments is painful and burdensome and that we should live a life of suffering and deprivation. The Torah's path is referred to as: "a tree of life" "Her ways are ways of pleasantness" (Mishle 3: 17, 18). At the same time we should not think that to serve God, to come before Him with gladness and exultation is simply an emotional state having nothing to do with wisdom and thought. To the contrary a person can begin to understand that gladness and exultation is produced when serving God, especially in every day practical life when you involve yourself in helping yourself and others. Every day life is set up specifically to immerse itself in God's will. The more you use your talents and skills to help others, the greater the gladness.

Divine Service is more than going to the synagogue on the Sabbath or making a phone pledge. Involve yourself in learning more about the commandments and prayer. When you are fulfilling a commandment or are involved in prayer, remind yourself that you are before the One and Only God; that you come before the One Who created you and the world. Do not allow anything or anyone to disrupt the relationship between you and the Creator. Realize that you are dependent on God, not man. Feel glad knowing that you are serving the One who knows all your needs and provides you with all your needs. Be happy that you have God to turn to. Thinking this way gives a person tremendous enthusiasm. It creates a great sense of well being that you can direct your thoughts this way. Begin to understand that by doing the mitzvos there are the great benefits of gladness and exultation. Learn the truths and purpose of the commandments, that itself produces gladness. Gladness and happiness is a by-product of thought. Put your effort and energy into fulfilling God's commandments with optimism and that will take you away from your own sadness and the sadness in the world.

Every Jew is obligated to serve God with joy and gladness in wealth and in poverty in good health and even if one is ill. This level can be reached slowly but be practical about it, you cannot demand happiness from yourself. But you can

certainly improve the quality of your life, by putting more effort into Torah study and understanding the commandments and their purpose in our lives. Over time the effort you make in this area will produce peace of mind. It will remove you from things that are petty and superficial and will remove you from the constant need to seek approval from others, which will always cause conflict.

Only God knows all your thoughts. Focus on this idea when you feel estranged from God, especially when the world is in turmoil and when you are personally suffering. It is God that relieves all suffering. Know that when you serve God you are fulfilling your purpose, the reason you were created and this understanding will begin to bring you relief optimism and happiness. Do everything possible to preserve and strengthen this relationship, it is the most important relationship we have. Understanding this will give you satisfaction and peace of mind. Your peace of mind will produce gladness so you can encourage others to serve God with simcha. Only a life committed to service can produce such gladness and exultation. The pusuk emphasizes that only service produces gladness, that to come before God only, produces exultation.

Don't allow yourself to be fooled to think that anything else can bring a person such gladness and exultation. Else meaning red benders, silver rings, handwriting annalists who claim to know your essence from your handwriting, hanging a mezuzah in your car, a palm reader who claims to foresee your future, or claims that one can direct your life with a blessing, or anything else that you imagine instantly creates gladness and exultation. This is all false. The only way to serve God with gladness is through the commandments given to us in truth. There is only one way to achieve exultation before God, through service and truth.

"The type of joy that is a mitzvah is the joy you share with those less fortunate such as orphans, widows, those without a family and poor people. If someone closes his doors to others and only utilizes what he has for himself and his immediate family without helping the poor and the unfortunate, his joy is not the joy of mitzvah, but joy of the stomach. Such joy is a badge of shame." Rambam, Hilchos Yom Tov 6:18.

"The feeling of steady and constant spiritual and moral growth, the continuous growth of all that is truly human in us, a blissful joy of life that is not subject to change in any manner by the outward circumstances which life may bring." Samson Raphael Hirsch, The Hirsch Psalms, pg. 195. □

## Purpose of Halacha

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

**Reader:** Sure, I am Jewish. I am a good Jew. (whatever that is.?) However, I am not sure that religion to the letter of the law is where it really is at. I do believe we have decisions to make in our lives (terribly secular, am I not?) and when religion (Jews, or others) try to push everyone into the same fundamental track, I object. I have seen lots of ignorance go down in the name of religion, mine and others. So much of the training has been done, and is, in many cases in an abhorrent manner. Your response is of interest to me.

I oppose anti Semitism, support Israel and am a caring, deeply spiritual. My religious background enriches me, my life, and is /was good training. Yes I absolutely think the push for strict adherence in every way is ridiculous. I understand Kosher, for example is a discipline. So are many other things. I have seen many "Kosher" adherence and religious people be "asses" or should I say donkeys. I can go on and on, but certainly am interested in your opinion on such issues.

**Mesora:** For those you call asses, they are clearly not following halacha. A Jew who follows the laws is considerate of others, his manners, and all which creates a good impression of man. If someone sets a poor example - deserving your ridicule - he cannot be adhering to Halacha properly.

There are many benefits for the strict nature of Halacha:

1) It keeps Judaism cohesive, not diluted by subjective feelings on how to act. If each person was allowed to pick and choose, Judaism would instantly vanish.

2) Halacha's strict guidelines cause man's every actions to be considered by his mind. As man talks, works, eats and interacts with others during each day, he incorporates ideals of morals and justice into these actions, thereby living in line with his reason. He is not guided by superficial whims.

3) Primarily, Halacha is a system of such precision and beauty which aims to draw man in, illuminating him with an appreciation for God's wisdom. Through study and analysis of numerous theories and structures of Jewish law, man submerges himself in a sea of ideas which captivates and invigorates his being. No other earthly involvement offers its depth, or satisfies man's search for a fulfilling life. It is for this last purpose that the Torah states that Torah study outweighs all other commandments.

These halachas (laws) are the result of lengthy conversations - recorded in the

Talmud - by the meticulous analysis of great sages. These sages uncovered for us the tremendous wisdom enclosed in God's laws. God understands man and gave us the Torah system by which He says we will live the most enjoyable and beneficial lives. Maimonides states that observing the laws keeps our minds engaged while we are not involved in Torah study.

Halacha may generate in some men a reluctance to follow it. This is not a flaw in the system, but in man. You must be careful to separate personal discomfort, from that which is inherently bad for man, which Torah cannot be. The reason for such reluctance is man's own level of comfort with his current mode of living without Torah. He is free to eat what he wants, say what he wishes, and marry who he chooses. Then the Torah comes along and places restrictions on so many of his actions. Yes, man will naturally be reluctant, as the Torah now restricts his so called "happiness". If a doctor told me that by taking 10 pills daily and exercise, I would remain healthy all my life, I most certainly would adhere to his suggestion although this requires change. He knows my body better than I. If he also told me that in time, my reluctance to change my lifestyle would be replaced with an actual enjoyment in the physical exercise, I would be foolish not to observe his plan.

So to with the Torah. The restrictions at first impede my current lifestyle. But through study, I will learn how each command benefits me in line with my design as an intelligent being. My greater essence as a thinking being - until this point - was not satisfied. But with involvement in thought and learning, I come to appreciate that which is more central to my being, and more universally important in life. It will also draw me in, as we are designed with natural curiosity, and a love for learning, an enjoyment unmatched by any other involvement. Fulfillment will be realized in myself, emotions will become more tamed, and enduring happiness will become a reality. It will greatly outweigh my current, momentary pleasures. I will abandon the need to stay the same for comfort's sake, and I will change as I learn, as I see truth, and benefit in such a change. One who sees the truth in the laws and remains obstinate, forfeits his life. He is truly ridiculous.

Without studying the human psyche, man is foolish to claim he knows what is better for himself. However, once he does study, he will most certainly see the Torah as the perfect system for man. God designed both, man and Torah. He surely knows what man requires for true happiness. To remain ignorant of the Torah is man's worst crime, one for which he will surely pay the highest price.

Alteration and abandon of halacha destroy the Torah system, thereby destroying our chance for true happiness. □

## The Chosen People

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM  
with commentary by  
RABBI REUVEN MANN

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descendants - to be the guardians and teachers of His Torah. It is most crucial that one realize this distinction between Abraham and all others of his era, which is the same distinction between Judaism and all other religions: Judaism is based on rationale and proofs, just as all other areas of study, such as math and natural science. Conversely, all other religions base themselves on belief and claims, not subject to proof. God does not desire this approach, demonstrated by His gift to man of intelligence.

Abraham discovered God and Judaism with the same methods used to prove scientific fact. God created both religion and science. Therefore, by design, both require the identical, intelligent approach in order to discover the layers of God's wisdom enveloped in each. This approach of reason - the only approach - is what Abraham engaged to demonstrate to others the fallacy of idolatry and theism. He taught God's existence via proofs, and that following the Creator of the universe is what is reasonable and true. Man cannot deny logic, and Abraham soon attracted thousands of adherents. That God revealed Himself to Abraham is the irrevocable endorsement that Abraham discovered what is real and true about life and the universe. We learn that God waited for someone like and Abraham to find God, and not vice versa. God revealing Himself to man without man exerting his intelligence will never happen. God does not desire that man be forced into worshipping Him. This is why the Torah states in connection with revelation at Sinai, (Deut. 5:19) "A loud voice, and no more." Meaning, although one historically proven event was required to prove God's existence and the veracity of the Torah, it also coerced the Jews into the acceptance of God, as the proof was undeniable. This is not God's desired method for man's approach to Him.

God wishes that man use intelligence, not his fear, nor faith, nor belief. This applies to all areas of life, starting with the most important area, man's knowledge of, and adherence to God. Selecting Abraham and his descendants to teach the world, God teaches just that.

Jews are bound to study God's system of Torah, both for our own edification, and to teach other nations, demonstrated by Abraham's life's work of reaching out to others. Thus, we are referred to as the "chosen people"(1), Deuteronomy, 10:15, "Only in your fathers did God desire and did He love them, and He chose their seed after them from all other peoples, as this day."



Based on God's words noted herein, a Jew must not feel arrogant towards a Gentile. Certainly, if such a Jew is non-observant, he does not fulfill in himself God's desire for man, nor does he lay claim on the term chosen. And even when one does fulfill God's plan and adheres to the Torah, the term "chosen" is not complimentary to him, but actually to Abraham. We read in Deuteronomy 7:8, "Because from God's love for you and His guard of His swear that He swore to your forefathers..."

God secured the blessings of Abraham upon his son Isaac, with the qualification that Abraham adhere to God's ideals, as stated in Genesis, 26:5, "I will increase your seed as the stars of the heavens, and I will give to your seed all these lands, and all nations will bless you. On account of Abraham's hearkening to My voice, and he guarded my guarding (laws), my commands, statutes and torahs."(2)

Where do we see our goal of "a light unto nations" realized? In Deuteronomy 4:6-8 we read, "And you shall watch them and keep them as they (the commands) are your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations, who will hear all these statutes and declare 'what a wise and understanding people is this great nation. Because what great nation has God close to them like God, whenever (they) call to Him? And what great nation has statutes and laws as righteous as this entire Torah'..." The Rabbis stated in line with this quote, that we are chosen for no other reason than to imbue the world with God's wisdom. God did not create "Jews" and "Gentiles". God created "man". Later on, man deviated through idol worship. But from God's initial plan it is quite clear, He desires ALL mankind follow him. That He chose a people most suitable to receive, study and teach His ideas to others, follows God's initial plan. Deuteronomy 9:5 and 9:6 state

emphatically, "Not due to your righteousness or upright hearts do you come to inherit the land..."

The very fact that God selected David and Solomon as His kings, the descendants of converts, demonstrates that God judges one based on his own merit, not on his lineage. Although these great men were not descendants of the "chosen" people, this is immaterial.

Maimonides - responding to a convert's query whether he could accurately state in his prayers "God of our fathers" - instructed him that Abraham was indeed his father, as "father" is measured not in biological terms, but in ideological terms. Maimonides taught that converts are truly descendants of Abraham.

Jews can become corrupt - we are not exempt from emotions and erroneous opinions which lead to sinning against God. Equally true, being a member of the "chosen people" does not brand us as good - our free will determines our own merit. We must think clearly, and appreciate that the term chosen did not devolve upon us today - it is Abraham's appellation - who was not even a Jew. We do share that reference, provided we study, understand, teach, and follow God's instructions to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses.

God desires all mankind know Him. It is only due to our forefathers' adherence to God's ideals, that God selected them. They demonstrated intelligence in all areas of life starting with religion, and they embodied moral perfection essential to act as God's emissaries - transferring God's will to man - every man. □

#### Footnotes:

- (1) "Chosen" is not a universal accolade applying to all roles of a Jew. Chosen means, chosen for a specific task. □  
(2) Once chosen, Abraham remained at risk of losing the chosen status unless he remained faithful to the true path. Unlike academic degrees, one's status as God's chosen is reversible; in proportion to his perfection is God's desire of him.

## Predictions: Part II

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

**Reader:** Could you tell me what is the Jewish opinion and belief of Nostradamus and his writings?

**Mesora:** If you ask, what is Judaism's view on man's ability to predict the future, the response is as follows: Man's mind is limited, primarily to the functions of comprehension, memory, comparison, analysis, induction, deduction, reason, intuition and imagination. Man cannot function outside of his limitations. Just as man cannot fly, as flight is outside our range of physical ability, so too is knowledge of the future outside the range of our mental ability. Without God informing us of the future, it is impossible for us to know it.

The reasons why predictions are impossible are three; 1) Foreknowledge: Our minds can only work with knowledge, and knowledge is always about something which already exists. The future does not exist, so we cannot know it with our minds' design. 2) Cause and Effect: We reason based on cause and effect relationships, and our minds cannot grasp the vast number of factors contributing to future events. 3) The Freewill Factor: The future of Earth is most certainly centered around man, who functions outside of cause and effect, as we each have freewill. This precludes our cause and effect reasoning from arriving at any accuracy of prediction.

**Reader2:** I read your answer to the question about Nostradamus (I have copied it below). I was surprised to read the answer. The 1st paragraph was correct but left out the possibility that man can predict the future, although that future is changeable. We say that Adam HaRishon told Hashem that he would not have children and he learned this from the Mazalot. We have cases in the gemara where men predict the future. The whole idea of MAZAL applies to individuals (eyn mazal l'yisrael is only applicable as a nation). We know of Rabbi Akiva's fear about his daughter's possible death on her wedding night... The list goes on. We now shy away from learning from the Mazalot but they were a way of telling the future even though they were not 100 percent effective.

**Mesora:** 3 Points:

1) You take midrashim literally, this is an error. 2) You also contradict yourself when you say, "even though they were not 100 percent effective..." Prediction, by definition, means 100% accuracy. Anyone can be partially correct. This is precisely why the Torah demands 100% accuracy for determining one a prophet of God. The Torah realizes that people can be partially correct, and that foreknowledge is humanly impossible. The Torah thereby teaches that the only valid proof that one has future knowledge, is that it is divine in origin.

3) You have also not shown any flaw in my reasoning.

# Chukas

## Proper Questions: Method in Learning

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

This paper was written to be an aid in developing questions when studying Torah, and to help direct one to the main issues and understand a given area.

When one goes through an account of Jewish history found in either the Pentateuch, Prophets or Writings, or Jewish Law in the Mishna or the Talmud, it is essential to your understanding to keep the following in mind: the Pentateuch was designed word for word, letter for letter by God, as was the Oral Law. The Talmud was written by the extremely wise. One commits a grave injustice both to the ideas and to oneself by offering a simple explanation of any topic found in these areas, as they all stem from God Who has infinite wisdom, "For God gives wisdom, from His mouth come knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs,2:6). Everything must be appreciated and understood on this level. Every sentence in the Pentateuch, for example, must contribute to the explanation of the area. In any given story in the Pentateuch, the Prophets or the Writings, the precise amount of information is disclosed to us by God so that we can detect the issues. Certain unusual words will be used to catch our attention. Certain passages will seem at first out of place, and seemingly impossible events are described which force us to delve into the area. These are all generous clues for the investigation.

Besides having the correct appreciation for the design of the Torah, you must also approach your studies with the correct questions. As a Rabbi once said, "asking the right question is 90 percent of the answer."

You will notice that many times when asking a question, you already have more information than you may think, and by using that information in your question, you will more likely arrive at the correct answer. For example: When you see a flat tire on your friends car you can ask "what happened?" But you already know what happened. He probably drove his car over some sharp object. The question should really be formulated as "What did you drive your car over?" By asking the question in this way, you will start pondering what could have done this. You've directed your thoughts directly to the area that will contain your answer - namely, the type of sharp object. If you would have persisted with your first type of question, "what happened?", you would have placed your mindset in an astonished state, as opposed to an inquisitively directed state. Being astonished sets up the emotional state in a person to await a response from another. What we really want, is to position the mind

to answer the question. This can only come from direct questions on the facts. This type of approach to questioning commences an intellectual search, better suited to result in answers.

The following area in the Pentateuch will illustrate this point. I will first give a brief summary of the area. Then I will show an indirect and direct way of asking questions:

The area is in Numbers, chapter 21, sentences 4 through 9. It states that the people traveled towards the land of Edom, and their patience grew short on the way. They complained regarding God and Moses that there was no bread and water and that they were tired of the "light bread" (the manna). God then sent fiery serpents to attack and kill the people, and many died. The people saw their wrong and went to Moses and confessed that they spoke wrongly about God and about Moses, and asked that he pray that the serpents be removed. After Moses prayed, God told him to create a serpent and to place it upon a pole and that any who looked at it would be healed. Moses did so, and made a brass serpent and placed it on a pole, and any man that was bitten gazed at it and was healed. This is the basic story. Keep in mind also that you must keep to the main issues if you are going to successfully answer an area. Distinguish between main questions and side questions.

The main questions on this section are: What was the fault of the people? Why did God choose to give "fiery serpents" as a punishment here, as opposed to something else? What does the added affliction of "fiery" serpents come to accomplish? Why did Moses have to make a serpent if the people already confessed? Why put it on a pole? Why did Moses make it out of "brass"? How did looking at this serpent heal?

Rashi said, "let the serpent who was punished due to his evil talk (the section dealing with Adam and Eve) come and exact punishment from those who spoke evil. Let the serpent come, to who everything tastes as one, and exact punishment from those who denied the good. That one thing (manna) was changed for them to many things." According to Rashi, the Jews received a corrective measure through snakes because of evil talk. However, this isn't the first time someone spoke evil. Why didn't Miriam receive snakes when she spoke against Moses? Why didn't the Jews receive snakes long before this? They spoke evil before.

These are the basic questions. It is very possible to work with them as they are. But if we make slight changes to their structure, we will direct ourselves closer to the answers. Remember, all of the information we need to answer these questions is in the passages.

The main question should be addressed first. Why snakes? We know why. They spoke evil. So we must ask more

directly: "What was the difference in the evil talk of the Jews here, that they received the snakes? After asking the question this way, you direct yourself at their actions for the answer. You know that in other cases the Jews complained to God and Moses, and they didn't receive snakes, let alone "fiery" snakes. So speaking evil perse cannot be the cause of their extraordinary punishment. What is different here?"

The difference is that it never mentions anywhere else that the people "grew tired on the way". This first passage seems extraneous at first. But now, rephrase the question using this information from the first passage: "What is it in the fact that they were tired, that the ensuing evil talk should be punished with serpents?" You can almost immediately make the connection that their evil talk was the direct result of being tired. Meaning, that their evil talk was unjustified in relation to the object of their complaint. It was just talk used to vent their emotions regarding something else. There was no inherent flaw with the manna.

Talking can be used for one of two things: 1) communication of an idea or of a complaint, 2) an outlet for the emotions, as one does when hot tempered and breaks something. Instead of breaking something, people often whine and complain.

This first passage is here to hint towards the underlying cause for their complaining. They were tired of the journey and didn't control their feelings, and began to displace their frustration to outlet their emotions. We also understand now why they received such a different punishment here than in other areas. Here, their complaining wasn't based on any real problem. They covered it up with a rationalization of the lack of bread and water. But in reality they shouldn't have complained. This explains why they received serpents.

Serpents were given to them because they represent what the original serpent was punished for - evil talk - and to point out to them that they were victims of an emotion of outletting their feelings through speech. Had there been another incident in Scripture where an individual, or people, had outletted their emotions in this manner, and were on a level for God to administer a corrective measure, we would witness another case of "fiery serpents". However, this is the only account where this specific flaw occurred, and therefore, the only account where fiery serpents comes to correct the situation.

With this information, we can also answer another question: Why the additional aspect of "fiery"? The reason is because they denied the good of the manna. This is what Rashi was pointing to. If there were two aspects to their punishment (serpents and fiery), there must be a reason for both. So "serpents" comes to correct evil speech, and "fiery" comes to correct their denial of the good manna. Tangentially, Miriam wasn't punished with serpents because her degrading talk wasn't to outlet an emotion.

Contained in her words was an incorrect notion regarding how God relates to man. She however expressed this with a boastful overtone. Thus, she fell prey to two faults; 1) She misunderstood how God relates to Moses, (as compared to herself) 2) She gave in to the feeling of haughtiness. Since Miriam faulted in these two, God corrected her in both. He taught her how His relationship with Moses differed from His relationship to her, and He gave her leprosy which lowers ones self esteem. This is another example of how God's punishment differs from man's. When God punishes someone, or a people, it is an act which corrects a fault. It's not just a deterrent. This is the basic concept behind "Mida k'neged mida", (measure for measure).

What about the question as to why God told Moses to make replica of the serpent? Didn't the people repent already? This is one way of asking this question. But we can deduce from the facts that there must have been something lacking if God told Moses to do something further. The question should be rephrased as the following: "What was it in the Jews request for the removal of the serpents which demonstrates incomplete repentance?" You can see the answer clearly. Their confession to God and Moses is immediately followed by their request to have the serpents removed. (An important point about this is that they both take place in the same passage. When one passage contains a few thoughts, they are related.) Their repentance was only for the sake of removing their immediate pain from the serpents - not a true realization of their error. Because of this, God instructed Moses to create a replica of the serpent so that they could stare at it in order to contemplate their problem properly, thereby removing from themselves their incorrect notions. Placing it upon the pole facilitated the direction of their thoughts towards God, Who is figuratively "upon high".

In summary, the following steps should be taken when approaching an area of Torah Sheb'csav: 1) Know where the area begins and ends

- 2) Understand the area thoroughly
- 3) Distinguish between main points and side points
- 4) Ask yourself how this area differs from all other areas. This will help to point you towards the main topics
- 5) Formulate questions clearly using as much information as you have to work with
- 6) If the area deals with God's relationship to man, detect either man's fault and see how the punishment fits the crime, or look into God's actions towards man to understand what He was improving upon
- 7) If the area deals with mitzvos (commandments), if they are positive commands, look into man's nature to see what they affect; and if they are negative commands, then they are coming to control a natural disposition of man which must be tempered. ■