

**“I Can See Clearly Now”**  
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I have often said that anything of value in our society has its origins in our texts, traditions and culture. We have made many worthwhile contributions to science, math, history, literature, entertainment, you name it. I believe, almost every insight can be traced to some ancient biblical or rabbinic text. Let me give you just one example. We have all heard the phrase, “Don’t judge another until you have walked a mile in his moccasins.” That Native American idea was born of Pirkei Avot, a section of the mishna, of the known oral law. Mishna Avot Hillel remarked, “*al tadin et chavercha ad shetagi’a limikomo.*” “Don’t judge another until you have been in his position.” (2:5) I could probably give you 50 more examples on the same subject, but this week I was completely taken by surprise when a song I had heard many times came into perspective through an ancient biblical story. I realize this is a little far-fetched but please follow along because it does come together. My theory that everything of value has its origins in our religion, has been proven true once again.

On November 17, 1972, one day after my 7th birthday, Johnny Nash’s release of this single went gold selling over 500,000 copies. In case you haven’t figured it out yet, the song I am referring to is: *I Can See Clearly Now*

Do you want to sing a few bars?

“I can see clearly now, the rain is gone,  
I can see all obstacles in my way  
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind  
It’s gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright)  
Sun-shiny day.”

It is the second stanza that I find most remarkable. In the most complete way, Nash has captured something timeless - and the song continues,

“I think I can make it now, the pain is gone  
All of the bad feelings have disappeared  
Here is the rainbow I’ve been prayin’ for  
It’s gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright)  
Sun-shiny day.”

“The pain is gone and I can make it now.” This is so powerful! “The pain is gone and I can make it now, all of the bad feelings have disappeared. Here is the rainbow, I’ve been praying for. It is going to be a bright, bright, sun shiny day.”

We have all been down in the dumps. We have each experienced moments when life gets us down and we are overwhelmed. We have each gone through painful times when

illness brought us down, when a relationship fell apart or when life has thrown us a curveball in our careers. Life is hard...

Throughout our people's history, we have many examples that serve as inspirations to us. They are examples of people coming back from defeat to triumph, from Joseph to King David. We have many personalities that serve to raise us up and, like Daniel in the lion's den, we too, can triumph. There is no greater person, no character more filled with pathos, than Moshe Rabeinu, Moses, our teacher.

For weeks we have been engaged in a prolonged good-bye. Week after week, we have listened to Moses' farewell. He has pleaded his own case and implored God on behalf of the Jewish people. He has begged for mercy for himself and he has appealed to the Jewish people never to stray from God. He has offered advice on how to live and he has recalled so many of the stories of the past 40 years. He has shared moments of joy and moments of sadness. He has talked about the times in which he has been disappointed and the times when expectations were exceeded.

Then it was time to take his leave and our Torah says quietly, *Aleh al har h'eivarim hazeh har nevo...uri; eh et eretz yisrael ...umeit b'har*. "And the Lord spoke to Moses that same day, saying, "Go up to this Mountain Avarim, to Mount Nebo... and behold the land of Canaan ... Die in the mount where you go up, and be gathered to your people; as Aaron your brother died in Mount Hor, and was gathered to his people." (32:48-50) As the Midrash points out, God leaned down and kissed Moses and he was gone. So beautiful!

As much as that is how I want to go, I want to say good bye and go quietly, just like the phrase at the very beginning of this section says. *B'etzem hayom*, in the middle of the day. Let me tell you what I mean and it has nothing to do with the time of day. Rashi, commenting on this phrase, points out that this phrase, *b'etzem hayom*, appears three times throughout the Bible, even though it actually appears a few more times. He makes a very good point. He shows us that the phrase is used with Noah and the Exodus from Egypt. In both of those narratives, the action takes place in the middle of the day, as if to say they had nothing to be afraid of, nothing to be embarrassed about. Noah boards the ark in the middle of the day, declaring his plan to his neighbors and stating that nothing would dissuade him from his journey. While the Jewish people left Egypt, not under the cover of darkness but in the middle of the day, it was as if to declare their independence without of fear of reprisal. As much as I like to preach on the issue of standing up for who we are without fear, this morning's message is far more simple and was sparked by a three word comment of Ibn Ezra.

In explaining the phrase, "on that day," Ibn Ezra says, "On that day he sang this song." You may have realized that this morning's reading was in poetic form. In the Humash text, we can see the words are set apart to indicate the rhythmic form. It is, therefore, believed that Moses sang this chapter. Much like he began his journey with a song, so too he ended his journey with a song. However, the message is even more simple than that. *B'etzem Hayom* literally means "in the middle of the day," when the sun is at its highest

point and when Moses, as the Torah reminds us, has a clear view of the Promised Land. Although he would never enter the land himself, his view was unobstructed. He could see clearly now. He had come to some understanding about his life and his long struggle was over.

There are tormented people in the Torah and Moses was certainly one of the most. A child tossed out by his parents for his own survival, raised by strangers and, therefore, an outsider in his own home. He was a loner tending sheep who was called to lead the Jewish people, a job he never wanted but had a knack for, nonetheless. He wasn't a great communicator, but yet, a passionate ally for his brothers. Confounded by the pain of watching a fellow Jew in trouble, he acts and finds his hands bloodied. He is forced to live in fear of discovery, caught forever between a demanding God and less than perfect people. Moses was a man drawn away from his family to fulfill his duties. He simply could not win. Told to speak to a rock, he hits it and again he is tormented by the mistake. Throughout his entire life Moses suffers in anguish without really ever knowing what is expected of him, never really understanding his purpose. Why me? Why this task? Why now? Then there is a gift given at the end of his life. Clarity! Clarity of vision. Clarity of purpose. Clarity of self. Moses finds his place.

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He could see all obstacles in his way  
Gone are the dark clouds that had him blind  
It's gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright)  
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So there you have it and just like I said, everything comes from us and from our Holy People. The genius of our Torah to uniquely describe the human experience has helped us find who we are and what is our place. May we all be blessed with clarity of vision and peace in finding it. It's gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright) Sun-shiny day.

Shabbat Shalom!