

ב"ה
**Torah
Tidbits**

ISSUE 1547

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פרשת שמות
PARSHAT SHEMOT
SHABBAT MEVARCHIM



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OU Israel Kashrut Column
***Bishul Akum: Reasoning
and Exemptions*** Page 36
Rabbi Ezra Friedman



Hearing the Clarion Call
Page 44
Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman



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שמות ג':ב'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT PARSHAT SHEMOT ZMANIM
CANDLES 4:13 PM • HAVDALA 5:30 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:06 PM



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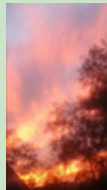
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THIS WEEK'S COVER PHOTO

This is a picture of the sun setting over Jerusalem as seen from Maale Adumim. It looks like the tree is on fire...it is only the sun! It reminds me of והסנה איננו אוכל.
Photographed by
Rav Ze'ev M Shandalov



HELPFUL REMINDERS

Rosh Chodesh Shevat is Thur. Jan. 11

מולד חודש שבט יהיה ביום
חמישי בשעה 8, 45 דקות ו-4 חלקים
ראש חדש שבט יהיה ביום חמישי
הבא עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה

A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

יען משה ויאמר והן לא יאמינו לי (ד': א')

"And Moshe answered and said: But behold, they will not believe me..." (4:1)

The Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin 1816-1893 Volozhin) seems to ask if Moshe really thought that the Israelites would be skeptical of any redemption close at hand?

Rather, Moshe doubted if the Israelites would believe that "he"- Moshe could be an actual bearer of G-d's message. The Israelites had known Moshe prior to today as an Egyptian raised in Pharaoh's palace. Even Yitro's daughters immediately identified him as an Egyptian man that had saved them.

However, G-d's miracle of transforming Moshe's staff into a snake, would pronounce to all Moshe's attributes. While the staff turns into a snake, the handle of the staff would become the head of the snake. When commanded by G-d to change the snake back into a staff, Moshe was told:

"Put forth your hand and take it by its tail...and it became a staff in his hand"(4:4)

We see that now, the tail became the handle, and the head became the tip. It was inverted from its original state. This act demonstrated to Moshe that even though he may have been seen by the people as the "tail of the lion" – disrespected, nevertheless he will be transformed into their leader for redemption.

- Shabbat Shalom

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



	SHEMOT		VA'ERA	
	CANDLES	HAVDALA	CANDLES	HAVDALA
Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	4:13	5:30	4:18	5:35
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:31	5:33	4:37	5:38
Beit Shemesh / RBS	4:31	5:31	4:37	5:36
Alon Shvut	4:29	5:30	4:35	5:36
Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	4:29	5:30	4:35	5:36
Modiin / Chashmonaim	4:29	5:30	4:35	5:36
Netanya	4:29	5:30	4:34	5:36
Be'er Sheva	4:31	5:32	4:37	5:38
Rehovot	4:30	5:31	4:36	5:37
Petach Tikva	4:13	5:30	4:18	5:36
Ginot Shomron	4:28	5:29	4:34	5:35
Haifa / Zichron	4:17	5:29	4:23	5:34
Gush Shiloh	4:27	5:29	4:33	5:34
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:29	5:31	4:35	5:36
Givat Zeev	4:33	5:30	4:39	5:35
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:29	5:31	4:35	5:36
Ashkelon	4:31	5:32	4:37	5:38
Yad Binyamin	4:30	5:31	4:36	5:37
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:19	5:26	4:25	5:32
Golan	4:25	5:26	4:31	5:32
Nahariya/Maalot	4:25	5:28	4:31	5:33
Afula	4:26	5:28	4:32	5:33
Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem) - 6:06 PM • Next Week - 6:12 PM				

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Bava Kama 65

JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat
Jan. 3 - 13 / 22 Tevet - 3 Shvat

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin **5:44 - 5:45**
Sunrise **6:39 - 6:40**
Sof Zman Kriat Shema **9:11 - 9:13**
Magen Avraham **8:32 - 8:35**
Sof Zman Tefila **10:02 - 10:05**
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)
Chatzot (Halachic Noon) **11:43 - 11:47**
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) **12:13 - 12:17**
Plag Mincha **3:43 - 3:51**
Sunset (Including Elevation) **4:51 - 4:59**



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Editor Emeritus: Phil Chernofsky
Editor: Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider | aaron@ouisrael.org
Advertising: Ita Rochel | 02-5609125 or ttads@ouisrael.org
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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel

What's in a name? This week's *parsha*, Shemot, begins with a focus on names, in a review of all of the names of the descendants of Yaakov who went down to Egypt. Indeed, names are a powerful thing. After all, our rabbis tell us that when parents name a child, there is 1/60th of prophecy in that decision. They will be called the name the parents give for the rest of his or her life, thousands and maybe millions of times. Knowing this, many parents take their time to think of the name, with the goal of deciding on a name that maximizes meaning and significance. Generally speaking, Ashkenazi Jews give names for those deceased who were important to them, and if that isn't relevant, they pick other meaningful names. Sephardic Jews, on the other hand, will also name based on the living. Either way, Jews seek the names with the most impact, the most connection, the greatest meaning.

As someone who has been part of that process nine times for my own children, *Baruch Hashem*, I can tell you that naming a child is an intense, yet happy, occasion. It calls for a celebration. Whether by the *Brit Milah* or at the reading of the Torah, it is a moment of happiness and excitement (with whispers of guesses before the name is called out). The father or mother, or both, often get up and explain to the crowd of friends and family why they decided on that name. It's a joyous event.

However, the war we are in has put us in a unique situation. A tragic one. Names have taken on a darker tone. Unfortunately, we

have seen too often these past few months parents burying their children. Obviously, this is not the natural course of events. In the natural order of the world, parents are meant to be long gone before their children pass, but because of the war that was forced upon us we're in a situation where so many parents, who gave their children their names just 20 or 30 years ago, are standing at their children's funerals. They often explain yet again to family and friends why they chose their child's name, but now they do so with sobs of sadness instead of tears of joy. Many times, they describe how the name they gave truly represents their child and who they turned out to be. Their names relate to their personality, their bravery, their passion, and all the other positive attributes they grew to represent.

One of the reasons the *parsha* focuses on names is that while lists of names begin the story of how the Jews went down to Egypt, it also represents one of the reasons we were redeemed. The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 32:5) states, "Rav Huna stated in the name of Bar Kappara: Israel was redeemed from Egypt on account of four things - because they did not change their names... They

In loving memory of my mother

Karin Fürst a"h

Hamburg - Oslo - Göteborg - Tel Aviv

קארין אסתר בת אברהם יוסף הלוי ע"ה

כ"ה בטבת תשס"ח

Ari Shalit and family

went down as Reuven and Shimon, and they came up as Reuven and Shimon. They did not call Reuven ‘Rufus’, nor Yehudah ‘Leon,’ nor Yosef ‘Lestes’, nor Binyamin ‘Alexander.’” It is because they held onto their Jewish names that they deserved to remain the Jewish people and be redeemed from Egypt.

Imagine being in Egypt, enslaved by the ancient Pharaoh. Why would it be so important what you name your child? But the Jews then knew, as we must recognize now, that these names keep us unique as a people. It’s what connects us to the generations before us, and it’s what will continue to connect us to the generations after us. This is what leads to redemption.

There was a recent publication of the most popular names in Israel from 2023, and I noticed how Jewish, yet uniquely Israeli, many of the top names are. For girls, the most popular names include Avigayil, Tamar, Ayala, Maya, Noya, Sara and Yael. For boys, the most popular name was Ariel, presumably a renewed prayer for the *Beit HaMikdash bimheira beyameinu*. Other popular boys names include David (also presumably representing a wish for *Mashiach*), Rephael, Yosef, Lavi, Ari, Noam, Ori, Moshe and Yehudah. This list was published this week because we are ending 2023 and starting 2024, but how divinely providential it is that it coincides with the *parsha* of names, where we are asked to consider the names of our children.

I’ll never forget a story I heard from Daliah Emanuelof, who tragically lost her son Dvir in 2009. Dvir’s family used to be my neighbors in Givat Ze’ev. Dahlia told me some years after Dvir’s death that she was feeling very down. She looked up to the heavens and said, “*Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, please just give me a sign that Dvir is still with me.” That

very day, a few hours later, she was at an event where there was a child behind her making a lot of noise and shaking her chair. She gets up to turn around when she hears the child’s parents calling for him, “Dvir! Dvir!” She asked the parents, “Out of curiosity, why did you name your son

Dvir?” The parents responded, “There was this soldier who passed away. His name was Dvir Emanuelof. He was such a *gibor* and such a *ben Torah*, the ultimate soldier; that

שמות בנות			שמות בנים		
אחוזים	מספרים מוחלטים	שם פרטי	אחוזים	מספרים מוחלטים	שם פרטי
2.05	1,284	אביגיל	2.62	1,710	דוד
1.83	1,147	תמר	2.15	1,404	אריאל
1.81	1,135	איילה	2.04	1,332	לביא
1.76	1,100	מאיה	1.96	1,282	רפאל
1.66	1,041	נועה	1.91	1,248	יוסף
1.66	1,037	שרה	1.90	1,242	ארי
1.52	952	יעל	1.83	1,194	נועם
1.44	902	אסתר	1.73	1,132	אורי
1.31	823	אדל	1.69	1,106	משה
1.30	815	ליבי	1.60	1,044	יהודה

May the Torah learning from
this issue be in loving memory of

**MICHAEL MOSHE LEIB
BEN YOSEF BAER Z”L**
beloved twin brother
on his 15th yartzheit

**MEIR ZALMAN BEN
GÖDEL PESACH Z”L**
(Matthew S. Silverberg)
beloved cousin on his 10th yartzheit

REUVEN BEN CHAIM Z”L
(Richard Tilis)
beloved cousin on his 1st yartzheit

Avraham & Malka Shrybman

we decided to name our son Dvir after him, after a real hero.” Dahlia immediately burst out, “That’s my son!” This was the sign she was waiting for.

I’m sure we’re going to find that many names given this year will be influenced by this war. The fact that we are giving names that connect our children to the previous generations, whether because they passed away, or to honor their importance during their lifetime, such as Sephardim naming after living grandparents, this is really a beautiful thing. It shows the link between generations.

Each year at the Pesach Seder we recite “*Bechol dor vador, omdim aleinu lechalo-teinu*, in every generation, our enemies try to destroy us.” Yet, I am reminded more and more how names have kept us going. They have connected us. The same way as those who perished in the Holocaust are remembered by their names, in their families and on the monuments of Yad Vashem, this generation is remembering our soldiers who are not forgotten. Their names and values live on in the Jewish people.

Yehi ratzon that just as the Jews in Egypt were redeemed through their keeping of their names from generation to generation, with G-d’s help we will see the *geulah* again in part because of *Klal Yisrael* staying strong and passing our names to the next generation. In this merit, may we see a speedy and full redemption in our days.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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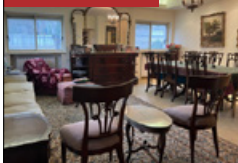
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FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

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Not Alone

Any challenge is made so much more bearable when it is not borne alone.

Pharaoh recognized this profound truth and used it manipulatively to intensify the suffering of Klal Yisrael. When Moshe approached him and asked for the Jewish people to be granted a break from their slavery to go serve Hashem, he responded not by increasing the expected quota of bricks but rather by maintaining those quotas while withdrawing his provision of the straw to make the bricks (Shemot 5:1-8). Pharaoh understood that if we were approaching Pharaoh for a “favor”, the Jewish people were viewing him as a supportive employer who would be open to address the needs and wants of those who work for him. To correct that, he chose not simply to give us more work but to remove his partnership in that work.

This would in turn make it much harder for us to accomplish anything at all as we would be feeling isolated and completely on our own.

In this light, it is especially meaningful to note how Klal Yisrael rose to this challenge. The Torah (5:14, Rashi) records how the Jewish officers appointed by Pharaoh’s taskmasters to ensure the delivery of the quotas absorbed the blows of those taskmasters as they worked to protect their charges from Pharaoh’s wrath. Here, at a time when Pharaoh was working to make us feel so alone in our difficulty, we stood up for each other ensuring that we would indeed not be or even feel alone.

This is a critical idea for all of us to absorb, especially at this critical time. Our greatest gift to each other is not always to solve others’ problems or do their work for them. It is the sharing of the burden, doing our part to understand the challenges faced by the other and to ensure that they are not left to bear their burdens alone. ■

May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be in loving memory of and לעילוי נשמת

Phrona Samburg Michael z”l
שינא פרומא בת ר' חיים ז”ל
on her 27th Yahrzeit כח טבת

Greatly missed
and always remembered
by her children, grandchildren,
and great grandchildren

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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT SHEMOT

The Jewish people are in Egypt. A new Paro is concerned with the size of the Jewish people. He decrees hard labor, infanticide and then actively drowning the male babies. Moshe is born, raised in Paro's daughter's home. After seeing the Jews mistreated, Moshe flees to Midian, marries and settles there. At age 80, Moshe encounters the burning bush. G-d instructs him to go to Paro and demand, in G-d's name, to free the Jewish people. Moshe, after attempting to refuse this mission, goes to Paro. Paro increases the burdens. The people complain.



1ST ALIYA (1:1-17)

70 Bnei Yisrael descend to Egypt.

They grow exceedingly numerous, filling the land. A new king who knew not Yosef arises. Afraid that the Jews would join with enemies of Egypt, he seeks to weaken their numbers. A labor tax is followed by oppressive labor. Then the midwives are instructed to kill the Jewish babies. The midwives fear G-d and do not heed Paro's directive.

The book of Shemot, of Exodus, is radically different from Bereshit. Bereshit was the story of people: Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah. Then Yosef and his brothers. And overlaid to the story of people is the Divine refrain, "I give to you the land promised to Avraham". It is almost like a song with

a chorus; each person is the verse, with the chorus of G-d's promise of the land repeated. Avraham and his life, with G-d's promise repeated. Yitzchak and his family, with G-d's promise repeated. Yaakov and then the Yosef story, with G-d's promise repeated. In Bereshit the people are center stage, with G-d ever present but of few words; the repeated promise.

In Shemot G-d and man switch places. It is the story of Divine control of Jewish destiny. He is the Main Director, the Jewish people the mere stage actors. He no longer lurks, with repeated promises. He acts, dominates, controls, manipulates. He initiates, communicates, and commands. Later, at Sinai, He reveals Himself.

But His appearance begins only when we hit bottom.

Paro acts to weaken the Jewish people. Vicious actions, including murder. The midwives fear G-d, refuse to murder. There is no mention of G-d's actions. We have seen this before. G-d's name is absent from the sale of Yosef, as it is here. Spiraling downward we can do on our own. Man does a mighty fine job of cruelty all on his own. G-d appears when we hit bottom.



2ND ALIYA (1:18-2:10)

The midwives defend their actions to Paro. Paro commands all Jewish baby boys to be thrown into the river. Moshe is born, placed in the water in a basket. Paro's daughter rescues him. Miriam arranges for Moshe's mother to nurse

him. He is returned to Paro's daughter and named Moshe.

When Moshe is born his mother "saw that he was good". And he was placed in the water, albeit in a basket. Those 2 elements, water and "it was good", immediately remind us of the first day of creation. In the beginning "the spirit of G-d hovered over the waters" (Genesis 1:2). And when light was created, "G-d saw the light and it was good." Moshe's being placed in the water and his mother "saw that he was good" could be the Torah's way of saying there is a new creation story taking place: with Moshe's birth, a new world dawns for the Jewish people.

The story of Moshe's rescue is in stark contrast to Yosef's sale. Yosef is thrown into a dry pit that has no water; Moshe is thrown into the water but remains dry. Yosef's brothers move away from the pit; Moshe's sister stays close to see what happens. Yosef's brothers didn't respond to his cry; Paro's daughter hears Moshe's cry. Yosef's brothers do not bring him home to his father; Moshe's sister brings Moshe home to nurse with his mother. Parallel stories; radically different.



3RD ALIYA (2:11-25)

Moshe matures. He goes out to see the travails of his brothers. He defends a Jew by killing his Egyptian aggressor, and then saves a Jew from a Jewish aggressor. He flees for his life to Midian, aids Yitro's daughters, is welcomed by Yitro, marries Zipporah, has a child Gershom. "For I am a stranger in a strange land". G-d sees the suffering of the Jews and remembers His covenant.

The reversal of the sin of the brothers

continues: the brothers did not see the suffering of their brother, Moshe wants to see and relieve the pain of his brothers.

Moshe names his son Gershom, for "I am a stranger". Which strange land is he referring to? Being a Jew in Egypt? Or being an Egyptian in Midian? Where is Moshe's home?

The story to this point is the story of people; G-d has yet to appear. In a world without G-d's presence, there are good people and bad people. Paro, evil. Midwives, good. Moshe's parents, brave. Paro's daughter, good. Moshe's sister, concerned. Egyptian slave master, cruel. Jews struggling, violent. Yitro, welcoming.

And Moshe? Goes out. Concerned. Helps those who need help. Feels angst; a stranger.

G-d appears. His name appears 5 times in 3 verses. Everything changes now. Or perhaps not. All the human activity to this point; has He orchestrated it, or is it people doing what people do? Some good, some not? Or mere puppets in the Hand of the Puppeteer?



4TH ALIYA (3:1-15)

Moshe and the burning bush. Moshe, Moshe, Hineni. G-d speaks, Moshe cowers. G-d tells him: I have seen the suffering of My people. I will save them from Egypt and bring them to the Land of milk and honey. I am sending you to go to Paro and he will release My people from Egypt. Moshe objects: who am I to go to Paro? And the Jewish people will question who sent me. G-d says: tell them the G-d of their forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov sent you.

The entire story of the Torah changes here. G-d moves from the unseen force behind human action to directly dictating

human activity. He tells Moshe that He will take the Jewish people out of Egypt and bring them to the Land of Israel. Up until now, the Jewish people have been promised the Land but have lived only with the promise, not with its fulfillment. They have not seen the Hand of G-d but have rather detected it behind the events. As Yosef said “G-d has brought me to Egypt to save the family.” He never heard that. He peered behind the veil and detected it.

Now the veil is drawn. Moshe is told in vivid detail exactly what will transpire. The Jews will be sent out by Paro. The story of the Exodus from Egypt is a pillar of Jewish belief because it is a blatant, direct display of G-d’s Hand in our history. It is His Hand in full display, not behind the veil.



5TH ALIYA (3:16-4:17)

G-d continues: Gather the people. Tell them that I will take them to the Land. They will listen. Go to Paro. I know he will not listen. I will smite the Egyptians. You will be loaded with gold, silver and clothing from the Egyptians. Moshe is still convinced that the people will not believe him. G-d gives him signs: staff turns to snake and then back, hand turns leprous and then back. And water to blood. Moshe objects: I am not a good speaker. G-d says: I give speech to man. I will send Aharon with you. He will speak. Take your staff.

Moshe’s reluctance is striking. Avraham did not demur from a pretty rough

command to sacrifice his son. Noach didn’t either when given a command that would bring derision. Moshe is a very begrudging leader. But that itself is instructive. Moshe is not a man driven by a mission, a great, charismatic leader who leads his people from oppression to freedom, displaying the power of human will in the face of injustice. And after all, he is 80, a rather late start on leading his people.

The charismatic leader leading his being from slavery to freedom would be a great story. But it is not our story. Our story is of the Divine Hand guiding human events through a reluctant leader. This is not Moshe’s story. It is the Divine’s. And even that great refrain “let my people go” is not Moshe speaking. It is rather “let My people go”. It is Moshe quoting G-d to Paro – he is but the messenger.



6TH ALIYA (4:18-31)

Moshe gets Yitro’s blessing to return to Egypt. G-d tells Moshe that those seeking his death have died. G-d tells him to tell Paro: G-d says Israel is my first born. Send out My son, for if you do not, I will slay your first born. Zippora circumcises her son. Aharon greets Moshe. They gather the people. The people believe that G-d will redeem them.

G-d adds one more thing to Moshe; Israel is My first born. As if to say – “Moshe, this is a story of love. I view the Jewish people as my beloved first born.” And. Refusal by Paro will result in Divine punishment. Our western ethos is uncomfortable with these central principles of Judaism: G-d’s Hand in history, G-d’s love for the Jewish people, and Divine punishment. As Rabbi Sacks, z”l, said; Radical then. Radical now.





7TH ALIYA (5:1-6:1)

Moshe and Aharon approach Paro, requesting a 3-day journey to the desert to celebrate. Paro refuses. He increases the workload. Conflict arises between the Jewish workers and the Egyptian supervisors. The Jews criticize Moshe for increasing their burden. Moshe complains to G-d. G-d reassures him that through a strong hand, Paro will send them out.

What a great lesson: even when G-d Promises, don't think it is all clear sailing. His promises run smack into the uncomfortable reality of human beings. The plan for the Jews to leave runs into the reality of Paro and his resistance. Paro derails the plan, at least in part. That is the lesson: man meanders as the Divine plan unfolds, up and down, forward and back. But resistance need not dull the end. The end will come. Maybe later than sooner. But a Promise is a Promise. ■



STATS

13th of 54 sedras; 1st of 11 in Shemot.
Written on 215.2 lines in a Torah (18th).
7 parshiot; 6 open, 1 closed.
124 pesukim - 15th (tied with Emor).
1763 words - 14th (Emor: 22nd).
6762 letters - 16th (Emor: 23rd).
2nd in Shemot in those three categories.



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Jeremiah 32:15



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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

Reading the Footnotes

I often find myself disagreeing with the phrase, “It’s just a footnote in history”. I have found some of the most interesting and important facts buried, unseen by most people, in the footnotes of the books I read.

Recently, I have begun to use a pocket-sized edition of the Talmud in my daily study. I have been doing a lot of traveling lately, and this miniature edition suits me well.

I find that the print of the main text and major commentaries in this edition is in sharp focus and, although quite small, is perfectly legible. However, this edition, known as *Oz V’Hadar*, contains an innovative feature. In the margins of every page are footnotes in very fine print, indicating variant readings of the traditional text. These footnotes supply minor corrections based upon ancient manuscripts or early print editions of the Talmud.

These footnotes are so small that I can hardly make them out, even with my glasses. I resort to the use of a magnifying glass, which enlarges the size of the letters by four or five times. In one corner of the glass is a small circle with an even more powerful magnifier, which enlarges the size of the letters to ten or perhaps twelve times their size.

I find these footnotes extremely useful in my study. Invariably, they suggest changes to the text that seem minor but are not at all trivial. Passages in the Talmud that I previously found vague or puzzling are elucidated with the change of a word, or sometimes even the addition of one single letter.

Often, I am tempted to ignore these footnotes, passing up the opportunity to use the magnifier. But when I do so, I forfeit the opportunity of gaining surprising and edifying insights.

These marginal footnotes, together with this magnifier, have literally opened my eyes to the authentic meaning of the text and have given me a fresh understanding of passages that I had previously found challenging.

In this week’s Torah portion, *Parshat Shemot* (*Exodus* 1:1-6:1), we encounter a phrase in Rashi’s commentary that my experience with the footnotes and the magnifying glass has helped me appreciate.

The Bible has just concluded the account of baby Moses’ rescue by Pharaoh’s daughter. It is about to proceed to narrate the story of the mature Moses. It begins, “Sometime after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his brethren and he saw their labors” (*Exodus* 2:11).

Rashi comments, “He saw their labors: He directed [literally, ‘gave’] his eyes and heart, to feel troubled for them.” Rashi’s comment is prompted by the words “he saw.” Of course, if he went out to his

brethren, he “saw” their labors.

Rashi, therefore, suggests an alternative and deeper interpretation of the words “he saw.” He is telling us that he didn’t merely see visually. He saw deeply. He took notice. Metaphorically, he used his “magnifying glass” to discover every footnote, to absorb every detail of his brethren’s toil. What he saw troubled him, and he suffered along with them.

The Midrash, serving as our “magnifying glass,” provides an expanded picture of every “footnote” in the scene that Moses saw:

He saw their labors, and he wept, saying, “Woe is me, I am willing to die for them.” He extended his shoulders to help carry the burden of each and every one of them. He saw the weak carrying heavy burdens, and the strong carrying lighter ones. He saw manly burdens being carried by women, and feminine burdens carried by men. He saw tasks appropriate for the elderly assigned to the young, and tasks befitting the young passed along to the elderly. He put aside his royal equipage and eased their labors... So that the Holy One Blessed be He said to him, “You left behind your concerns, went to observe Israel’s pain, and reacted like a good brother. So too will I, God, leave behind My upper and lower celestial spheres and speak to you...”

The Midrash’s implication that the Almighty, so to speak, took his cue from Moses is a daring one. But even more daring from a theological perspective is Rashi’s comment on a later phrase in the *parsha*: “God looked upon the Israelites, and God knew.”

What can “and God knew” possibly mean? After all, He is all-knowing, omniscient.

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עם ישראל חי



Targum Onkeles, troubled by this question, renders the phrase “God knew” into Aramaic as, “and God gave His word that He would redeem them.”

A widely-used English translation renders the phrase, “and God took notice of them.”

Rashi offers a theologically daring comment: “He directed [literally, ‘gave’] His heart toward them and did not hide His eyes.”

Returning to the metaphor I introduced above, God, so to speak, used His divine magnifying glass to scrutinize every footnote, to attend to every detail, of Israel’s enslavement.

Rashi dares to apply the same terms that he used to describe Moses’ empathic

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response, “eyes” and “heart,” to the Almighty Himself. Rashi leaves his readers with an image of a God who demonstrates human-like sympathy for His suffering people.

There is much more to these two passages in Rashi’s commentary than an account of Moses’ compassion. There is more to them than just a glimpse of God’s merciful ways. There is a lesson here for all of us.

We often “see” our brothers in difficulties of one sort or another. Typically, matters stop right there. We “see” them, but we do not extend ourselves in the ways that Moses did. Quite the contrary: we tend to look away.

But there is another, much more worthy option. We can utilize our magnifying glass to look at the footnotes. We can pay careful attention to the plight of our brothers, noting all the details of their plight. We can direct our eyes to the scene that is before us and can then open our hearts so that they feel the pain of others who suffer.

Finally, like Moses, we can shed our inhibitions and plunge right into the fray, extending our shoulders to help bear our brother’s burden.

Moses is called *Moshe Rabbeinu*, Moses our Teacher. As we read the weekly portions for the next many months, we will learn many things from him. But this week, we can learn from his very first lesson, one that he modeled by his own conduct: Direct your eyes and your heart to your brother’s suffering. ■

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The Challenge of Jewish Leadership

I used to say, only half in jest, that the proof that Moses was the greatest of the prophets was that when God asked him to lead the Jewish people, he refused four times: Who am I to lead? They will not believe in me. I am not a man of words. Please send someone else.

It is as if Moses knew with uncanny precision what he would be letting himself in for. Somehow he sensed in advance that it may be hard to be a Jew, but to be a leader of Jews is almost impossible.

How did Moses know this? The answer lies many years back, in his youth. It was then when, having grown up, he went out to see his people for the first time. He saw them enslaved, being forced into heavy labour.

He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He intervened and saved his life. The very next day he saw two Hebrews fighting, and again he intervened. This time, one of the men he had stopped aggressively

responded with a question; "Who appointed you as our leader and judge?"

Note that Moses had not yet even thought of being a leader, and already his leadership was being challenged. And these are the first recorded words spoken to Moses by a fellow Jew. That was his reward for saving the life of an Israelite the day before.

And though God persuaded Moses, or ordered him, to lead, it never ceased to be difficult, and often demoralising. Moses was faced with over forty years spent leading a group of people who were prone to criticise their situations, sin and rebel, and argue among themselves.

In an appalling show of ingratitude, the Israelites complain several times in the book of Shemot, after witnessing miraculous acts from God and his appointed leader. At Marah they complain that the water is bitter. Then, in more aggressive terms, they protest at the lack of food ('If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat round pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death'). Later, at Refidim, they grumble at the absence of water, prompting Moses to say

to God, 'What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me!'

In Devarim, Moses recalls the time when he said to God: "How can I myself bear Your problems, Your burdens and Your disputes all by myself" (Deut. 1:12). And then in Beha'alotecha, Moses suffers what I have often called an emotional breakdown:

He asked the Lord, "Why have You brought this trouble on Your servant? What have I done to displease You that You put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do You tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land You promised on oath to their ancestors? . . . I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how You are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me - if I have found favour in Your eyes - and do not let me face my own ruin." (*Num. 11:11-15*)

And this was said, don't forget, by the greatest Jewish leader of all time. Why are Jews almost impossible to lead?

The answer was given by the greatest rebel against Moses' leadership: Korach. Listen carefully to what he and his associates say:

They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord assembly?" (*Num. 16:3*)

Korach's motives were wrong. He spoke like a democrat but what he wanted was to be an autocrat. He wanted to be a leader himself. But there is a hint in his words of what is at stake. Jews are a nation of strong individuals. "The whole community is holy,



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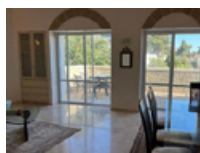
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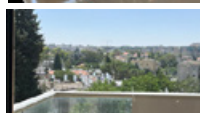


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every one of them.” They always were. They still are. That is their strength and their weakness. There were times when they found it difficult to serve God. But they certainly would not serve anyone less. They were the “stiff-necked” people, and people with stiff necks find it hard to bow down.

The prophets would not bow down to kings. Mordechai would not bow down to Haman. The Maccabees would not bow down to the Greeks. Their successors would not bow down to the Romans. Jews are fiercely individualistic. At times this makes them unconquerable. It also makes them almost ungovernable, almost impossible to lead.

That is what Moses discovered in his youth when, trying to help his people, their first response was to say, “Who appointed you as our leader and judge?” That is why he was so hesitant to take on the challenge of leadership, and why he refused four times.

There has been much debate in British and American Jewry recently¹ about whether there should be an agreed collective stance of unconditional support for the state and government of Israel, or whether our public position should reflect the deep differences that exist among Jews today, within Israel or outside.

My view is that Israel needs our support at this critical time. But the debate that has taken place is superfluous. Jews are a nation of strong individuals who, with rare historic exceptions, never agreed about anything. That makes them unleadable; it also makes them unconquerable. The good news and the bad go hand in hand. And if, as we believe, God loved and still loves this people despite all its faults, may we do less? ■

1. It should be noted for context that this essay was written by Rabbi Sacks in November 2010.

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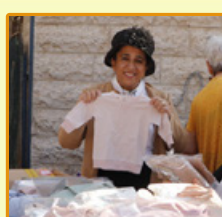


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The Haftarah's Dual Message

The Sepharadim and Ashkenazim have different customs regarding the haftarah reading for this parasha, Sh'mot. The Sefaradim have the tradition of reading the first perek of Yirmiyahu depicting Hashem's charge to Yirmiyahu to serve as His prophet to bring G-d's warnings and condemnations to the people. This theme, together with the prophet's reluctance to take on that responsibility, reflects the parasha's portrayal of Hashem's choice of Moshe Rabbeinu to bring His word to Israel as well as Moshe's reluctance to accept that mission.

On the other hand, Ashkenazim choose to read from the 27th and 28th chapters of Yeshayahu that, beyond the opening word "**HaBa'im**", which is also found in the opening verse of the parasha ("V'eileh sh'mot B'nei Yisra'el **haba'im**...") seems to have very little connection to the Torah reading. Indeed, we are hard-pressed to understand why the Ashkenazic masters chose this reading to be read this week. Consider: the parasha focuses upon the enslavement of Israel and the suffering they underwent in Egypt, in the "galut", while the bulk of the haftarah speaks of Israel's sinful behavior and the punishments that would befall "Ephrayim", for their corrupt behavior during the era of "ge'ulah"!

One might point to those p'sukim that

speak of a glorious future that awaits Israel, prophetic declarations such as "Yatzitz upharach Yisrael" ("Israel will bud and blossom") and visions of our return to the land, including the well-known "Uva'u.....hanidachim b'Eretz Mitzrayim ...v'hishtachavu... b'Har Hakodesh, be'Yerushalayim" (that those scattered in Egypt will return to Yerushalayim) as the link to our parasha - but the majority of the haftarah's theme has little to do with the events of our parasha, and indeed, contradicts the very leitmotif. Perhaps this explains the variant tradition of the Sepharadim that focuses upon the suffering in the Egyptian galut by reading the first chapter of Yirmiyahu, in which the navi warns the people of the coming exile.

In attempting to understand the view of the Ashkenazic poskim, I would submit that they saw in the events of the parasha the story of "atchalta d'geulah", the beginning of the long awaited redemption from bondage. For that reason, they focused upon the approaching redemption, the plagues visited upon the oppressors and the relief felt by the enslaved, and not upon the suffering depicted in the opening p'rakim. Chazal chose to see the horrors of the Egyptian bondage only as the background leading up to the events that followed - not as the focus of the parasha. The inclusion of Israel's difficult past in

Egypt was essential for future readers to appreciate the nation's overwhelming relief at upon recognizing the dawning of geulah. Additionally, it was important for future generations to learn of the the man who would be the instrument of Hashem to redeem the people and lead them out of Egypt. Together, the two stories create a powerful message of hope and optimism that Moshe hopes to bring to the nation. And that is also much of what Yeshayahu hoped to bring those who were facing impending exile from their Land.

It is this theme that we choose to echo in the selection of this haftorah, a theme of promised redemption that, for so many years, remained only unfulfilled.

And, how fortunate are we to recite the prophet's words in our time while witnessing their realization before our very eyes! ■

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The Shifra & Puah Within Us

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמִילֵדוֹת הָעִבְרִית אִשָּׁר שֵׁם
הָאַחַת שְׁפָרָה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פּוּעָה: (שמות א:טו)

Now the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one who was named Shifrah, and the second, who was named Puah. (Shemot 1:15).

The Shemen Hatov cites a story about Hagon Harav Hillel Kalimayer, who was once hosted by a wealthy individual. During his stay, he was constructively criticizing his host's behavior. At one point the host turned to the Rav and declared: "Last month I hosted a different renown Rav and he did not correct anything I was doing. Why is it that you have a totally different approach?" The Rav explained that there were two midwives in Egypt – *Shifra* and *Puah*. In a similar vein, there are two types of individuals, one that can positively influence others – *Shifra* (משפיע), and another who constructively criticizes with the view of correcting another's behavior, albeit in a sensitive manner – like *Puah*.

Our duty is to combine these two characteristics. Although they may seem to be mutually exclusive, having the proper balance is what creates a complete individual. To appreciate the current situation yet strive for further perfection.

YOSEF – SHEPHERD AND VICEROY

When the tribes who descended to Egypt are enumerated at the beginning of the

parsha the Torah informs us that Yosef was in Egypt. Rashi interprets this verse as follows:

הוא יוסף הרועה את צאן אביו, הוא יוסף שהיה במצרים, ונעשה מלך, ועומד בדיקון

He, the Joseph who tended his father's flocks, is the same Joseph who was in Egypt and became a king, and he retained his righteousness.

Yosef was a shepherd who later rose to become the viceroy of Egypt - second in command. A shepherd is a loner who spends his day with a flock outside the city and away from civilization. A king is someone who deals with his ministers and matters relating to the population and his empire. Although these two personalities differ, Yosef embodied both. He was able to adjust and balance two diametrically opposed characteristics.

COMBINING SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik cites a midrash on the pasuk:

וַיֵּצֵר ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם עֹפֶר מִן הָאֲדָמָה
(בראשית ב:ז)

And the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground (Bereshit 2:7).

The midrash asserts that two statements were made simultaneously. First, that man was created from dust gathered from all over the world. Second, that man was created from dust gathered from the location of the *mizbe'ach* (altar). The Rav explained that this symbolizes the outlook man is to embrace. On one hand man is created from dust gathered from all over the world, which symbolizes that he should have a worldly

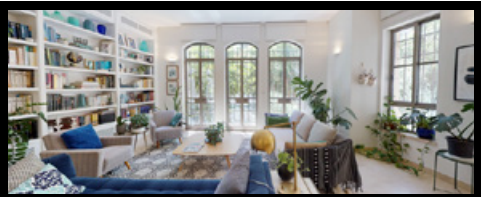
view. To be concerned with what is transpiring around him. To appreciate the physical nature of his surroundings. Yet, man was also created from the dust of the place of the altar, symbolizing man is to focus on himself and his roots, and connect to his spiritual self. The ideal is to be able combine both- the physical and spiritual, the concern for perfecting oneself with perfecting the world.

Each of us ought to combine the Shifra and Puah within us. To perfect ourselves while caring for those around us. To establish the proper balance between physical and spiritual pursuits. To be careful when dealing with others to know when to accept another for who they are and to seek to constructively criticize for the benefit of that individual. May we achieve the proper equilibrium and be rewarded as Shifra and Puah were – with *Batei Kehuna* – with offspring that are *talmidei chachamim* and *yerei shamayim*! ■

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Notable Names

“*Ve’eyleh shemot benei Yisrael haba’im Mitzrayimah et Yaakov ish u’beito ba’u. Reuven, Shimon, Levi ...*” And these are the names of the children of Yisrael who came to Egypt with Jacob, each man and his household came: Reuven, Shimon, Levi...” (*Shemot 1:1-2*). Why is there a need now to repeat the names of Yaakov’s children who came down to Egypt? Hasn’t this list already been recorded in *Parashat Vayigash*? Further, we must understand the appellation “*Shemot* -Names,” as this *sefer* is known.

Rashi’s commentary at the beginning of each of the *Chamisha Chumshei Torah* embodies the concept of Hashem’s intense love for His people. Here he explains that since Hashem loves *Klal Yisrael* so much, He recounts the names of the *shevatim* again. Rashi notes that the Jewish people are compared to the beloved stars that Hashem puts out and brings in calling each by name. Rabbi Aryeh Leib Baskt *zt”l* offers a deeper nuance as to why we are compared to stars. The stars are unique in that they were not part of the original creation, they were created afterward to appease the moon whose light became diminished. Likewise, a Jew’s whole purpose is to be concerned with the needs of another and alleviate his brother’s pain. In his introduction to *Nefesh HaChayim*, Rav Itzle Volozhiner notes that his father would

continually remind his students, “*lo le’atzmo nivra rak le’ho’il le’acharini*,” a Jew was not created for selfish purposes, rather he was created to benefit others. The Midrash notes that in the merit of helping each other and showing concern for one another, the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt.

The Tosher Rebbe *zt”l* in *Avodat Avodah* focuses on the power inherent in one’s name; it connects him with his higher spiritual source and awakens his individual spiritual powers. This is one reason to call a person by his full name at least once a day so he can tap into the tremendous potency in his name. Further, *Sefer Shemot* begins with the letter ‘*vav*,’ connecting it to *Sefer Bereisheet*. This teaches us that the very names that Yaakov’s children were called in Eretz Yisrael were the same ones they used in Mitzrayim. One of the merits the Jews exhibited in the Egyptian exile was keeping their Jewish identities and not changing their names. Hence, at the beginning of this new book, the Torah shows us the power that a Jew possesses to survive the *galut* and emerge spiritually intact.

The names of each *Shevet*, the *Kli Yakar* explains, contain hints of redemption both from Mitzrayim as well as for the future. Reuven reflects that “Hashem has seen the suffering,” Shimon embodies the idea that “Hashem has heard the affliction,” and so on. Keeping their Jewish names ensured that they would continuously remember that Hashem is with us in the pain and will eventually bring redemption, engendering

hope for salvation. How appropriate then that *Names* are indeed the designation of this new stage in our story, they are our link to the past, and our hope for a better future. ■

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Rabbi Anthony
Manning

11:20 AM

**Deepening our Eternal
Relationship with
Eretz Yisrael: Timely
teachings from the
Wisdom of Rav Kook**
Rabbi Aaron
Goldscheider

12:15 PM

**Israel's Continuing
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Dr. Deborah Polster

8:30 PM

The Bais-Semichat
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10:15 AM

Minchat Chinuch-
Meaning in Mitzvot
**Rabbi Yitzchak
Breitowitz**

11:15 AM

Sefer Breisheet-
Chumash B'lyun
Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

12:15 PM

Unlocking the Eternal
Wisdom of Chazal
Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

Schedule Subject to change, please check website for updates: Ouisrael.org/events/

WEDNESDAY JAN. 10

Evening Classes @OU Israel Center

7:30 PM

Kosher 101: Kashrut for Dummies- Navigating the World of Kashrut in Israel
Rav Ezra Friedman

8:30PM

**The Bais (For Men)
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Rabbi Aschi Dick

THURSDAY JAN. 11

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9:30 AM

Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Ari Kahn

10:45 AM

**Iron Sword-
Perspective for
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Rav Zalman Sender Shapira was a towering Rabbinic figure in Lithuania at the turn of the 20th Century, a genius in Torah renowned for his righteous ways. He authored a multi-volume work on *Seder Kodshim* and was the primary influence and rebbe of his son, Rav Avraham Dov-Ber, the last Chief Rabbi of Kovno and author of *Devar Avraham*.

In their shtetl, there lived a *pashut* water carrier, a simple, gentle soft-spoken person. Velvel made up for his lack of education and sophistication with his hard work, stellar *midos* and endearing *Temimus*, sincerity.

One day, the *vasser treiger* came to Rav Shapira with a heartfelt request. For too long he had been ‘on the outside’ of what was happening in the *beis medrash* in their town; he desperately desired to understand what the learned men were discussing while engaged in *chavrusa* learning, to be able to follow and participate in the Rabbi’s *shiurim*. Velvel wanted to be a *talmid chacham*: “Bless me,” he pleaded with quiet yearning, “to become a *talmid chacham*...”

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אורה בת ראינה

seriously. “Please say it again, loud and clear — loudly, like you really mean it: ‘I *want* to be a *talmid chacham*!’ Go ahead...”

Velvel blushed with emotion and said it with increased volume and determination. “Again, louder,” answered the Rav, “Shout it!”

Unaccustomed to raising his voice, Velvel took a deep breath, and cried out with all of his strength, “*I want to learn Torah and be a talmid chacham! I want this so, SO MUCH, Rabbi! I WANT TO LEARN TORAH!! Please...*” he burst into tears, “*please bless me...*”

Velvel’s passionate cries pierced Rav Zalman Sender’s soul. He closed his eyes, and a heartfelt blessing poured forth for his success in *talmud Torah*.

The next morning, Velevel arrived early to the Beis Medrash for davening, sat down in his usual spot, and began to learn. Line after line, page after page, he sat motionless and fiercely focused. That evening, after work, he returned to the study hall and continued to apply himself. Day after day, week after week, Velvel’s *hasmada*, his determined, uninterrupted learning, began to bear fruit. The words and ideas on the pages began to come alive and flow with grace and power, and his mind and heart filled with insight, clarity, and the bright, holy joy of Divine Presence.

The great Rav of Slutsk (and later the Rosh Yeshiva of Eitz Chaim in Yerushalayim), Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer would repeat this *ma’aseh*, and describe how

extraordinary it was to see Velvel's transformation from a 'regular' person into a full-fledged scholar. He would marvel and note how the entire town had witnessed how an 'underprivileged' middle-aged man completely changed his identity, making learning the center of his life, growing day by day until he was recognized as a knowledgeable and brilliant *talmid chacham* in every sense of the word.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-ה', בִּי אֵד-נִי, לֹא אִישׁ דְּבָרִים אָנֹכִי
גַם מִתְמוּל גַּם מִשְׁלֶשֶׁם, גַּם מֵאֲזוּ דְבָרְךָ אֶל-עֶבְדְּךָ:
כִּי כְבֹד-פֶּה וְכְבֹד לְשׁוֹן, אָנֹכִי.
וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלָיו, מִי שֵׁם פֶּה לְאָדָם, אוֹ מִי-יְשׁוּם
אֵלִים, אוֹ חֵרֶשׁ אוֹ פֶקֶח אוֹ עֵוֶר-הֲלֹא אָנֹכִי, ה'.

"Moshe said to Hashem, "Please, my Lord, I have never been a man of words, neither in times past nor now that You have spoken to Your servant. I am slow of speech and I am slow of tongue!" And Hashem said to him, "Who gives man speech? Who makes him mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, Hashem?"

Our Sages relate to Moshe Rabbeinu's speech impediment, and his struggle to communicate clearly and confidently, as the existential condition of Am Yisrael in exile. Enslaved and traumatized, we were stuck, broken in body and spirit — and collectively 'mute'. The bodies of Jewish children dammed up the Nile river, and all were constantly exposed to the bottomless depravity, immorality and violent cruelty of Pharaoh. After generations of oppression and helplessness, what was there to say?

What words could appropriately express the exhaustion, fear and suffering of a nation enslaved? These days we are accustomed to social media posts, reacting to ongoing

tragedies such as, "No words..." followed by a long-form rant. In Mitzrayim, however, there actually were literally #NoWords. We had lost our collective ability to express ourselves, our hopes and dreams, even the ability to express or give voice to our pain.

A human being is classified as a *medaber*, a 'speaking being' — speech being our defining capacity. The *Zohar HaKadosh* reveals that in Mitzrayim, speech itself was exiled (2:25b). In our enslavement, we had become so dehumanized and demoralized that we lost the ability to voice our wants, needs, beliefs or desires. We lost the freedom we needed to develop ourselves personally and nationally, and to state our purpose.

Rav Zalman Sender's *bracha* could only be effective with Velvel's heartfelt self-expression. Once he was able to liberate his speech from constriction and exile, he was able to 'receive the Torah', the 'speech' of the Ribbono Shel Olam.

May we have the courage and strength to raise our voices and tell the world — and ourselves — what we really want and who we really are: a compassionate people, bearers of the *Shechinah*, conduits of the Divine word, bringers of a complete redemption, MAY IT BE VERY, VERY SOON! ■



Bishul Akum: Reasoning and Exemptions

Our Sages prohibited eating kosher food cooked by a non-Jew. As mentioned in previous articles, there are two main reasons behind this prohibition. The Talmud (*Avoda Zara* 36b) states that eating food cooked by non-Jews may cause excessive mingling and lead to the severe transgression of intermarriage. The decree of *bishul akum* is intended to maintain distance between Jews and non-Jews in order to avoid transgression. The other reason for this decree is the possibility that a non-Jew could have mixed in non-kosher food, either maliciously or due to his lack of knowledge of kashrut.

As with many rabbinic decrees, so too with *bishul akum*, the question is how much does the underlying reason affect its practical application. The classic example is with a non-Jew who has no children, and thus the issue of intermarriage seems irrelevant; would a Jew be able to eat kosher food cooked by this non-Jew? *Rashba* writes clearly that in such a case, the reason does not set aside the prohibition. *Rashba*, in his responsa (1:248), examines the question of food cooked by a priest. Since Catholic priests do not marry nor do they have children with whom to intermarry, is it permitted to eat food cooked by a priest being that the reason for *bishul akum* seemingly does not

apply to him? *Rashba* answers that we have a principle regarding rabbinic decrees: even in a case in which the reason does not apply, the prohibition still stands. Later authorities codify this opinion of *Rashba* (*Rema* YD 112:1; *Taz*, *ibid*). Although the rule seems clear, later authorities cite different examples which still leave room for dispute.

NOT KNOWING THE FOOD IS *BISHUL AKUM*

Later authorities examine the case of someone who is unknowingly eating (kosher) food that is *bishul akum*. Responsa *Chik'kei Lev* (YD 24) rules that in such a case, there is no obligation for someone else to inform the eater. *Chik'kei Lev* explains that even though in general there is an obligation to inform someone who is transgressing a biblical or rabbinic *halacha*, here there is no such obligation. Since the reason behind *bishul akum* is the concern of intermarriage and the person eating has no idea the food is from a non-Jew, he may continue eating and **need not** be informed (see *Bein Yisrael LaNochri*, p. 59). Other authorities disagree, claiming there is no difference between this situation and *Rashba's* responsa regarding a priest; indeed, even when the underlying reason doesn't apply, the ruling should be the same in both cases. One might answer that the cases are different since eating



without knowledge is a *b'diavad* (ex-post facto) occurrence, and once someone found out that a food is *bishul akum* he must refrain from further consumption. Regardless of this distinction, the opinion of *Chik'kei Lev* is rejected by many authorities (see *Pesakim Ut'shuvot* 112:2).

FOOD COOKED BY A CONVERT

Another interesting situation regarding exemptions to *bishul akum* is that of converts. Authorities discuss a case where a non-Jew (in the process of conversion) cooked food and subsequently converted. Would the food cooked the day before still be prohibited because of *bishul akum*? Would the convert himself be prohibited to eat it? Responsa *Avnei Zikaron* (88) rules that both the convert and anyone else may consume the food. His main argument is that the decree on that particular non-Jew is no longer relevant; as such, other Jews may consume the food, and certainly the convert himself should be able to eat since there is no possibility of marrying himself.

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Many later authorities dispute this ruling on the grounds that even when the reasoning for the decree is no longer relevant, the halacha does not change (*Hagahot Imrei Baruch* 1:64; Responsa *Lev Arie* 2:25). Rav Chaim Kanievsky and Rav Yosef Lieberman are also quoted as prohibiting the convert or anyone else from consuming the food in such a case (*Bin'tivot Hahalacha* 46, p. 667).

IN SUMMARY:

- *Bishul akum* was decreed by our sages to distance Jews from intermarriage.
- In a case where this reason does not apply, the decree is still binding. As such, *bishul akum* applies to a catholic priest.
- Someone who is unknowingly eating (kosher) food that is *bishul akum*. An observer aware of this has an obligation to inform them.
- A convert may not eat cooked kosher food he made prior to his conversion. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

Parshat Shemot introduces us to Moshe Rabbeinu; his birth and subsequent childhood being raised by the daughter of *Paroh*, his exile as he flees to *Midian*, and of course the seminal moment when Hakadosh Baruch Hu reveals himself to Moshe with the supernatural vision of the thornbush that is completely engulfed by flame, but somehow is not consumed.

Many *meforshim* have questioned the significance of this particular medium, the supernatural “burning bush” as the vehicle for Moshe to receive his sacred mission to lead the Jewish People, and to bring them forth from *Mitzrayim*.

The Chasidic Masters in particular, saw important messages represented by this supernatural encounter.

The ***Shem Mishmuel***, the ***Rebbe of Sokatchov zy’a***, suggests that the thornbush is the humblest of trees, and *Har Sinai* is the humblest of mountain tops. These two specific factors were meant to convey a fundamental message to Moshe Rabbeinu whom the Torah will later describe as being exceedingly humble:

וְהָאִישׁ מְאֹד עָנָו [עֲנִי] מְאֹד מִכָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר
עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה

Now Moses was a very humble man, more than any other man that was upon the face of the earth.

In presenting this sacred call to Moshe, in such a way, says the *Shem Mishmuel*, Hashem meant to convey to Moshe, that indeed he was perfectly suited for this

sacred mission, specifically because he was humble, that even this humble thornbush, on this humble mountain top, can become a conduit for Hashem to reveal miracles.

The ***Noam Elimelech***, ***Reb Elimelech of Lijensk zy’a***, sees the supernatural occurrence of the bush being engulfed by flames, but not being consumed, as an important lesson for each of us. The thornbush represents the thorny presence of the *yetzer hara*. The flames, says the ***Noam Elimelech***, represent the passionate fire of dedicated *Avodat Hashem*. The imagery of the burning bush, explains ***Reb Elimelech***, is meant to serve as a constant reminder, that even if we are on fire in our *Avodat Hashem*, the thorny *yetzer hara*, is never truly consumed, it is ever present, and we must ever be aware, and work to overcome its challenges to our spiritual growth.

The ***Netivot Shalom***, the ***Slonimer Rebbe zy’a***, suggests that the thornbush is meant to represent the Jewish People. Throughout our long history, Am Yisrael, has indeed been surrounded by flames—flames of hatred, flames of immorality, yet despite each of these factors, says the *Slonimer Rebbe*, those flames will never entirely consume the Jewish People.

Yehi Ratzon, may each of us find *chizuk* in these three beautiful teachings, and strive to live lives of humble *Avodat Hashem*, ever wary of the *yetzer hara*’s constant presence, and be strengthened in knowing that indeed the Jewish People are eternal. ■

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GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

Actually... We Did Start the Fire

An iconic bush on a lonely desert mountain hosted the first rendezvous between Moshe Rabeinu and the Shechinah. To gradually ease Moshe into the practice of speaking directly with Hashem, a modest shrub was selected over more majestic but imposing trees.

A bizarre fire which didn't consume the flammable bush provided added symbolism. At one of the lowest moments of Jewish history, after a 210-year holocaust, this miraculous and unending fire symbolized נצח ישראל or the everlasting survival of the Jewish people against all attempts to extinguish it.

Beyond the eternity of Jewish peoplehood, the unusual fire implied a different message- about the relationship between Torah and Jewish history. This second idea is based upon the science of fire.

THREE ELEMENTS OF COMBUSTION

Combustion is a chemical process which releases heat and light energy. The process of combustion depends upon three essential elements: an energy source such as fire, and a fuel, such as wood or coal, which the fire consumes and from which energy emits. The third element of combustion is ubiquitous but invisible,

and without that crucial third element the process of combustion cannot occur. That imperceptible third element is *oxygen* which “oxidizes” or reacts with fuel to form combustion particles we call energy. Combustion depends upon three elements, two of which are visible and one which isn't, but is omnipresent.

Torah is routinely compared to fire and just as with fire, Torah study requires the same three essential elements for successful combustion. Torah itself is the metaphoric *fuel*. It is studied or *consumed* by the human mind and heart. The *energy* for this process is provided by a person who *studies* Torah. However, for Torah combustion to occur a third element is crucial. A third “element”, which, like oxygen, is ubiquitous and invisible, must participate in the experience of Torah study. *That omnipresent but invisible element is Hashem Himself.* Without His assistance or סיועתא דשמיא, our study of Torah cannot succeed and Torah cannot be ignited into fire. Daily, we pray for His assistance in the study of Torah ותן בליבנו להבין ולהשכיל לשמוע ללמוד Torah וללמד את כל דברי תלמוד תורתך באהבה

Physical fire requires fuel, energy and oxygen; Torah study requires the *fuel* of Torah, the *energy* of the human effort, and *Hashem's assistance*.

A FIERY BUSH WITHOUT COMBUSTION

At the encounter of the *sneh*, combustion wasn't yet possible. Our *avot* studied the will of Hashem and performed mitzvot.

The exact nature of their mitzvah observance and Torah study is difficult to determine, but the wisdom of Torah shaped their lives and carved our national identity. Avraham is rewarded for instructing his family to adhere to Torah and mitzvot: עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקלי וישמר משמרתו מצותי חקותי ותורתו

However, at this early stage of history, mass revelation had yet to occur. Additionally, for the past two centuries Hashem had been distant from our people as His presence in Jewish history was obscured. *Without Hashem's palpable presence within history combustion could not occur.* Without oxygen combustion fails. Without Hashem's palpable presence in history the bush was on fire but wasn't consumed. Fire yes, combustion no.

About a year later, upon the very same mountain, combustion would begin. Hashem promised Moshe that he would return to the mountain with the newly liberated nation, but that this time, the barren mountain would be ablaze with fire and enveloped by billowing smoke. A year later we all stood beneath a mountain top transformed from a *sneh* to *Sinai*, and spoke directly with Hashem. As Hashem's presence descended into our world and into history, combustion commenced, and the mountain burst into flames. The shift from a combustion-less *sneh* to a *Sinai*-mountain, roaring with flames, signified the palpable presence of Hashem in history. Combustion of Torah had begun.

HISTORY AFFECTS TORAH

Fire then, serves as a metaphor for the interaction between our people, Torah, and Hashem. Without Hashem there can be no fire. Just the same, as Torah combustion requires three elements, without the Jewish

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people embracing Torah, there can be no fire. Torah's fate depends upon Jewish history.

As the will of Hashem, Torah is eternal and, as the gemara asserts, predates our universe by two thousand years. As the cosmic word of Hashem, it lies beyond human reach and beyond human experience. Infinite and unfathomable.

Despite the cosmic sweep of Torah though, Hashem shrunk his will into the Torah we received which allows access to the Infinite through human study. By studying Torah and adhering to its mitzvot we magnify Torah's imprint and augment Hashem's presence in this world. For this reason, we are compared to *husbands* of Torah. In a well-known *derasha*, Chazal explained that Torah is not just our *מורשה* or *heritage*, but is also our *מאורסה* our *wife*. Marriage is a dynamic which affects both

members. Torah is a guidebook for life, but also is *affected* by our lives. It is affected by our personal lives and is also impacted by the grand revolutions of Jewish history. As the Jewish people prosper, Torah thrives. When we decline, Torah itself suffers.

For full Torah fire to be kindled, Hashem's presence in our world is necessary. When that presence recedes, *chas v'shalom*, the fire ebbs. Similarly, fully-flamed Torah depends upon Jewish fortune. When we are persecuted, Torah's fire diminishes.

IMPACTING THE TEXT

Not only is the general *state* of Torah affected by Jewish history but the actual *text* of Torah changes when Jews suffer. There is a two-pasuk "stand alone section" commonly known as the section *ויהי בנסוע*, because it contains this iconic pasuk recited when opening the aron hakodesh. The gemara in Shabbat claims that this tiny section migrated from its natural location to signal an important message about Jewish exile. During Messianic times, after the completion of exile, the parsha will return to its original location. Jewish suffering caused the re-partitioning of Torah from its pristine form to our current text. The actual text of Torah was "reformatted" by Hashem to reflect Jewish history.

A similar reformatting occurs in the transition from parshat Vayigash to Vayechi. Typically, junctures between parshiyot are designated by an empty space of at least nine letters. Atypically, Vayigash and Vayechi are fused, without any intervening empty parchment. In his comments to Vayechi, the Sefat Emmet casts the textual closure as a parallel to the sunken state of our people in Egypt. The textual shrinkage mirrors our suffering in Egypt.

When we suffer, Torah contracts. Without our fuel, the combustion of Torah fails.

THE ATTACK OF TORAH

On October 7th, Torah suffered. The people of Torah were attacked on the Land upon which Torah was meant to be maximized. Worse, this brutal massacre occurred on the day we celebrate Torah. Calling this the "Simchat Torah massacre", as opposed to the "attack of October 7th" emphasizes that Torah itself was also assaulted on this day. On the day we honor a חתן תורה affirming our own husbandry of Torah, our marriage with Torah was viciously assaulted.

This Simchat Torah timing of the pogrom, though, provides long-term confidence. Rebbe Chanaya ben Tradyon, one of the 10 martyrs brutally murdered during the destruction of the second Mikdash, was burned alive while wrapped in a sefer Torah. As he died, he conveyed confidence to his daughter: "[Hashem] will avenge the dishonor of Torah and will [thereby] also avenge my brutal death". The dual attack on his life and on Torah assured him of the final outcome.

Our people were literally burned alive on the day wrapped with the joy of Torah. Like Rebbe Chananya, this battle may take some time, but we already know how it concludes. Hashem will avenge the Simchat Torah attack, and will avenge the attack upon our people, and our Homeland.

Jewish history will rise, and the flames of Torah will burn forever bright. ■



Mazal Tov to

**Rabbi Asher & Lia Manning on the birth
of a 2nd daughter, grand-daughter to
Rabbi Anthony & Sarah Manning**



The background of the entire image is a photograph of a modern, multi-story apartment building at night. The building has a light-colored, textured facade and several balconies with black railings. Some balconies have small potted plants. The windows are lit from within, and some balconies have small outdoor lights. In the foreground, a silver car is parked on a dark surface. To the right, there is a tall, thin street lamp. The sky is dark with dramatic, bright light rays shining down from the top center, creating a sense of mystery and divine revelation. The overall mood is mysterious and intriguing.

P s s t !

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HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA
SHMIDMAN



Hearing the Clarion Call

YESHAYAHU

27:6-28:13; 29:22-23

In this week's Haftorah we read:

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל וּבָאֵם
הָאֲבָדִים בְּאֶרֶץ אַשּׁוּר וְהַנִּדְחִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּ לַה' בְּהַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

And on that day, a great ram's horn shall be sounded; and the strayed who are in the land of Assyria and the expelled who are in the land of Egypt shall come and worship the LORD on the holy mount, in Jerusalem.

Why are the countries of Ashur and Mitzrayim chosen to represent the global community when describing the dramatic ingathering of the Jewish people in Messianic times? Rav Shimon Schwab in his commentary on prayer suggests that the two places mentioned in Yeshayahu are not just physical places but can be understood in the metaphorical sense as well. The two sources of pain we have experienced in exile are that of plenty and pain. The land of Ashur represents the experience of plenty, from the Hebrew word "osher". The impact of living with affluence and tranquility has caused many to be lost, "ovdim". The alternative exile experience, Mitzrayim, has been one of great difficulty and pain, from the word "tzar".

Our nation has suffered greatly with many pushed away, "nidachim", due to the pain of philosophical angst and religious doubt.

While the Navi addresses us on a national level, these words can also be understood on a personal level. We often feel disconnected with Hashem in a "Goldilocks" way - when things are too good or too bad. The Navi is telling us that whether we are distanced because of Ashur, when things are easy and comfortable or because of Mitzrayim, when things are so painful, ultimately we have the capacity to reconnect when we hear the shofar - Hashem's heavenly call. Perhaps our greatest challenge is neither that of Ashur nor that of Mitzrayim. Rather, our greatest challenge is to open our ears to Hashem's clarion call from the shofar beseeching us to turn to Him. ■

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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS
RAV, THE JERUSALEM SHUL - BAKA, JERUSALEM

Out of Sight But Not Out of Mind

The Jewish people are known for not withholding criticism from our greatest leaders, and even Moshe does not escape criticism. At the burning bush, Moshe responded to God's charge to help free the Jews enslaved in Egypt by saying, "But they will not put faith in me, they will not heed my voice" (Exodus 4:1). The Sages say that Moshe baselessly imputed a lack of faith to the Jewish people and "suspected the upright without cause." He should have judged them favorably. According to the Talmud, God rejoins by affirming that "the Jewish people are the faithful progeny of faithful forbears"¹ (בְּנֵי מַאֲמִינִים בְּנֵי מַאֲמִינִים).

Moshe might have been able to see the future or even behold God, in a manner of speaking, through the highest level of prophecy, but his spiritual sight failed him when it came to penetrating the Jewish heart. Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook explained that within every Jew there

is a deep well of pure faith. Its waters are still, so it is indiscernible to others, and we ourselves do not know how deep it goes. Faith is our *élan vital*, and it comes to us from our ancestors Avraham and Sarah. As the Torah tells us about Avraham, "He had faith in the Lord" (וְהָאֱמִן בַּיהוָה) (Genesis 15:6).²

After the exchange between Moshe and God described in the Talmud, Moshe is given signs to perform so that his mission will be believed. But if their purpose is to convince his brethren of the truth of his message, why must he perform them now without an audience? Apparently, the signs are for Moshe, to teach him a lesson about judging others favorably. The first sign of turning the snake into a serpent is meant to evoke the cautionary tale of the primordial serpent who misused the gift of speech in the Garden of Eden.³ The next sign is a skin



Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlop zt"l

affliction called *tzara'at*, which according to the Sages afflicts a person for, among other things, *leshon ha-ra*, speaking ill of others.⁴ According to Rav Kook, a dermatological condition is by definition only skin deep and does not reflect a deeper malady within, say, the heart. Moshe's hand is afflicted miraculously to demonstrate

2. *Ein Ayah, Shabbat*, 11:12.

3. *Exodus Rabbah*, 3:12.

4. See *Arachin* 15b, and *Exodus Rabbah*, 3:13.

that the part of the body most involved in navigating the physical, external world can be sullied or sick without it telling us anything about the pure waters of faith within. Moshe was wrong about the faith of the Jewish people because he judged them by their cover. God has him perform these signs now because in order to succeed as a leader, he has to understand whom exactly he will be leading.⁵

Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlop, a confidant and disciple of Rav Kook, added to his teacher's insight. When God instructs Moshe to bring his afflicted arm back to his bosom, not only is it healed, but there is no evidence that it was ever afflicted. Since those afflicted with *tzara'at* had to leave the camp, this symbolized for Moshe—as well as for us—that we must draw into our embrace those who have grown distant. By holding them close, they are healed and any rift is sealed.⁶

Judging others favorably is about more than being a *mensch*. According to the Rambam, it is a positive commandment from the Torah. It is part of the larger mitzvah to treat litigants fairly and apply Torah law to disputes, which is derived from “judge your fellow justly” (Leviticus 19:15). As he puts it, “One should interpret his actions and deeds only for good.”⁷

The Mishnah juxtaposes this directive alongside two others: “Make for yourself a rabbi, acquire a friend, and judge every person favorably.”⁸ The Lubavitcher Rebbe wondered how the first two phrases

connect to the third. He reasoned that when we see a Jew not behaving in accordance with the Torah, our mind immediately jumps to conclusions. The Rebbe said that we should pause and consider these two points: “Did he have a rabbi to teach him Torah? Did he have a close friend whose behavior he could emulate?” The moment we realize that these powerful role models are missing from this person's life, we cannot but judge them favorably. In the absence of those figures from that person's life, it falls upon us to befriend them and teach them Torah.

In *Pirkei Avot* we are further taught the ethical principle, “Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place,”⁹ which means we should always consider the pressures, influences, and extenuating circumstances shaping the conduct, speech, and thought of others. When we choose to shine a light on the good in our fellow man, we promote peace and harmony:

The mitzvah to “judge your fellow justly,” which requires judging everyone favorably... is a foundational principle of ethical living and of fear [of Heaven], which leads to wholeness in everything.¹⁰

We are to be compassionate and view others with a generous eye, thereby fulfilling one of the most vital teachings and mitzvot of the Torah: “love your fellow like yourself” (וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ) (Leviticus 19:18). ■

9. Ibid., 2:5.

10. *Ein Ayah, Berachot*, 3:24.

5. *Ein Ayah, Shabbat*, 11:16.

6. *Mei Marom, Nimukei Mikra'ot*, 108.

7. *Sefer ha-Mitzvot, mitzvot aseh* §177.

8. *Pirkei Avot*, 1:7.

Rabbi Goldscheider is the author of the newly published book ‘Torah United’ (OU Press), featuring divrei Torah on the weekly parasha from Rav Kook, Rabbi Solovetichik, and the Chassidic Masters.

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Monetary Responsibility of One Member of a Group

לעילוי נשמת
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: Reuven and four friends rented a car with bangs and scratches from Shimon; Reuven gave a deposit check. When they returned the car, Shimon claimed they damaged it. Reuven is sure no damage occurred when he was in the car and assumes (but is unsure) the damage was there before. His friends deny they owe anything and are unwilling to speak seriously to Shimon about it. Shimon cashed Reuven's deposit check and says that if he wants money back, he should pay for the damage or make his friends do so. Reuven and Shimon preferred not to go to *beit din* and approached me for guidance. We decided I would present the **general principles** (without possibly impactful questions) on whether Shimon can hold Reuven responsible for the whole group or whether he must pursue the others if he wants their payment.

Answer: There are two halachic issues to discuss regarding the extent of Reuven's responsibility: 1. Does Reuven have more than 20% responsibility for the car, and if so, to what extent? 2. Is indirect responsibility activated because the others refuse to take responsibility?

The Yerushalmi (Shvuot 5:1) concludes that if two people borrow a sum of money together, they become *areivim* (guarantors) for each other, even without explicit agreement for that. In other words, one of the borrowers could end up paying the lender the entire amount. (If he acted correctly - see Pitchei Choshen, Halva'ah 14:14-18 - the *arev* can demand reimbursement from the other borrower - Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 130:1). The Shulchan Aruch (CM 77:1) extends this concept to two who buy an object together (regarding payment for it), and the Rama (ad loc.; see Shach ad loc. 1) adds two who accept an object to watch (regarding payment if they do not successfully return it). This is thus a broad concept that should apply also to rentals. In essence, renting a car contains two elements that can lead to payment - paying for the right to use it, which is like buying (see Bava Metzia 56b), and paying if he does not return it intact, like a watchman (see Mishpat Haschirut 1:9).

The two main forms of *arevim* are: a regular *arev* and an *arev kablani*. A regular *arev* is responsible to potentially pay for what his friend owes, but only when the creditor has a valid reason to view the debt as impractical to receive from the debtor

The Orthodox Union - via its website - fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and OU Israel's Torah Tidbits.



(Shulchan Aruch, CM 129:8). An *arev kablan* is treated like a direct recipient of a loan, even though someone else is the ultimate beneficiary. Resultantly, while a creditor can approach a regular *arev* only after it is apparent that the debtor will not pay, he can approach an *arev kablan* before even trying the debtor (ibid. 15).

Rishonim disagree on the status of two who borrow together. The Rosh (Shvuot 5:2) considers each lender as an *arev kablan*, which means that the borrower can take full payment from either without even trying to get half from the other. The Sha'ar Mishpat (77:1) explains that we view the matter as if each of the borrowers received all the money, no matter how they decided to split it among them. The Shulchan Aruch (CM 77:1), though, accepts the opinion of the *Rishonim* who say that each is a borrower on half and a regular *arev* on the other, so that generally each person only has to pay when his partner will not.

At what point has the lender exhausted his necessary efforts to receive payment from the borrower and can demand pay from an *arev*? The Shulchan Aruch (CM 129:10) says a case where one can demand payment from the *arev* is if the other borrower is a powerful person who does not listen to *beit din*. The Rama (ad loc.) cites but does not accept an opinion that we wait until *beit din* tries to force the borrower to pay. Clearly, though, if there has been only refusal to pay without being

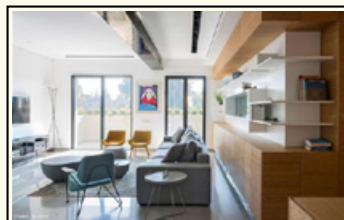
summoned by *beit din*, it is too early to demand payment from the *arev* (see also Bava Batra 174a). This is even clearer if the debtor has real claims for exemption, in which case going to *beit din* before paying is the defendant's right (even if he is presently not eager to do so). ■

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INSIGHTS INTO LASHON HAKODESH

DR. ARIELLA AGATSTEIN

The Torah's Perspective on Greatness

In Parshat Shemot, we are introduced to the greatest prophet that ever lived: Moshe Rabbeinu. Hashem Himself explains in במדבר "ב: ז-ח" that unlike all other prophets to whom G-d spoke in a dreamlike state, Hashem communicated with Moshe in a much more direct manner - פה אל פה אדבר בו - Was Moshe Rabbeinu always great? Are human beings born "great"? Is greatness thrust upon us or can one achieve it in some other way? These are questions which philosophers have addressed throughout the ages. In this week's Parsha, we learn about the Torah's fascinating approach to "greatness".

The Torah explicitly tells us about Moshe Rabbeinu's developmental growth on two occasions. The first is found in שמות ב: after Moshe was no longer an infant and being nursed by his mother, Yocheved:

וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַתְּבַאֲהוּ לְבֵת פְּרֹעֶה וַיְהִי־לָהּ לְבֵן...

"**And the boy grew up.** And she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he was for her like a son..." The Torah then states that Moshe received his name and in the *very next pasuk*, the Torah continues to list another stage of development:

וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־אֶחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מַכֶּה אִישׁ־עִבְרִי מֵאֶחָיו
"And it was in those days, **and Moses had grown up**, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen..."

Twice does the Torah use the word: וַיִּגְדַּל - "And he grew [up]". While it is clear that the first time indicates physical development, perhaps the second mention of גדל refers to Moshe's moral development.

Interestingly, throughout the Torah, this shores, this root, of גדל has a number of nuanced meanings. Sometimes it means "to grow up" or mature, as it does here with Moshe Rabbeinu, while elsewhere the translation is slightly different.

For example, in last week's Parsha, before his death, Yaakov Avinu reached out to bless Yosef's children. He placed his right and stronger hand on Ephraim's head and his weaker left hand upon the elder Menashe's head. Upon seeing this, Yosef protested and insisted that Yaakov switch his stronger hand to be placed upon Menashe's head. The Torah writes

(בראשית מ"ח: ט)

וַיִּמָּאן אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר יְדַעְתִּי בְּנִי יְדַעְתִּי גַם־הוּא יִהְיֶה לְעָם וְגַם־הוּא יִגְדַּל וְאֹלָם אֶחָיו הִקְטִן יִגְדַּל מִמֶּנּוּ ...

"His father refused, and said, "I know, my son, I know. He [Menashe] also will be a nation and he **also will become great**, but his younger brother [Ephraim] **will be greater than he...**"

In this location, the shoresh of גדל means “to *become* great”.

The גדל of שרש, has one additional meaning. In פרשת לך לך, when Hashem speaks to Avram for the very first time and commands him to move to Eretz Yisrael, Hashem promises him (בראשית יב:):

וְאֶעֱשֶׂה לְךָ גְדוֹל וְאַבְרָכְךָ וְאֶגְדַּלְהָ שְׁמֶךָ וְהָיָה בְרָכָה”

“And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and **I will make your name great**, and you shall be a blessing...”

Here, G-d seemingly assures Avram that He will make his name great. The commentators discuss different possibilities of what “a great name” might mean, with some suggesting that G-d would make Avram well-known. Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch does not agree with the above translation. He notes that the pasuk doesn’t say “אגדל” “I will make your name great” as stated above, but rather uses the word אגדלה- which translates as: “I wish to make your name great.” Indeed, G-d can bestow blessings upon individuals, but ultimately, only their actions and commitment to Him will determine the outcome of whether such blessings are actualized.

Within these three explanations of the word גדל, “to grow”, “to become great” and [a variation of] “to make great” we can learn a very important Torah lesson. In Judaism, no human being is innately born spiritually “great”, no person is an immediate גדול. Neither in their Torah learning nor in their refinement of character, no person is born as a finished product. Unlike the Greeks who believed people were born “great” and talented- some were heroes and some were villains, the Torah’s view on

greatness is quite the opposite. Rather, the Torah suggests that to become great (גדול), one must *grow* (לגדל) and develop themselves. This process can be frustrating and is far from a quick-fix for someone who truly desires to be on a high spiritual level. This spiritual perspective on greatness requires one to commit time and time again to work on themselves- to be regimented in pushing themselves forward. Whether one wants to be a גדול בתורה, a great Torah scholar, or transform themselves into a בעל חסד, one who graciously performs acts of kindness, one must appreciate that growth does not happen overnight. Malcolm Gladwell stresses this rule in his book “Outliers”. He suggests that throughout history, in order for someone to achieve a level of “expert”, in a specific area, they had to minimally commit ten thousand hours of practice. No famous athlete started out as such at the beginning of their career. Rather, they only became a success after inching their way forward in their personal growth and skill. If this is true in the physical world, so too, in the world of spirituality, our growth works in a similar manner. True, some are born with certain traits or qualities that can seem outwardly to give them a “head start”, but G-d doesn’t compare each of His children. Each one of us is judged according to our own potential.

Yes, Moshe Rabbeinu was raised in the palace of Pharaoh. Perhaps as the Ibn Ezra suggests (שמות כג:), Moshe was purposely raised in a palace in order to be raised up above his brethren, a quality which would help him to become Am Yisrael’s ultimate leader. Yet, even with this blessing, Moshe’s greatness was only *actualized* by the painstaking

actions he took- his ability to risk everything and stand up for a fellow Jew, his ability to advocate for the Jewish people after they sinned, and his repeated choice to *grow* and learn from his mistakes and from others. From this week's parsha, we are reminded to set our spiritual sights high and to know that everyone who ended up spiritually "great" had to "grow" themselves, and forge themselves step-by-step to get there. ■

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RABBI DR. NATAN OPHIR (OFFENBACHER)

GUEST DVAR TORAH

The Secret of עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי



This guest Dvar Torah for Torah Tidbits is devoted to my beloved nephew Naftali Yonah Gordon Hy"d who was killed in his tank in Gaza erev Chanukah 2023 as a tribute on his *Shloshim*.

Our rallying cry since the current war began on Simchat Torah has been עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי. It is an inspirational slogan proclaiming we are alive and will continue to exist despite perennial threats. Question: When and why was this slogan invented?

The first time the Torah refers to Israel as a nation (עַם) is in this week's parsha, Shemot. Before that, Jacob's family were 70 individuals, "sons of Yisrael". After they settled in Egypt and multiplied rapidly, Pharoh identified יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי as a fifth column who will fight the Egyptians and leave the country (Exodus 1,9). Our parsha sets the contours towards the future theme of the Torah that עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי will fulfill its mission as a nation. But the actual phrase עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי does not appear in the Torah, Tenach or liturgy. It is not in the Talmud, Midrash or medieval Jewish sources. It is mentioned in a legend attributed to Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschutz, but its origin

as a rallying call was invented by the pioneers of the "First Aliyah" (1881/2). David Gordon, a leading activist in *Hibbat Zion*, wrote in *HaMaggid*, the first Hebrew language weekly newspaper, עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי. He thus combined the futuristic hope of חַי from Ezekiel 18, 21 with Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi's optimistic message (*Rosh Hashana* 25a) that דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ חַי יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי יִקָּוּ.

Soon עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי transformed into a popular Zionist tune. In 1914 Eliezer Ben Yehudah reported that Jerusalem youth sang and danced עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי to celebrate the Turkish government's willingness to create the first Jewish army unit. In November 1917 after the Balfour Declaration, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook who was then in London, encouraged the Jewish Legion stationed in Plymouth, England and wrote עֹד יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי וְחַיָּה יִקָּוּ. Later, Rav Kook mentions that the song עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי was sung on Hanukah.

Abraham Idelsohn was a musicologist who made aliyah in 1907. He innovated the six-word ditty, עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי עֹד בְּלִי דֵי, and recorded it professionally with a cantor and pianist. He also published it in a 1922 Zionist songbook entitled *Sefer haShirim*. The song underwent several transformations, e.g. as יִשְׂרָאֵל יְבִנָּה עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי in a Zionist song book in 1929. It was later used in post Holocaust responses. As a result, Jacob Birnbaum, founder of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ),

asked Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach to use the words **יִשְׂרָאֵל** **עַם** to create a protest song for SSSJ. Thus, in April 1965, Reb Shlomo created his most popular tune, **יִשְׂרָאֵל** **עַם** **אֲבִינוּ** **חַי**.

Now in 2024, following an especially fractious time in Israeli history and a devastating war that is not yet over, **יִשְׂרָאֵל** **עַם** has become a proud announcement of solidarity and determination. Like my beloved nephew did, many of our devoted soldiers sacrifice their lives so that **יִשְׂרָאֵל** **עַם** can thrive in **יִשְׂרָאֵל** **עַם**. ■

Rabbi Dr. Natan Ophir (Offenbacher) graduated from Yeshiva University, then Yeshivat Mercaz Harav where he received semicha from the Chief Rabbinate. He received his MA and PhD in Jewish Philosophy from Hebrew University where he served as the campus rabbi for 16 years. He has taught Jewish meditation and a variety of topics at Israeli universities and colleges.

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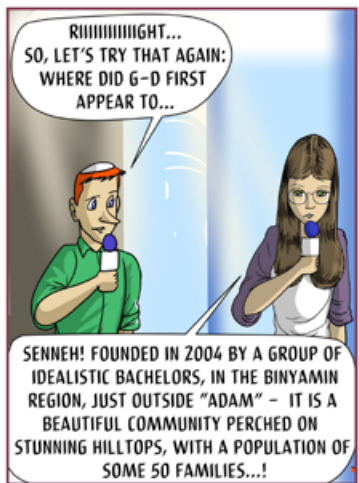
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we want to say**

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**to all of you, our partners,
for making our lifesaving mission
possible this year.**





Yael Cinamon
Jerusalem
Chapter Madricha

Embracing Support: Overcoming Self-Doubt

In Parshat Shmot, we witness the beginning of the Jewish people's journey from slavery to freedom. One of the main characters in this story is Moshe, who becomes the leader and delivers the people from bondage. I think we can learn a valuable lesson from his experience.

When Hashem first appears to Moshe in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-4), Moshe expresses self-doubt and hesitates to take on the task of confronting Pharaoh. He questions his own abilities, saying, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" (Exodus 3:11). Moshe feels inadequate, lacking confidence in his own capabilities.

Hashem responds with reassurance, saying, "I will be with you" (Exodus 3:12). Hashem reminds Moshe that he is not alone in his mission, that divine support will be present every step of the way.

The lesson we can derive from this exchange is that even when we doubt ourselves, we should remember that we are not alone. We have the strength and support of a higher power, God, as well as the encouragement and assistance of those around us.

As young adults, we often face challenges and uncertainties. We may question our

abilities, feel overwhelmed by the weight of responsibilities, or doubt our own potential. However, just like Moshe, we need to recognize that we are not alone in our journey. Whether it be through faith, friends, family, or mentors, there are sources of support that can guide us and help us overcome obstacles.

Parsha Shmot teaches us to have faith in ourselves and to reach out for support when needed. It reminds us that even in moments of self-doubt, we are capable of greatness when we embrace the idea that we are not alone.

May we find strength in our connections with others and in our connection to Hashem that we are never truly alone.



Talia Agatstein
Jerusalem
12th Grade

One in a Million

In this week's Parsha, Parshat Shemot we delve into the storyline that started the journey of Am Yisroel. The Parsha starts out by saying, "ואלה שמות בני ישראל." "And these are the names of the sons of Israel." Why is the Torah starting out with the word "and"? Many of the Torah's commentary address this question. The Ohr Hachaim explains that the "ו" in ואלה shows us continuity:

ללמוד עליהם כי כולם צדיקים כאבותיהם ואלה מוסיף על הראשונים מה ראשונים להם אברהם יצחק

יעקב צדיקים עליונים כמעשה אבות עשו הבנים

"To teach about them that they were all

righteous individuals like their forefathers. ואלה adds upon those that came first. Just like those that came earlier, Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov were high level tzaddikim, [so too] like the actions of the forefathers so did the sons.”

This pasuk teaches us that the shevatim who entered Egypt were complete tzaddikim like Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. The vav also hints to the fact that Shemot is a continuation of Bereishit. It shows that while Bereishit was more about individual stories of our forefathers as a family, Sefer Shemot is its continuation into the bigger picture of how Am Yisroel became a nation.

Despite this theme of a larger nation, the name of the Parsha is “Shemot” or “Names.” This emphasizes the importance of individuality within a bigger group and that each individual person contributes greatly to the bigger picture of our nation. We learn from here the great importance of the individual.

In a nation like our own, one could think: “What is my great importance? Why does it matter what I do?” Here we see, however, that the parsha is called “Shemot”, referring to individual names and individual people like ourselves. It shows us that what each of us do as individuals has importance, and how our actions contribute to the growth of the personal self. We see that a nation is driven by individuals, all with different stories and strengths, and Hashem brings us together to create a great storyline. ■

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