

B'S'D'

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS SHMOS - 5756

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Date: 1/10/96 11:06pm
Subject: Drasha - Shmos

PARSHAS SHMOS - BURNING INTERESTS -- 1/12/96
Volume 2 Issue 13

In Jewish history, there is a hardly an object more expounded upon than the burning bush. Its symbolism is analyzed, its significance expounded upon, and its impact is noted for generations. This week, rather than discuss the actual burning bush and its meaning, I'd like to view the event from a totally different approach -- Moshe's.

The Torah tells us in Exodus 3:1- 4 that Moshe was shepherding the sheep of Yisro, his father-in-law, when, "an angel of G-d appeared to him in a blaze of fire from amidst the bush. Moshe saw the event and behold, the bush was burning in fire and yet the bush was not consumed. Moshe said, 'I will turn from my course and see the marvelous sight -- why does the bush not burn?' Hashem saw that Moshe turned from his path to see the sight and He called out to him from amidst the bush and said, 'Moshe Moshe...' " The conversation ultimately leads to our exodus from Egypt.

However, the entire narrative, from the moment that Moshe notices the burning bush until Hashem speaks to him from its midst, seems overstated. After Moshe sees the amazing sight, why does the Torah mention that Moshe says "I will go look at the amazing sight?" Further, why does the Torah preface Hashem's charge to Moshe with the words, " Hashem saw that Moshe turned from his path to see the sight, and He called out to him from amidst the bush?" It seems that only after Hashem openly acknowledges Moshe's interest in the spectacle does he call out, "Moshe, Moshe," thus beginning the process of redemption.

The Torah, which never uses needless words, could have simply stated, " Moshe saw that the bush was burning and yet the bush was not consumed. Moshe turned to marvelous sight, and Hashem called out to him from amidst the bush and said, 'Moshe Moshe...' "

The Midrash Tanchuma expounds upon the verse, "Moshe turned from his path to see the sight." There is an argument whether he took three steps or just craned his neck. The Midrash continues. Hashem said, "you pained yourself to look, I swear you are worthy that I reveal myself to you." The Medrash was definitely bothered by the extra wording regarding Moshe's decision to look and Hashem's open commendation of that decision. But it is still very difficult to understand. Moshe sees a spectacle of miraculous proportions and looks. Why is that such a meritorious act? Doesn't everyone run to a fire? Aren't there hoards that gather to witness amazing events?

In the early 1920's, Silas Hardoon, a Sephardic Jewish millionaire, made his fortune living in China. Childless, he began to give his money away to Chinese charities. One night his father appeared in a dream and implored him to do something for his own people. Silas shrugged it off. After all, there were hardly any of his people in China. But the dreams persisted, and Silas decided to act. The next day he spoke to Chacham Ibrahim, a Sephardic Rabbi who led the tiny Chinese Jewish community. The Chacham's advice sounded stranger than the dreams. He told Silas to build a beautiful synagogue in the center of Shanghai. It should contain more than 400 seats, a kitchen, and a dining room. Mr. Hardoon followed the charge to the letter. He named the shul "Bais Aharon" in memory of his father. A few years later Mr. Hardoon died leaving barely a minyan to enjoy a magnificent edifice, leaving a community to question the necessity of the tremendous undertaking.

In 1940, Japanese counsel to Lithuania Sempo Sugihara issued thousands of visas for Kovno Jews to take refuge in Curaçao via Japan. Included in that group was the Mirrer Yeshiva. They arrived in Kobe but were transported to Shanghai where they remained for the entire war. The Mirrer Yeshiva had a perfect home with a kitchen, study hall and dining room -- Bais Aharon! The building had exactly enough seats to house all the students for five solid years of Torah study during the ravages of World War II. The dream of decades earlier combined with action, became a thriving reality.

Moshe our Teacher knew from the moment he spotted that bush that something very extraordinary was occurring. He had two choices: approach the spectacle or walk on. If he nears the bush he knew he would face an experience that would alter his life forever. Hashem knew that Moshe had this very difficult conflict. His approach would require commitment and self sacrifice. He took three steps that changed the course of history. Hashem understood the very difficult decision Moshe had made and declared that such fortitude is worthy of the redeemer of my children.

In many aspects of our lives we encounter situations that may commit us to change. It may be a new charity we decide to let through our doors, or a new patient we decide to see, or even a new worthy cause we decide to entertain. They all require us to take three steps and look. If we walk away, we may not just be ignoring a burning issue. We may be ignoring another burning bush. Good Shabbos (c) Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

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Dedicated in honor of the 60th Anniversary of the Bar Mitzvah of Dr. Sheldon Rudansky by the Rudansky Family
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Date: 1/6/96 1:36pm
Subject: Torah Weekly - Shmos

* TORAH WEEKLY *
Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion
Parshas Shmos For the week ending 21 Teves 5756 12 & 13 January 1996

Summary

With the death of Yosef, the era of the Avos and the Book of Bereishis (Genesis) come to an end. The Book of Shmos (Exodus) now chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews in Egypt, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate continues to increase, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all baby boys. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and places him in a basket in the Nile before anyone can kill him. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts the baby even though she realizes he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's older sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe. She arranges for his mother Yocheved to be his nursemaid and help raise him. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, and Moshe kills the Egyptian. When Moshe realizes his life is in danger, he flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yisro approves their subsequent marriage. In Chorev, Moshe witnesses the "burning bush" where Hashem commands him to lead the Jewish

People from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael, which Hashem has promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People in Egypt will doubt him being Hashem's agent, and so Hashem helps Moshe perform three miraculous transformations to validate him in the eyes of the people: Changing his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker Hashem tells him that his brother Aaron will be his spokesman. Aaron greets Moshe on his return to Egypt, and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before, but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but Hashem assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Hebrews leave.

Commentaries

What's in a name

"And these are the names of the Children of Yisrael that came to Egypt..." (1:1)

There was once a Jew who wanted very much to join a certain golf club. The only problem was that this golf club didn't accept Jews. Undeterred, he changed his name, and took every conceivable precaution to conceal his Jewishness. A week after he submitted his application, he was very disappointed to receive a polite but firm rejection from the club. "I don't understand what went wrong" he complained to a friend. "My name doesn't sound Jewish. And on the application form, under where it said 'Religion' I even wrote 'Gentile'..."

One of the reasons that the Jewish People deserved to be redeemed from Egypt was that they didn't change their names. But why was this considered something so important that it gained them deliverance from Egypt?

The name of a thing defines its essence. When Adam HaRishon gave names to every creature, he understood that creature's individual essence and was able to express this in a name.

Similarly, later in this week's Parsha, when Hashem commands Moshe to bring

out the Jewish People from Egypt, Moshe says to Hashem "...They (the Jewish

People) will say to me 'What is His (Hashem's) Name?' What shall I answer them?" In other words, if they ask me to define the essence of The Creator - what His name is - what do I answer them? Obviously, Hashem is above all definition. Man can have no idea or concept of the real essence of The Creator. We can only know that there is a Creator. And that is precisely what Hashem answered to Moshe.

"I will be that Which I will be." - My essence is the fact that I exist, I have always existed and I will always exist. That is My essence. That is My Name.

That's what 'not changing their names' means: The Children of Israel didn't change their essence. They didn't lose their identity. Even in the depths of exile they never stopped feeling that their essence - their total gestalt was Jewish. Right at the beginning of the Book of Shmos the Torah tells us "These are the names of the Children of Israel..." - With these names they came and with these names they left - their essence and their identity unaltered in any way.

(Based on L'Torah U'Imoadim by Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin)

The Prince of Prophets

"And a man from the House of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi..." (2:1)

When writing about the union of Moshe Rabbeinu's parents why didn't the Torah just say "And Amram went and took Yocheved"?

In his lifetime Moshe Rabbeinu achieved a closeness to Hashem unequalled by any other human being. He alone ascended to heaven and received the Torah for Yisrael. He alone spoke to Hashem, face to face, with crystal clarity, unlike all other prophets who saw but through a glass darkly. There was a concern that, in the course of time, someone might say that Moshe himself really came from heaven, and make him into a god. For this reason, the Torah stresses, even before his birth, that his origin was as normal and earthly as any Jew, for "a man from the House of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi." Although Moshe Rabbeinu was the prince of prophets, his parents were regular flesh and blood. A 'man' and a 'daughter.'
(Adapted from Kehilas Yitzchak in Iturei Torah)

Haftorah: Yishayahu 27:6-8:13, 29:22-23

THE REVOLUTION THAT WENT WRONG

"To whom shall one teach knowledge, who can be made to understand a message. Those weaned from (mother's) milk, removed from the breasts!" (28:10)

Since the time of the Industrial Revolution we have witnessed an ever-accelerating development of science and technology. As the Holy Zohar predicted, from the year 5600 the gates of wisdom were opened. If the Jewish People had been worthy, this tremendous outpouring of knowledge would have found its proper home in the wisdom of Torah and holiness.

Now, since we were not worthy, this diffusion of higher energy has found its way to the superficial wisdoms and precipitated the invention of weapons of mass destruction to humanity's profound loss.

>From the day that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, `prophecy was given to fools and infants.' Meaning, that when Yisrael dwelled in the Holy Land, celestial energy, both spiritual and material, descended to its correct landing place. However, since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, this spiritual radiance has gone astray - descending on desolate lands and unsuitable people - "fools and infants." This is what the prophet means when he asks whether "those weaned from (mother's) milk" can be "made to understand a message."

(Adapted from Ahavas Yonason and Rabbi Bunem M'Pshisch) Sing, My Soul! Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

Baruch Kel Elyon - "...And He shall seek out Zion, the outcast city."

The reason given by our Sages for a number of religious practices in our post-Temple times is zecher l'Mikdash - a desire to remember how things were done when we had a Beis Mikdash in Zion. The importance of recalling Zion in its spiritual glory is found in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah (30:17) who bemoans Jerusalem - Zion - as an "outcast city" because no one cares enough to seek her. In this song we turn to "Kel Elyon" - the Most Exalted G-d - and confess that all our efforts to seek out Zion are only symbolic and that it is He alone who can effectively "seek out Zion" and end its isolation as "the outcast city."

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Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Shmos

Parshas Shmos:

G-d Views Every Jew as a "Star"

The Medrash in this weeks Parsha comments on the words "And these are the names (Shmos) of the Children of Israel.." that the Jewish people are equal to the Heavenly Legion: It is written here "Shmos" (names) and in connection with the stars, it is written "Shmos" as it states [Tehillim 147:4] "He counts the stars, He gives to each of them names

(Shmos)". So too, the Medrash continues, when the Jews went down to Egypt, G-d counted them by names.

The Mikdash Mordechai, authored by Rav Mordechai Ilan, offers a beautiful interpretation of this Medrash.

When one goes out on a clear night and looks at the sky, he can see literally thousands if not millions of stars. One might think, if one or two stars were missing, it wouldn't make any difference whatsoever. But the pasuk tells us otherwise -- G-d calls each star by name!

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch says there is a connection between the word Shem (name) and the word Shom (there). Just like "Shom" defines the place of a person or an object, so too "Shem" defines the essence of a person or object. When G-d showed Adam the animals and allowed him to give them names, Adam was not just assigning arbitrary titles. Through his wisdom, he looked into the nature of each animal and labeled its essence.

By calling each of the millions of stars names, G-d is telling us that each has a unique definition and purpose in the universe. Even though we cannot fathom what that purpose may be and even though there are stars we can't even see, G-d attributes importance to each of them by giving them individual names.

This is what the Medrash means. Just like each star is called by a name because each star has a function and each star has importance, that is how Klal Yisroel appears to the Ribono Shel Olam as well. Everyone has a function and purpose.

Within a community there are the "Leaders" of the community whose importance everyone recognizes. Then there are always people in the background -- "the cast of thousands" -- about whom we might sometimes think "just another Jew". Sometimes we fail to realize that each Jew has a "Name" -- an importance and a mission. G-d does not fail to realize this. For Him every Jew is a Star.

Brisker Rav: Midwives Were Rewarded Measure for Measure

The pasuk [Shmos 1:21] tells us that since the midwives feared G-d and refused to obey Pharoh's decree of killing all newly born Jewish boys, they were rewarded: "[G-d] made them Houses (batim)". What are "Batim"? Rash"i tells us that this refers to the fact that G-d rewarded Yocheved and Miriam (who were the midwives, Shifra and Puah) that Priests, Levites, and Kings descended from them.

Yocheved was the mother of Moshe and Aharon, representing Leviim and Kohanim, respectively. Miriam, according to the Gemara in Sotah, (11b) had Kings descending from her.

The Brisker Rav zt"l asks, where in this reward do we find the aspect of "measure for measure" (mida k'neged mida)? [which we know is G-d's practice in assigning reward and punishment]. His answers is simple but beautiful:

The midwives were told to kill out the boys, not the girls. By

Halachic principle, had they carried out these orders, the Jewish nation could still have existed. True, without males the girls would have had to marry Gentiles, but the halacha is that the offspring of a Jewess and a Gentile is Jewish. Consequently, the Jewish nation could have existed even without that generation of boys.

What, however, would have been missing in Klal Yisroel if they had killed out the boys? The element of Kehuna, Leviya, and Malchus would have been missing because the status of being a Kohen, a Levi, or a King is dependent on the father, not the mother. Since their contribution to Klal Yisroel was the salvation of this genealogical status of Kohen, Levi, and Malchus so the "Measure for Measure" method of reward dictated that they should be the mothers of Priests, Levites, and Kings.

The "Heart" Better Characterizes a Person than the "Brain"

As we mentioned before, Shifra and Puah are really Yocheved and Miriam. Rash"i says "Shifra is Yocheved. Why was she called Shifra? Because she would help form the baby (m'Shaferes es ha'vlad) that it should be a beautiful child. Puah is Miriam. Why was she called Puah? Because she would coo (poah) to the baby as it would come out".

Rav Chaim Friedlander, the mashgiach in Ponnevitz, makes an interesting observation. He says Yocheved and Miriam risked their lives to save these babies. That being the case, he asks, is it not strange that the name the Torah assigns to them relates to their praise-worthy actions of shaping the children and cooing to them? We should better call them "Hatzala" and "Teshua", after all their crowning glory was the fact that they SAVED the babies.

Rav Friedlander says that we see from here a very important principle: The decision to risk their lives and save the children was a conscious, cerebral decision. However, their motivation in making sure the children were beautiful and in cooing to them was not an intellectual one. It was not the Brain speaking, it was the Heart.

If one really wants to look at the nature of a person, one shouldn't look at the brain, one should rather look at the heart -- Rachmana Liba Ba-ee (The Merciful One wants the Heart). A person's essence is not defined by the moral decisions he or she makes after carefully consulting their conscience. Rather, it is defined by the instinctive gut reactions that come naturally without thought and hesitation.

From Little Things One Detects Greatness

Perhaps we can infer a slightly different lesson from this observation. The Rosh Yeshiva (Rav Ruderman) always used to say that if one wants to test the greatness of a person, the proof is not in the headline grabbing things he does. The proof is in the little things. Sure they saved the babies and "grabbed the headlines". Any of us, perhaps, would do that. When one wants to see real greatness, one should examine the small actions of a person. The fact that they

didn't pat themselves on the back after saving the babies saying "Our job is done, we've just risked our lives to save this child", but rather went on to shape and to coo -- that shows us who they really were.

The Gemara in Avoda Zorah [18a] tells us of an amazing conversation. Rav Yosi ben Kisma publicly taught Torah at a time when that was forbidden by the Government under the penalty of death. Rav Chanina ben Teradyon came and visited him and said, "Don't you know that this nation (Rome) was given dominion from Heaven... how dare you flaunt them by teaching Torah publicly?" Rav Yosi ben Kisma responded that he was pinning his hopes on the fact that they would show him Mercy from Heaven. Rav Yosi ben Kisma then asks Rav Chanina ben Teradyon "Do I merit going to the World to Come?" Whereupon Rav Chanina ben Teradyon asks, "Have you ever done anything outstanding in your life?" To which Rav Yosi ben Kisma responded, "Yes, I once mixed up in my pocket my own money with Tzedaka money, so I went and gave it all to Tzedaka". To this Rav Chanina responded, "If so, may my portion be as great as your portion and may my destiny be as great as your destiny."

This Gemara is amazing! Rav Chanina ben Teradyon knew that Rav Yosi ben Kisma risked his life to publicly teach Torah to the masses and yet he was searching for some incident that the latter deserved the World to Come...and when he heard the incident with the mixed up Tzedaka money, he became enthusiastic? This does not seem to make any sense!

The answer is that teaching Torah in public gets headlines! Everyone will praise and admire Rav Yosi ben Kisma for such selfless devotion. That is not where we see greatness. We see greatness when nobody knows how much money he has in his pocket, nobody knows he is confronted with doubtful theft from the poor, and yet he proceeds to remove all doubt by giving it all to charity -- that is true greatness!

Sure, Shifra and Puah saved the children. Everyone in Egypt was talking about it. But that's not where we see their greatness. Greatness is the fact that these same women, after having saved the babies when nobody knew and no one was looking, took the babies in their arms, made nice to them, shaped them and cooed to them. That is true greatness!

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@scn.org

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Date: 1/10/96 11:10pm
Subject: Parshas Shmos

DVAR TORAH - PARSHAS SHMOS

by Chaim Ozer Shulman

"And these are the names of the children of Yisroel who are coming to Egypt with Yaakov: Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, etc. And all the descendants of Yaakov were 70, and Yosef was in Egypt." (Shmos 1; 1-5)

Several questions arise:

1) Why was the counting of the children of Yisroel who descended to Egypt repeated in Parshas Shmos when the 70 who descended were already counted in Parshas Vayigash (Bereishis 46; 8-27)? Rashi says: "They were counted again in their death to show Hashem's love for them." But as the Abarbanel asks on Rashi's interpretation: Since the death of the brothers is only mentioned later in verse 6 after the counting, this implies that the counting in verses 1-5 was in their lifetime?

2) Why does the Torah list only the sons of Yaakov here in Parshas Shmos and not the grandchildren and great-grandchildren as it does in Parshas Vayigash?

3) Why does the Torah say here "AND these are names of the children of Yisroel" ("V'EILEH shmos B'nei Yisroel") with the conjunctive "AND" (the "vav mosif al inyan rishon")?

4) Why does it say "who ARE COMING to Egypt" ("habaim mitzraimah") in present tense, if the descent to Egypt actually occurred many years before?

5) Why does the Torah in Parshas Shmos say "[the children of Yisroel who came into Egypt] WITH YAAKOV" ("eis Yaakov"), while in Parshas Vayigash it says "[the children of Yisroel who came into Egypt] YAAKOV AND HIS CHILDREN"?

6) Why is "and Yosef was in Egypt" ("vi'Yosef haya bi'Mitzrayim") mentioned here? Rashi quotes a Sifri in Haazinu which asks: "Don't we know that Yosef was in Egypt? The Torah is teaching us the righteousness of Yosef. He was the very same Yosef herding his father's sheep as he was as viceroy in Egypt." This doesn't explain, however, why this important assertion that "Yosef was in Egypt" is placed here and not in the original counting of the 70 who descended to Egypt in Parshas Vayigash?

It appears that the counting of the children of Yisroel in the beginning of Shmos is really an introduction to a central theme of the story of Shmos, that B'nai Yisroel were able to continue and thrive as a nation even as they were enslaved in Egypt. As the Torah says two verses later: "And the Children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied and become exceedingly mighty" (1; 7). This second counting of the children of Yisroel in Shmos is done to emphasize that the success of B'nai Yisroel in not assimilating and in not being lost among the Egyptians is directly attributable to the fact that Yaakov's children remained as strong in their faith, their Torah, and their righteousness in Egypt as their forefathers did in Eretz Yisroel. Therefore, their children

and grandchildren were able to maintain this tradition and thrive in Egypt.

As the Midrash Rabbah states: "It states: 'And these are the names of the children of Yisroel' . . . They were all equated to Yaakov for they were all Tzadikim [righteous]." The Midrash does not explain how we see that the children were all compared to Yaakov. But it is probably from the statement "AND these are the names of the children of Yisroel," with a conjunctive "AND" (Vav Mosif Al Inyan Rishon), to show that the children of Yaakov were as strong in their faith as their forefathers were; and perhaps also from the fact that it says here "WITH Yaakov" ("eis Yaakov") to equate them all to Yaakov.

It was not only Yaakov's children, but also his grandchildren and great-grandchildren who maintained the tradition of their forefathers. The parallel to Yaakov, however, applied primarily to his 12 sons. The sons who lived in Egypt maintained the same righteousness as their father Yaakov did. Therefore just the sons are mentioned in Shmos.

This is also perhaps why it says "that are coming" ("ha'baim") in present tense, to stress that B'nai Yisroel always considered themselves newcomers even many years later.

This also explains why the Pasuk says "and Yosef was in Egypt," particularly in Shmos and not in Vayigash, because in Shmos when discussing how the children of Yaakov retained their faith in Egypt it is appropriate to state that Yosef who herded his father's sheep was the very same Yosef who was viceroy in Egypt. Yosef was the epitome of a Tzadik in Egypt, and Yosef exemplified more than any of the other brothers how one can be in Egypt and still remain steadfast in one's faith and one's righteousness.

It is interesting to note that Yosef Ha'Tzadik is the only person in the Torah referred to by Chazal (the Rabbis) as "Ha'Tzadik" (the righteous). The contemporary Mefarshim (commentators) try to understand why Yosef in particular merited this title. Some point to the fact that Yosef resisted the enticements and threats of the wife of Potiphar. But that doesn't seem to distinguish Yosef from the Forefathers who also withstood many tests. From the above it would appear that Yosef merited the title "Tzadik" because of the fact that he remained firm in his righteousness even as viceroy of Egypt. He remained the very same righteous Yosef of his youth even as viceroy in Egypt.

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Date: 1/11/96 12:50am
Subject: Parshas Shmos

Gratitude / Hakoras Hatov

The following statement in Tractate Shabbos (31A) is very commonly quoted.

A gentile approached Hillel and he said "I am willing to convert on the condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot" Hillel agreed and told him "What is hateful to you, do not do to others, This is the entire Torah, everything else is just the explanation!" What Hillel meant, Rabbi Avigdor Miller explained based on Rashi's explanation of the Gemmorah, is that the performance of every Mitzvah, commandment, is a show of Gratitude. The example he gives is: If a person

were to give another person a house to live in and in exchange he asked for one small favor. That favor is to put a small plaque on every door to remember the one who gave you this present. Should the person put up that plaque? The answer is a resounding YES! Why because the act of showing gratitude and listening to the request of someone who showers you with kindness is an extension of loving one's neighbor as oneself. Wouldn't we be hurt if WE gave a present and were refused a small sign of gratitude? That is the rule of "what is hateful to yourself do not do to others." (Loving one's neighbor as himself is just the positive way of saying "what is hateful to yourself do not do to others.")

Therefore every Mitzvah in the Torah is only a show of gratitude towards Hashem for the kindness showered upon us. As the Midrash points out: Who did a mitzvah before I gave him the wherewithal to perform it? Who put up a Mezuzah before I gave him the house on which to affix it? Who gave Terumos and Maasros, Tithes, before I gave him crops of the field to tithe? Who redeemed his first born before I gave him a child? The Medrash gives several other examples of this. There is nothing we can do unless Hashem gave us something first. All our Mitzvos are purely done as a sign of gratitude. One may say that this is the most basic level of Menschlichkeit, (The proper way for a person to act), for anyone.

In Parshas Shemos we find several examples of what Hakoras hatov is and how small an action deserves this show of gratitude.

* Moshe's name

Moshe was named Moshe by Pharaoh's daughter and that is the name by which he is known. It is very interesting since this was NOT the name given him by his parents when he was born. The Gemmorah in Megillah lists many names for Moshe. The Midrash says his name was Tuvye base on the Posuk "that he was good" (Ki Tov Hu) So why isn't this the name by which he is known? The answer could be because of the tremendous gratitude Moshe had for Basya, Pharaoh's daughter, for saving him that it was in her honor that he chose THAT name over any other.

* "An Egyptian saved us"

When Moshe went to Midyan he saved the daughters of Yisro (Jethro) from the other shepherds. When they returned home Yisro asked them, "How did you finish so quickly today" and they answered him saying "An Egyptian man saved us" There is a Midrash that says the Egyptian man

does not refer to Moshe. The Egyptian man refers to the Egyptian that Moshe killed forcing him to flee from Pharaoh and eventually come to Midyan. What does the Midrash and the posuk mean to tell us? Why refer to the dead Egyptian? The answer again deals with gratitude. Yisro's daughters were so appreciative for being saved that their appreciation did not begin and end with Moshe. It began with the very first link in the chain of events that brought Moshe to their aid! Did this Egyptian ever mean to do anything nice to these Midianite women whom he never met nor had he ever heard of? Most certainly not! In fact he may of been upset since Yisro had once been member of Pharaoh's court and he advised Pharaoh AGAINST enslaving the Jews. However their gratitude went all the way back to him. This shows us how far our feelings of gratitude must go. Even when the person who caused good to happen to you did not want it to happen, one who is the beneficiary must appreciate their benefactors. This also shows how sensitive we must be when dealing with others. It would seem that lacking gratitude in this case would not be considered a hateful act to another. Yet we still must show gratitude. Apparently the Torah is teaching us that the "benefactor" will in fact be ever so slightly, possibly only sub consciously perturbed. We must therefore be considerate even to such a slight.

* "Why did you leave him?"

A couple of posukim later, after they, (Yisro's daughters), told their father of their good fortune, he asked them, "Where is he? Why did you leave him? Bring him so that he may eat bread." (A reference to marrying one of his daughters) The Ohr Hachayim says that Yisro was rebuking his daughters for forsaking Moshe even for the few minutes it took to go to Yisro. A person who did you such a favor should be taken care of properly and not left alone even for a small amount of time; even the amount of time to go home to confer with your father! Again the level of gratitude one should show! And this was said to women who understood the importance of showing gratitude, as we mentioned earlier.

* "You should not hate an Egyptian"

We know there is a Mitzvah, (Devarim 23:8) , "You should not hate an Egyptian, for you were strangers / sojourners in his land." Imagine the Torah tells us NOT to hate the Egyptians because we lived there! Under what conditions were we there? One need only read this Parsha to see how terribly we were treated in Egypt. We were not allowed to leave UNTIL after the ten plagues were visited upon them. Why should we have anything BUT negative feelings towards them? The answer is because there was a short period of time before the harsh labor began when we were welcome in their land, albeit because the Viceroy Yosef invited us. Therefore, we must show gratitude the Egyptians FOR ALL TIMES! How great is the burden / debt of Gratitude?

* The plagues of Blood and Lice

This same concept is also very evident in next week's Parsha. We find that Moshe could not hit the Nile and change it into Blood, nor could he hit the ground and turn it into lice. Why, Rashi explains because Moshe "owed" them a debt of gratitude. The Nile saved him when his mother put him out in the basket. He also owed a debt to the ground since after he killed the Egyptian he buried him. Now one may ask, The river and the ground are inanimate objects. Why not hit them? What did they do that Moshe owed them anything? Again the answer is that this shows the level of gratitude one must have. If you benefit from someone

or something just because they are there, although they do nothing one owes them gratitude. (Just imagine the gratitude one would owe a jogger out on a nightly run who, just happens to run by you, causing a mugger to get frightened and run away. The jogger may not even have noticed what he did, but the beneficiary would forever feel indebted to the jogger. This is how Moshe felt)

* Where a lack of gratitude can lead

We also find the "flip side" of this coin in this Parsha. The posuk says, a new king arose that did not know Yosef. Did he not know Yosef? (Yosef saved the entire nation a mere few years ago. Yosef put the Flat Tax on the entire country for Pharaoh!) It must mean he acted as if he did not know Yosef. What did Pharaoh do? He instituted this new decree and enslaved an entire nation! This was an action that was never done before nor has it been done since! To another human as mere chattel, So much so that Pharaoh was willing to kill little children and use their blood as a medicine to cure his leprosy! Barbaric! What is the source of this perversion? It is the lack of showing gratitude to Yosef's family who literally saved them. It's the willingness to do unto others what would certainly be hateful to oneself. However it is to these depths that a person who does not act properly to another can fall.

Hillel taught us that showing gratitude is not some esoteric ideal. It is the basis for the entire Torah. It is based on the rule "Love your neighbor as yourself". Hillel then further simplified this idea by stating it in the negative: "That which is hateful to you, do not do to others"

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From: "Menachem Leibtag <ml@etzion.org.il>"
To: NDIAMENT, DHUEBNER, CSHULMAN, " "
Chumash shiur...
Date: 1/11/96 7:12pm
Subject: PARSHAT SHMOT

"Let My People Go" - Moshe's recurring plea to Pharaoh - is just a HOAX! So contends the Rashbam. He explains that Moshe's request to allow Bnei Yisrael to worship their God in the desert is a trick. Once Pharaoh permits their departure, Moshe instead plans to take Bnei Yisrael to the Promised Land instead. Although this interpretation may at first sound a bit preposterous, a careful examination of the Exodus story clearly supports this explanation.

In this week's shiur, while attempting to identify the primary theme of Sefer Shmot, we will uncover the reason for this daring interpretation by Rashbam. Nevertheless, we shall arrive at a very different conclusion.

We will begin the shiur with a brief introduction to Sefer Shmot. Then, we will focus on the "shlichut" (mission) that Moshe receives from God at the burning bush.

INTRODUCTION

An overall theme of Sefer Shmot is rather difficult to find, for the "sefer" contains three distinct sections:

- 1) "Yetziat Mitzraim" (the Exodus/ chaps. 1->18)
- 2) "Ma'amad Har Sinai" (the Theophany / chaps. 19->24)
- 3) the "Mishkan" (the Tabernacle / chaps. 25->40)

The primary goal of our Parsha shiurim is to find a common theme for an entire sefer through the study of its structure. Therefore, we shall begin our study by identifying the individual theme of the first section of Sefer Shmot - the story of Yetziat Mitzraim.

As explained in our shiurim in Sefer Breishit, to find the prophetic theme of each "sefer n'vuah", we must first analyze the various instances of "hitgalut" (revelation) found in the sefer. Accordingly, we begin our study of the first such instance in Sefer Shmot - God's "hitgalut" to Moshe at the 'burning bush' (3:1-4:17).

This episode is central to Parshat Shmot. The two chapters which precede it provide the background information for this "hitgalut". The two following chapters detail the first stage of its fulfillment.

The following table, organizing the 'sedra' by its 'parshiot', illustrates this point:

PARSHA TOPIC

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1:1-7 | Bnei Yisrael's settlement in Egypt (linking Sefer Breishit to Sefer Shmot). |
| 1:8-22 | The "shi'abud" (bondage) of Bnei Yisrael |
| 2:1-22 | The birth and life of Moshe (until he arrives in Midyan and marries Tzipora). |
| 2:23-25 | God hears the cry of Bnei Yisrael |
| 3:1-4:17 | God's "HITGALUT" TO MOSHE AT THE "SNEH" [Moshe receives his MISSION]. |
| 4:18-26 | Moshe leaves Midyan to fulfill his mission. |
| 4:27-6:1 | Moshe fulfills the first stage of his mission: |
| - 4:27-4:31 | 1) He informs Bnei Yisrael that God has come to redeem them (to fulfill His "brit") |
| - 5:1-3 | 2) He commands Pharaoh to allow Bnei Yisrael to enter the desert to worship their God. |
| - 5:4-6:1 | 3) The mission appears to backfire. |

Another guiding principle is that God always reveals Himself to man for a specific purpose. In order to find the purpose of the "hitgalut" to Moshe at the "sneh", it is helpful to first outline the entire 'parsha' (3:1-4:17):

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. 3:1-3 Moshe notices the 'burning bush'
- B. 3:4-6 God identifies Himself to Moshe

II. THE MISSION

- A. 3:7-9 The PURPOSE of Moshe's mission
- B. 3:10 The MISSION itself

III. QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

- A. 3:11-12 Who am I to go to Pharaoh?
- B. 3:13-22 What precisely do I tell Bnei Yisrael?
- C. 4:1-9 Why (and how) should they believe me?

D. 4:10-17 How can I, specifically, be Your spokesman?

First, God identifies Himself to Moshe (I-B) and then explains to him the purpose of this mission (II-A). At the CENTER of this outline lies God's charge to Moshe that he take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt (II-B). Finally, Moshe responds to this assignment by asking several questions which clarify how it is to be accomplished (III).

[You should review these psukim in a Tanach Koren in order to verify and appreciate this outline.]

THE MISSION AND ITS PURPOSE

When God appears to Moshe at the burning bush (3:1-4), He first identifies himself:

"I am the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzchak, and the God of Yaakov..." (3:6)

This pasuk alludes to the primary goal of Moshe's mission: the fulfillment of God's various promises to the Avot, i.e. to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt and bring them to the Promised Land (3:7-8).

To accomplish this goal, Moshe is instructed:

"And now come, and I will send you to Pharaoh, and you will take my people, Bnei Yisrael, out of Egypt" (3:10)

Since God is not very specific as to how He intends to be accomplished this mission, Moshe promptly inquires:

"Who am I that I can go to Pharaoh, and take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt?" (3:11)

Rashi and Rashbam argue in their explanation of these psukim. Rashbam divides Moshe's question into two parts:

1) Who am I, to confront Pharaoh?

AND 2) HOW am I supposed to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt?

These two questions relate to both parts of God's previous command (see 3:10):

1) I am sending you to Pharaoh;

AND 2) You shall take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt.

[Note how the "taamei mikra" support this division. The two parts of these questions and answers follow the "etnachta" in each pasuk from 3:10-12.]

God's response to Moshe's question is even more difficult to comprehend: [Take special note of this pasuk, for we shall return to it several times during the shiur.]

"And He said: For I will be with you, and this is the sign that I have sent you - when you take the Nation out of Egypt, you shall worship Elokim on this mountain" (3:12)

How does this answer Moshe's question? Moshe needs to know NOW what to do. What meaning is there to God's response that AFTER he takes them out, Bnei Yisrael will worship Elokim on this mountain?

Rashi deals with this difficulty by reinterpreting Moshe's question (3:11): Why am I (and/or Bnei Yisrael) WORTHY of being taken out of Egypt?

God responds: Because after they go out, they are to worship Me and receive the Torah on this mountain. [See Rashi 3:12.]

RASHBAM'S EXPLANATION

Unlike Rashi, Rashbam is not willing to reinterpret the question. Instead, he divides God's answer into two parts as he does with Moshe's original question:

PART I -

Q. Moshe's question (3:11) - "Who am I to go Pharaoh?" i.e. Who am I that Pharaoh will allow me to enter his palace? [Moshe is not an official leader of Bnei Yisrael, why would he be allowed entry to speak to Pharaoh?]

A. Hashem's answer (3:12) [according to Rashbam]:

"[Do not worry, you will be allowed to enter] for I will be with you, and this [THE BURNING BUSH] is the sign that I have sent you [and therefore, you need not worry]."

PART II -

Q. Moshe's question (3:11) - Even if I am allowed entry, HOW can I possibly convince Pharaoh to let them free?

A. Hashem's answer (3:12) - TRICK HIM, by requesting to:

"take them [for a short time] out of Egypt, in order that they can worship their God on this mountain"!

In other words, God instructs Moshe to deceive Pharaoh: Request permission to worship their God in the desert. Once you are allowed to leave, lead them to the Promised Land.

To fit his interpretation into this ambiguous pasuk, Rashbam adds several details which the pasuk itself does not state. Why does (and how can) he make these radical assumptions?

The above outline and table help us understand what led the Rashbam to his interpretation. The outline shows us that these psukim define Moshe's mission. The table shows us when this mission was later fulfilled. Therefore, by examining the details in 5:3 of how Moshe actually fulfilled God's directive, we can understand His original commandment to him in 3:12!

[Here we have a very important methodological point: in order to explain an ambiguous pasuk, one should examine other instances when that pasuk is referred to.]

The complete details of God's command appear when Moshe actually confronts Pharaoh for the first time:

"Afterward, Moshe and Aharon came and said to Pharaoh: Thus said the God of Israel, let My People go and worship Me in the desert. [Pharaoh refuses.] And they answered: the God of the 'Ivrim' has called upon us to take a three day journey into the desert in order that we may sacrifice to our God, LEST HE STRIKE US WITH 'DEVVER' (pestilence) OR 'CHERREV' (sword)." (5:1-3)

This final phrase - "lest he strike us with 'dever' or 'cherev'" - is the key towards understanding God's intention in 3:12. The plan is rather simple. Moshe claims that if Pharaoh does not allow Bnei Yisrael to journey into the desert and worship their God, a severe Divine punishment will ensue. This

punishment might not be confined to Bnei Yisrael alone - indeed it might also involve the Egyptians! Therefore, Moshe claims, it is in the best interest of both Pharaoh and the Egyptian people that they allow Bnei Yisrael a 'short vacation' during which they can worship their God in the desert.

Likewise, during the ten plagues, each plague begins with Moshe's demand: "shlach et ami v'yaavduni" ['Let My People Go' and worship God (in the desert)], and follows with the threat to bring upon Mitzraim yet another plague. Throughout the Ten Plagues, the negotiations which take place between Moshe and Pharaoh relate ONLY to the journey to worship God, NOT to emigration. For example:

Where they can sacrifice their "korbanot"?

Pharaoh initially offers to allow them to sacrifice within the Land of Egypt. Eventually, he agrees to one day's distance into the desert. (See 8:21 -24)

Who can go? What they can take?

Pharaoh initially agrees only to the men (10:7 -11).

Eventually, he allows also women and children, but not the sheep and cattle (10:24-25).

Moshe consistently rejects any concession, insisting that EVERYONE must go. Still, Moshe NEVER mentions that they are leaving for good. Pharaoh NEVER suspects!

The Torah's account of "makkat bchorot" (12:29-36) provides additional proof. Pharaoh realizes that Moshe's original warning that God will bring "devver o' cherrev" (5:3) has actually come true. He agrees to allow Bnei Yisrael to journey into the desert AS THEY REQUESTED ("k'daberchem" /12:31), i.e. to offer "korbanot" (as explained in 5:3). Pharaoh even requests that they pray there on his behalf ("u'bay'rachtem gam oti"- 12:32).

Likewise, the entire Egyptian nation encourages Bnei Yisrael to hurry up and leave (12:33) IN ORDER that Bnei Yisrael can sacrifice to their God and stop this terrible plague! They even LEND Bnei Yisrael their finest wares so that they will leave as quickly as possible (12:35-36). After all, they assume, Bnei Yisrael will soon return.

Pharaoh's total astonishment when he is told several days after the Exodus that Bnei Yisrael have 'run away' (see 14:5) provides final proof that he was unaware of the true plan.

Therefore, based on a careful examination of the entire Exodus narrative, the Rashbam's explanation that God commands Moshe to employ trickery emerges as simple "pshat". [Note the style with which the Rashbam begins AND ENDS his explanation to 3:11-12. He seems rather confident that he is indeed correct!]

'NOT SO FAST ...'

Despite the charm of Rashbam's explanation, two questions arise which make it quite difficult to accept his conclusion:

1) Why can't Moshe tell Pharaoh the whole truth? Why does he need to hide behind half a story? [Is God not mighty enough to bring plagues that will convince Pharaoh to allow them total freedom?]

Furthermore, the implication of Rashbam's conclusion is rather disturbing. How could it be that God would instruct Moshe

to lie, or at least deceive, Pharaoh? Are we to learn from this shlichut that it is proper to tell half-truths and mislead people as long as it is for a Divine purpose? [as unfortunately, many people do.]

2) Is it feasible that this plot could be kept secret from the Egyptians? After all, when God commanded Moshe to go to Pharaoh, he commanded him at the same time to gather Bnei Yisrael and inform them of the true plan, i.e. that he is taking them out of Egypt to the Promised Land (see 3:16-17, 4:29-31)!

Can it be expected that no one will leak the story?

With regard to the first question, Rashbam answers that this was "derech chochmah", wise counsel. He cites a similar example from Shmuel I 16:2-3, where God tells Shmuel to fabricate a story that he is going to offer sacrifices at the House of Yishai, even though Shmuel's true intention is to anoint David as King of Israel.

However, this answer only strengthens our first question. Our second question is not even raised, let alone answered, by Rashbam.

To answer both questions, we must take into consideration the realities of Bnei Yisrael's settlement in Egypt. While doing so, we must be careful not allow our 20/20 hindsight to confuse us.

WHO'S FOOLING WHOM?

It is commonly assumed that the tyranny of Pharaoh had prevented Bnei Yisrael from returning to Eretz Canaan. However, even if Pharaoh had been willing to allow Bnei Yisrael to leave, the very idea that some two million people could migrate en-masse and conquer Eretz Canaan with its walled cities and formidable enemies is ludicrous. Thus, before God appeared to Moshe at the "sneh", no practical alternative existed other than staying in Egypt, despite the hardships of their enslavement.

With this in mind, the answer is simple:

In the "hitgalut" to Moshe at the burning bush, God had no intention to fool Pharaoh. Had Moshe mentioned a plan of an en-masse emigration to Eretz Canaan, Pharaoh would have dismissed him as insane. Moshe would have lost all credibility in the eyes of Pharaoh as a responsible leader of the Hebrew Nation [see Further Iyun]. Instead, God instructs Moshe to make a fairly reasonable request - to allow his afflicted brethren to worship their God. Moshe does not lie to Pharaoh, nor does he deceive him. He simply claims the legitimate right of religious freedom for an oppressed people!

Hence, our first question has been answered.

Likewise, this explanation also answers our second question. Had the Egyptians heard a rumor that some messianic leader was offering to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt to some Promised Land, they would have scoffed at the very thought. Could a multitude of slaves possibly organize themselves into an independent nation? Could they survive the journey through the desert? Could they conquer the kings of Canaan?

No one was keeping any secrets. Even the majority of Bnei Yisrael felt that this idea would lead to national suicide (see

14:12!). Why should the Egyptians believe this 'rumor' any more than the Bnei Yisrael did? Throughout Sefer Shmot and Bamidbar, we find that the people consistently want to return to Egypt. As the "mraglim" (spies) themselves later conclude, it is the only logical alternative.

Even though this plan received immediate endorsement when Moshe first presented it to the elders and performed the "otot" (see 4:29-31), only a short while later, after their workload was doubled, these hopes quickly fizzled out (see 5:1-21).

Moshe has received his Divine mission: he must present Pharaoh with a reasonable request. At the same time, he must inform Bnei Yisrael of their forthcoming redemption.

WHY MUST PHARAOH BE INVOLVED?

Even though we have managed to answer all the remaining questions by taking into account the realities of the situation of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt, we have neglected a fundamental question concerning Moshe's "shlichut".

In God's opening statement (3:6-9) to Moshe that the goal of his mission is to take Bnei Yisrael to Eretz Canaan, there is no apparent reason why He also commands him to confront Pharaoh. Surely God could create circumstances whereby Bnei Yisrael could emigrate without official Egyptian authorization. Yet God insists that Bnei Yisrael must receive permission to worship Him on Har Chorev specifically from Pharaoh.

The psukim even emphasize this point:

"Now go, I have sent you to PHARAOH..." (3:10)

Moshe responds:

"Who am I that I should go to PHAROH?..." (3:11)

Furthermore, as Rashi points out, it is God's true intention that Bnei Yisrael offer "korbanot" there and receive the Torah on this mountain. Worshiping God in the desert is not merely an excuse, it is an integral part of Bnei Yisrael's redemption!

The process of Yetziat Mitzraim seems to be a matter between Bnei Yisrael and God. So, why must Pharaoh be involved?

A DOUBLE PURPOSE

As we explained, God is not telling Moshe to trick Pharaoh, he is lodging a reasonable request. The confrontation between Moshe and Pharaoh is over a fundamental right of religious freedom - the basic right of any people, especially an oppressed one, to worship God. The fact that Pharaoh, the king of Egypt - the powerful center of ancient civilization - rejects this request shows that he considers himself divine. He acts as though he himself is a god.

The natural resources of Egypt, especially the mighty Nile river, granted power to the Egyptian people. This power not only allowed their monarch to feel divine, it also led Egypt to believe that they had the right to oppress other nations - to act as though they were gods. God has an important lesson to teach Pharaoh and his nation.

Therefore, God's intention, as revealed to Moshe at the burning bush, is that Yetziat Mitzraim serve a double purpose:

1) From a universalistic perspective, its primary goal is that Egypt - the center of ancient civilization - realize that God is above all Man - "v'yadu mitzraim ki ani Hashem" (7:5 & many

others). This message to the Egyptian people must be delivered, in God's Name, by Moshe to Pharaoh (as explained in 3:10-12, 18-20).

2) From Am Yisrael's perspective, the purpose of Yetziat Mitzraim is the fulfillment of God's covenant with the Avot to return their descendants to Eretz Canaan. This proclamation must be delivered by Moshe, in God's name, to Bnei Yisrael (as explained in 3:7-9, 13-17).

This dual Divine purpose for Yetziat Mitzrayim introduces the theme of Sefer Shmot. Over the coming weeks, we will attempt to reveal this theme by tracing Yetziat Mitzraim in light of its dual purpose.

ffff

In conclusion, it is interesting to note the inter-relationship between these two aspects of the Exodus.

As we explained in Sefer Breishit, the ultimate purpose of the Nation of Israel is to bring all mankind to the recognition of God and the establishment of a just society. At the very same time when Israel becomes a nation, through the process of Yetziat Mitzraim, Egypt - the center of ancient civilization and the epitome of a society that rejects God - comes to recognize Him.

Initially, this Divine goal is achieved through force, by the "mateh" (staff) which kindles the Ten Plagues. Ultimately, when Israel becomes a nation in its own land, this very same goal will be achieved through 'peaceful' means - as long as Bnei Yisrael follow the principles of the Ten Commandments given to Moshe on Har Chorev.

shabbat shalom
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. See the other commentaries on 3:10-12, especially Ramban. Attempt to explain them based on the analysis in the above shiur.
B. Consider the structure of the established leadership of Bnei Yisrael and their relationship with Pharaoh. There were "zkeinim" (elders of the tribes) who gathered to make formal decisions (3:16). There were also "shotrim" (Hebrew taskmasters), and "m'yaldot" (Hebrew midwives), who are permitted to petition, and possibly negotiate with Pharaoh himself! [Read carefully 1:18, 3:18, and 5:15.]

1. How does this enhance our answer to the question why Moshe could not have possibly suggested to Pharaoh that he was planning to take them out for good?

C. We noted in the shiur that the introduction to God's "hitgalut" to Moshe (3:3-6) associates the forthcoming revelation to Moshe with God's previous revelations to the Avot in Sefer Breishit.

1. Return to the parallel between these psukim and Breishit 46:1-4, as explained in our shiur on Parshat Vayigash, and use that parallel to fully appreciate this introduction.

2. Read carefully 3:7-8, 16-17, and 19-22, then compare them carefully to the language of Brit Bein Ha'tarim (Br. 15:13-21) and Brit Milah (17:7-8), as well as 46:1-3 and 50:24-25.

Which brit has God come to fulfill?

D. Based on the above (C) - read 3:13 carefully.

1. Why does Moshe expect Bnei Yisrael to ask what Name of God appeared to him? Relate this to C. above!

[Were the traditions of these covenants passed down by the Avot to their offspring?]

2. What should God's answer be to Moshe's question.

What is his answer?

3. Look up the Rashbam on this pasuk! He 'codes' his answer in "at-bash". Decode it, and decide what his answer is, and how it relates to Question C above!

E. Aside from serving as an 'attention grabber', there is symbolism to the 'burning bush'.

1. Read Dvarim 5:19-24 and its context. How does the burning bush model what transpires at Matan Torah?

Note that both took place at the same site.

2. How does this relate to the purpose of "hitgalut"?

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From: "Yeshivat Har Etzion <yhe@jer1.co.il>"
To: NDIAMENT, CSHULMAN, " " Sichot of the Roshei Yes...
Date: 1/11/96 7:33am
Subject: SICHOT - SHEMOT

PARASHAT SHEMOT
SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A

Summarized by Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon

"And these are the NAMES of the children of Israel who came down to Egypt... Reuven, Shimon..." (Shemot 1:1).

The Torah has already provided us - in Parashat Vayigash - with the list of names of Benei Yisrael who came down to Egypt. For what reason, then, does the Torah repeat the same list again in this week's parasha?

Rashi explains that "although they were enumerated by name during their lifetimes, God enumerates them once again after their death in order to demonstrate His love for them. (In this respect) they are compared to the stars, which God takes out and brings in by number and by name, as it is written: "He takes out their host by number, calling each by its name."

The Midrash Rabba (Shemot 1:3) elaborates further:

"... Israel are compared to the heavenly host; here their names are mentioned, and the stars, too, are enumerated by name... and God Himself counted Benei Yisrael when they went down to Egypt, to see how many there were. And since they are compared to the stars, He counted each by name. Hence it is written, "These are the names of the children of Israel..."

Rashi and the midrash mention two concepts: number and names. "Number" refers to the commonness, the similitude, each unit identical to all the others. "Names" refers to the special quality of each one, his individuality.

Am Yisrael are compared to stars: each star is a world in itself, each one is different from the others. So it is with Israel - each person has qualities unique to him, each has his own name.

Today there is a tendency towards mass production, and little value is attached to individual craftsmanship. Companies produce thousands of items each day, all completely identical to each other. The tendency in society, too, is to be fashionably 'in,' to be like everyone else. In yeshiva, each person wants to learn like everyone else. One of the gedolim once said that R. Yisrael Salanter was remarkable in that his talmidim all turned out different from one another - all were great, but each in his own way.

In the past, one could talk about the customs of the different tzaddikim. Today, there is almost no such thing as a certain tzaddik having an individual custom, because as soon as that tzaddik behaves in a certain way, everyone immediately imitates him.

A person must find what is unique about himself, and not just imitate others. Obviously, in the early stages of one's development, one has to take on and assimilate the common foundations and standards. But thereafter, each person should develop along his own individual path.

The Vilna Gaon taught that Benei Yisrael had many prophets - twice as many as the number of those who came out of Egypt. Benei Yisrael would go to the prophets, and the prophets would tell them what was special about each and every one of them and how each should serve God accordingly. There is no set way that is appropriate for everyone - each person has his own way of serving God.

The two aspects - number and name - have to be combined. On one hand, a person has to feel like a "number" - he has to

feel that he is part of society. "If I am for myself, what am I?" On the other hand, he must not become identical to everyone else. Everyone has something special about him, each person has a name - "These are the names of the children of Israel."

(Originally delivered on Leil Shabbat, Parashat Shemot 5750.
Translated by Kaeren Fish.)

From: "Jeffrey Gross <75310.3454@compuserve.com>"
To: CSHULMAN, " "Halachic Topics Related to the
Weekl...
Date: 1/10/96 9:18am
Subject: Parshas Shemos

SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS SHMOS

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

A man went from the house of Levi and he took a daughter of Levi (2:1). Rav Yehuda Bar Zevina said, "He placed her under a wedding canopy and Moshe and Aharon and Miriam danced in front of her... (Sotah 12a).

Leaving a Wedding Before Benching

QUESTION: Is it permitted to leave a wedding or a Sheva Brachos dinner before the recital of Bentching and Sheva Brachos?

DISCUSSION: There is a disagreement among the Poskim as to who is obligated in Sheva Brachos and when the obligation of reciting Sheva Brachos begins. Some Poskim(1) are of the opinion that Sheva Brachos is only an obligation for the Choson and Kallah. Other Poskim(2) hold that Sheva Brachos is an obligation for all those who partake of a meal together with a Choson and a Kallah. Thus, all those who partake of the meal may not leave until Sheva Brachos are recited. Other Poskim(3) rule that the obligation of Sheva Brachos begins only at the time of Bentching. Thus, one who must leave before the meal is over may join with two others for Bircas Hazimun and leave.

In order to satisfy the views of all the Poskim, the preferred method is to stay until the end of the wedding or Sheva Brachos and listen to the recitation of the Sheva Brachos(4).

If ten or more people have to leave a wedding early, e.g. a group that has to leave by bus before the dinner is over, they should Bentch and recite the Sheva Brachos. This may be done only with the permission of the Choson and Kallah(5).

When, however, an individual cannot stay until the end of the meal, the following options, in order of preference, are

available to him(6) or her(7):

He should partake of the meal without washing on bread (and without eating the amount of cake that might require him to Bentch);

He should try to begin and end the meal before everyone else.

Thus, he does not become obligated in Zimun or Sheva Brachos(8).

If the above options are not available, he should stipulate -

either verbally or mentally - that he does not want to join the other guests in a Bentching of Zimun. Then he will not incur the obligation of Sheva Brachos(9). If he changes his mind and wants to stay till the end of the meal, he may do so and join in the

Zimun and the Sheva Brachos(10).

If one forgot to stipulate the above condition, he may still

leave, provided that he finishes the meal before the other

guests. This option should only be exercised in a case of great

necessity or possible monetary loss(11).

Bedieved, if one failed to follow any of the above

arrangements(12), and he finds that he must leave, he may rely on

the Poskim who hold that an individual is not required at all to

stay for Sheva Brachos(13). He should not, however, leave before

being Mezamen with at least two others.

***This issue is graciously sponsored by Dr. and Mrs. Yehuda Cohen
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FOOTNOTES:

1 Shu"t Rav Yonoson Shteif 9.

2 Igros Moshe OC 56 and AH 87. See Avudraham Shaar 9 who clearly writes that all those who partake of the meal are obligated; see also Taz Even Haezer 62:9 who implies that all present, even those who do not eat, are obligated.

3 Yosef Ometz 159; Haalef Lecha Shlomo AH 107-8; Minchas Yitzchok 2:43; Tzitz Eliezer 11:84

4 It is preferred, therefore, to schedule most of the dancing after Bentching, so that those who must leave should do so - see Sova Semachos p. 48.

5 Igros Moshe and Minchas Yitzchak, ibid.

6 According to the opinion (quoted in footnote 2) that requires all participants to join in the Sheva Brachos.

7 Rav Moshe Feinstein is quoted (Oholei Yeshurun, Laws of Sheva Brachos p. 26) as having ruled that there is no difference between men and women in regard to these Halachos.

8 Mishnah Berurah 193:19.

9 Chochmas Shlomo OC 193; Igros Moshe, ibid, who says that this option should only be employed in a time of need.

10 Obviously, since as long as one finishes the meal with the others he become obligated in Zimun and Sheva Brachos.

11 Mishna Berurah 200:5

12 Awareness of these Halachos, as described, should allow every individual the chance to satisfy the opinions of all the Poskim,

using one of the above options.
13 See footnote 1.3. See also Sova Semachos p.46-47, and
Hanisuin K'hilchasam 14:46.

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From: "Ohr Somayach <ohr@jer1.co.il>"
To: CSHULMAN, " "Ask the Rabbi and get the answer!"
<...
Date: 1/6/96 2:12pm
Subject: Ask the Rabbi - #91

Ask The Rabbi 13 January 1996 Issue #91

Sarah Ross <ross2@gl.umbc.edu> wrote:
>Dear Rabbi,
>What is the Torah view on the possibility of life on other planets?

Dear Sarah,
Rabbi Chasdai Crescas (14th century) writes that nothing in the Torah outlook precludes the existence of life on other worlds. The verse "Your Kingdom is one which encompasses all worlds... (Psalms 145:13)" implies the existence of more than one world. According to the Talmud there are 18,000 (at least!). The existence of these other worlds and the fact that they rely on Divine Providence make it reasonable to assume that life does exist there!

The Sefer Habrit states that extraterrestrial creatures exist but that they have no free will. He adds that we shouldn't expect creatures from another world to resemble earthly life, any more than sea creatures resemble land animals.

Now you might ask, what possible purpose could there be for the existence of `Martians' who possess no free will? This problem prompted Rabbi Yosef Albo (author of Sefer Ikkarim) to view their existence as illogical. However, a possible purpose for their existence can be found in the work Tikunei Zohar, which states that in the future each tzaddik (righteous person) will rule over a star and have an entire world to himself. This world with its entire population would serve to enhance the tzaddik's spiritual growth.

Sources:
o The Aryeh Kaplan Reader

Ask The Rabbi is written at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel. General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman
Production Design: Lev Seltzer

To: CSHULMAN, " Torah insight by Mordecai Kornfeld
<p...
Date: 1/10/96 10:22pm
Subject: Parashat Shemot 5756 - "The sign of the serpent"

The Weekly Internet

P * A * R * A * S * H * A - P * A * G * E

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by Mordecai Kornfeld

This week's issue is dedicated to the memory of Rav Pinchas Teitz of Elizabeth, New Jersey. This great Torah scholar taught us how to turn even the backwaters of America into a Torah environment.

Parashat Shemot 5756

THE SIGN OF THE SERPENT

When Moshe was first presented with his historic mission to lead the Jews out of Egypt, he hesitated. Moshe was concerned that neither the people nor Pharaoh would believe that he had actually been sent by Hashem. In order to bolster Moshe in his mission, Hashem supplied Moshe with wonders to perform. These signs would prove that he was indeed a Divine emissary. As the Torah tells us:

Hashem said to Moshe, "What is that in your hand?" Moshe replied, "A staff." Hashem told him, "Throw it to the ground." He threw it to the ground and it became a snake, and Moshe fled from before it.

Hashem said to Moshe, "Put out your hand and grab it by the tail." Moshe put out his hand and grabbed it, and it became a staff in his hand.

(Shemot 4:2-4)

This feat was followed by two others (4:6-9). When Moshe arrived in Egypt he and his brother Aharon performed their repertoire of signs for the Jewish People (Shemot 4:30). Later, they repeated the wonder of the snake in Pharaoh's palace, with Aharon acting as Moshe's proxy:

Aharon threw down his staff before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent! Pharaoh called upon his wise men and sorcerers, and the magicians of Egypt did likewise through their sorcery. Each one threw down his staff and they became serpents. Then, the staff of Aharon swallowed up their staffs!

(Shemot 7:10-12)

The ostensible purpose of this display was to prove to Pharaoh that Moshe indeed brought the word of God. Clearly, however, the choice of miracle was not random. If God chose this particular sign, it must bear a deeper, allegorical meaning that is somehow related to Moshe's mission. What could this hidden message be?

A number of suggestions have been made concerning the metaphorical significance of the staff turning into a serpent. Most of the commentaries see it as symbolic of the Jewish exile in Egypt, and of Pharaoh's ultimate downfall (Keli Yakar 4:9, 7:9; Ya'arot Devash 1:3; Chatam Sofer HaChadashot 4:3; Meshech Chochma ibid.; Pardes Yosef 4:10). Others bring out the symbolism of Moshe's authority as an emissary of Hashem (Ha'amek Davar, Malbim, and R.S.R. Hirsch to 4:3). In general, however, these explanations fall short of explaining the rebuttal of the Egyptian magicians. What were they trying to say by turning their own staffs into snakes? What was their response to Moshe's proof of Divine agency?

Perhaps the most satisfying explanation of the allegory is that of the early commentators (Ibn Ezra 4:3; Chizkuni 7:9; Baal HaTurim 7:9), who

say that the staff turning into a serpent was a hint to Pharaoh's behavior as king of Egypt; behavior which ultimately led to the Ten Plagues that Hashem brought upon the Egyptians. This interpretation actually has its basis in a Midrash. Let us take another look at Moshe's Divine sign in light of this explanation.

II

What message did the sign of the stick/snake carry for the Jews? Said Rebbi Elazar: The stick that became a snake hinted to Pharaoh, who is called a "snake" -- "Pharaoh... the great serpent" (Yechezkel 29:3); "The erect Leviathan snake" (Yeshayah 27:1). He was compared to a snake because of the way he "bit" the Jews. Hashem said to Moshe, "Do you see how Pharaoh is like a snake? You will smite him with a staff, and he will end up as a piece of wood, that cannot bite!"

(Shmot Rabba 3:12)

Why did Moshe perform for Pharaoh the miracle of the serpent? Because Pharaoh is compared to a serpent... When Moshe would leave Pharaoh's presence, Pharaoh would say, "If I get hold of Moshe, I'll kill him! I'll hang him! I'll burn him!" But when Moshe would enter the palace, Pharaoh would immediately become as a stick of wood.

(Shemot Rabba 9:4)

Moshe's miracle symbolized that a timid Pharaoh (a "staff") had become a venomous "serpent" (see Rashi 1:8). Hashem's message was that this serpent would be tamed, and become harmless once again.

There may, however, be a deeper significance to a staff than simple lifelessness. A staff, or stick, is used for striking and for punishing. When Hashem sent the nation of Aram to conquer the Jews, he called them His "rod of retribution" ("Shevet Appi" -- Yeshayah 10:5.) So too, Pharaoh's position was one of a rod of retribution -- he enslaved the Jews as per the Divine decree (Bereishit 15:13): "Your offspring will be strangers in a land not theirs, and they will serve the natives of that land, who will afflict them for four hundred years."

Such a "staff" is nothing but a tool that is wielded by the one who holds it. It accomplishes nothing on its own. As Hashem chastened the nation of Aram that prided itself in the destruction of Israel, "Can an ax in the hand of a wood-chopper take pride in its accomplishments? ... Does a staff [that strikes] pick itself up? No! Someone must raise it!" (Yeshayah 10:15). Pharaoh had nothing to gloat over. He was simply Hashem's tool.

But then, why should Pharaoh be punished for his actions with ten plagues? What did *he* do? The answer is that Pharaoh had turned himself into a snake!

The Ramban (Bereishit 15:4) gives two reasons for the punishment of the Egyptians. First of all, they did much more than was decreed. Hashem had only said that the Jews would be enslaved and oppressed. Pharaoh, however, gave them excruciatingly hard labor, and even decreed the death of their babies. The second reason given by the Ramban is that Pharaoh did not enslave the Jews *in order* to fulfill the will of Hashem, but for his own selfish motives, out of his hatred for the Jews, and his desire to profit from their labor. His goal was not to fulfill the prophecy. That is why, according to the Ramban, he was deserving of punishment for his deeds.

The first reason that the Ramban suggests is clearly symbolized by the staff turning into a "serpent." When someone is struck with a staff, he is left with a bruise in the place where the staff hit him. But Pharaoh

made himself into a snake. The bite of a snake, unlike the bites of other animals, causes poison to spread throughout the entire body of its victim (Yerushalmi Rosh Hashana 3:9). The effects are much more severe than those of a stick.

The second reason of the Ramban, that Pharaoh did not punish the Jews in order to fulfill the will of Hashem, is also alluded to in the staff becoming a snake. The Gemara tells us (Sanhedrin 78a) that if a person scratches someone with the fangs of a snake, he cannot be sentenced as a murderer (according to the majority opinion). The fangs of a snake are not like knives dipped in poison. The poison is contained in a duct, and the snake must exude the venom of its own volition. The snake is the killer, while the man holding it is merely a causative agent in the murder ("Gerama"). In a similar manner, Pharaoh tortured the Jews of his own free will. Instead of being the "staff" of Hashem, Pharaoh transformed himself into a "serpent." (See also Parasha-Page Toldot 5756, section IV, for some more insights into the metaphor of a snake.)

III

We can understand the response of Pharaoh's magicians in this light as well. When Moshe threw down his staff so that it should turn into a snake, they too threw down their staffs. Their message was, "We're right with you, Pharaoh! We, too, do not consider ourselves to be merely sticks in the hands of Hashem. We, too, wish to enslave Jews of our own free will! We will not accept the fact that it is only the will of Hashem which has placed the Jews into our hands. We are serpents just like Pharaoh!"

At this point, Moshe's staff swallowed up all of the other staffs. It is noteworthy that the Torah now refers to them as "staffs" once more, and no longer as serpents. Moshe's serpent became a piece of wood once again, and then it "swallowed" the staff/serpents of the Egyptian sorcerers (Rashi). Perhaps this was a hint that, against his own will, Pharaoh would return to being a stick in the hands of Hashem. He would end up doing things which were clearly against his own interests, simply because they fit into Hashem's plan. This is just what Hashem had already told Moshe (Shemot 4:21), "I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go." Pharaoh would refuse to allow the Jews to leave, even after he had seen plague after plague, in order to reveal to the world through the plagues that Hashem was the Creator of the Heavens and Earth (Shmot 7:3). Pharaoh again became a staff in the hand of Hashem -- but this time, for punishing the Egyptians, not the Jews.

Perhaps this is why Moshe was told to pick up the snake by its *tail* when he turned it back into a staff. He was to reverse the direction of this rod of retribution, making it smite the one who formerly wielded it!

Eventually, Pharaoh's own servants pleaded with him to let the Jews go, declaring, "Don't you realize that we're being destroyed?" (Shemot 10:7). Yet Pharaoh refused to listen, and they became unwilling partners in his refusal to let the Jews go free. They, too, became sticks in the hand of Hashem, and were "devoured" by the "stick" called Pharaoh!

IV

This theme -- that a staff becoming a snake represents a humble pawn becoming haughty and proud -- can be used to explain numerous other appearances of the stick and the snake in the words of our Sages. For example, this is how we are told to bow to Hashem in the Amidah prayer:

One is to bow upon saying "Blessed are you," and to stand erect upon reaching the name of Hashem. Rav Sheshet would bow as a *stick* (-- all at once -Rashi), and would return to an erect state as a *snake* (-- slowly, first head, then neck,

then trunk -Rashi).

(Gemara Berachot 12a-b)

Bowing to Hashem is to be done as a *stick*. We demonstrate our humility and subjugate ourselves to Hashem's will, by showing that we are only "sticks" in Hashem's hand. We haven't the power to accomplish anything without Hashem's help.

But when we reach the Holy Name, we stand erect. This is the time to display our pride in being Hashem's chosen nation, upon whom He rests His great name. We return to holding our head *erect* the way a *snake* does. Even haughtiness has its place. "[Yehoshaphat's] heart was haughty, when it came to following the ways of Hashem" (II Chronicles 17:6 -- see Shabbat 63a, Yoma 23a "Talmid Chacham ... Noter K'Nachash"). We must be sure to recognize when we should be "snakes," and when we must be "sticks!"

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Shmot-5756

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This edition is dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Dr J Rabbinowitz, Dalston
Synagogue

SHEMOT- Greatness through kindness: Rabbi Chananya Silverman, Enfield
Synagogue

If there is one characteristic that Judaism encourages us to develop it is
kindness, for this incorporates the whole of the Torah. Hence, Rabbi Simlai
taught (Sotah 14a), In the Torah there is a deed of loving-kindness at its
beginning "G-d made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed
them"
(Bereshit 3:21) and a deed of loving-kindness at its end "and He buried
Moses in the valley" (Devarim 34:6).

The circumstances surrounding the saving of Moses, the redeemer of Israel,
stemmed from great acts of benevolence from family and strangers alike.
Miriam, the sister of Moses waited by the bank of the river to see what
would become of her baby brother after he was placed in the bull -rushes and
ensured that he was nursed by his mother once he was rescued.

The fact that it was the daughter of Pharaoh who saved Moses teaches us the
importance of helping others even in face of criticism, social isolation and
possible danger to one's own life, for it was her father who decreed that
all Hebrew males be killed.

Thus, the quality of kindness was impressed on Moses from birth and
reinforced by those around him. Even his name, which means "drawn out
(from
the water)", was meant to be a reminder of the need to show compassion to
others. The Midrash brings the opinion in the Talmud that in fact Moses was
given other names by different members of his family, such as Tov or Tuvia.
The question is why did he remain with the name the daughter of Pharaoh
gave
him?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that by giving him his name (Moshe),
Pharaoh's daughter meant to impress upon him that "as long as he lives he
must never forget that he was thrown into the water and that I drew him up
there." For this reason his heart should always be filled with compassion
for the sufferings of others and he should be ready at all times to be a
Moshe, to "draw out" others from distress.

Rabbi Zev Leff, in his book Shiurai Binah points out that a baby enters this
world with a clenched fist. Part of the preparation for burial includes the
opening of the deceased's hands. A person comes into this world concerned
only with his own needs and desires. His fist is clenched tight. He is
closed unto himself. As he matures, he slowly opens that fist to reach out
to extend his self to others, to embrace an entire world in his concern. He
must exit this world with an open hand.

This was the lesson that Moses learnt early on in his life. The Torah
repeats the expression "Vayigdal and he grew up" (Shemot 2:10-11) twice in
quick succession. The Ramban, commenting on this apparent redundancy in
the
text, explains that the first refers to Moses' attainment of physical
maturity. The second refers to Moses' growth in intellectual and spiritual
maturing which enabled him to see the suffering of others and to act in a
thoughtful and considerate manner. According to Shemot Rabbah, he was
only
twelve at the time and this was when he prevented the Egyptian taskmaster
from beating a fellow Jew and tried to split up the quarrelling Datan and
Aviram.

Moses' charitable acts did not stop at helping his own brethren. When he
was forced to flee for his life after Pharaoh had tried to kill him, he
protected the daughters of a Midianite priest (Jethro) from a group of
shepherds who tried to drive them away from a well. As the Ramban points
out
in explaining the verse "...and Moses got up and saved them and watered their
sheep" (Shemot 2:17), Moses was outraged at the injustice of the shepherds'
behaviour; since Jethro's daughters had drawn the water, no one had a right
to take it away from them. Since the water was insufficient for their sheep

Moses drew more for them.

It did not matter if the needy party was a Jew or non-Jew, Moses could not stand by and let injustice or suffering continue.

This principle of his even extended to the welfare of animals. There is a beautiful Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 3:1) which points out that G-d tested Moses

by means of the flock of sheep which he tended for his father-in-law, Jethro. One day, a lamb escaped and Moses followed it until it approached a shelter under a rock. As the lamb reached the shelter, it came upon a pool of water and stopped to drink.

When Moses caught up with it, he said, "I did not know that you ran away because you were thirsty. Now you must be tired". So he hoisted the lamb on his shoulders and started walking back with it. G-d then said: Because you showed such compassion in tending the flock of a mortal, as you live, you shall become the shepherd of Israel, the flock that is Mine.

If only we could show the same compassion and love that Moses had for all Hebrews, non-Jews and all of G-d's creatures, perhaps the final shepherd of Israel will be appointed sooner rather than later.

The Golden Age of Spain

by Mr. Clive Fierstone, Academic Registrar, Jews' College, Hendon

The Golden Age of Spanish Jewry is best appreciated within the context of Jewish settlement in the Spanish Peninsula. Jews settled in Spain before the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) and their presence in Spanish society was noted by the Church authorities during the fourth to seventh centuries, who enacted legislation to their detriment.

However, the rise of Islam was a precursor to the Crescent's invasion of Spain and this created new opportunities for the Jews. Once the original extremism of the new religion waned, Jews began to follow the footsteps of the Arab conquest. Since Jews had knowledge of languages, astronomy and medicine, they became an important minority. Scholars have pin-pointed the era of Hasdai ibn Shaprut (915-970) as the beginning of the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry. His knowledge of medicine brought him to the attention of the Caliph of Cordova. In addition, his knowledge of Latin meant that he was indispensable as an interstate diplomat especially with the Christian States of Northern Europe.

In this unique position he was able to help the scattered Jewish minorities in places as far apart as Southern France and Constantinople. Perhaps most importantly he supported the new School of Spanish Scholars, such as Menachem ben Saruk (910-975), who produced his dictionary, the Machberet, in which he attempted to define Hebrew roots which, in his view, ranged from one to five letters. (Later scholarship proved that the vast majority of Hebrew roots have three letters). He had, however, turned Biblical Hebrew philology into an independent discipline. He certainly influenced Rashi and the Franco-German Biblical exegetes.

Ibn Shaprut similarly supported Dunash ibn Labrat, whose contribution to

philology was to define the verbs into a system which is not too distant a cousin to the one in current use.

Due to the liberal atmosphere in Moslem Spain, Hebrew poets soon began to experiment with the Arabic literary form. Complicated liturgical poems were formulated, (many are printed as an appendix to the standard festival prayer book) and secular poetry and prose were being produced.

This situation did not last. In the early eleventh century, the Caliphate of Cordova suffered an invasion from North Africa which led to the fragmentation of the Caliphate into small kingdoms. The rulers of these fragmented territories utilised the services of capable Jews at the highest level.

../To be continued next week

From: "listserv@lubavitch.chabad.org (W-2 LIST Chabad-Lubavitch)"
To: CSHULMAN
Date: 1/7/96 11:58pm
Subject: Torah Studies - Shemos

B"H
Torah Studies
Adaptation of Likutei Sichos
by
Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of Great Britain

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion

Shemos

In this Sidra, when G-d asks Moses to undertake the mission of redeeming the Israelites from Egypt, Moses replies, "Send, I pray You, by the hand of whom You will send."

The Midrash interprets this to be a plea for the Messiah to be sent in his place.

What is the connection between Moses and the Messiah - the past and future redeemers? And what is the difference between them, that each was given a separate mission?

The Rebbe answers these questions, and explains their significance in the life of the individual Jew.

THE TWO REDEEMERS

After G-d has repeatedly asked Moses to return to Egypt and lead the Jewish people out of their captivity, Moses finally says, "Send, I pray You, by the hand of whom You will send."

The Midrash says on this verse, "(Moses) said before Him, 'Master of the Universe, send, I pray You, by the hand of whom You will send' - by the hand of the Messiah who will be the future redeemer." But this request of Moses was not granted, for it was he, specifically, whom G-d wanted to deliver Israel from Egypt.

It can be inferred from the Midrash that there is a special connection between Moses and the Messiah, and it was because of this that Moses wanted the Messiah himself to be sent to Egypt.

Nonetheless, the redemption from Egypt was the task of Moses; the mission of the Messiah belongs to the final exile.

The similarity which they share (in virtue of which they have been given similar tasks - redemption from exile) is indicated in the Rabbinic saying: "Moses was the first and he will be the last redeemer."

This does not mean that Moses in person will be the Messiah (since he was a Levite, and the Messiah, who will be a descendant of David, will be from the tribe of Judah); but rather that the redemptive power of the Messiah will be drawn from Moses.

The reason is that the first and major virtue of the Messiah will be Torah (according to Rambam, he will be steeped in it); from this, his redemptive strength will be drawn; and the Torah is called "the Torah of Moses."

Likewise, the power of Israel to bring the Messiah derives from the service articulated in the Torah.

This inner connection between Moses and the Messiah is alluded to in the verse "And the scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh come (ad ki-yavo Shilo)." This is taken to refer to the Messiah, because the words "yavo Shiloh" and "Mashiach" ("Shiloh come" and "Messiah") are numerically equivalent.

The same equivalence also applies to the words "Shiloh" and "Moses" so that the coming of the Messiah is related to Moses.

In addition, "yavo" ("come") has the same numerical value as "echad" ("one"). Thus we can state the equivalence: "Messiah = Moses + One," and its meaning is that the Messiah will be brought by service which has the attribute of "Oneness"; and the power to achieve this is transmitted through Moses.

Descent For the Sake of Ascent

How are we to understand this?

The Rabbis said: When the world was created, everything was in a state of perfection. But after the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, when the serpent infected Eve with impurity, man and the world fell from perfection until the Giving of the Torah; for when Israel were at Mt. Sinai the "spirit of impurity" departed.

But it returned with the sin of the Golden Calf, and it remains in the world until the Messianic Age when the promise will be fulfilled to remove (utterly destroy) impurity; and the world will be ultimately

purified and cleansed.

It is a general principle in Judaism that every fall is for the sake of some ascent; and subsequent ascent is higher than the state before the fall.

Hence the state ushered in by the Giving of the Torah was higher than that which preceded Eve's sin. And by implication the Messianic Age will be superior to the time of the Giving of the Torah.

A twofold movement creates this achievement of hitherto unreach heights:

A descent of light (revelation, spiritual power) from its source in the infinite; and a corresponding ascent of Israel and the world.

We find this in the Giving of the Torah. Even though the strength to fulfill Divine commandments preceded it (Adam had 6 commandments, Noah 7, extra ones were given to each of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the Fathers kept the whole Torah before it was given), not only was greater strength given at the time of the Giving of the Torah, but a new power, different in kind from all that had existed before, was given to Israel when the relation of chosenness between them and G-d began ("and You have chosen us"). This was a revelation of G-d's essence; something that had not been disclosed in revelation before.

Likewise, the elevation of Israel and the world was unprecedented - in the inwardness and intensity of their purification. Hence their subsequent degradation, in committing the sin of the Golden Calf, was not so great.

Thus, although its effects (the presence of impurity) remain visible today, still, the effects of the Giving of the Torah are evident.

THE MESSIANIC AGE

In a similar way, the elevation that will belong to the Messianic Age - when the Messiah will teach his Torah to all Israel - will be correspondingly greater than that of the Giving of the Torah; and this in two ways:

(i) In the Divine revelation. For though at Sinai it was so intense that they could see it with their physical senses, it was only like the Messianic revelation (when "the Glory of the L-rd will be revealed") and not equal to it.

(ii) In the elevation of Israel. Whereas at Sinai the spirit of impurity departed, it remained in potential and reappeared with the sin of the Golden Calf. But in the Messianic time it will be destroyed and consumed forever. The whole essential nature of the world itself will be changed; not temporarily altered by specific Divine intervention from Above.

The Task Of Exile

Since every elevation must be preceded by a fall, the fall is a necessary preparation for it.

It is the service in the time of the fall (while its effects persist) which brings about the elevation. The service of the Fathers, and the catharsis of the "iron furnace" of Egypt, brought the Giving of the Torah. And likewise, the Messiah will be brought by our continual service in exile to purify the whole essence of the world.

The Meaning of "One"

This can be understood by first understanding a well-known difficulty about the Shema. Why does it say, "the L-rd is One" and not "the L-rd is unique?"

For "one" is an attribute of a countable thing; it is compatible with a second. But "unique" rules out the possibility of another.

The explanation is this: The true Oneness of G-d is not perceived merely by denying at the outset the existence of anything besides Him ("uniqueness"- world-denying attitude); but rather by perceiving in the midst of the physical world that it has no existence in itself, by feeling in the context of a worldly existence that it is in one with (united with) G-d.

The word "one" itself suggests this. Its letters in Hebrew (echad: alef, chet, daled) have the numerical values, 1, 8, 4.

8 symbolizes, as it were, the seven heavens and the earth, and 4, the four directions. All these are emanations from 1 (alef) the Source and Master (aluf) of the world.

In other words, the perception of Oneness must not be a spiritual one alone, but one which permeates one's whole view of the physical world and is realized in it.

TORAH AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD

But how can it be that this world whose nature is (and whose name in Hebrew means) the "concealment" of G-dliness, should be receptive to a revelation within it of the Aluf (Master, One) of the universe?

For this purpose, to make the world a fit dwelling-place for G-d, Israel was given the Torah and the commandments.

At Sinai, it was not merely that they were given so that through them the world should be purified and refined; but also the accompanying revelation transmitted the power by which this could be done.

At the moment when the Torah was given, the whole world was entirely nullified in the face of the revelation - even "the birds did not sing and the earth was silent" - but this was a force from above rather than from within (and hence it was not a permanent state).

But from this was derived the world's power to become refined itself, and hence become a fitting receptacle for a yet higher revelation.

Moses and the Messiah

Now we can understand why the Messiah = Moses + One. For the Messiah will be brought by the service which makes the Oneness manifest, and the power to do this was given through the hand of Moses.

Hence the inner connection between Moses and the Messiah: The latter will be brought by powers transmitted through the former. And hence also their difference:

The exile to and liberation from Egypt was for the sake of the Giving of the Torah, and this was to give Israel the power to purify themselves and the world. The task of the Messiah is to complete this process, and to innovate the subsequent service, when the purity of the world is complete.

"ONENESS" AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Man is a microcosm of the world. And this cosmic process finds its echo in every man at all times: When he works and performs his service until evening; and entrusts his soul to G-d at night; and next day is made new again, and begins a new service.

The service of the day begins with prayer and Torah. Through them a man receives the strength to serve (the G-dly spirit is diffused through his whole being by prayer) and to overcome the inclination to evil (through Torah which instructs him in the right course of action).

Then he is able to enact this service in the practical world (to the extent that, as Rambam says, "his wisdom is manifest in his eating and drinking"). His worldly existence (the chet and daled of echad) is subordinated to his Divine wisdom (alef); a recognition of Oneness permeates his physical actions.

Then, when his day of service is over, he makes a spiritual reckoning of his day's actions and rededicates his task to G-d. He says, "Into Your hands I entrust my soul . . . G-d of Truth," and Truth itself is Oneness.

For the Hebrew word for truth is Emet - the first, middle and last letters of the Alef Bet, reminding us that G-d is He who has said, "I am the First and I am the Last, and besides Me there is no god." There is no reality which does not emanate from Him, for when the alef (the One) is removed from emet, the word becomes met, "death," the absence of life.

Just as the Torah (through the hand of Moses) gives the world the power to bring the Messiah, so it gives each and every individual the power to refine his own life and environment, and so hasten the Messianic Age.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. XI pp. 8-13)

From: "owner-haftorah@synergy.Destek.Net"
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Date: 1/11/96 3:50pm
Subject: Haftorah - Sh'mos

MESSAGE FROM THE HAFTORAH
PARSHAS SHEMOS Yeshaya 27:6, 29:22

This week's haftorah displays the true potentiality of the Jewish people and reminds us never to despair. The prophet Yeshaya opens and says, "Those who are coming will strike roots as Yaakov and will blossom and bud as Yisroel." Yeshaya refers to the earlier generation of the Jewish people, those who struck roots in Egypt, and identifies it as Yaakov. However when referring to the generation that blossomed and left Egypt Yeshaya identifies it as Yisroel. This change of name typifies the spiritual ascent of the Jews which began from the downtrodden Yaakov and resulted in the superior and supreme Yisroel. This truly reflects the unbelievable spiritual growth of the Jewish people who developed in Egypt from a nearly assimilated family to a kingdom of priests.

The S'forno demonstrates the seemingly inadequate origins of the Jews and reflects upon the Torah's description in this week's sedra. In describing the proliferation of the Jews the Torah says, (Shemos 1:7) "And the children of Israel were fruitful and multiplied in swarms and proliferated and became overpowering in excessive measures." The S'forno takes note of this peculiar expression, "multiplying in swarms," which seems to compare the Jewish people to swarms of insects and crawling creatures. He explains that this refers to the prevalent mannerisms of the Jewish people then which were truly likened to those of an undisciplined race. This parallels the words of Chazal which state that during the early years in Egypt the Jews roamed freely through the streets of Egypt. They involved and preoccupied themselves with Egyptian practices by participating in Egypt's immoral style of amusement and pastimes.

This, however, was only the description of our earliest era. After one hundred years of servitude and torturous slavery, this same Jewish people emerged a nation of sanctity and dignity, each and every one of them worthy of perfect communication with Hashem through ultimate levels of prophecy. They experienced the revelation of Hashem at Har Sinai and were temporarily elevated to the spiritual level of the angels. The prophet Yeshaya draws upon our people's early experience to demonstrate our true potentiality. We may have appeared to have digressed to the level of swarming creatures but our potential remained that of the angels themselves.

The prophet continues and predicts that this same pattern will reappear amongst the Jewish nation. He reprimands the ten tribes of Israel and calls upon them to remove every trace of idolatry from their kingdom., (Yeshaya 28:1) "Woe unto you, crown of arrogance; drunkards of Ephraim. The splendor of your glory will be likened to a withering bud." Yeshaya refers here to the imminent era of destruction and exile soon to befall the ten tribes. He then turns to the remaining Jewish segment, the Judean kingdom and blames them for following a similar path. About their practices Yeshaya says, "And they too were negligent through wine and strayed through intoxication...for all of their tables were replete with refuse without any remaining space." This refers to the sinful plunge of the Judean empire into idolatry. Although this practice originated amongst the ten tribes it eventually took strong hold even amongst the Judean kingdom.

But, Yeshaya adds, "On that day Hashem will be a crown of splendor and a mitre of glory for the remnant of His people." (ibid 28:5) The Radak (ad loc) explains that the Judean kingdom would have the fortune of experiencing one of the greatest miracles in the history of the Jewish people. The mighty king

Sanherev would be completely defeated through an awesome miracle without even one Jewish casualty. This miracle will be totally in the merit of an unprecedented campaign by the king Chizkiyahu to proliferate Torah knowledge throughout the Judean kingdom. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 94b) records that during this illustrious era every single individual-man or lady, boy or girl was proficient in the most complicated laws of ritual cleanliness. This very same kingdom that was heavily involved in idolatry only one generation earlier was now completely cleansed from it and totally immersed in Torah study and Torah rituals. With this, the prophet reminds us to recognize the unlimited potential of the Jewish people. Although we may appear to have seriously digressed we are always capable of making a perfect comeback. Over the span of one generation we can actually climb from complete spiritual bankruptcy to almost unprecedented perfection meriting one of the most open miracles ever to be seen.

In this spirit we close the haftorah and say in the name of Hashem to our patriarch Yaakov, "Now, don't be embarrassed Yaakov and don't blush from shame because when your children will witness My hand in their midst they will sanctify My name...and exalt the Hashem of Israel." The apparent message here is that we have seriously strayed from the proper path. Our actions are so inexcusable that our own patriarch Yaakov is embarrassed and ashamed of us. But, we recognize wholeheartedly the unlimited potential of the Jewish people. We firmly believe that we will sincerely return and merit outstanding miracles from Hashem. The day will come to pass when all Jewish people will recognize the hand of Hashem amongst them and will sanctify and exalt Hashem beyond all measures.

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel, Rosh Kollel (Dean)
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Editor : Zev S. Itzkowitz ----

"Moses replied: But they will not believe me, nor will they listen to me. Rather, they will say that Hashem did not appear to you. Hashem asked, 'What is that in your hand?' Moses answered, 'A staff.' [Hashem] said, throw it on the ground. [Moses] threw it on the ground and it became a snake..." (Exodus 4:1-3)

How is the alteration of the staff proof that Hashem sent Moses as His emissary? In truth, any sign would have been sufficient. This specific sign was intended to send a message to Moses. Moses had slandered the Children of Israel. He doubted that the people would believe him. Therefore, to point out to Moses that he had maligned his people, Hashem employed the snake as a symbol of evil speech. In the Garden of Eden, the snake slandered Hashem to convince Eve to eat from the forbidden tree (Shemos Rabbah as quoted by

Ramban).

Alternatively, the transmutation of the staff into the snake was a sign specific for Israel. What is a staff's function? Not only does a staff allow a person to physically support oneself, it may also be used as an extension of the body. What is a snake? Of all the animals, the snake is the one with enmity for human beings (see Gen. 3:15). In effect, by displaying the transformation of the staff, Hashem is exhibiting His power to turn helpful objects into hurtful ones. He can make the staff, something which man relies upon for help and power, into the exact opposite, a snake, something which hates and hinders him. Pharaoh, now, might be the slave driver and the Israelites the slaves, but Hashem can just as easily make Israel into the rulers and Pharaoh into the subject (R. Hirsch).

Mussar of the Week

"...for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.

Hashem replied [to Moses]: Who gave a mouth to man...?

Now go.

I will be with your mouth and teach you what to say." (Exodus 4:10-11)

What is Hashem telling Moses? That I am very much aware of what your physical limitations are. Nevertheless, you have it within your capability to transcend your speech impediment and fulfill the mission that I am charging you (Shadal).

From: "Project Genesis <genesis@j51.com>"
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Date: 1/12/96 2:33am
Subject: * PG LifeLine - Shemos

Project Genesis LifeLine

D'var Torah and News from Project Genesis - learn@torah.org
Volume III, Number 15 Shemos

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS THIS WEEK - PLEASE SEE BELOW. SUBSCRIBERS: 5200

This week's LifeLine is dedicated in memory of Rabbi Pinchus Mordechai Teitz zt"l, leader of the Elizabeth, NJ, Jewish community for over 60 years. Our condolences to his grandson, Rabbi Eliyahu Teitz.

"And a man from the house of Levi went out, and took for his wife a daughter of Levi." [Shemos 2:1]

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rashi) explains the extra word "vayelech [went out]" in this verse, which refers to Amram and Yocheved. Amram had previously married Yocheved, he explains, but separated from her in response to Pharaoh's decree that all Jewish boys be killed. Amram "went out" in the path of his daughter's advice.

According to our Sages, his daughter Miriam told him, "Your decree is still worse than Pharaoh's! Pharaoh decreed only against Jewish boys, but yours is against girls as well!" Because of Miriam's counsel, Amram remarried Yocheved, and Our Rabbi Moshe was born.

We should wonder, though, when Miriam made her argument, and when it was accepted. Obviously the separation went on for some time, especially because Pharaoh made two decrees. The first decree was that the midwives should kill any male Jewish child [1:16]. After that failed, Pharaoh then told his entire nation to throw any Jewish boy into the Nile river [1:22]. Amram, apparently, remarried only after the _second_ decree, which ordered all Egyptians to take part! Does this make sense?

In order to answer this, let us look first at another puzzling story. In Parshas Vayeshev, which we read several weeks ago, Yosef's brothers decide to kill him. But "Reuven heard, and he saved him from their hands..." [Br. 37:21]. What did they do instead? They threw him in a pit, "and the pit was empty, it had no water" [37:24]. Our Sages asked, "if it says the pit is empty, don't I know that it has no water? Rather, it had no water, but it did have snakes and scorpions" [Talmud Shabbos 22a]. So what kind of "rescue" did Reuven carry out? How can the Torah credit Reuven with "saving" Yosef, when he dumped Yosef into a pit filled with snakes and scorpions?

The answer goes to the very nature of a human being. A human being has one trait which, above all others, distinguishes us from animals: the trait of free will, of choice. Humans can choose to kill or not to kill; for animals, the decision is made by a host of external factors - animals don't go on a rampage because they "feel like doing it," nor are they generous by choice. Only we humans have the ability to make our own decisions.

Because the natural order of things is for humans to have free will, it would have been miraculous beyond nature for Divine Intervention to save Yosef from his stronger brothers who had surrounded him. Because scorpions, on the other hand, do not have free choice, it is not entirely unnatural (though certainly unusual) for them to fail to sting and kill someone who lands in their pit. Therefore Reuven did indeed save Yosef. He saved Yosef from his brothers, given that Divine Intervention could then save him from the snakes and scorpions in the pit - a miracle, but not beyond nature.

We can then understand why Amram might more willingly remarry Yocheved after the second decree. Under the first, the midwives were commanded to kill the boys, and had they not displayed amazing self-sacrifice, an open miracle would have been needed to save each child. The second decree, however, put death in the hands of the river - and thus only a "natural" miracle would be needed to save them.

[from Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Hertzberg zt"l, Rabbi in Baltimore for 42 years, and my wife's grandfather, as printed in Tzaddik B'Emunaso.]

CALL FOR INTERNS: Would you like to help make our program even better? We need Web programming, design, almost anything you want to do. If you have a good idea for Jewish VRML, please let us know! We appreciate all help...
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Eliezer chapter 29). Chazal tell us that it is to these bloods that Yechezkel referred (Yechezkel 16:6). This is the meaning of brit mila, and of our parasha in particular. We can now understand Tzippora's cryptic pronouncements. She originally circumcised her son whom she thought she had lost. Throwing down his foreskin she bitterly cried: I have circumcised you in death (4:25) (see Aruch Hashalem "chatan"). Upon seeing her son recover, Tzippora corrected herself (4:26); "You are circumcised with the blood of mila". For both Gershom and Israel, the blood signaled the beginning, not the end, of life!

Shnayim Mikra Ve'echad Targum by David Samet and Michael Arnold The very first words of Sefer Shemot and the name of the sefer itself, remind us of the obligation to read SHnayim Mikra Ve'echad Targum (Shim Mem Vav Tav = Shmot as rashei teivot) (codified in the Shulchan Aruch Orach chaim Siman 254), namely, reading the parasha each week twice and the Targum once. In addition to the acronym Shmo"t, the Levush (quoted in the Aruch Hashulchan Siman 285) and the Ba'al HaTurim go a step further and say the entire first phrase of Shemot is a reference to this obligation. According to the Levush, the words "Ve'eleh Shmot B'nei Yisrael" stand for:

Vechayav Adam Likrot Haparsha Shnayim Mikra Ve'echad Targum (vezeh chayavim kol) B'nei Yisrael

The Ba'al Haturim rather brilliantly employs the entire phrase as an acronym referring to Rav Hunas statement in Berachot 8a which posits that anyone who finishes the parasha with the congregation is deserving of long life. "Ve'eleh Shmot B'nei Yisrael" stands for:

Ve'adam Asher Lomeid Haseder Shnayim Mikra Ve'echad Targum Bekol Naim Yashir Yichyeh Sanim Rabot Aruchot Le'olam

We now have to resolve the following two issues. First, why is it that we have this obligation? What is this obligation based on? Secondly, what is the basis for the statement made by Rav Huna in Brachot 8a? Why is the reward for this mitzvah long life? What is the connection between the two? To explain the origin of this law, there are three general approaches. The Levush suggests K'dei Sheyehei Baki BaTorah - so that one should be thoroughly familiar with the Torah. (That is not accomplished simply by listening to the reading in shul on Shabbat). The second explanation is given by the Aruch Hashulchan. The source is found in the phrase we say everyday in Shacharit, "Lishmoa, Lilmod, etc." - we must listen and learn. The third explanation is based on a Midrash Rabba (Parashat Ki Tisa) and a Yalkut Shimoni (Job 28). Before Hashem taught Moshe each parasha, Hashem reviewed it two times. Originally the custom was to read ones own portion when called to the Torah. Following Hashems example, only if one had gone over the portion two or three times would he be permitted to read. The need to be fluent in the reading of the Torah (when called upon to read), explains Rav Elazar Halevi Horowitz, is the reason for Shnayim Mikra Ve'echad Targum. Rav Horowitz continues to explain our second difficulty, the reward of long life. The Talmud in Berachot 55a says that for three specific wrongdoings ones life is shortened. Included in the three is one who is given a sefer Torah but doesnt read from it. Both these passages (Berachot 55a and Berachot 8a) must be contrasted with one another. Furthermore, the phrase "Ki Hu Chay'yecha Ve'orech Yamecha", explains both the punishment of shortening of life for spurning the opportunity to read the Torah and the reward of lengthening of life for

embracing such an opportunity. Though true, this contrast still doesn't explain the importance of the mitzvah and the appropriateness of the reward. An alternate explanation to the second issue may also explain why the Torah alludes to this obligation here, in the beginning of Sefer Shemot. There are two mitzvot for which the Torah explicitly says the reward is long life: the mitzvah of honoring our parents, and the mitzvah of Shiluach HaKan. These share a common theme of love, manifested by our love for our parents, and our love for Hashems creations. Furthermore, the very first Rash"i on the parasha explains that Hashem repeated the names of the Sh'vatim because of his love for Bnei Yisrael. Moreover, we must wonder why the Midrash Rabba says Hashem reviewed everything twice before saying the Torah over to Moshe. Clearly Hashem only did it to demonstrate the value of the Torah and to illustrate the love we should have for the Torah. We say every day in the paragraph preceding shema (during maariv) "Ki Hem Chay'yeinu Ve'orech Yameinu". In the subsequent sentence we request "Ve'Ahavatcha Al Tasir Mi'menu Le'Olamim". Hashem will continue his love only if we reciprocate with our love - demonstrated by Shnayim Mikra Ve'echad Targum. One of the manifestations of His love will be, as Rav Huna states, a long and fulfilling life alluded to in the phrase Ki Hem Chay'yeinu Ve'orech Yam'meinu.

Oh, the Places You Can Go! by Hillel Wiener In the midst of Pharaohs terrible decree to kill all Jewish males, the future savior of the Jewish people was born. His mother, Yocheved, realizing that her newborn sons life was in danger, placed him in a basket in the Nile, hoping that someone would come along and save him. Pharaohs daughter went down to the Nile to bathe and, seeing the basket in the water, she opened it up, found the baby, had pity on him, and saved him. Ultimately, after being nursed by his own mother, the baby was returned to Pharaohs daughter who adopted him as her own and named him Moshe. The Torah states:

"When the child matured, [his mother] brought him to Pharaohs daughter. She adopted him as her own son, and named him Moshe and said because I drew him from the water (2:10)

The Midrash Rabba in Vayikra (1:3) tells us that Moshe had a total of ten names including Yered, Chaver, Ykutiel, Avigdor, and Avi Socho. However, Hashem told Moshe that despite the fact that he had so many names, he would be called Moshe - the one given to him by the daughter of Pharaoh. Shemot Rabba elaborates on the choice of this name. The Midrash states (1:26) that from this decree of Hashem one sees the reward for kindness. As instructive as this Midrash and its message may be, upon a further reading of the Midrash in Vayikra, a difficulty does arise. The Midrash, after listing the names of Moshe, explains the reason behind each name. Yered was because Moshe brought the Torah down from the heavens; Moshe was the spiritual father of the prophets and hence Avi Socho; Chaver was given because he brought Bnei Yisrael closer to their Father in heaven, etc. This Midrash demonstrates that all the names of Moshe Rabbeinu portray his greatness and the greatness of his actions. Therefore it would seem odd to call Moshe Rabbeinu, "Moshe", after the name of Pharaohs daughter. That particular name relates nothing about Moshe Rabbeinus virtues. Why choose it? Rav Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l explains that the actions of Pharaohs daughter were so great that they caused her name to be chosen over all the others. In saving Moshe Rabbeinu she had rebelled against her fathers decree, a decree she continued to violate each day as she raised Moshe in her fathers court. This act of kindness and the devotion she exhibited in performing it became ingrained in Moshe and were instrumental in his

development into the savior of Bnei Yisrael. All the qualities alluded to by the other names of Moshe sprouted inside of him due to this little seed of devotion planted by Pharaoh's daughter. This is why Hashem chose that particular name of Moshe over all the others. When one does an act of kindness the *chesed* is placed upon them, causing their whole being to become one of *chesed*. It is a name that lasts forever like the name Moshe - the savior of Israel. A simple act of *chesed* can go a long way.

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Shiur HaRav ZTL on Parshas Shemos

'Go and assemble the elders of Bnai Yisrael and say to them "Hashem the Gd of our forefathers appeared to me. and they will heed your voice and you and the elders of Bnai Yisrael shall come to the King of Egypt and say to him, "Hashem the Gd of the Hebrews happened upon us" (Shemos 3:16,18).
'And Moshe and Aaron went and gathered all the elders of the children of Israel... And the people believed and they heard that Hashem had remembered Bnai Yisrael' (Shemos 4:29,31).

'And afterwards Moshe and Aaron came to Paroh and said to him "So said Hashem the Gd of Israel send out my people that they may celebrate for me in the wilderness. Paroh replied "who is Hashem that I shall heed his voice and send out Israel. I do not know Hashem nor will I send out Israel. So they said "the Gd of the Hebrews happened upon us"' (Shemos 5:1-3).

The Rav raised 2 questions on the above p'sukim:

1) HKB'H said that Moshe should assemble the elders and come with them to Paroh. However only Moshe and Aaron appeared to Paroh. What happened to the elders? Why didn't Moshe fulfill his obligation and bring them to Paroh with Aaron and himself?

2) HKB'H commanded Moshe to say 'The Gd of the Hebrews happened upon us'. Yet Moshe's first pronouncement to Paroh was 'So says Hashem Gd of Israel...'. After Paroh says 'who is Gd that I shall listen to Him', Moshe says 'The Gd of the Hebrews happened upon us'. Why didn't Moshe initially identify Hashem as Gd of the Hebrews as Hashem commanded him?

The Rav explained the first question based on his interpretation of the

Ramban [Note: the

Rav did not specify which Ramban he was referring to. It would appear that he was referring to the Ramban 4:1, VaYa'an Moshe]: Hashem commanded him to assemble the elders (Lech V'asafta) and to tell them that Hashem has commanded that Moshe, Aaron and the elders appear to Paroh (Uvasa Ata Vziknay Yisrael). This constituted an obligatory Mitzvah on Moshe, Aaron and the elders. The elders were obligated to listen to Moshe. The Rav noted that the term 'And you shall come' (Uvasa) has the same shape and tense of many of the positive commandments in the Torah (e.g. U'lkachtem Lachem, V'Shinantam L'Vanecha). The obligation is expressed through the use of the future tense. These positive commandments are related to Bnai Yisrael. They must choose to take the Lulav and Esrog, sit in a Succah, and teach their children Torah of their own volition. Moshe was obligated to charge them with the positive commandment to appear before Paroh together with him and Aaron. [Note: as the Ramban says (ibid): Hashem did not promise Moshe that the elders would listen to him, rather that he must command them to listen, for it is intended that they listen to him]. Their coming with him and Aaron to Paroh had to be of their own free will (Bechira Chofshis).

The Rav explained the second question: The Ramban says (5:3, Pen Yipha'aynu) that at that time, the other nations of the world knew of Hashem the Gd of the Hebrews. That name was understood as referring to the Gd of Avraham Haivri who was well known among the nations of the area and era. "Hashem, the Gd of Bnai Yisrael", which included the first use of the divine name of Hashem connected to the nation of Israel, was first revealed to Moshe at the burning bush. This represented a new name, that combined Hashem with the nation of Israel as a distinct identity. Elokay Haivrim, Avraham Haivri, represented the Gd of Avraham the individual. Hashem Elokay Yisrael connotes the Gd of the NATION of Israel and not the Gd of Jacob, our forefather. When Moshe mentioned it, Paroh did not associate it with the name of Hashem that he was familiar with.

Had the elders accompanied Moshe and Aaron to Paroh, Moshe would not have used the name Hashem the Gd of Bnai Yisrael. This name of Hashem was not revealed to the elders until Bnai Yisrael received the Torah at Mount Sinai. Only at that time were they granted permission to refer to Hashem with that name. Therefore Moshe would not have used that name in the presence of the elders. (Though the new name of Hashem was not revealed to Aaron either, the Rav explained that Moshe and Aaron were extensions of each other and were viewed as one and the same with regard to the use of the name of Hashem.)

When Moshe saw that only he and Aaron were going to appear before Paroh, and that the elders would not fulfill their obligation, he thought that their absence gave him license to use the name of Hashem that was revealed to him at the burning bush, 'Hashem Elokay Yisrael'. Certainly there must have been a purpose for Hashem to reveal that name to him. He figured there now was no longer a reason to refrain from using the new name of Hashem that he had received. When Paroh failed to recognize 'Hashem, Gd of Bnai Yisrael', Moshe realized that the reason Hashem commanded him to use the name of Gd of the Ivrim, was so that Paroh might immediately recognize the name of Hashem. His next reference to Hashem before Paroh was therefore changed to Elokay Haivrim, Gd of the Hebrews.

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