

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON SHMOS - 5760

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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand[SMTP:ryfrand@torah.org]
"RAVFRAND" LIST - RABBI FRAND ON PARSHAS SHMOS

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 222, Disposal of Shaimos. Good Shabbos! This week's class is sponsored for the merit of a Refuah Shleimah (complete healing) for Sarah Rivkah Bas Golda Rachel.

Kindness and Truth -- The Sequence Is Critical

The Torah tells us that Pharaoh's daughter went out to bathe in the Nile and saw a little basket floating among the reeds. She retrieved the basket and opened it, and saw the crying baby inside. She had pity on him and realized that it was one of the Hebrews' babies. [Shmos 2:5-6]

The pasuk [verse] describing this incident seems somewhat inverted. The sequence should be, "she opened the basket and saw the baby and recognized that it was a Jewish child; she heard that it was crying and had pity on it". In that way, seeing the baby would have been connected to recognizing that it was a Jewish child. The pasuk reads, however, that after seeing the baby, Pharaoh's daughter first hears the crying and has pity. Then she recognizes that the child is a Jewish child. The identity of the baby came only after the fact that Pharaoh's daughter had compassion for the child -- not before.

Rav Nissan Alpert shared an insight into this pasuk when he delivered a hesped [eulogy] at the funeral of his teacher, Rav Moshe Feinstein. Rav Alpert illustrated this pasuk by explaining one of Rav Feinstein's philosophies of life.

Rav Alpert recalled that people had a complaint about Rav Moshe Feinstein. Rav Moshe wrote more approbations on Torah books than we would want to count. Rav Moshe was known as a "big maskim" since he wrote so many letters of approval (haskamas) for other people on their Torah literary output. He did this to an extent that people felt that a letter of approval from Rav Moshe Feinstein was "cheap". It was as if anyone who could sign his name could get a 'haskama' from Rav Moshe.

The same was true regarding letters of recommendation or letters attesting to need, etc. Often, these letters did not have the impact that one would have expected, because there were so many such letters. Rav Alpert related that people came to Rav Moshe with the complaint that he was cheapening his name and his letters by issuing them so freely.

Rav Alpert explained that there are two mutually exclusive concepts -- Chessed [Kindness] and Emes [Truth]. Chessed is performed without thinking and considering -- it is just a favor, a good deed. Truth is an absolute quality -- right or wrong, true or false.

It is no coincidence that the word Chessed always precedes the word Emes wherever the two terms are used together in the Torah. (For example: Bereshis 24:49; Shmos 34:6; Yehoshua 2:14) If Emes would precede Chessed, we would never reach Chessed. If our perspective on life would always be 'Truth', then no one would ever be worthy of receiving any Kindness. No school would receive support, no institution would receive a donation, no poor person would receive a hand out, nobody would receive an approbation. No one stands up to the test of Truth. The only approach in life must be "And do with me Kindness and Truth" [Bereshis 47:29].

Rav Moshe's philosophy in life was that a person's natural reaction must be Chessed first. It may subsequently be tempered with Emes, but

B'S'Dhe initial response must be Chessed.

When Pharaoh's daughter picked up the basket, the first thing she saw was a baby crying that needed help. If she would have started asking "Who? What? Where does he come from? Does he deserve help?" the kindness would never have started. That is what we learn from this pasuk.

The Medrash says that Moshe was called by ten different names, but G-d would only address him by the name given to him by Basya, daughter of Pharaoh -- in order to emphasize the reward deserved by those who do acts of kindness.

What was Basya's approach, which was so deserving of reward? "You see the baby crying? -- Have mercy. Ask questions later. Later you can stop to think 'Who is he?' A Hebrew."

That was Basya's spirit and that was the spirit she imbued into Moshe Rabbeinu. For that is the spirit a Jewish leader must have -- the spirit of 'Chessed' and then 'Emes'. If we allow Emes to come first, we will never reach Chessed.

The Key To Revelation: Why Doesn't It Get Consumed By The Fire?

Rav Alpert related another insight involving the famous story of Moshe Rabbeinu and the burning bush. "Let me go look and see this wondrous sight - - why isn't the bush consumed?" [3:3] Immediately thereafter, a most historic event took place: G-d first appeared to Moshe.

Herein lies a message -- a message about achieving Belief in G-d (Emunah).

How does one convince himself that there is a Master of the Universe?

This is an age-old question that has bothered man since the beginning of time -- how does one know there is a G-d? According to the Jewish religion, every person is obligated to believe that there is a G-d. This applies to all people, regardless of whether they have tremendous IQs or not, regardless of whether they are great philosophers or not and regardless of whether they are of great intellectual standing or not. How does one arrive at such an awareness?

This verse tells us how Moshe Rabbeinu became convinced that there is a G-d. Moshe came to this conclusion based on a question that he had. It was not a complicated question, nor was it a deep question. It was a simple question that anyone could have asked: Why doesn't the bush burn up? Immediately after Moshe asked this question, G-d appeared to him.

What is the lesson in this?

The biggest proof that G-d exists is that we are still around. There is a question -- "Why doesn't the bush burn?" How can one bush experience so many fires and still not be consumed? The answer to that question is "And G-d spoke..." -- i.e. -- because there is a G-d.

The story is told that Frederick the Great asked the wise men of his court for a succinct proof for the existence of G-d. The answer he was given was just two words -- "the Jews".

Since there exists a G-d and he has a Chosen People whom He protects, we can understand how it is that the 'bush' -- the Jewish Nation -- is not consumed.

Today (December 26, 1991) was a historic day. Something occurred today that I never thought would happen. Today, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics officially went out of business. I don't know what it was like when the Roman Empire ceased to exist. I don't know if there was a specific date on the calendar that people could point to and say, "today Rome went out of business". But we saw the USSR go out of business.

If anyone had told us this 3 years ago, we would not have believed it. If they had told us even a year ago, we would not have believed it. I grew up in an era of Sputnik and of Nikita Krushchev yelling "We will bury you". There was a real bona fide uncertainty and fear that maybe he was

right. The USSR was not only an Evil Empire; it was a Mighty Empire as well. I grew up in a time when we had to catch up with the Russians. We had to increase our study of science and math because they were beating us.

To think, after 74 years it literally came apart -- the wheels just came off! I keep on saying to myself that if Rav Ruderman, zt"l, would have been alive during this period, it would have been impossible to tear him away from the radio. He hated the Communists with a passion. The worst thing he could call a person was a Bolshevik. He would literally be dancing today. This mighty Empire is now out of business.

So how is it that the 'little bush' was not consumed? We are a tiny little nation that has been oppressed for thousands of years. We never put up a Sputnik and we never put a man in space. Why doesn't the bush get consumed? There is only one answer to that -- because there is a G-d in Heaven. It requires no great intellect to realize this.

Sources and Personalities Rav Moshe Feinstein -- (1895-1986) Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem, NY. One of contemporary Jewry's foremost halachic decisors.
Rav Nissan Alpert -- Rav of the Agudah of Long Island in Far Rockaway and Maggid Shiur at Yeshivas Rabbenu Yitzchak Elchanan. Died shortly after Rav Moshe in 1986. Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman -- (1901-1987) Rosh Yeshiva and founder (1933) of Ner Israel Rabbinical College; Baltimore. Chofetz Chaim -- (1838-1933) Rav Yisrael Meir HaKohen of Radin. Author of basic works in Jewish Law and Jewish values (halacha, hashkafa, and mussar). Rabbi Berel Wein -- Noted author and lecturer. Formerly Congregational Rabbi, head of OU Kashrus and Rosh Yeshiva in Monsey, NY. Currently resides in Jerusalem. Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Yerushalayim dhoffman@torah.org Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway learn@torah.org 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B <http://www.torah.org/> Baltimore, MD 21208 (410) 602-1350 FAX: 510-1053

From: RABBI LIPMAN PODOLSKY
[SMTP:podolsky@hakotel.org.il] Subject: Parshas Shmos
What's in a name?

"And these are the names of the children of Yisrael... (Shmos 1:1)." Why does the Torah emphasize their *names*? It could simply have written: These are the children of Yisrael! Indeed, what is in a name?

Rashi comments: "Although Hashem had counted them during their lifetimes, he counted them again after their deaths to demonstrate His love for them, for they are compared to the stars..."

What does Rashi mean? And why are they compared to the stars?

I once had occasion to walk through a cemetery. As I walked, I beheld the thousands of gravestones. Thousands of stones; thousands of lives. Who were they? What did they accomplish? Each had lived. Ups and downs; joy and sadness. Each was faced with his or her own individual challenges. Some were successful; some ended in failure.

And I wondered, after all is said and done, what remains? What is left after 120 years of struggle and toil? And the answer struck me: A stone. And upon this stone are engraved a few meager facts: A name, date of birth, date of death.

What is in a name? Why do we have one? The Maharal says that a name reveals essence, content. A name is the essential mensch -- the soul. A name symbolizes a person's lasting achievement in this world. What did he accomplish. What did he make of himself?

"These are the names of the children of Yisrael' -- Man has three names: One given to him by Hashem -- Man; one given to him by his father and mother; and one that he gives himself (Medrash Tanchuma quoted in Torah Shleimah)." Thus is a name. And that is what remains.

Rashi likens the names of the Jewish people to stars. A good name is not guaranteed. It is not assured until life ends, just as the stars are not visible until after dark, until the day is done (Kli Yakar). Sometimes, tragically, a person ruins his good name. He cannot, therefore, be labeled a tzaddik until his job is finished; until he can accomplish no more, until he can demolish no more.

Consequently, the Torah does not write "these are the names of the children of Yisrael" until after their demise. Only then were they proven to be tzaddikim, proud bearers of a good name.

What will be our lasting legacy? How will we be remembered?

Everyone knows how the legendary baseball hero, Ted Williams, culminated his career. He went out with a "bang" with a solid homerun. But few are those who know how his career began.

A promising young rookie, a sensation in the minors, Ted Williams came to the Red Sox with high expectations. It was assumed that success was "in the bag."

Fenway Park. Williams' first game. He confidently stepped up to the plate, took three mighty swings, and summarily struck out. He failed similarly in his next three at bats. His once-promising career suddenly looked doubtful.

That night, Ted Williams went back to his hotel room and cried bitter tears of defeat. His spirit was broken. Should he just give up? Was there really no hope? What could he possibly do to reverse his misfortune?

Then an idea occurred to him. He pictured his last at bat in the majors. This would be the hit that everyone would remember him for. The culmination of all his years of effort. How could he allow himself to fail? He decided that at the next game, he would imagine to himself that this was his last chance to prove himself, to make his name.

He stepped up to the plate. The fans sat on the edge of their seats in hushed anticipation. Would he strike out again? Would this be the end of their hero? The catcher signaled secretly to the pitcher. The pitcher smirked smugly. "This loser's all mine" he thought to himself. He bunted a fastball low and outside, and Ted Williams connected -- all wood. The ball careened into right center field, earning for Williams his first hit in the majors.

Over the next twenty years, every single time Ted Williams approached the plate, he told himself that this was this last chance. Whatever he accomplished now, would fix his legacy forever. His career soared, and he became a living legend.

If we knew that we had only ten minutes to live, ten minutes in which to prepare for eternity, would we have trouble focusing? Would we be distracted by the quest for pleasure or property or prestige? Or would we be concerned with our name, our lasting legacy, our soul?

These are the *names* of the children of Yisrael. Indeed, what is in a name?

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From: RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY
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Subject: Drasha Parshas Shmos -- Growth Investment Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky Dec. 31, 1999

It was a test for the ages. The mighty Pharaoh commanded the midwives Shifra and Puah, known to us as Yocheved and her daughter Miriam, to kill all the boys born to Hebrew mothers. Not only did they ignore the edict, they countered it by nourishing the newborns with pacifying words and comforting amenities food and drink.. The Midrash tells us that they cared for the sick and unhealthy babies as well, nourishing them with prayers, and Hashem in heaven did not ignore their actions. But the verses need some explanation. First the Torah tells us, "And G-d rewarded the midwives, and the nation flourished and prospered." Only then does it add, "And it was as the midwives feared Hashem, and He made for them houses." Rashi explains that both midwives were rewarded for their efforts with more than physical houses. They were rewarded with houses of Kohanim and kings.

Hashem rewarded them well with generations of kings and priests, Divine attributes that are perpetuated through the species of humans that the midwives actually saved male Jewish children! A kohain can only be the son of a Kohain, and a King can only be a male!

But there seems to be an interruption in the order of the verses. The words "and the nation flourished" seem out of context. In fact, Rashi is bothered by the obvious question and explains the verses as follows. "And G-d rewarded the midwives," and what was the reward? "He made for them houses." The words "and the nation flourished" are part of the narrative, an historical footnote inserted into the middle of the episode of heroism and reward. But the simple, juxtaposed text needs clarification. Perhaps there is a way to explain the historical insert

More than 10 years ago, my brother, Reb Zvi and his wife had a beautiful little baby boy. He was truly beautiful. And he was truly little. Five weeks premature and only two-and-a-half pounds.

For a while it was touch and go. The prayers of a community and thousands of friends and relatives pulsed the support systems that sustained the child's short breaths and the parents' deep hopes. For nearly two months the baby endured in the neo-natal unit under the care of the most prestigious doctors and devoted nurses that the city of Chicago had to offer. After two grueling months of prayers, incubators, and devoted healthcare, the baby arrived home healthy. The joy and gratitude to Hashem was overwhelming, but the young father did not forget his gratitude and appreciation to the mortal messengers, the entire medical and nursing staff, who worked arduously, day and night, to help insure the newborn's health.

He wanted to express his appreciation in a very special way. He searched gift shops and bookstores for a proper memento to show his appreciation, but he could not come up with an appropriate gift. A few days after the baby was brought home, the young father mentioned his dilemma to his Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Eliyahu Svei, Dean of the Philadelphia Yeshiva.

"The nurses don't want perfume, and the doctors don't need pens," said Rabbi Svei. "What they want to see is the continued growth and health of your child. Every year, on his birthday, bring the child to the hospital and let the staff share in the joy of his growth and success! That will be the most meaningful gift you can offer!"

The Rosh Yeshiva explained: Before the Torah mentions an additional reward bestowed upon the midwives, it alludes to the greater reward that they truly appreciated. Their efforts towards Jewish perpetuity were not in vain. The nation prospered. The young babies, whom they worked so diligently to sustain, grew up. And they married, and they flourished. All the midwives wanted was the propagation of their nation. And that was their first reward. The gift of Houses of the Priesthood and the Houses of Royalty were an added bonus which was Hashem was pleased to deliver. But as far as the midwives were concerned, the greatest reward was the joy in seeing that the children they delivered flourished, and that the nation prospered and grew. All the risks were worth it for that knowledge alone. And so the Torah tells us, "and Hashem made good for the midwives, and the nation grew and flourished." For them, that was the greatest reward. The rest was just icing on the just desserts.

Good Shabbos 1 1999 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky If you want to be on a shiur announcement faxlist, fax request along with your fax number (dedicated line, please) to 516-569-7954 Drasha is the email edition of FaxHomily which is funded in part by Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation. Mordechai Kamenetzky Yeshiva of South Shore Box 224 or 1170 William Street Hewlett, NY 11557 <http://www.yoss.org/> - rmk@torah.org 516-374-7363 x114 Fax 516-374-2024 Drasha web site: <http://www.torah.org/learning/drasha> Drasha, Copyright 1 1999 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc.

From: Yated USA[SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com]
Yated Neeman USA Columns
Parsha Perspectives Parshas Shmos-Burning Issues by Rabbi
Mordechai Kamenetzky

The symbolism of the amazing episode of the sneh boair, the burning bush, is analyzed and expounded upon by many meforshim, and its impact has been noted for generations. In essence, it was the turning point marking Moshe's transformation from a distinguished and concerned member of Klall Yisrael, whose mesiras nefesh was remarkable, to the hand picked messenger of the Ribono Shel Olam. The Torah tells us in Shmos 3:1 - 4 that Moshe was shepherding the sheep of Yisro, his father-in-law, when, "an angel of Hashem 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 redemption 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 in the Tanchuma whether Moshe took three steps to see the sight or he just craned his neck. Rav Yochanan says he took three steps and Rav Shimon ben Lakish says he didn't walk, but strained his neck. The Midrash continues: Hashem said, "you pained yourself to look, I swear you are worthy that I reveal myself to you." The Midrash was surely bothered by the Torah's extra verbiage 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 witness a spectacular fire? Aren't there hoards that gather to witness amazing events? What makes Moshe's decision of asurah nah v'eereh so starkly special. Further, Rashi explains the words, "asurah nah v'eereh" to mean, "I will turn from where I am and go there." What does Moshe mean? Of course one must turn from one place to go to another! Perhaps the answer is: Moshe Rabbeinu knew from the moment he spotted that bush that something very extraordinary was occurring. He had two choices: approach the spectacle or walk on. Approaching the bush meant facing an experience that would alter his life forever. He realized that something very compelling and extraordinarily spiritual was occurring. Once entering the scene there was no turning back. Hashem knew that Moshe had this very difficult conflict. His approach would require commitment and self sacrifice. The three steps or the straining of the neck, changed the course of history. Hashem understood that Moshe was not a curiosity seeker chas v'sholom. His appearance on the scene was a statement of commitment, and he faced the challenge that beckoned to him from the ethereal flames that leaped from the bush. It was in response to that commitment that Hashem declared, "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 representative for a new tzedokoh we decide to let through our doors, a new shiur that we

decide to attend, even l'havdil in the business world a new client that we decide to help in his parnasah. A new kabalah or commitment is not easy to make and the three steps of asurah nah v'eereh are those that Hashem cherishes. Hakodosh Boruch Hu tells us through the story of the s'neh that even entertaining the thought of commitment is worthy of reward. It easy to say, "It sounds fascinating, but I am already too involved." Many people say, "I am sure that they do remarkable work, but I don't want to see." It takes fortitude and courage to leave one place, such as a field of grazing sheep, and take three steps and walk toward a new world of spirituality. The first step is to turn, and look. If we walk away, we may not just be ignoring a burning issue. We may be ignoring another burning bush.

Rabbi Kamenetzky is the Associate Dean of Yeshiva South Shore and the author of the Parsha Parables Series.

From: Yated USA[SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com] Yated Neeman USA Columns

KORTZ UN SHARF: Short and Sweet Vertlach on the Parsha by SHAYA GOTTLIEB

"V'ayleh Shmos Bnei Yisroel Haboim Mitzraymo" And these are the names of the children of Yisroel who came to Egypt 1:1 The last letters of the five words "V'aleh Shmos Bnei Yisroel Haboim" spell "Tehillim". During all the suffering and difficult times, the "Matzorum"-the narrow straits, Klal Yisroel relies on their tefillos, using the tehillim to pour out their hearts to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. -The Bendiner Rav

"Haboim Mitzraymo Es Yaakov"-who came to Egypt, Yaakov 1:1 The secret of Klal Yisroel's survival in golus is, to adopt the traits of Yaakov, who was an 'ish tom yoshev oholim', who was exceedingly humble, never flaunting his possessions. Yaakov sat in the 'tent of Torah', and the Shechina was constantly with him. -Pardes Yosef

"V'oloh Min Ho'oretz"- and he will 'go up' (depart) from our land 1:10 When the Jewish nation finds itself in the most desperate position - in the lowest Yerida, then "V'oloh" comes the 'aliyah'. -Shmos Rabbo

"Vayimorriru Es Chayehem B'chomer U'Bilvanim"- And the (Egyptians) embittered their lives with hard work, with limestone and bricks 1:14 The Zohar comments, B'chomer means with a Kal V'chomer and Bilvanim means to be 'mevarer', to explain the halacha. By virtue of the fact that Klal Yisroel is involved in learning Torah Shebaal Peh, built on the 'thirteen midos', the first one of them a Kal V'chomer, and clarifying the halachos, they will be able to bear the heavy burden and bitterness of golus. -Rav Menachem Ziemba

"Vatishlach Es Amoso"- And she stretched out her hand 2:5 Basya stretched out her hand to try and reach Moshe in the water. Rashi comments on the word 'amoso' instead of the more traditional 'yodo'-her hand, that Basya's hand stretched out to four amos. According to the Baalei Hatosfos, her hand stretched sixty amos. Basya immediately realized that the newborn was far beyond her reach. Why, then, did she stretch out her hand in a futile attempt? When a person truly desires to help someone else, he should not theorize about whether it is possible. All he needs to do is to stretch out his hand, and do his share. Hakodosh Boruch Hu will do the rest. -Rebbe Yitzchok of Vorka

"Ochein Noda Hadovor" Now the reason is known 2:14 Moshe Rabenu at first did not understand why the Yidden suffer in golus more than any other nation; now that he saw that r'chilus exist amongst them, he understood. Through loshon hora and r'chilus, Klal Yisroel lose their z'chuyos.-S'fas Emes

From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il]

* TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshat Shemot
HAPPY NEW SHABBAT!

"And these are the names of the Children of Israel." (1:1)

New Year's Eve is the loneliest night of the year. Such unrealized expectation! Hanging over one's head, the monumental question: "Where will I be, and what will I be doing when the new year is rung in?"

This year, that question will be amplified a thousand times.

And what will most people be doing? Immersed in a sense of deep introspection on what the coming millennium portends? I doubt it. Deep introspection of the bottom of a large Scotch is more likely. Many, with the help of legal or not-quite-legal substances, will try and escape from anything which resembles even mild contemplation. The more athletic amongst us will, of course, be experiencing the deep significance of the new millennium by jumping into fountains from London to Lagos.

Why will the world react to what it considers the most significant moment in a thousand years with total superficiality and escapism?

It's not by coincidence that this week, we begin reading the book of Shemot. In English the second book of the Torah is called Exodus, but in Hebrew, Shemot means "Names." In the Holy Tongue, the name of something defines its essence. When G-d created the world, He brought each animal before Adam, and Adam gave that creature its name. Adam's names were not imaginative. They were definitive. Adam gave expression to the essence of each and every creature through its name. The name is the pipeline to the spiritual essence above. The name is the root and the summation of essence.

Great events connect us to our essence. When someone gets married, is born or dies, we step back and take stock of our entire lives. Great events, whether they really are great or we merely perceive them as great, bring us to introspection. The secular world when faced with a "great event" realizes that all it has to look forward to is lines under its eyes, cosmetic surgery and heart disease. The Jew, when confronted with great events, sees how everything in this world leads beyond this world.

That's why this Friday, while the rest of the world is drowning its sorrows in various kinds of anesthesia, the Jewish People will be doing what it has been doing for the last three thousand years -- basking in the light of the Shabbat candles, making blessings over wine and bread, and ushering in a day of rest and tranquillity with quiet faith. Shabbat Kodesh. The Holy Shabbat.

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PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM
Patshas SHEMOS

And these are the names of the Bnei Yisrael who were coming to Egypt with Yaakov; each man and his house had come. (1:1) In the Mechilta, Shemos, 18,11, Chazal note that the first and last letter of the word Mitzrayim, Egypt, is a "mem." A detail, however, distinguishes between these two ""mems." The first mem has a little opening in it, while the final mem is a square, completely closed. In response, Chazal comment, "It is much easier to get into Egypt than to get out." Horav Moshe Swift, zl, in his inimitable manner, takes this remark further: It is easier to discard old observances; it is easier to dismiss old traditions and practices than to bring them back. Just speak to those who try to retrieve some of the practices we have lost. In Egypt, we had the opportunity; it was easy to enter and acculturate ourselves into Egyptian society. It was simple to drop our observances, ignore our past traditions, and put an end to the heritage of our ancestors. However, there is no easy exit from Egypt. To retrieve the things that we have lost, to retrain an assimilated generation, to try to regain Yiddishkeit as our only way of life, is so much more difficult.

Hashem redeemed the Jews from Egypt, however, because they did not assimilate. After all is said and done, despite the various shortcomings that led to their exile, they still managed to earn liberation. How did they do it? How did they manage to exit Egypt? The answer lies in the pasuk; "These are the names of Bnei Yaakov who are coming to Egypt." It was always ha'baim, "were coming." They always felt that they had just arrived. They were settled in Egypt merely temporarily. Indeed, as far as Bnei Yisrael were concerned, they were "ha'baim Mitzraymah," with a "hay" at the end of the word, rather than the prefix "lamed," l'Mitzrayim. Egypt remained open to them. They always thought about leaving. The door against assimilation, representing the escape from spiritual elimination, never closed, because "es Yaakov," the spirit of their Patriarch was vibrant in their minds and hearts. They never had the audacity to sever themselves from their father's tradition. As Horav Swift notes, in no other parshah in the Torah do we find the concept of "Elokai avoseichem," "the G-d of your fathers." Their father and the Ribbono Shel Olam were always on their minds. An individual might transgress; but it is entirely another matter to divorce himself from his heritage, so that in his foolish mind he is convincing himself that he is not transgressing.

Whenever Klal Yisrael has confronted a new "move," a new home -- either by choice or by force - we have had to assure ourselves that the "men" has remained open. If we are to save our children; to retain our values and ideals; to be sure that we do not become a statistic to assimilation; if the chain of tradition is to remain strong, we must assure that, "Elokai Avoseichem nirah eilai," "The G-d of your fathers must appear before us" - at all times. While we certainly are not dismissing the need to modernize with the times, this option should only apply to our external facades. Our tradition, however, must be "b'ruach Yisrael sabbo," in the spirit of the Klal Yisrael of old, as transmitted throughout the generations. Only by building on the foundations of the past can we be assured of a healthy spiritual future.

Nachlas Tzvi addresses the pasuk, "A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Yosef" (Shemos, 1:8). He interprets into this pasuk the idea that children, regrettably, often seek to sever their ties with the past. He explains that Pharaoh saw that the new generation of Jews acted as if they did not know Yosef; thus, he followed suit. If the Jews do not acknowledge their past spiritual leadership, should we expect the gentiles to recognize them? It is especially noteworthy that it was "Yosef" who was not known. Yosef was the paradigm of the Jew in galus, exile, who resisted temptation and withstood the winds of assimilation. If the Jews of that generation were to attribute their acculturation to the Egyptian way of life -- to the pressures of the exile -- Yosef would provide a contrast to their excuse. He lived and thrived in Egypt; he was accepted and respected by Egyptian society. Yet, he remained true to his faith, never once sacrificing his ideals on the altar of assimilation. Pharaoh saw that Klal Yisrael did not know Yosef. Why should he?

Nachlas Tzvi cites a poignant, but powerful, story that conveys this message: Many of us wake up and decide to return to the path of our ancestors, to reestablish and reaffirm our ties with the heritage that we had disdained. Alas, for some it is too late. The story is related that a Jew was once traveling on a bus from Yerushalayim to Tel Aviv. As he sat on the bus, a woman approached him and asked, "What time is it?" As he continued reading his sefer he told her it was twenty minutes to six. Five minutes later, the lady once again approached him to ask the time. He responded that it was a quarter to six. After another few minutes, the lady came over again to ask the time. Somewhat frustrated, he responded that it was twelve minutes to six. When she came over a few minutes later and once again asked the time, the Jew asked her impatiently, "Why are you so obsessed with what time it is?"

The lady responded with the following story: "My parents were Holocaust survivors. I was their only child. They did everything to

provide me with a strong religious education. Regrettably, my friends who were far from observant had a stronger influence on me, and I rejected the Torah way of life. My parents pleaded with me; they cried bitter tears, to no avail. I was not to be moved. My parents died of great agmas nefesh. They were grief-stricken that their only child had rejected the Judaism for which they had lived and so many had died. These last few nights, my mother has been appearing to me in a dream, imploring me to repent and change my way of life. I have continued in my resolve not to give in; I am not becoming observant. Last night, my mother appeared to me once again, telling me that she would like to "meet" me. We made up to "meet" at a certain building precisely at 6:00 o'clock. I am now on my way to meet my mother, and I cannot afford to be late!"

Hearing the incredible story, the Jew decided to exit the bus at the same stop and follow the lady to witness her encounter with her mother. How was the mother's neshamah, soul/ spirit, going to meet her living daughter? The bus arrived at the stop at three minutes to six, and the lady ran off the bus in search of her mother. She ran so fast that she did not realize that the traffic light above the street which she was crossing was malfunctioning. As she crossed the street, not realizing that the traffic was moving at its usual speed, she was struck by a car and fatally injured. Suddenly, the Jew who was horror-stricken to see this lady's body flung in the air, heard a heart-wrenching cry: "Mama!" It was six o'clock.

Behold, the people of Bnei Yisrael are greater and stronger than us. (1:9) While the Jews were certainly growing in numbers, their influence and power far exceeded their quantitative growth. Indeed, is this not true in contemporary times? We are a minority in the free world, but our influence is strongly felt throughout. The Jews have made their mark in every realm of human achievement. From the sciences to humanities to the world of finance, we have made significant and lasting contributions. If this is the case, why was Pharaoh so concerned about his Jewish citizens? Accompanying the Jewish power and influence, a humility innate in the Jewish character has coupled with a dedication to serving our "host" country. Loyalty is a trait that is truly becoming a Jew. Throughout history, we have maintained a balance of trust and fidelity as citizens in whichever country we have lived. Pharaoh certainly knew that the Jewish People were his greatest asset: Why did he fear them?

Horav David Feinstein, Shlita, suggests that the answer may be found in Pharaoh's own words: "pen yirbeh," "lest they become many." Pharaoh was afraid that the Jews would multiply or -- even worse, as Horav Feinstein interprets the word "yirbeh" -- lest they become great. Pharaoh feared the Jews might lose their humility, that the power and influence would cause them to become arrogant. Indeed, they might become so haughty that they would develop designs for greater power. Even his throne was no longer safe from the "power-hungry" Jews. Pharaoh's paranoia overcame his ability to think rationally. Had he not been such a cruel king he would have realized that treachery is antiethical to the Jewish persona. Pharaoh viewed the Jews as he viewed his own people. An Egyptian with even a fraction of a Jew's power presented a danger for Pharaoh. His paranoia overcame whatever common sense he might have possessed. His myopia did not permit him to see beyond his own treachery. Regrettably, things have not changed much since that time. The Jew who is successful is still scorned, albeit in private and with class. When we win our prizes as a result of talent, hard work, intelligence and, of course, Hashem's blessing, we are envied and disdained. We will never be accepted - but that is to our ultimate advantage.

And they became disgusted because of Bnei Yisrael. (1:12)

Rashi comments that the Egyptians became disgusted with their lives. We must understand what effect the Egyptians' self-evaluation and personal feelings had on the bondage to which the Jews were subjected.

Horav Yaakov Moshe Charlop, zl, derives from here a profound lesson, which gives us great insight into the psyche of those who oppress others. One does not persecute others unless he feels that his own life has little value. One who appreciates life, and is happy with his lot in life, develops positive feelings of self-worth. His outlook for the future is filled with optimism and hope. Thus, he will also hold dear the lives of others. One to whom life has no meaning and value, who looks at himself in the mirror and sees only bitterness and dejection, will humiliate and take advantage of those weaker than he. The Egyptians were disgusted with their own lives. Therefore, they had no qualms about destroying the lives of the hapless Jews.

The Egyptian exile is paradigmatic of all future exiles and oppression. The prevalent attitude and emotional composition of our Egyptian oppressors serve as a foreshadowing of the typical personality of anti-Semites throughout history. The self-loathing that characterized the Egyptians is a trait we can expect to find inherent in those who abuse others. We should bear this in mind when we attempt to circumvent anti-Semitism by assimilating ourselves to be more like those who vilify us. We will not change them by rejecting the one feature that distinguishes us from the rest of the world: the Torah.

Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe by the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and she sent her maidservant and she took it. (2:5)

Rashi cites the Midrash that interprets "amasah" (maidservant) as "her arm." She extended her arm and, miraculously, it became long enough to reach the basket.

Once a group of distinguished Rabbis and communal leaders in Lublin, Poland, were convened to discuss a pressing matter of life and death proportions confronting Klal Yisrael. At one point, one of the leaders said, "This matter is of overriding concern. Perhaps it is too weighty an issue for us to decide alone." Present among the group was Horav Meier Shapiro, zl, who, noting that the enthusiasm of the meeting was dying down and soon all would be lost, ascended the podium. With great feeling, he exclaimed, "My colleagues, please listen to me for a moment. Regarding the pasuk that says that Pharaoh's daughter stretched out her hand to fetch Moshe, Chazal explain that once she stretched out her hand to retrieve Moshe, Hashem caused her hand to elongate miraculously to save Moshe. We must endeavor to understand what Pharaoh's daughter had in mind when she stretched out her hand. Obviously, she knew that her hand would never reach the distance to Moshe. Was she waiting for a miracle to occur?"

"We see from here," he continued in a passionate tone, "that a person must do what he must do and leave the results up to Hashem. Even if his goals are far beyond the scope of human achievement, he should place his trust in the hope that which should be - will be. One should never be me'yaesh, give up hope, and claim defeat before he even begins to do anything. Therefore, my friends, while our goal may seem to us farfetched and unattainable, we must do all that we can and leave the rest to Hashem. With His help we will triumph over adversity and overcome all odds."

The Alter Mi'Novardek, zl, was want to say, "I never think about whether I can confront an undertaking, but, rather whether I should do it. For, if I am obligated to do something, I will be able to do it." This approach kept him going, overcoming challenge after challenge. Never did his faith wane; his spiritual endurance remained resolute. During World War I, when many yeshivos closed due to a lack of food or housing, so that yeshivah students were forced to undergo hardship just to stay alive, he proclaimed, "Mi l'Hashem eilai," "Who is for Hashem (shall come) to me!" He assured anyone who would come to study in his yeshivah that he would not be conscripted in the army. He succeeded beyond belief. Hundreds upon hundreds of young men thronged to study Torah in his network of yeshivos. He triumphed because of his

faith; he succeeded because of his mesiras nefesh, total devotion, to the point of self-sacrifice.

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From: RABBI RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM LIST
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Shabbat Shalom: Shemot Exodus 1:1-1:6 by Shlomo Riskin

Moses is the major personality throughout the Book of Exodus; Joseph is the major personality at the conclusion of the Book of Genesis. There is a fascinating inter-action between these two historic giants, albeit only with the bones, or remains, of Joseph many generations after his death, which has profound ramifications for all future Jewish history. In effect, the point of their intersection provides an inspiring lesson in faith for the children of Israel.

Joseph rose to greatness in Egypt, even to the extent of his ascendancy as Grand Vizier, second only to Pharaoh. The Egyptians certainly claimed him as one of their own, fully expecting him to identify with Egyptian nationality and culture.

Nevertheless, his very last request to his family before his death reveals his essential identity as an Israelite, his root connection with the land and destiny of Israel: "And Joseph made the children of Israel take an oath, saying 'the Lord will remember, certainly remember you, and you shall bring out my bones from this (place)' " Therefore, the Bible records in the Book of Exodus: "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him (when he left Egypt), because he (Joseph) had made the children of Israel swear, certainly swear, saying 'the Lord will remember, certainly remember you, and you shall bring out my bones from this (place)'" (Exodus 13).

The scenario is a difficult one to picture. It is the night of the fifteenth of Nissan, the first born of the Egyptians are being slain by G-d, the task-masters are terror-struck and they force the Israelite slaves to leave the country of their bondage. In the midst of the tumult and turmoil, Moses-who must first and foremost direct an orderly exodus of his people-is concerned with locating and exporting the remains of Joseph. The Midrash records what transpired in the following way:

"Who informed Moses as to where Joseph was buried? Serah, the daughter of Asher was from that (original) generation (which came to Egypt). She came and said to Moses: "Moses, my Master, Joseph is buried in the Nile River."

Moses went and stood at the front of the Nile. He said: 'Joseph, Joseph, the time has come for the Holy one Blessed be He to redeem His children, but the Divine Presence is being held back because of you. If you shall reveal yourself, it will be well. If not, I shall then be considered innocent of the oath which I have sworn.' Immediately, the casket-ark of Joseph floated to the top. Thus it was that when the Israelites went out of Egypt two arks accompanied them in the desert: the Torah-ark of the Eternal Giver of Life and the casket-ark of the bones of Joseph. The nations of the world then said: 'What is the nature of these two arks? Is it then the manner of a casket-ark of the dead to go together with the Torah ark of the eternal Giver of Life?' And the Israelites said to them: 'the corpse who is buried in this casket-ark fulfilled whatever is written in this Torah-ark.' " Now, do the words of this midrash really make sense? After all, it is difficult to see how Joseph actually fulfilled the 613 commandments of the Bible while living under the pressures of a demanding and aristocratic position in Egypt! Moreover, Joseph and Moses seem to be contrasting, even antithetical, personalities. Joseph came from within the Abrahamic family, and wandered outside of it; Moses came from the outside, and entered deeply within. Joseph brought the Israelites down into Egypt; Moses took the Israelites up into Israel.

Can we really say that the corpse in the casket-ark fulfilled the verses in the Torah ark? I would suggest that Joseph did understand-and profoundly believe-the one Divinely guaranteed promise of the Bible, declared by G-d in His covenant with Abraham and iterated and re-iterated throughout the five Books of Moses: after a slave-affliction experience in a strange land, the Israelites would eventually return to Israel and to world redemption. The young Joseph was nourished by this faith commitment as a child sitting on his father Jacobs's knee. An older Joseph was never vanquished-and his optimistic spirit was never extinguished-despite near death in a pit, despite having been sold into slavery, despite imprisonment for false charges-because his belief in ultimate restoration and return never flagged. At the end of the day, Joseph does not punish or even blame his brothers for the cruel acts they perpetrated against him because he understood that it was all part of a Divine plan; that everything had occurred in order for the children of Jacob-Israel to survive, to become slaves in Egypt, and eventually to be redeemed in Israel. So profound was Joseph's faith that he risked Egyptian displeasure, but made his brothers swear to take out his bones and bury him in Israel. "The Lord will remember, certainly remember you."

Is it any wonder, then, that Moses could never leave Egypt without taking Joseph's bones with him? Joseph's bones were the symbol of Jewish eternity, the proof of the Divine covenant, the expression of faith in Israel despite prestige and poverty, power and penury, in a foreign country of Exile. No matter how good or how bad life in a country of Exile may be for Jews, we must never think that the host country is our ultimate resting place. "The Lord will remember, certainly remember, you": Israel is our only true home. The Jew must never be too comfortable in the Exile, nor may he despair from the suffering in the Exile.

This is the message of Joseph's bones.

When Moses blesses the twelve tribes of Israel, he says about Joseph: "The sweetness of the land its fullness, the will of the one who dwells in the bush, shall come upon Joseph's head, (shall come) on the brow of the elect of his brothers" [Deuteronomy 33:16]. Joseph pre-ordained and instinctively understood the lesson at the burning bush. The children of Israel may be burned by the fires of persecution and programs, of slavery and genocide, but they will never be consumed or destroyed. "The Lord will remember, certainly remember you" The bones will be returned to Israel, and the dry bones will live again, will develop blood and skin and will be restored to life!

Indeed Joseph who was buried in the casket-ark believed in the fulfillment of the works of promise written in the Torah ark. The Book of Genesis, Jewish history today confirms the vision of the Covenant of Abraham. We carry the bones of Joseph, seared in the auto da fes, inquisitions and holocaust, when we walk the streets of Dizengoff and King George. Serah the daughter of Asher, according to the Midrash, not only revealed to Moses the whereabouts of Joseph's bones, of Joseph's casket-ark; Serah the daughter of Asher, according to the Midrash the one who whispered into Jacob's ear, into the conscious and sub-conscious of Yisrael Sabba, Grandfather Israel: "Joseph still lives." (Ode Yosef hai). Yes, Joseph the child still lives, and our Father still lives; (ode avinu hai), because our Father in Heaven still lives, our children Joseph's on Earth shall live eternally.

Shabbat Shalom

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm> Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Chancellor Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Dean

<http://www.ou.org/torah/ti/> OU Torah Insights Project
Parshat Shemot January 1, 2000 RABBI BERTRAM LEFF

Parshas Shemos begins with the verse, "And these are the names of the children of Israel who were coming (haba'im) to Egypt." The Hebrew word, haba'im, is the present tense. Why write, "who were coming to Egypt" when Jacob and his family had already come down many years before?

In response to this question, the Midrash comments that with the death of Yosef and the loss of his influence in Egyptian society, a new era began, a period of persecution. Indeed, it seemed, to the children of Israel, "as if they had entered Egypt that very day."

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zt"l, adds another dimension to the meaning of this verse. The use of the present tense reflects the attitude of the Egyptians to the Jews in their country. Although the Jews had been in Egypt for many years, in the eyes of the Egyptians they remained strangers who had come to Egypt that very day. The Jewish community was not an integral part of Egyptian society. They were aliens. This attitude of the Gentiles is the source of historical anti-Semitism.

However, there is a positive side to this galus experience of being a stranger in the country of our exile. It reflects our determination not to assimilate into the dominant society. By maintaining ourselves as haba'im, as newly-arrived immigrants, we reject the temptations and the value system of the dominant culture and the pressures they exert on our Jewish identity, values and peoplehood.

We reject the claim of the anti-Semite that we are strangers in the land in the sense that we are not loyal to the distinctive ideology and principles of our adopted country. On the contrary, we are obligated to contribute to our host society as loyal and devoted citizens, and, indeed, we have contributed to the welfare of every country of our sojourn in the Diaspora.

Despite our loyalty, though, we remain a unique people with a chosen mission. In this sense, we are strangers in the land. We have arrived this very day. The children of Israel assert that Israel is a covenantal community, that Israel has a special relationship with G-d.

Did the Jew in Egypt fulfill this special role of haba'im, of integrating into the society of his exile while resisting assimilation into the dominant culture? Unfortunately, our sages relate that only one-fifth of the Jews merited to leave Egypt as people of the covenant. Four-fifths succumbed and assimilated into the dominant Egyptian culture. Four-fifths of the Israelites perished in the plague of darkness because they had blackened the ideology of their forefathers.

As we enter the 21st century, contemporary American society reminds us of our Egyptian past. Assimilation and intermarriage are at historical highs. The lesson embedded in our parshah has not yet made its mark. Torah Jews, as the remnant of Israel must reach out to our co-religionists and teach them the lesson of haba'im, of being strangers in the land, so that our Jewish future may be strengthened.

Rabbi Bertram Leff

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From: Shlomo Katz[SMTP:skatz@torah.org]
HAMAAYAN / THE TORAH SPRING EDITED BY SHLOMO KATZ
Shemot

"And these are the names of the children of Yisrael who were coming to Egypt; with Yaakov, each man and his household came." (1:1)

R' Baruch Yosef Sack z"l writes: Various midrashim list different meritorious practices that enabled Bnei Yisrael to be redeemed from Egypt. These are: They did not give up their Jewish names; They did not change their language; They did not commit adultery; They were not talebearers; They observed Shabbat; and They circumcised themselves [- at least the tribe of Levi did].

All of these are alluded to in our verse, as follows:

"These are the names of the children of Yisrael" - they kept their names. If they kept their names, they must have kept their language, for

those who abandon the Jewish tongue usually abandon their Jewish names as well.

The gematria of "v'eleh shemot"/"And these are the names of" (788), plus eight, for the eight letters of the two words, equals 796. The gematria of "Shabbat, milah" (787), plus nine, for the seven letters and two words, also equals 796. Also, the words, "with Yaakov," allude to Shabbat and milah because the name of Yaakov is tied to those two mitzvot. Specifically, we say in shacharit of Shabbat: "And in its contentment the uncircumcised shall not abide - for to Yisrael, Your people, have You given it in love, to the seed of Yaakov . . ."

Finally, the words "each man and his household" alludes to the fact that husband and wife were faithful to each other and did not commit adultery.

[R' Sack does not explain how the verse alludes to the fact that they were not talebearers. Perhaps this also is alluded to in the words "each man and his household," i.e., that they remained a close-knit family.] (Birkat Yosef)

R' Moshe Feinstein z"l was asked: If keeping Jewish names can bring about the redemption, why do we find that so many sages of the Talmud had non-Jewish names? He answered:

Perhaps our Sages' praise of Bnei Yisrael for maintaining Jewish names only refers to before the giving of the Torah, as then there was no other way to distinguish Bnei Yisrael from gentiles. This is especially true because many of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt were idolators and did not circumcise themselves. (Only the tribe of Levi was careful to circumcise its sons.)

For that generation, preserving Jewish names and the Hebrew language were signs that they believed in the redemption. Accordingly, they deserved to be redeemed. Once the Torah was given, however, all that is expected of us is to keep the Torah; even our feelings and ethics are dictated by the Torah, as we learn in Pirkei Avot. The Torah does not expect us to look for other ways of identifying such as giving only Jewish names.

R' Feinstein concludes: Even though this appears logical to me, I am afraid to say it for certain. (Igrot Moshe: Orach Chaim IV No. 66)

"The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives . . . 'When you deliver the Hebrew women, . . . if it is a son, you are to kill him.'" (1:15-16)

R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993) observed: The method employed by the haters of Israel throughout the generations has been not only to oppress the Jew but also to discredit or dehumanize him in the eyes of the world. They have wanted to prove that he is a subhuman, an immoral being, and therefore does not deserve the sympathy of other people.

This was exactly the method employed by Pharaoh. He wanted to show that Bnei Yisrael were not worthy of sympathy in that the Hebrew midwives themselves had no sympathy for the newborn babies. Pharaoh wanted to show that the midwives were willing to kill the babies at birth in order to save themselves from punishment. (Quoted in The Rav, Section 18.06)

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From: Jeffrey Gross [SMTP: jgross@torah.org] HALACHA DISCUSSION:
RECITING SHEVA BERACHOS-LAWS AND CUSTOMS
BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT [Third in a Series]

Before Birkas ha-Mazon is about to be recited, two cups of wine(1) or grape juice are prepared. Since two separate mitzvos are about to be fulfilled-Birkas ha-Mazon and Sheva Berachos-two kosos shel berachah are used. To use one kos for both mitzvos would violate the Talmudic principle of ain osin mitzvos chavilos chavilos, lit., mitzvos should not be "bundled together". Indeed, some poskim hold that in order to properly comply with this rule, the second cup -the one over which Sheva Berachos will be recited-should not even be filled at the same time as the first. Rather, the first cup should be filled before Birkas ha -mazon and the other should be filled before the Sheva Berachos are recited(2). While other poskim(3) disagree and allow both cups to be filled at the same time before Birkas ha -Mazon(4)-and this is the more prevalent custom(5)-it is recommended by some poskim(6) that each cup be filled by a different person so it does not appear as if the two mitzvos are being lumped together(7).

Both cups should hold at least a revi'is, approx. 3.3 fl. oz., but no matter how large the cup is, it should be filled to the top(8). When a silver wine cup (becher) or a crystal wine goblet is available, paper or plastic cups may not be used(9). L'chatchilah, the becher or goblet should not be chipped, cracked or wobbly, neither the rim, the stem, nor the base. But if nothing else is available, a flawed cup may be used(10). [If wine or grape juice are not available, any other beverage which is considered chamar medinah(11) may be substituted(12). If there is enough wine or grape juice for only one cup, it should be used for Birkas ha-Mazon and the chamar medinah is used for the second cup. If there is enough wine, grape juice or chamar medinah for only one cup, both the Birkas ha -Mazon and the Sheva Berachos are recited over that one cup. According to many poskim, Sheva Berachos may be recited even in the absence of any beverage(13).] It is a hidur mitzvah that both cups be of similar size and quality(14). When two similar cups are not available, the bigger and more valuable cup should be used for Birkas ha-Mazon and the lesser one for Sheva Berachos(15).

The liturgical poem Devai haser is recited before Birkas ha-Mazon as part of the Zimun. [There are conflicting customs as to whether or not Devai haser is recited on Shabbos.] During the Zimun, the words ha-Simchah bi'meono are added(16). After Birkas ha-Mazon is completed (17), the first wine cup that was used for Birkas ha -Mazon is placed on the table but is not drunk from yet. Sheva Berachos are then recited over the second cup. If several people are reciting the Sheva Berachos, as is customary, the cup is handed from one person to the next. The blessing of Borei pri ha-gefen is recited last so as not to prolong the pause between the blessing and the drinking of the wine which follows. But if, by mistake Borei pri ha-gefen was recited first (18), the other six berachos are recited and then the cups of wine are drunk. Similarly, if any of the Sheva Berachos was recited out of order, it does not matter (19). Although some poskim are critical of the practice (20), it is customary for the guests to join in singing aloud parts of the Asher Bara blessing. At the conclusion of the six berachos, the person who led the Birkas ha-Mazon recites Borei pri ha-gefen. He should have Savannah (intent) to be motes all those who are present so that they can drink without reciting their own Bore pi ha-gene. He then drinks at least a cheerful (1.7 fl. oz.) from the first cup. [It is preferable that he drink an entire revi'is so that he meets the requirement for reciting Al ha-gene.] Since it is appropriate and customary to drink from the second cup as well (21), the Borei pri ha-gefen which was recited over the first cup covers the second cup too (22). Furthermore, it is a long-standing and commonly practiced minhag yisrael (23) that the chasan and kallah (24) [and, very often, many of the guests (25)] drink a bit of wine from each of the two cups after mixing wine from both cups into a third cup. The mixture is divided into two cups, one for the chasan and one for the kallah, and they, in turn, pass their cups around to the rest of the men and women respectively. There are conflicting opinions about when the wine should be mixed: some hold that in order to avoid the problem of Kos pagum, the wine should be mixed before anyone drinks from either cup (26). Others hold that it should be mixed after some wine was drunk from the first cup (27). The kos pagum problem can then be rectified by adding some wine from the bottle into the third cup before it is passed around (28).

When the Sheva Berachos ceremony takes place during Seudah Shlishis on Shabbos [or Yom Tov] and Birkas ha-Mazon is completed after sunset but during bein hashemashos (29), the regular procedure is followed (30). But if Birkas ha-Mazon is not over until nightfall, drinking the wine becomes a problem since no beverages may be drunk after nightfall until Havdallah is recited. There are many different opinions about the correct procedure under these circumstances and one should follow his custom or the directive of his rav. Harav M. Feinstein ruled that only the chasan and kallah should drink, and between them, they should consume no more than a cheekful from both cups of wine (31).

1 Red wine is preferable. 2 Chochmas Adam 7; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 149:1. 3 Taz E.H. 62:7. Kaf ha-Chayim O.C. 190:1. 4Before washing mayim acharonim. 5Sova Semachos 4:7. There are, however, some communities who follow the first view and fill the second cup after Birkas ha-Mazon. 6 Eizer mi-Kodesh E.H. 62; Maharam Shick O.C. 64. 7Kaf ha -Chayim 190:1 writes that the second cup should not be placed in front of the person who is leading Birkas ha-Mazon, but rather in front of the person who is going to recite the [first of the] Sheva Berachos. 8Rama O.C. 182:2. It need not, however, be filled to overflowing; see Mishnah Berurah 9 and Emes Y'Yaakov 183:2. 9Igras Moshe O.C. 3:39. 10Mishnah Berurah 183:11. 11See The Weekly Halachah Discussion, pg. 384. 12 A she'hakol, though, is recited instead of ha-gefen. 13Sova Semachos 4:5. 14Eizer mi-Kodesh E.H. 62. 15Harav M. Feinstein (Oholei Yeshurun 5:3). 16Ha-simchah bi'meono is added whenever guests are invited to a meal in honor of a chasan and kallah, even when Sheva Berachos are not recited, e.g., when the last Sheva Berachos ends after sunset of the seventh day; when only three people ate bread; when no Panim Chadashos participated. 17The person leading the Birkas ha-Mazon may not speak until after he drinks the wine upon concluding Sheva Berachos; Mishnah Berurah 183:21. 18This is a common mistake, since under the chupah, Borei pri ha-gefen is recited first. 19Chochmas Adam 129:8. 20See Sova Semachos 4:26 based on Mishnah Berurah 65:4. 21Since six berachos were recited over it. 22In some communities, a separate Borei pri ha-gefen is recited over the second cup. 23Dating back to the days of the early Rishonim. See Igras Moshe O.C. 4:69-1 who explains the origin of this minhag. 24 Since the Sheva Berachos ceremony is being held in their honor, it is fitting that they partake of the wine. They are, however, under no halachic obligation to partake. 25Since it is a mitzvah min hamuvchar

to partake of any kos shel berachah. Whoever drinks the wine should not speak until after he has drunk. If he did, he must recite his own Borei pri ha-gefen. 26Kaf ha-Chayim 190:1. When pouring wine from the two cups into a third, one should be careful to leave at least a revi'is in the original cups (based on Mishnah Berurah 271:51). 27Aruch ha-Shulchan E.H. 62:18. 28S'dei Chemed (Pe'as ha-Sadeh, Berachos 31) quoting the Aderet. A suggested procedure is as follows: After drinking a revi'is from the first cup, part of the second cup is poured into the first cup, thus mixing the wines and rectifying the kos pagum problem at the same time. Part of the wine in this [first] cup is then poured back into the second cup, resulting in two cups of mixed wines which can now be given to the chasan and kallah. 29Depending on the various opinions and on the locality, bein hashemashos could be anywhere from 9 minutes to 30 minutes past sunset. 30Mishnah Berurah 299:14 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 24. If, however, the wedding took place on Sunday [before sunset] the Sheva Berachos must be recited before sunset. 31Iggros Moshe O.C. 4:69-1. See also Oholei Yeshurun 5:15.

Rabbi Jonathan Schwartz From jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu Subject: Internet Chaburah -- Parshas Shemos

Prologue: One of the great recurring plots in big and small screen twentieth century entertainment is the amnesiac family member who cannot remember his own name. The general plot involves losing memory for everyone around him and experiencing a "rebirth" where the person must relearn everything anew while suffering family members must painstakingly work with the person and hope for the return of the lost memory. Modern neuropsychologists note that this form of amnesia is almost non-existent and may actually be documented in more films than in medical records (Barr, 1999).

Actually, one of the common neuropsychology tests administered to amnesiacs involves the review of familiar faces or historically famous people. Being able to recognize these people but not your loved ones, may indicate the amnesia described in the films. However, complete non-recognition of the most common famous people may indicate a rouse of some sort by someone who does not wish to be discovered. Rashi cites the Talmud (Sotah 11a) who notes that the new Pharaoh (Shemos 1:8) suffered from this rouse disorder, "not-wishing-to-recognize-Yosef-itis." What brought this disorder on? How could he make himself appear as if he did not recognize the accomplishments of the man? Was Yosef not the most famous person in Egyptian history? What about Yosef did he forget?

Rav Yechzekel Sarna (Ohr Yechezkel) notes that man struggles daily with the philosophical Machlokes of whether he is the controller of his destiny or if Hakadosh Baruch Hu determines all. Man resolves that question by minimizing his scope and focusing only on the future. He focuses on that which is tangible to him and plans on the basis of that which, he has learned by experience, appears to be in his power to do. Hence, man declares that he was sharp enough to cash in on a particular business deal or was able to deliver the right line or was able to pull off a particular stunt that perhaps had its opportunities presented by Hashem.

However, the truth is that man is not the controller of his destiny even in that sense. Hashem alone controls the ability and destiny of each of our actions ("hu LEVADO asa, oseh v'ya'aseh l'chol Hamaasim"). Man's ability to have Bechira in these matters is one of Nisayon. He is being tested to see if he will choose the way of Hashem. If he fails, at times his decision will carry on for a bit, at times, his plans will fail (Rabos Machashavos B'lev Ish) despite his Bechira because Hashem is still in charge.

Yosef discovered this idea when he was with his brothers following their fathers death. As the brothers begged him to allow them to bring closure to their transgression (See Ohr HaChaim to Parshas VaYechi), Yosef tells them he is not in the place of Hashem and that although they may have wished him ill-will, Hashem had other plans. Rashi comments that Yosef presented the brothers with a lesson in Emunah. He told them that he was not going to be able to choose to harm them even if this had been his desire because his desire was not that of Hashem's. The proof was that Hashem changed their intentions of ill-will into his plans of L'Tov for the nation.

As the leader of Mitzrayim, Pharaoh could recall who Yosef was, but not what he represented. While in Mitzrayim, Yosef sang the song of Chochma and mixed it with the lesson of Ruach Hashem. As his fame spread, his own family and nation grew. The only way for the Egyptians to challenge that nation was to ignore the Ruach Hashem that was behind Yosef's Chochma. Hence, Pharaoh developed a specialized form of amnesia, where he forgot Hashem, the one that Yosef taught the people was truly responsible for the Egyptian's success. Once he left Hashem out of the picture, Yosef's Chochma was something he could challenge with arguments of progression and modernity, looking only toward the future.

Alas, warns Rav Sarna, Kofrim are made from such tunnel-vision. The inability to see what is Hashem's masterplan is part of the test of each man's life. But ignoring the lessons of the past, lead one to forget Yad Hashem. In the end, it is those with the tunnel-vision who cannot understand the masterplan when it is finally laid out.

Trauma often leads one to question Hashem's masterplan. No human can provide a complete answer as to why a particular tragedy occurs when it does. The inability to see the gameplan at these moments strengthens the Nisayon for those closely associated with it. This week's chaburah examines one small aspect of one such Nisayon. It too, involves bringing the closure to a particularly difficult test. It is entitled:

Better off Dead? The concept of stillbirth (Naifel in the Halachic terminology) is conceptualized by Chazal (Nazir 50a) as referring to a situation where the fetus's limbs "were not tied with sinews." ...