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From: cshulman@gmail.com

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Parshas Shemos: Don't Be Locked In

Friday January 8, 2010 1:35 AM

By Rav Shmuel Brazil

There is a story told about a chaburah of serious ovdai Hashem who every week together took on another mida to work on 24/7. The first week they worked on the middah of laziness. The second week they worked on tzedaka and the third week they struggled with haughtiness. During the midst of the fourth week when the agenda was controlling anger, someone knocked at the door of one of the chabura and was soliciting for tzedakah of hachnasas kallah for his own daughter. The baal mussar after hearing his plea raised his hands in the air and said Oy! I am so sorry. What a shame you didn't come two weeks ago because then I was "mamesh" head and heart into working on the mitzvah of tzedakah!

People have a tendency to be locked in to an idea, middah, or goal and are therefore not flexible when necessary. Yes one can be locked into kedusha as well and it still does not make it right. My Rebbe ztl Rav Shlomo Freifeld used to say there are individuals who have acquired the middah of emes and there are those that emes has acquired them. The former possesses the healthy middah of emes while the latter possesses a distortion. We find people who say I must tell the truth so therefore you are These negative and hurtful words that flow out of the mouths of these people under the banner of righteousness portray individuals who are not in control of their traits but rather their traits are in control of them. For we have learned that one must be flexible with the usage of his middos and not to be straight jacketed in them. The word middah itself attests to this understanding because it means measurement. Every measurement has a beginning and end.

Everyone seems to be secure and comfortable by locking themselves with an identity and association such as this particular team, this type of music, this style of dress, this political party, this sport, this vacation, this make car

etc. People rest more easily when they know what to expect and not have any surprises or sudden changes happen to them. But unfortunately being locked in has its deficits. Take the individual who says I can only daven Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur is a certain shul even though it is out of the country. So he leaves his wife and family for a few days and hopes his kids daven with some stranger on the holiest days of the year. Sure he might be having a good time but I would suspect that his wife being alone on these Yomim Tovim with the family is not the happy trooper that he makes her out to be.

I once read the story of the Divrei Chaim from Sanz who on Pesach was eating soup with his old and partially senile mother sharing the same bowl. At one point she put in some matzah and nevertheless he kept on eating with her because of kibud aim. There is no question that this was his first time in his life that he ate gebrachtz but he was ready to flex and change his lifetime custom on the moment. This behavior is only possible by someone who was the baalhabas over gebractz and not the gebrachtz the baalhabass over him.

My Rebbe ztl told us that one day his high school rebbe walked into the yeshiva without wearing a hat. The talmidim were dumbfounded for they never ever saw him naked like that. One of the boys questioned the rebbe on the issue. He answered that his daughter was sick and was sleeping and he was afraid to walk in her room where the hat was in case he would unintentionally wake her. It was the rebbe who controlled the hat and not the hat who controlled the rebbe.

We react to certain experiences with certain learned behavior. Rabbi Avigdor Miller ztl once said that the reason why we have a negative attitude towards rain is because probably when we were young and it began raining for our first time, we heard one of our parents remark, "Oh no, it is raining. Now I am stuck in the house with the kids." That association would make anyone hate rain for eternity. But what if the reaction was "Baruch, look how beautiful and wonderful the rain is," and then one would go on to explain all of its benefits, then we would have a different positive outlook and take on it.

Unfortunately the same holds true with all of our locked in impulsive reactions. I vividly remember the story that my Rebbe ztl told about a couple who owned an inn and they would fight and curse each other all the time until all the customers stopped patronizing them because of the electric filled atmosphere. Realizing that they are about to be sent to the "poor house" they made up that instead of cursing each other they would give berachos in their place. It would only be them who knew the truth of their smiling berachos to each other. From that day on their business prospered because everyone just loved to be in an inn that was constantly flowing with love and berachos between husband and wife. The funny thing was that at the end they both found new love and respect between themselves because of blessing each other instead of cursing.

A good hypnotist can make you react with a burning feeling every time you touch ice just by the mere suggestion alone. This indicates that one can change the reaction and the way one looks and feels towards experiences. Do not allow yourself to be locked in and a prisoner of your own making. You can change and reframe to be a happier you and at the same time to make others happier as well.

There used to be fervent Chassidim and Misnagdim. Today they don't really exist as the Michtav Mayeliyahu expounds in his fifth sefer page 35 - 39. Therefore, Rav Dessler writes (over fifty years ago), what we must do in our times of Mashiach and almost the only path left to take is to chhap up everything and anything that would help us strengthen our Yiddishkeit - both the wisdom of Chassidus and Mussar together.

Rav Dessler ztl did not just write this message to us but he lived and practiced it as well. In the same mamer in Michtav Meyaliyahu we can find back to back Likutai Moharan, Nefesh Hachayim, Maharal, Rav Simcha Zissel of Kelm all used to weave an explanation in a deep concept. We must forget about being locked into labels, identities, and expected reactions. If it helps you get closer to Hashem and it is emes, go for it.

Whether it be a Tish, or a shiur, a Chassidish or Litvish sefer, a Lubavitch niggun or a Polish march, a hisboddedus in the forest or a tevila in the mikveh. Hashem is sending us today everything and anything possible because we need everything possible and anything big or small to help us survive this ever darkening Galus.

Our Chazal say that when Hashem was about to create Man, He asked the middah of emes what her opinion was, to which she responded negatively with the reason that Man will be full of lies. Hashem then went ahead and threw emes to the earth. What was the purpose and gain in that? I would like to suggest that when one throws something from upon very high, as it hits the ground it splinters into many pieces. The higher the place from where it falls the broader the area into where these particles spread. Hashem wanted that no matter where a Yid find himself he will still be able to discover another particle of emes to grab on to in order to extricate him from the lies of his surroundings of Olam Hazeh. Each emes might be nothing but tiny, but nevertheless it is still emes and life changing if we cherish it. In the days of Mashiach we do not have the gigantic emeses as we used to have in the past but Hashem has prepared for us many different facets of it that can nourish us with different prisms at any time for the asking. But again we must be willing to be "rach kekaneh" (Taanis 20b) soft as a reed that bends and is flexible in the wind otherwise we will not partake from these miniature truths and only we will be the ones who miss out.

This idea I believe is hinted in the passuk in this week's parsha (5,12) when Pharaoh decrees that no more straw (teven) will be given to them but rather they should take from whatever they find that is to be used to finish the same amount of service that they accomplished until now without the king supplying the straw as before. The word teven - straw also means understanding. The Torah is telling us that in galus we must seek wisdom from any source possible. Do not only expect to be fostered by hamelech the king referring to (Bamidbar 20,17) on the way of the king not to turn right or left. This derech of the king is inflexible and uncompromising. At this juncture in time and history, our avodah is to uncover the wisdom from any particle of emes that will bring us closer to Hashem so in this way one will not detract from his avodah due to loss of inspiration and spiritual arousal.

Gut Shabbos. {Matzav.com Newscenter}

From **Rabbi Josh Flug** <yutorah@yutorah.org> date Fri, Jan 8, 2010 at 9:21 AM subject

Keriat HaTorah: The Obligation to Read the Torah

There is an obligation to read the Torah every Monday, Thursday, Shabbat, Yom Tov and special occasions. This is known as keriat haTorah. The Talmud records three different institutions relating to keriat haTorah. The Talmud Yerushalmi, Megillah 4:1, states that Moshe Rabbeinu instituted the reading of the Torah on Shabbat, Yom Tov, Rosh Chodesh and Chol HaMo'ed. The Talmud Bavli, Baba Kama 82a, states that the prophets instituted the reading of the Torah on Monday, Thursday and Shabbat at Mincha. The institution of the prophets only required the reading of three verses. Ezra HaSofer added to this institution that on these days, one must read a total of ten verses and call three different people to read. In this issue, we will address the differences between the various institutions.

The Two Types of Institutions

Rambam (1138-1204), Hilchot Tefillah 12:1, writes that the original institution of the prophets to read the Torah on Monday, Thursday and Shabbat at Mincha was an institution of Moshe Rabbeinu. R. Yosef Karo (1488-1575), Kesef Mishneh, ad loc., explains that it is clear from the Talmud that the original institution was instituted while the Jewish People were in the desert, during Moshe Rabbeinu's lifetime. If there was an institution of prophets during that time, it must have been under Moshe Rabbeinu's direction.

R. Yosef D. Soloveitchik (1903-1993), Shiurei Rabbeinu B'Hilchot Keriat HaTorah (pp. 134-137), notes that although Rambam is of the opinion that all institutions of keriat haTorah emanate from Moshe Rabbeinu, the institution to read on Monday, Thursday and Shabbat at Mincha is fundamentally different from the institution to read on all other days. The Gemara states that the motivation of the institution to read on Monday and Thursday was so that the people would not go three days without learning Torah (publicly). The institution to read on Shabbat at Mincha was to provide another opportunity to learn Torah. As such, the institution to read on Monday, Thursday and Shabbat at Mincha is primarily an institution to learn the Torah publicly. However, the institution to read on Shabbat, Yom Tov, and other special occasions is not merely a form of public learning. Each day has a unique motivating factor to read the Torah. For example, the reading on Shabbat is a fulfillment of the mitzvah of oneg Shabbat (enjoying Shabbat), which not only requires physical enjoyment of Shabbat, but also spiritual enjoyment.

The Unique Quality of the Shabbat Reading

The reading on Shabbat morning differs from all other readings in that the reading on Shabbat morning is the only reading that is used to complete the cycle of reading the entire Torah. The Gemara, Megillah 31b, records a dispute between R. Meir and R. Yehuda on this matter. According to R. Meir, the readings on Monday, Thursday and Shabbat at Mincha are part of the cycle and what was read previously is not repeated. According to R. Yehuda, only the reading of Shabbat morning can be part of the cycle. The Gemara states that the Halacha follows the opinion of R. Yehuda.

R. Soloveitchik, op. cit., notes that logically, one could have argued in favor of R. Meir's opinion that there is no reason to repeat the weekday readings on Shabbat. However, R. Soloveitchik contends that there are a number of reasons why the cycle of Torah reading must be performed specifically on Shabbat. First, by reading the portions of the cycle specifically on Shabbat one fulfills the mitzvah of honoring Shabbat by providing the Shabbat reading a unique status. Second, in Talmudic times, the reading of the Torah on Shabbat was accompanied by a commentary from the meturgeman (translator). The meturgeman represents the oral portion of the Torah. It is possible that the cycle must be completed with both the written Torah and the oral Torah. Third, because the reading of Shabbat entails more than just a fulfillment of learning Torah publicly, the rabbis wanted the completion of the cycle to relate to the additional fulfillments specific to Shabbat.

There is one portion of the cycle that does not have to be read on Shabbat. V'zot haBeracha, the last portion in the cycle, is read on Simchat Torah and does not ever occur on Shabbat in the Diaspora (and does not always occur on Shabbat in Israel). How then can one complete the cycle on a day other than Shabbat? Based on R. Soloveitchik's third answer, one can suggest that the unique elements of the Shabbat reading also exist on Yom Tov. [Rambam, Hilchot Yom Tov 6:16, writes that the mitzvah of oneg applies on Yom Tov.] The only reason why the Yom Tov readings are not included in the cycle is that the Yom Tov readings must relate to the Yom Tov. Since the readings of Yom Tov don't ordinarily correspond to the proper place in the cycle, they cannot be included as part of the cycle. However, the Gemara, Megillah 31a, cites a Beraita that states that the proper reading for the second day of Shemini Atzeret (what we call Simchat Torah) is V'zot haBeracha. R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (1843-1926), Meshech Chochmah, Devarim 34:12, notes that the reading of V'zot haBeracha is not a function of the cycle. Rather, the content of V'zot haBeracha is relevant to Shemini Atzeret. As such, V'zot haBeracha - which is relevant to the holiday and is read at its proper place in the cycle - may be counted towards the cycle.

Other Distinctions between Shabbat and non-Shabbat Readings

There are other distinctions between the Shabbat morning reading and the non-Shabbat readings. First, Hagahot Maimoniot, Hilchot Tefillah 13:40, writes that if one accidentally skips one of the verses in the reading on Monday, Thursday or Shabbat at Mincha, there is no reason to return to

that verse provided that enough verses were read. However, on Shabbat, if one skips a verse, he must return to that verse and read from there, even if the mistake was caught after the Torah was returned to the ark. R. Yisrael Isserlin (1390-1460), Terumat HaDeshen, 1:24, writes that the Yom Tov readings and all other non-Shabbat readings have the same status as the weekday readings and if one skips a verse, there is no obligation to return to that verse. The rulings of Hagahot Maimoniot and Terumat HaDeshen are codified in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 137:3. R. Yisrael M. Kagan (1838-1933), Mishna Berurah, Bei'ur Halacha 137:3, s.v. Parshiyot, adds that Terumat HaDeshen's leniency regarding Yom Tov readings is limited to the verses that are not the main verses of that Torah reading. If one skips the main verses of that Torah reading, one must return.

The leniencies of Hagahot Maimoniot and Terumat HaDeshen are more relevant in the area of correcting the ba'al korei (Torah reader) who reads a word improperly. Ostensibly, if one does not have to return when skipping an entire verse, one certainly should not have to return if one mispronounced one word. This argument is presented by Mishna Berurah, Bei'ur Halacha 142:1, s.v. Machzirin. However, he notes that perhaps reading a word improperly is worse than not reading it altogether. He does not provide a resolution to this issue.

Second, in a previous issue, we noted that the mitzvah to review the parsha (shnayim mikra v'echad targum) only applies to the portions that are part of the annual cycle. We presented two approaches why there is no requirement to review the Yom Tov readings or other special readings. One approach is that the mitzvah to review the parsha complements the annual cycle in that it represents the private learning of the Torah on an annual basis. The other approach is that, the mitzvah of reviewing the parsha is a preparation for the reading of the Torah. As long as one reviewed the parsha within the year, one is considered adequately prepared. Therefore, on Yom Tov and other occasions, one may rely on the preparation that one performed the previous year when that portion was read on Shabbat.

The Practical Halacha Overview, authored by Rabbi Joshua Flug, is a project of Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future- Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. If you would like to subscribe to this series click here. Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future 500 W 185th St. New York, New York 10033

from **Shlomo Katz** <skatz@torah.org> genesis@torah.org to hamaayan@torah.org date Fri, Jan 8, 2010 at 11:05 AM subject HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parshat Shmot

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Today's Learning: Nach: Yeshayah 35-36 Taharot 6:6-7 O.C. 392:5-7 Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Batra 141 Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Niddah 10

The Midrash Rabbah on our parashah states that Hashem chastises His children so that they will ultimately love Him, as we read (Mishlei 13:24), "If he disciplines his son, he will [ultimately] love him." In particular, says the midrash, G-d has given us three gifts, but all of them must be acquired through yissurin / suffering. These are: the Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and Olam Haba.

R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler z"l (1843-1917; Yerushalayim) explains why these three gifts are acquired only at the price of yissurin:

Studying Torah and observing the mitzvot are contrary to man's nature and his physical desires. Therefore, one who wants to attain the Crown of Torah must accept upon himself "yissurin shel ahavah" / "suffering of love," i.e., deprivation that is not seen as a punishment but as a gift.

Eretz Yisrael is the King's palace. Unlike a subject who serves the king from a distance, one who wishes to stand close to the king must be on constant guard lest he offend the monarch. In reality, though, a person cannot be on constant guard. Therefore, Hashem weakens a person's body and physical desires by imposing yissurin / illness, deprivation, or poverty on him, so that he will not be tempted to sin.

Finally, even if a person has attained the Crown of Torah and merits to live in Eretz Yisrael, he can never relax, for a person is always at risk of sinning. Therefore, Olam Haba also is acquired through yissurin. (Tiferet Zion)

"Bnei Yisrael were fruitful, teemed, increased, and became strong . . ." (1:7)

The Midrash Rabbah states that the Jewish women in Egypt gave birth to sextuplets. Another opinion says they gave birth to sixty children at a time.

R' Yehuda Loewe z"l (the Maharal of Prague; died 1609) writes: The midrash does not literally mean that women gave birth to 60 children at a one time. Indeed, he observes, if it were possible for one woman to carry that many children, each one would be so small as to not be viable. Rather, the midrash means that women who gave birth, rather than suffering the weakness that normally follows birth, felt so strong that they could have delivered 60 babies if such a thing were possible.

As for the opinion that they gave birth to sextuplets, Maharal suggests that this was G-d's response to the fact that Bnei Yisrael were enslaved six days a week. (Gevurot Hashem ch.12)

"Come, let us `nitchakmah' / outsmart [Bnei Yisrael]." (1:10)

R' David Ha'naggid z"l (1224-1300; grandson of Rambam z"l) notes that the mitzvot and customs of the Pesach seder parallel Pharaoh's plot to "outsmart" Bnei Yisrael: "nun" for "nisuch ha'yayin" / pouring wine; "tav" for "tavshilin" / the two cooked items on the seder plate; "chet" for charoset; "kaf" for karpas; "mem" for matzah; and "heh" for Hallel. (Midrash Rabbi David Ha'naggid Al Haggadah Shel Pesach p.37)

"[Moshe] went out the next day and behold! two Hebrew men were fighting. He said to the rasha / wicked one, `Why would you strike your fellow?'" (2:13)

Rashi z"l comments: "Although the man had not yet hit his fellow, he is termed here `wicked' merely because he had raised his hand against his fellow."

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (1914-2005) explains: When one's anger becomes manifested in an action, when one lifts his hand against another person, even if he does not hit him, he is called a "rasha" because he is under the rule of the yetzer hara.

R' Wolbe adds: Sometimes, after a person commits a sin or an improper act, he can reconstruct in his mind exactly what circumstances or what defective middah / character trait led him to err. On other occasions, however, a person commits a sin or an improper act impulsively, and he immediately kicks himself and wonders, "Why in the world did I do such a crazy or harmful thing?" Often, the answer is simply that the person is in the grip of the yetzer hara. This is what our Sages mean when they teach (Shabbat 105b), "If a person tears his clothes, smashes dishes, or throws-away money in anger, he is like an idolator, for such is the modus operandi of the yetzer hara: today, he tells you to do this [commit a seemingly minor sin] and tomorrow he tells you to do that, until, eventually, he gets you to worship idols." Once a person is in the clutches of the yetzer hara, there is no end to what he might do.

Everyone is in the grip of the yetzer hara to some degree, as we confess on Yom Kippur: "Al chet / for a sin that we committed before You with the yetzer hara." When one sins for no apparent reason and for no gain--as is typically the case when one speaks lashon hara--it is because he is under the control of the yetzer hara. (AleI Shur, Vol.I p.152)

"Bnei Yisrael groaned because of the work and they cried out." (2:23)

R' Shimson David Pinkus z"l (rabbi of Ofakim, Israel; died 2001) quotes the Zohar (Shmot 20a) which teaches that tze'akah / crying out is a form of prayer that is very dear to G-d and never goes completely unanswered. What is tze'akah? It is prayer without words, as the verse says (Eichah 2:18), "Their hearts cried out to Hashem."

R' Pinkus continues: Tze'akah is "hysteria." However, it does not involve screaming or waving one's arms like a lunatic. Rather, when a person stands silently in prayer with a recognition that he is surrounded by challenges that he cannot overcome without G-d's help, or an appreciation of the fact that the yetzer hara is holding a knife to his throat and is about to overcome him, and he then pleads, "Help me!" - that is tze'akah. In particular, tze'akah is found when a person feels himself unworthy of approaching G-d and cannot find the words to pray.

R' Pinkus adds: Although the Zohar says that tze'akah is a wordless cry, any prayer that a person utters when he cannot articulate his thoughts, even if it involves words such as "Help!" is also tze'akah. We see this, for example, in Melachim I (18:37), where Eliyahu Hanavi prayed, "Answer me, Hashem! Answer me!" It is as if a person is being attacked by robbers, and he calls out to a friend who stands nearby, "Help me!" (She'arim Ba'tefilah pp.41-43)

R' Itamar Schwartz shlita observes that tze'akah that involves a raised voice is an undesirable form of prayer. While a person who is being held up screams "Help!" to a friend who is standing some distance away, he does not need to cry out if he knows his friend is standing right next to him. Thus, a raised voice indicates that the supplicant feels there is distance between himself and Hashem, as Bnei Yisrael felt that Hashem had abandoned them in Egypt. When a person stands in prayer and feels that Hashem is right there with him, he does not cry out. (B'levavi Mishkan Evneh Vol.II p.125)

Based on the foregoing, we must understand why (in Shmot 8:8) Moshe Rabbeinu "cried out" to Hashem to remove the plague of tze'afar / frogs. Surely Moshe Rabbeinu did not feel that Hashem was distanced from him. Indeed, commentaries offer a number of reasons for Moshe's tze'akah:

Sforno - Moshe was asking Hashem to remove the frogs only from the Egyptians' homes, but to leave them in the Nile. Ordinarily, one may not pray to Hashem to perform "half a job." Because Moshe Rabbeinu was violating this rule of prayer, he had to cry out.

Abarbanel - All of the other plagues lasted one week, but Moshe asked that this one end early. Since Moshe Rabbeinu did not know if such was Hashem's Will, he cried out.

Sifte Chachamim - A person must hear himself pray. Since the frogs were so noisy, Moshe Rabbeinu had to cry out.

from Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>

date Wed, Jan 6, 2010 at 5:49 PM

subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein - Parshat Shemot

Weekly Parsha :: SHEMOT :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Shifra and Puah give Jewish children life in this week's parsha. Midrash and Rashi point out that Shifra and Puah were really Yocheved and Miriam. In God's world where everything eventually evens out, Moshe, Yocheved's son and Miriam's brother will be saved from the Nile and its tides and crocodiles by another woman who saved children, Batya, the daughter of the Pharaoh. There is a common streak that runs throughout the Torah that goodness begets goodness and evil always will lead to other evil.

Saving children is the prime value in Jewish life. The emphasis on education in Jewish life is part of this mission of salvation of the young. The enemies of the Jewish people have always concentrated on destroying Jewish children so that the Jewish future would be bleak and non-existent.

Pharaoh's decree to cast Jewish children into the Nile was the first in a long line of such decrees.

The Germans and their evil cohorts destroyed one and a half million Jewish children during the Holocaust. The absence of these children from the midst of the Jewish world is felt even today, seventy years later. Thus the supreme act of kindness and risk taken by Shifra and Puah leads to their reward that the savior of Israel will also be saved from the Nile by a different, compassionate and risk taking woman.

One never realizes how a kindness and good deed done to others can influence for good one's own life and family circle. By saving other children, Shifra and Puah saved their own little child and brother as well. In the late 1940's the Day School movement in America was barely on its fledgling feet attempting to somehow save thousands of American Jewish children from the pits of complete assimilation and Jewish apathy and ignorance - the Nile River of its day, spiritually speaking. It faced overwhelming problems and fierce opposition from within the established Jewish community itself.

Many felt then that somehow being intensely and proudly Jewish in a knowledgeable fashion was un-American. One of the major problems that the Day Schools faced was finding dedicated young families willing to leave the imagined sanctuary of the New York area to become the teachers and administrators of these new schools in the hinterlands of America. They were justifiably concerned about the future of their children growing up in a more difficult, Jewishly speaking, environment.

Rabbi Ahron Kotler, one of the driving forces behind the creation of these new day schools, boldly announced to the yeshiva world that any young couples who would move to these "out of town" communities to help build and staff these schools would be personally guaranteed by him to have success in raising their children as they wish.

His guarantee and prediction was fulfilled in dozens of families who have made a great deal of difference in rebuilding Torah life in America. Saving others in essence, and in the long run, helps to save one's own self. The redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage is initiated by small acts of kindness, sacrifice and goodness. Israel and Zion is redeemed by acts of justice and righteousness.

Shabat shalom.

From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>
to Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>
date Thu, Jan 7, 2010 at 3:30 AM
subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Shemos

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Parshas Shemos

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the first one was Shifrah and the name of the second was Puah. (1:15)

Shifrah was actually Yocheved, and Puah was her daughter, Miriam. The alternate names were given to them as a tribute to their work. Shifrah denotes the fact that Yocheved beautified the infant. Puah calls to mind the manner in which Miriam cooed, speaking to the child in a soothing manner. These are surely important and necessary qualities for a midwife to possess, but Yocheved and Miriam were the two most prominent women of that generation. Is that the best way that the Torah can characterize them? Yocheved was one of the original seventy souls to have arrived in Egypt together with Yaakov Avinu. She was certainly a distinguished woman. Miriam was a neviah, prophetess. Hence, the Torah should have referred to them by their birth names, names of prominence. Furthermore, these names are simple names which identify how they interacted with the infants. These names certainly do not lend distinction to Yocheved and Miriam. It is as if the Torah is describing two ordinary midwives. What about their

courage; their heroism; their self-sacrifice; their fear of Heaven? Is that all secondary to their ability to soothe and beautify the baby's skin?

Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, explains that, indeed, it is these seemingly mundane acts that bespeak the true eminence that characterized Yocheved and Miriam. Let us begin with an analogy. A seriously ill young child is brought into the emergency room of a hospital. The child is surrounded by doctors and nurses, all working feverishly to ensure that his young life continues unhampered. Nothing takes precedence when a child's life is in danger. If a spectator were to enter the ER and notice a woman talking soothingly to the child, even singing a sweet melody, he would know for certain that this is the child's mother. The other people surrounding the child are too concerned with the child's immediate health to worry about his emotional well-being, the fear he must be harboring in a strange place, inundated with people and machines. Only a mother's love focuses also on the little things, because that is what a mother does. Her love is all-encompassing and all inclusive.

The fact that Yocheved and Miriam were prepared to risk their lives for the Jewish infants was not adequate indication that they were worthy of achieving "mother" status. They were not yet to be rewarded with "batim," houses, of monarchy, Kehunah and Leviah. Only after they demonstrated that extra bit of motherly care and love amid the terror of death that permeated the Jewish community at the time - when they showed that they also cared about the "little" things, such as soothing the infant's skin, beautifying it, cooing and talking softly - did they become eligible for this lofty reward.

I have always wondered why Rachel Imeinu was the one who was buried on the side of the road, so that Jews being exiled from the Holy Land would go by her grave and pray to catalyze hope. Why is Rachel the one who is the great intercessor for Klal Yisrael? Moreover, why does the pasuk refer to Klal Yisrael as *baneha*, her children? Rachel gave birth only to Yosef and Binyamin. If anything, Leah should receive greater Matriarchal status. She gave birth to more children.

Perhaps the answer lies specifically in the fact that Klal Yisrael is referred to as *baneha*. Rachel views all of the Jewish People as her children. She acts towards us as a mother and, therefore, has earned the title. The maternal instinct was an intrinsic part of her nature. She became the Matriarch to whom all the Jewish "children" turn for solace, hope and prayer.

Horav Shlomo Heyman, zl, was Rosh Yeshiva in Vilna and later in Mesivta Torah Vodaath. He was a brilliant Torah scholar who was dedicated to Torah dissemination, training students who later went on to become Torah leaders themselves. Every great man has a partner: his wife. Rebbetzin Heyman was just as busy as her husband, with her constant involvement in all areas of *chesed*, acts of loving-kindness. She was especially devoted to marrying off orphan girls. Those who had no one knew that they had Rebbetzin Heyman.

Once, the Rosh Yeshiva and his wife were preparing to go to a wedding which she had completely arranged. She had outfitted the bride and was even seeing to it that the expenses for the wedding were covered. As they were walking out the door, Rav Shlomo turned to his wife and asked, "Did you order a corsage for the *kallah*, bride?" The Rebbetzin replied, "I assumed that I did not have to go that far. I took care of everything else. The corsage was not something I felt was necessary - especially since the funds were all provided from *tzedakah*, charity." Rav Shlomo disagreed, asserting, "No, no, it is not right. You must immediately go and purchase a corsage for the girl. She must have it - just like everybody else."

Rav Pincus feels that the Rosh Yeshiva was intimating to his wife that a mother would not overlook her daughter's corsage, and his wife was in the role of mother, since this girl was an orphan. If his Rebbetzin was going to carry out an act of *chesed*, she should do it the right way. In order for Yocheved and Miriam to be worthy of the "houses" of royalty, Kehunah and Leviah, they had to act like mothers.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates that when he was sitting *shivah*, observing the seven-day mourning period for his mother, he was visited by

the present day Ozrover Rebbe, Shlita, who quoted the following Torah thought from his grandfather, the Eish Dos, Horav Moshe Yechiel HaLevi Epstein, zl. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, we read about Sarah Imeinu and the birth of Yitzchak. The Haftorah relates the story of Chanah and the birth of Shmuel HaNavi. It is only on the second day of Rosh Hashanah that we read about Avraham Avinu's dedication at the Akeidah of Yitzchak Avinu. Why do we mention the merit of the Imahos, Matriarchs, prior to that of the Avos, Patriarchs?

The Eish Dos explains that when a child falls, his father picks him up and makes sure that he is able to stand up on his own two feet. His mother, however, is the one who is concerned that the child not fall in the first place. She protects. That is what mothers do, and, for this reason, our prayer to Hashem in the *z'chus*, merit, of the Imahos precedes that of the Avos.

Many "mother" stories portray the singular devotion that the Jewish mother manifests to her children. The following episode might be a bit unusual, but it certainly bespeaks a mother's devotion. In a small Egyptian village lives a young man who, for all intents and purposes, appears to be an Arab. The features are all present. Surprisingly, on the inside of his hand is a tattoo of a Magen David, a Jewish star! Arabs do not make it a practice to have Jewish stars tattooed into their skin - at least not if they want to have a normal lifespan. After investigation, it was discovered that this young man is accompanied by an incredible story. He is Jewish, born to a Jewish mother, who - together with a number of Jewish girls - were kidnapped and forced to marry Muslims. His mother, albeit not observant, knew that her son was Jewish and that Jews do not intermarry. To protect her son, she made an indelible mark on his hand that would be a constant reminder of his holy pedigree. Until this very day he lives in danger, never exposing the inside of his hand, for fear of being discovered. His mother risked everything - even her son's life - so that he would not intermarry. That is a Jewish mother. She may not have been observant, but she was acutely aware of the *kedushah*, holiness, which is part of every Jew's DNA.

She (Pharaoh's daughter) sent her maidservant/arm and she took it. (2:5)

Not only does every "little bit" count, but it only takes a "little bit" to make a difference, to start the ball rolling towards successful achievement. This is a theme throughout the parsha. According to Chazal, Bisyah, the daughter of Pharaoh, reached out her arm to grasp the basket in which the infant Moshe was lying, and, miraculously, her arm elongated far beyond its normal reach. The commentators derive from here a lesson in *avodas Hashem*, service of the Almighty. One must make his own effort; the rest is up to Hashem. Pharaoh's daughter was much too far from Moshe's floating basket. Yet, she made the attempt. She did her part. Hashem did the rest. Moshe Rabbeinu was walking in the desert when he saw a burning bush. His curiosity was piqued, and he turned around. That is all. The rest of the revelation came from Hashem. Moshe did not turn very far out of his way - only a few steps, but that made the difference. He took the initiative. This is what Hashem asks of us: the first step, our initiative, an indication that we are interested. He will do the rest.

When Moshe told Hashem that the Jews would ask for Hashem's Name, Hashem replied, *Eheyeh asher Eheyeh*, "I shall be as I shall be" (Shemos 3:14). Ramban posits that Moshe was explaining to Hashem that once the Jews had accepted him as Hashem's emissary, they would want to know which of G-d's Attributes He would manifest in the process of redeeming them from Egypt. Hashem's reply was *Eheyeh*, "I shall be." Horav Avraham Schorr, Shlita, cites the commentators who posit that *Eheyeh* is a name which denotes *teshuvah*, repentance/return. He cites the Maor v'Shemesh in his commentary to Parashas Korach who asserts this idea, since the *baal teshuvah*, one who is returning, should always say, *Eheyeh*, "I shall be" an *oveid Hashem*, serve the Almighty. *Eheyeh* stimulates the person; it motivates him to go on, to go further, to continue pushing, elevating himself so that he does not fall prey to the disease of

complacency. In Yiddish, it is "Ich vel zein"; it is an assertion that, although now I am far from there, one day I will make it.

This, explains Rav Schorr, is the secret of geulas Mitzrayim, the redemption from Egypt. A nation that had sunken to such a spiritual nadir as the forty-ninth level of tumah, spiritual impurity, was suddenly taken from the dreadful abyss of spiritual extinction and granted ultimate salvation. Why? How? What did they do to deserve such spiritual and physical largesse? It was because they would accept the Torah. Their "present" was defined by their "future". Accepting the Torah was an experience that transformed the Jewish People. The "I shall be" attitude that pervaded the Jewish psyche in Egypt was the merit through which they were granted redemption. Hashem knew the Jews' potential. Their true capabilities would soon be manifest. Eheyeh, "I shall be!" made the difference.

It was a small step, a singular stride forward and upward, but it was all that was necessary. Their attitude signified a readiness and enthusiasm for change and was the initial catalyst needed to engender their redemption. All Hashem asks of us is to "turn a little," make that first move, and He will do the rest.

I think we can go a bit further. Everyone has his ups and downs, his moments of inspiration and instances of disenchantment. There are times when we decide to begin a process that will culminate in change, and we remain with the "decision", we go no further. The yetzer hora, evil-inclination, immediately mounts its offensive to prevent us from succeeding.

The Alter, zl, m'Kelm, asserts that even if we do not succeed in following through our intention, the mere fact that we initiated a "beginning," that we decided upon a course of change, that alone, elevates us from our present state and catalyzes within us a spiritual metamorphosis. He substantiates this with the law concerning the meisis, one who entices others to go astray. The halachah states that once the p'sak din, final judgment, against him has been rendered, it is not rescinded, even if we find some merit to save him. The reason is stated in the Torah: (Devarim 13:11), "For he sought to make you stray from near Hashem." That's it! The mere desire to cause another Jew to stray from Hashem is reason to abrogate any compassion - none, whatsoever. We know that Hashem's reward is five-hundred times his punishment. Therefore, if this is punishment for one who simply makes a move to turn us away from Hashem, we can imagine what a desire to bring an individual - especially oneself - closer to Hashem can engender. The mere inspiration, the thought, the idea, any of these stimuli is the beginning of our journey. It is our decision whether to follow up or not. Regardless of our desire to continue, Hashem saves the inspiration and counts it for us when it is most needed.

He (Moshe) went out the next day and behold! two Hebrew men were fighting. (2:13)

Rashi identifies the two men who were fighting as Dasan and Aviram, our leader's nemeses from the very beginning. These two men were evil, and they sought every opportunity to undermine Moshe Rabbeinu's leadership. Their involvement in almost every mutiny is recorded throughout the Chumash. It is, therefore, surprising that in indentifying the two men, Rashi adds that they were the individuals who left over manna, after being told explicitly not to leave any over. These two miscreants had a detailed resume of evil deeds against Hashem and Moshe. What prompted Rashi to choose the leaving over of the manna as their defining evil activity? They were the ones who partnered with Korach in the greatest insurgency against Moshe. Why not mention that? They were the ones who had clamored for a new leader to return the Jewish nation to Egypt. Surely, that is good reason for censure; yet, Rashi picked the manna. Why?

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, explains that the fact that Dasan and Aviram left manna over was a clear indication that everything that they were doing was nothing more than self-serving evil. They were interested only in themselves - nothing else. Rashi is teaching us that Dasan and Aviram can be characterized by the act of leaving over the manna. When we have

analyzed the various acts of evil perpetrated these two scoundrels, we see one common denominator weaving itself throughout their actions: self-righteous ideology. When Moshe challenged one of them for striking the other, his immediate response was: "Who appointed you as our leader? Who are you to voice your opinion concerning our actions?" Then he so subtly added, "Are you going to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian?" Was that necessary to add? He was intimating that he wanted peace to prevail in the camp, and Moshe had obstructed peace by killing the Egyptian and mixing into their affairs. This ideological perversion of the meaning of peace was the underlying catchphrase which revealed itself throughout their dissent against Moshe. It was always their desire to promote peace and welfare. That is why they complained about the food, the water, the leadership, etc.

When Dasan and Aviram left over the manna, they revealed their true essence. They were interested in furthering their own agenda. They did not care about Klal Yisrael. It was themselves about whom they cared. Everything else was excuses to cover up their true intentions. It was leadership which they sought. They wanted to be in charge, to give the orders - in place of Moshe.

Every community has such individuals. They are never there when help is needed. They rear their ugly heads at every opportunity in which a controversy can be stirred. Whenever the community's leadership does something for the community, they are the ones who must undermine the noble efforts of the leadership. If everyone says, "right," they must say "left," because this is how they get attention. They talk and complain, postulate and suggest, but never "do." When Moshe saw his brethren laboring for the Egyptian taskmasters, he immediately joined with them. He really cared. Dasan and Aviram talked and complained, but never lifted a hand to help.

I do not want to end this dvar Torah with total censure of Dasan and Aviram. They mere fact that they are mentioned in the Torah bespeaks a status far beyond anything we are able to grasp. In addition, as evil as they were, they did not perish during the three days of darkness - when all those Jews who would rather remain in Egypt than travel into the unknown wilderness - died. Why were Dasan and Aviram not included in this "august" group? Furthermore, they merited to be part of the 600,000 who witnessed the splitting of the Red Sea and who received the Torah. They must have some redeeming qualities.

The Maharil Diskin, zl, explains that Dasan and Aviram were among the shotrim, Jewish foremen, who were in charge of the Jewish labor force in Egypt. It was Pharaoh's diabolical plan to have Jew mistreat Jew. He was unsuccessful, as these foremen actually sacrificed themselves to protect their brethren. Dasan and Aviram sustained more than one "klop," beating, on behalf of their Jewish brothers. In addition, these beatings created infections that gave off a noxious odor from their bodies, which added insult to injury. All of this was on behalf of the Jewish people. Such sacrifice does not go unrequited by Hashem. The Maharil concludes with the following statement: "A person who suffers pain for another Jew, neither the Malach Ha'Maves, Angel of Death, nor the Red Sea can do him harm."

Now that we have discovered the redeeming quality for which these two despots merited to be a part of the greatest generation in Jewish history, we wonder where they went wrong. I think the answer lies specifically in their good deed. It went to their heads. They assumed that since they had been performing such acts of kindness on behalf of their brethren, they were above reproach. They erred. There are good deeds and bad deeds. The good does not overshadow the bad. Certainly, it is not license to act in a manner unbecoming a Jew.

Va'ani Tefillah

Yehallelu es Shem Hashem ki Hu tzivah v'nivrau.

Let them praise the Name of Hashem, for He commanded and they were created.

Vayaamidem laad l'olam chak nasan v'lo yaavor.

He placed them so that they would last forever, He declared this as law, and it cannot be changed.

The nature of man is to be impressed by new creations, especially when something unusual takes place. When it comes to those occurrences to which he is used to seeing on a daily basis, however, he is rarely moved. He takes it for granted that the sun rises and sets, the moon comes out every night, it is hot and cold in accordance with the climatic changes that "just happen" on a seasonal basis. Veritably, everything in the universe is a miraculous event; every second is a new creation from Hashem. We do not see it, because we are accustomed to it. Therefore, explains the Baal Haflaah, Horav Pinchas Horowitz, zl, we praise Hashem that "He placed them so that they would last forever." Just as the creation of the world took place as a result of Hashem's utterance, willing the world into existence, so, too, does it continue to exist and last forever based on this amirah, utterance. For this reason, all creations "praise the Name of Hashem, because He commanded and they were created." Concomitantly, the praise for the original creation should be accompanied by the praise, "He placed them so that they would last forever." We must recognize the constant creation of the world. The world's continued existence is as much a miracle as its original creation.

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genesis@torah.org
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Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Shmos

Participating With Someone Else's Troubles

Pharaoh decreed that every male child must be thrown into the Nile River. Moshe's parents were able to hide their infant son for only 3 months. After that, they made a small basket, lined it with a water-resistant material, placed it in the river and left the baby to fate.

The pasuk [verse] writes "His sister stood at a distance, to see what will be with him." [Shmos 2:4] Miriam had no expectation of what might happen. Eventually, Pharaoh's own daughter came to bathe and took the baby home to raise him. However, Miriam went there without the expectation that she would be able to save the child, but simply to become aware of his fate. Rav Dovid Povarsky, the Rosh Yeshiva in Ponevezh, makes a very poignant observation. There is a similar incident in Tanach where a concerned family member does not know what the fate of a young child will be, where the family member has a totally different reaction. When Hagar was chased out of the house of Avraham, she went into the desert, her water supply was exhausted, her child got sick, and she was almost certain that he would die. She threw the child from herself and went to sit a distance away saying "Let me not see the death of the child." [Bereshis 21:16]

Hagar's reaction was that she did not want to be around to see what would happen to Yishmael. Rav Povarsky notes the difference "between a Jewish sister and an Ishmaelite mother." Miriam had no expectation of saving her brother but there is a concept amongst the Jewish people of "participating in the hardship of one's fellow man," i.e. - to become part of another person's suffering. Our Sages refer to this as "bearing the burden with one's friend" (noseh b'ol im chaveiro). Miriam went because if her brother was going to suffer or her brother was going to drown, she wanted to be there! She would want to see it because he was her brother and she would want to experience the pain that he was going to endure.

Hagar, on the other hand, did exactly the opposite. "I do not want to see the death of the child." It is too painful! In a certain sense, there is selfishness here. A Jewish sister wants to be part of her brother's pain but an Ishmaelite mother cannot take it. She says "Let me not see the death of the lad." According to the Medrash, it was not just Moshe's sister who went to observe her brother's fate. In describing the fact that Pharaoh's daughter heard a child cry out from the basket, the Torah says "And behold a lad (naar) was crying." [Shmos 2:6] The simple reading of course is that the lad referred to in the pasuk is the baby Moshe. The Medrash, however, teaches that the lad crying refers to Aharon, Moshe's older brother.

In other words, it was not only Miriam who went to the banks of the river to see what would be. Aharon, his brother, also went. The Baal HaTurim buttresses this Medrash by citing the following gematria [arithmetic equation]: "na'ar bocheh = zeh Aharon haKohen" [a lad crying = this is Aaron the Priest]. There is a connection between every Jew which engenders this attitude of "bearing the burden together with his friend." This connection does not allow me to merely "look away" when tragedy strikes. I have to see it. I have to feel it. I have to be part of it.

Rav Simcha Zissel of Kelm teaches a similar idea. He notes that this parsha introduces us to Moshe Rabbeinu. From now until the end of the Torah, we will be learning and studying about the life of Moshe Rabbeinu. This is the parsha (at the famous incident of the burning bush) where G-d taps Moshe on the shoulder, so to speak, and asks him to lead the Jewish people. It is only natural, Rav Simcha Zissel says, that the Torah should provide some background information about the life of this individual to give us an idea of why specifically he was charged with this leadership role. What did he ever do in his life that earned him this job?

We only have 4 brief incidents in four different pasukim giving us slight clues to his qualifications and capabilities. The first pasuk tells us he grew up and he went out to his brethren to see their suffering. [Shmos 2:11] Although he lived in the lap of luxury in the palace of Pharaoh, he refused to sit back in comfort but went out to empathize with the suffering of his brethren.

The next incident was that he saw an Egyptian man hitting a Jewish man [2:12]. In other words, his concern was not limited to the masses (tzibur), he was concerned about the problem of each individual Jew (yachid).

The third incident [2:13] teaches us that Moshe was not just concerned about a situation of an Egyptian beating up a Jew. Even when it was one Jew beating up another Jew, Moshe was concerned and got involved to come to the aid of the victim.

Finally, we are taught that Moshe's compassion is not just for his fellow Jews. He goes to Midyan and steps in to protect Yisro's daughters who are being taken advantage of [2:17]. He stands up for the oppressed young girls who were not able to fend for themselves.

These are four incidents out of the first 80 years of Moshe Rabbeinu's life that the Torah tells us about, before relating that G-d appointed him to be the leader and deliverer of the Jewish people. In these four incidents, Moshe exhibited the quality which every Jew should have, but most importantly it is a quality that is absolutely essential for the leader of the Jewish people - the quality of participating in the burden of his fellow man, feeling his pain, and empathizing with his suffering.

The following story was brought to my attention by Rabbi Zev Katz of Silver Spring, Maryland. It is a fascinating little story which eloquently illustrates this same message of bearing the burden together with one's fellow man: "A Blanket of Trust" by Howard Schultz (Chief Global Strategist of Starbucks)

When I was in Israel, I went to Mea Shearim, the ultra-Orthodox area within Jerusalem. Along with a group of businessmen, I had the opportunity to have an audience with Rabbi [Nosson Tzvi] Finkel, the head of a yeshiva there [Mir Yeshiva]. I had never heard of him and did not know anything about him. We went into his study and waited ten to 15 minutes for him. Finally, the doors opened.

What we did not know was that Rabbi Finkel was severely afflicted with Parkinson's disease. He sat down at the head of the table, and, naturally, our inclination was to look away. We did not want to embarrass him.

We were all looking away, and we heard this big bang on the table:

"Gentlemen, look at me, and look at me right now." Now his speech affliction was worse than his physical shaking. It was really hard to listen to him and watch him. He said, "I have only a few minutes for you because I know you are all busy American businessmen." You know, just a little dig there.

Then he asked, "Who can tell me what the lesson of the Holocaust is?" He called on one guy, who did not know what to do - it was like being called on in the fifth grade without the answer. And the guy says something benign like, "We will never, ever forget." And the rabbi completely dismisses him. I felt terrible for the guy until I realized the rabbi was getting ready to call on someone else. All of us were sort of under the table, looking away - you know, please, not me. He did not call me. I was sweating. He called on another guy, who had such a fantastic answer: "We will never, ever again be a victim or bystander."

The rabbi said, "You guys just do not get it. Okay, gentlemen, let me tell you the essence of the human spirit.

"As you know, during the Holocaust, the people were transported in the worst possible, inhumane way by railcar. They thought they were going to a work camp. We all know they were going to a death camp.

"After hours and hours in this inhumane corral with no light, no bathroom, cold, they arrived at the camps. The doors were swung wide open, and they were blinded by the light. Men were separated from women, mothers from daughters, fathers from sons. They went off to the bunkers to sleep.

"As they went into the area to sleep, only one person was given a blanket for every six. The person who received the blanket, when he went to bed, had to decide, 'Am I going to push the blanket to the five other people who did not get one, or am I going to pull it toward myself to stay warm?'"

And Rabbi Finkel says, "It was during this defining moment that we learned the power of the human spirit, because we pushed the blanket to five others."

And with that, he stood up and said, "Take your blanket. Take it back to America and push it to five other people."

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Parshas Shemos: Burning Interests **By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

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.

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The Lessons of the Yosef Epic

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski
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Few stories in the Torah are as laden with emotion and psychological teachings as the epic of Yosef and his brothers. First, we see how the minds of great men, the sons of Jacob, could be so distorted by envy and hatred that they were able to justify committing so dastardly an act, initially plotting to kill their brother, then selling him into slavery. Year after year we read this story, but it has never lost its emotional impact. I have now heard this story repeated for more than seventy years, yet when I hear the Torah reader say, "And Yosef could no longer restrain himself and called out, "Let everyone leave this room!" and then said, "I am your brother, Yosef, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt," (Breishis 45:1-3) I choke up as if this were the first time I heard it.

There are several psychological messages in this epic. We are told (Rashi, Breishis 37:3) that Yosef bore a striking resemblance to Yaakov. True, when he left his brothers at age seventeen he was beardless and now had a beard. But Yaakov, too, had a beard. Could they not see the resemblance? The Midrash states that they entered the city through ten separate gates, because they were going to disperse throughout the city, looking for Yosef. Obviously, they felt that they would be able to recognize him among a large population. Yet here, standing directly before him, they are unable to recognize him! Strange!

The Midrash says that when Yosef wanted to take Shimon as hostage, Shimon fought off all the soldiers sent to subdue him. Yosef then sent his son, Menashe, a boy of eight, who gave Shimon one blow on the back, and Shimon fell to the ground, declaring, "This blow is from my father's household!" Someone from Yaakov's household in Egypt? An eight year old boy! Isn't it obvious that this could only be a son of Yosef?

At the dinner table, Yosef seats them, announcing, "Reuven, Shimon, Levi, etc., sons of one mother, sit here. Dan and Naftali, sons of one mother, sit here", etc. How obvious can you get? Yet, even when Yosef revealed himself to his brothers, they had difficulty in believing it was him!

I believe that what was operative here is the phenomenon of denial. Denial is a psychological defense mechanism that operates subconsciously, so that the person is not aware of it. It is a mechanism that causes a person to be oblivious of something, the knowledge of which would be extremely distressful. To defend a person from the distress, denial renders the person essentially blind to what is right before his eyes, and he is no more capable of seeing it than a blind person is capable of seeing a rainbow.

The brothers believed that Yosef's dreams were his grandiose fantasies rather than prophesies, and it was their hatred of what they felt was his wish to rule over them that led to their selling him into slavery. Had they found Yosef working as someone's slave, they would have had no difficulty in recognizing him. Their subconscious defense, protecting them from realizing that they were wrong in thinking that the dreams were nothing but his grandiose fantasies, threw them into denial, so that when they prostrated themselves to him, like the sheaves in the dream, they could not afford to recognize that his dreams had been prophetic and had come true. The Torah has thus given us a clear case of denial.

One of the glaring omissions in the entire epic is how did Yaakov react when he discovered the truth? In his blessings to his children before his death, Yaakov barely alludes to the brothers' deed, and they later sent Yosef a message that Yaakov requested that he not avenge himself. But what was Yaakov's reaction when he found out that Yosef's blood-stained cloak was a sham, and that his sons had put him through twenty two years of inhumane suffering? Did he not shout at them and curse them for their lying and the unthinkable grief they had caused him? Why does the Torah not tell us his reaction?

The answer is simple. The Torah does not tell us Yaakov's reaction because Yaakov did not react. The Midrash states that Yaakov had said, "Hashem has turned away from me," and Hashem said, "I am manipulating things to

make his son viceroy of the greatest empire on earth, and he is complaining."

Yosef said to his brothers, "It was not you who sent me to Egypt. It was Hashem" (Breishis 45:8). This was not something to alleviate their guilt, but a genuine belief. During his mourning, Yaakov was deprived of the Divine spirit, but once he knew that Yosef was alive, the Divine spirit returned to him and he realized, as did Yosef, that the brothers were pawns in the hands of Hashem. He firmly believed that it was not the brothers who had sold him into Egypt, but it was Hashem, and he, therefore, gave them no more than a slap on the wrist before he died.

This is what true emunah is all about. Not to react after twenty two years of suffering because one believed and trusted in Hashem.

Another aspect in the Yosef episode is the question raised by a number of Torah commentaries. Knowing how deeply his father must be grieving, why did Yosef not send a message to his father, "Don't grieve for me. I am alive."

My late brother Rav Shloime zt"l provided an answer which must be carefully thought through.

Rambam (Hil. Teshuva 2:4) says that true teshuvah requires more than just remorse. Teshuvah requires a total character overhaul, so that the person can say, "I am no longer the person who committed that sin. I am a different person." When this is achieved, the "new person" is not held culpable for what the previous person did.

One way of demonstrating that one has become a different person, Rambam says (ibid 2:1), is that if the person finds himself in similar circumstances to those of the sin, but this time acts differently rather than repeating the sin, that is an indication that one has truly changed and is a different person.

If Yosef had simply forgiven his brothers, he would have been the magnanimous saint, and they would have been the groveling penitents, doomed to bear the shame of their deed forever. Yosef had heard their expression of remorse (Breishis 42:21), but what he wanted was to give them the opportunity to redeem themselves so that they could have a feeling of dignity and self-esteem and walk upright with their heads high.

In order to achieve this, Yosef orchestrated the events so that Binyamin, who had now become Yaakov's favorite, would be suspected of thievery and would be kept as a slave. How would the brothers react? This was their opportunity to repeat their sin. "Good! Father's new favorite is a thief. We can get along perfectly well without him. We got rid of Yosef, who was father's favorite, and now we can get rid of Binyamin."

But this time the brothers acted differently. Yehudah said, "Spare Binyamin. Send him back to his father. I will be a slave in his place."

Seeing that the brothers had indeed redeemed themselves, Yosef could now reveal himself to them. He had saved their pride.

Yosef could have sent a message to Yaakov, but that would have exposed everything and the brothers would never have the opportunity to redeem themselves. Yosef knew the dreams would come true, and he engineered things to simulate the original sin.

But why did he let his father suffer? This is the powerful message. Yosef knew his father well, and he knew that Yaakov would gladly accept twenty-two years of suffering in order to allow his children to have self-esteem and not be crushed by guilt for the rest of their lives.

That is a major teaching of the Yosef epic, and tells us how important self-esteem is to life.

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from Rabbi Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com>
reply-to rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com
to Rav Kook List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com>
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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Prayer - The King's Servant and His Minister

Chanina ben Dosa's Prayer

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, the great first-century scholar and leader, was deeply troubled - his son was seriously ill. When the child's condition became life-threatening, the rabbi turned to one of his students, Chanina ben Dosa, known for his piety and ability to perform miracles. "Chanina, please pray for my son so that he may live!"

Chanina willingly obliged. He placed his head between his knees in complete submission to God, and prayed for mercy. And the boy recovered. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai later commented to his wife: "If I were to place my head between my knees all day long, it would not have made a difference."

"What?" exclaimed the rabbi's wife. "Is Chanina greater than you?"

"No," replied Rabbi Yochanan. "But he is like a servant before the King, while I am like a minister before the King." [Berachot 34b]

What is the difference between the king's servant and his minister? Why was Chanina ben Dosa's prayer more efficacious than the prayer of an eminent scholar like Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai?

Two Paths

In general, there are two paths to serve God. The first path is through the mind: to utilize one's intellectual faculties to grasp and follow the ways of God. The second path relies principally on the heart. It is based on one's innate disposition towards kindness and holiness.

Both paths are valid forms of serving God - whether one is guided by the intellect's enlightened truth, or by one's innate sense of goodness and purity.

For those whose service is based on the intellect, they must concentrate their efforts on attaining and internalizing true knowledge of God's ways.

Prayer, on the other hand, primarily engages feelings and emotions; it contributes less to the path of intellectual spiritual growth.

But for those who choose the path of the heart, prayer contributes greatly to refine and uplift their service. For this reason, their prayers are more likely to be accepted, as Divine providence looks to assist and complete us in the path that we have chosen. As the Sages taught in Makkot 10b: "On the path one wishes to take - on that path he is conducted."

The service of the mind is elevated above that of the heart, just as the intellect is a higher faculty, above the emotions. Nonetheless, prayer will be closer and more effective for those who have chosen the path of holy emotions, the path of elevating the spirit through an outpouring of prayer and feeling the natural draw of closeness to God.

The Servant and the Minister

Now we may understand Rabbi Yochanan's response to his wife. His student Chanina ben Dosa was like a servant before the King. Chanina's service was based primarily on holy and pure emotions. He performed God's Will like a faithful servant, without questioning or deeper understanding. And Chanina's sincere prayers, straight from the heart, naturally suited his spiritual service.

The great scholar Rabbi Yochanan, on the other hand, was like the King's minister. His service was an elevated path, the service of Torah wisdom and scholarship. For one accustomed to this higher service, the emotional service of prayer is a descent; it is less central for this spiritual path.

Perhaps that is the significance of the Talmud's description of Chanina ben Dosa's prayer - "he lowered his head between his knees." This bodily position indicates a service of God in which the intellect takes a backseat. The head is lowered, while the heart and its emotions take center stage.

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Comments and inquiries may be sent to: <mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com>

from Jeffrey Gross <jgross@torah.org>
reply-to neustadt@torah.org,
to weekly-halacha@torah.org
date Thu, Jan 7, 2010 at 4:05 PM

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mailed-by torah.org

Weekly Halacha by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Parshas Shemos

Eyeglasses that Break on Shabbos

Before we establish if and how broken eyeglasses can be fixed on Shabbos, let us list the halachic violations that may be incurred when doing so. Our discussion covers the two most common mishaps – a temple (earpiece) breaking off from a frame, and a lens popping out of a frame. There are three areas of concern:

1. It is Biblically forbidden to firmly attach two objects on Shabbos and Yom Tov, either because of Boneh or Tikun Mana, a form of Makeh b'Patish[1]. It makes no difference whether the objects are fitted into each other tightly or screwed into each other tightly. [Even though a minority view holds that the Biblical prohibition applies only when the items are forced together but not when they are merely screwed into each other[2], in practice we should follow the stringent view(3).] Accordingly, it is strictly forbidden to screw a temple onto a frame on Shabbos and on Yom Tov[4].
2. Even inserting the screw into the hinge without tightening it is forbidden, since the normal tendency is to tighten the screw, and one can easily forget himself and inadvertently tighten it automatically after inserting it[5]. This Rabbinic prohibition is called shema yitka, which literally means, "liable to be firmly attached." The decree of shema yitka applies only on Shabbos, not on Yom Tov, since the Rabbis felt it would cause undue hardship and interfere with simchas Yom Tov[6].

3. As an added precaution, the Rabbis forbade handling the detached objects by rendering them muktzeh. The case which the Shulchan Aruch[7] discusses involves a kirah, a four-legged stove, whose leg (or legs) became detached. The halachah is that both the base and the detached legs may not be moved, since one may easily forget and reattach the legs to the stove, thus violating a Biblical prohibition. Since this Rabbinic prohibition originated with the case of a stove, it became known as gezeiras kirah, "the decree concerning the stove[8]."

4. In the following cases gezeiras kirah does not apply:

If the leg is broken or missing and can no longer be re-attached.

In such a case the stove is not muktzeh, since we no longer fear that the detached parts will be re-attached[9].

If the leg was detached before Shabbos and the stove was being used even though it was missing a leg[10].

On Yom Tov[11].

As mentioned above, the Shulchan Aruch uses a stove as his case in point. The Rama adds that the same rules apply to a bench whose legs became detached. Most latter-day poskim[12] agree that all similar objects are included in this Rabbinic prohibition[13]. It follows, therefore, that the halachos concerning a temple which becomes detached from its frame will be similar to the cases of the stove and the bench mentioned above.

Based on these principles, we can now answer the following questions:

Q: Can the temple be screwed back onto the frame?

A: Strictly forbidden, according to all views.

Q: Can the screw be inserted into the hinge without tightening it?

A: No. The prohibition of shema yitka applies. On Yom Tov, however, it is permitted.

Q: May one wear the glasses while only one temple is attached?

A: On Yom Tov, yes. On Shabbos, however, it depends: If the detached temple or screw is lost, it is permitted to wear the frames minus the temple, since gezeiras kirah does not apply. If the detached temple and screw are accessible, the frames become muktzeh. If, however, it is acceptable to be seen in glasses that have a missing temple, the glasses may be worn[14]. If

it would be embarrassing to be seen in such glasses, gezeiras kirah applies and the frames are muktzeh[15].

If the temple broke off before Shabbos and the glasses were already worn in their broken state, all poskim agree that it is permitted to wear them on Shabbos, regardless of whether the other temple or screw is missing or not[16].

Q: Can the temple be attached to the frames using a wire or a pin?

A: If the original screw, or a replacement, is available, then the frames, temple, and screw are muktzeh, based on gezeiras kirah. Consequently, they may not be moved at all on Shabbos[17].

If the screw is lost and no replacement is available, then gezeiras kirah does not apply. It is permitted to attach the temple to the frames using a safety pin, provided that it will be removed after Shabbos. [The poskim, however, do not permit attaching the temple to the frames using a wire or a needle, even if the wire or needle is not firmly tightened around the frame(18).]

On Yom Tov, since shema yitka and gezeiras kirah do not apply, it would be permitted to attach the temple using a pin or wire [as stated above], regardless of whether or not the screw is lost.

Q: There are frames (usually plastic ones) that hold the lens in place merely by exerting pressure on the lens; there is no screw involved. What can be done if a lens pops out of such frames?

A: If the lens pops out because the pressure on it has slackened (e.g., the frame expanded slightly due to wear and tear), then it may be reinserted[19]. If, however, the lens is knocked out forcibly and would have to be forced back in, then the poskim differ in their opinions. Some are stringent and forbid re-inserting it on the grounds of tikun keli[20], while others do not consider this an instance of tikun keli since the lens can be re-inserted with minimal pressure[21].

Q: What can be done if the frames break in half?

A: Nothing. Since they can no longer be worn, the frames are severe muktzeh and may not be moved for any reason.

[1] Mishnah Berurah 308:37.

[2] Taz, O.C. 313:7. See Minchas Yitzchak 4:122-21.

[3] Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 313:32, based on the view of the Magen Avraham. [See also Binyan Shabbos, Boneh, 2nd edition, pg. 309, who quotes Rav E. Auerbach's view that the lenient opinion was referring to objects which – although screwed into each other – can still be adjusted or turned, but not to tightly connected objects like a temple attached to frames.]

[4] Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 519:12.

[5] Rama, O.C. 313:6. Chazon Ish O.C. 50:10, however, disagrees and permits loosely inserting the screw without tightening it. In his opinion, shema yitka only applies when the pieces are tightly fitted together.

[6] Mishnah Berurah 519:9; Hilchos ha-Moadim 13, note 4; Binyan Shabbos, Boneh, 2nd edition, pgs. 63-65.

[7] O.C. 308:16. See also 313:8.

[8] See Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 308:47, Tehillah l'David 308:22 and Shulchan Shlomo 308:44-3, 4, who debate if gezeiras kirah renders the item severe or light muktzeh.

[9] Mishnah Berurah 308:69.

[10] Rama, 308:16.

[11] Since gezeiras kirah only applies if shema yitka applies as well.

[12] Ketzos ha-Shulchan 109:10; Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 86); Knei Bosesem 1:19.

[13] A minority view maintains that gezeiras kirah applies only to the two cases specifically mentioned in the original sources: a stove and a bench. This is the opinion of Imrei Yosher 1:102, Chelek Levi O.C. 101, and Beis Yisrael, 12, quoted in Tzitz Eliezer 9:28-9.

[14] Rav M. Feinstein (Sefer Tiltulei Shabbos, pg. 148); Az Nidberu 8:33.

[15] Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pgs. 85-86.)

[16] Rama, O.C. 308:16.

[17] Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Meor ha-Shabbos, vol. 2, pg. 600).

[18] Rav S.Z. Auerbach, *ibid.*; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Shalmei Yehudah 4:50); Knei Bosesem 1:19.

[19] Rav Y. S. Elyashiv (Shalmei Yeudah, pg. 88); Az Nidberu 8:33; B'tzeil ha-Chochmah 6:123.

[20] Rav Y. S. Elyashiv, *ibid.*; Sheraga ha-Meir 3:43; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 15:79; Binyan Shabbos, 2nd edition, Makeh B'patish, pg. 168. According to this opinion, the frames and the lenses would now be muktzeh, due to gezeiras kirah.

[21] Tzitz Eliezer 9:28-9; Az Nidberu 8:33.

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