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Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks Covenant & Conversation Shemot 5770

She is one of the most unexpected heroes of the Hebrew Bible. Without her, Moses might not have lived. The whole story of the exodus would have been different. Yet she was not an Israelite. She had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by her courage. Yet she seems to have had no doubt, experienced no misgivings, made no hesitation. If it was Pharaoh who afflicted the children of Israel, it was another member of his own family who saved the decisive vestige of hope: Pharaoh's daughter.

Recall the context. Pharaoh had decreed death for every male Israelite child. Yocheved, Amram's wife, had a baby boy. For three months she was able to conceal his existence, but no longer. Fearing his certain death if she kept him, she set him afloat on the Nile in a basket, hoping against hope that someone might see him and take pity on him. This is what follows:

Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe in the Nile, while her maids walked along the Nile's edge. She saw the box in the reeds and sent her slave-girl to fetch it. Opening it, she saw the boy. The child began to cry, and she had pity on it. "This is one of the Hebrew boys", she said.

Note the sequence. First she sees that it is a child and has pity on it. A natural, human, compassionate reaction. Only then does it dawn on her who the child must be. Who else would abandon a child? She remembers her father's decree against the Hebrews. Instantly the situation has changed. To save the baby would mean disobeying the royal command. That would be serious enough for an ordinary Egyptian; doubly so for a member of the royal family.

Nor is she alone when the event happens. Her maids are with her; her slave-girl is standing beside her. She must face the risk that one of them, in a fit of pique, or even mere gossip, will tell someone about it. Rumours flourish in royal courts. Yet she does not shift her ground. She does not tell one of her servants to take the baby and hide it with a family far away. She has the courage of her compassion. She does not flinch. Now something extraordinary happens:

The [child's] sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a Hebrew woman to nurse the child for you?" "Go", replied Pharaoh's

daughter. The young girl went and got the child's own mother. "Take this child and nurse it", said Pharaoh's daughter. "I will pay you a fee." The woman took the child and nursed it.

The simplicity with which this is narrated conceals the astonishing nature of this encounter. First, how does a child - not just a child, but a member of a persecuted people - have the audacity to address a princess? There is no elaborate preamble - "Your royal highness" or any other formality of the kind we are familiar with elsewhere in biblical narrative. They seem to speak as equals.

Equally pointed are the words left unsaid. "You know and I know", Moses' sister implies, "who this child is; it is my baby brother." She proposes a plan brilliant in its simplicity. If the real mother is able to nurse the child, we both minimise the danger. You will not have to explain to the court how this child has suddenly appeared. We will be spared the risk of bringing him up: we can say the child is not a Hebrew, and that the mother is not the mother but only a nurse. Miriam's ingenuity is matched by Pharaoh's daughter's instant agreement. She knows; she understands; she gives her consent.

Then comes the final surprise:

When the child matured, [his mother] brought him to Pharaoh's daughter. She adopted him as her own son, and named him Moses. "I bore him from the water", she said.

Pharaoh's daughter has not simply had a moment's compassion. She has not forgotten the child. Nor has the passage of time diminished her sense of responsibility. Not only does she remain committed to his welfare; she adopts the riskiest of strategies. She will adopt it and bring him up as her own son. This is courage of a high order.

Yet the single most surprising detail comes in the last sentence. In the Torah, it is parents who gave a child its name, and in the case of a special individual, G-d himself. It is G-d who gives the name Isaac to the first Jewish child; G-d's angel who gives Jacob the name Israel; G-d who changes the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah. We have already encountered one adoptive name - Tsofenat Paneakh - the name by which Joseph was known in Egypt; yet Joseph remains Joseph. How surpassingly strange that the hero of the exodus, greatest of all the prophets, should bear not the name Amram and Yocheved have undoubtedly used thus far, but the one given to him by his adoptive mother, an Egyptian princess. A midrash draws our attention to the fact: This is the reward for those who do kindness. Although Moses had many names, the only one by which he is known in the whole Torah is the one given to him by the daughter of Pharaoh. Even the Holy One, blessed be He, did not call him by any other name. (Shemot Rabbah 1: 26)

Indeed Moshe - Meses - is an Egyptian name, meaning "child", as in Ramses.

Who then was Pharaoh's daughter? Nowhere is she explicitly named. However the First Book of Chronicles (4: 18) mentions a daughter of Pharaoh, named Bitya, and it was she the sages identified as the woman who saved Moses. The name Bitya (sometimes rendered as Batya) means "the daughter of G-d". From this, the sages drew one of their most striking lessons:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to her: "Moses was not your son, yet you called him your son. You are not My daughter, but I shall call you My daughter." (Vayikra Rabbah 1: 3).

They added that she was one of the few (tradition enumerates nine) who were so righteous that they entered paradise in their lifetime (Derekh Eretz Zuta 1).

Instead of "Pharaoh's daughter" read "Hitler's daughter" or "Stalin's daughter" and we see what is at stake. Tyranny cannot destroy humanity. Moral courage can sometimes be found in the heart of darkness. That the Torah itself tells the story the way it does has enormous implications. It means that when we come to people we must never generalize, stereotype. The Egyptians were not all evil: even from Pharaoh himself a heroine was born. Nothing could signal more powerfully that the Torah

is not an ethnocentric text; that we must recognise virtue wherever we find it, even among our enemies; and that the basic core of human values - humanity, compassion, courage - is truly universal. Holiness may not be; goodness is.

Outside Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, is an avenue dedicated to righteous gentiles. Pharaoh's daughter is a supreme symbol of what they did and what they were. I, for one, am profoundly moved by that encounter on the banks of the Nile between an Egyptian princess and a young Israelite child, Moses' sister Miriam. The contrast between them - in terms of age, culture, status and power - could not be greater. Yet their deep humanity bridges all the differences, all the distance. Two heroines. May they inspire us.

Why a Child of Slaves can be greater than a Prince
The Times – Credo – June 2001

It was Freud's greatest Freudian slip, and for some reason his commentators, at least those I've read, haven't noticed it.

It appears in his last book, *Moses and Monotheism*, a strange work if ever there was one. It was published in 1939, by which time Freud had taken refuge in Britain. Had he stayed in Vienna, heaven knows what humiliations he would have suffered before being murdered along with his fellow Jews. For some reason, at this desperate time, Freud wrote a book (he originally described it as a 'historical novel') in which he tried to prove that Moses was an Egyptian. There have been many speculations as to why he wrote it, and I have no wish to add to their number. Early on in the book, though, there is a most curious episode.

Freud notes that several scholars have identified a common theme in stories about the childhood of heroes. The hero's birth is fraught with danger. As a baby, he is exposed to the elements in a way that would normally lead to death - sometimes by being placed in a box and thrown into the water. The child is rescued and brought up by adoptive parents. Eventually, he discovers his true identity. It is a story told about Sargon, Gilgamesh, Oedipus, Romulus and many others. It is also the story of Moses.

At this point, however, Freud notes that in one respect the story of Moses isn't like the others at all. In fact, it's the opposite. In the conventional story, the hero's adoptive parents are humble, ordinary people. Eventually he discovers that he is actually of royal blood, a prince. In the Moses story the reverse is the case. It is his adoptive family that is royal. He is brought up by the daughter of Pharaoh. His true identity, he discovers, is that he belongs, by birth, to a nation of slaves.

Freud saw this and then failed to see what it meant. Instead he changed tack and concluded that the story is a fabrication designed to conceal the fact that Moses was the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he really was a prince of Egypt. What Freud failed to realise is that the story of Moses is not a myth but an anti-myth. It takes a myth and turns it upside down.

Its message is simple and revolutionary. True royalty - the Bible suggests - is the opposite of our conventional wisdom. It isn't privilege and wealth, splendour and palaces. It's moral courage. Moses, in discovering that he is the child of slaves, finds greatness. It's not power that matters, but the fight for justice and freedom. Had Moses been an Egyptian prince, he would have been eminently forgettable. Only by being true to his people and to G-d did he become a hero.

Freud had mixed feelings about his own identity. He admired Jews but was tone-deaf to the music of Judaism. That is why, I suspect, he failed to see that he had come face to face with one of the most powerful moral truths the Bible ever taught. Those whom the world despises, G-d loves. A child of slaves can be greater than a prince. G-d's standards are not power and privilege. They are about recognising G-d's image in the weak, the powerless, the afflicted, the suffering, and fighting for their cause. What a message of courage Freud might have sent his people in that dark night! Let us at least see what he did not, that the story of Moses is one of the great narratives of hope in the literature of mankind.

<http://www.iyim.org.il/young-israel-torah/parsha/13%20Shemos/Shemos09AvnitShulman.html>

Parashas Shemos 21 Tevet 5769

This week we have an extra dvar Torah on Parshas Shemos due to its high relevancy to our times today.

By **Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman, Mara D'Asra, Young Israel of Midwood 5761**

As משה approached the סנה , the Torah tells us that he turned his face away, fearing to look at the Divine apparition: ויסתר משה פניו כי ירא מהביט אל האלוקים .

This turning away would seem to be a praiseworthy thing since it stemmed, as the פסוק tell us, from his fear of השם ; we know, after all, that משה רבינו epitomized the quality of היראת השם , and the fear that he demonstrated here was an expression of that trait.

And, indeed, the Gemara in ברכות quotes the view of רב שמואל בר נחמני who says that משה רבינו was ultimately rewarded for turning away from gazing at the סנה : ultimately meriting to have the שכינה shine through his own countenance to such a degree that the people were afraid to approach him, as he had once been afraid to approach the סנה .

That is one view in the Gemara. However, the Gemara there also cites an opposing view, and it is on that opposing view that I would like to focus your attention.

For against the view of רב שמואל בר נחמני , who considers משה רבינו's turning away as deserving of reward, the Gemara cites the view of רבי יהושע בן קרחה , who maintains that משה רבינו was punished for turning away from looking at the סנה ; for when משה later asked: show me Your glory, כשרציתי לא רצית, עכשיו שאתה רוצה אני איני רוצה . When I had wanted you to look at My manifestation in the burning סנה , you did not want to; now that you want, I am no longer willing.

Apparently רבי יהושע בן קרחה believes that משה was at fault; that he should have forced himself to look at the bush, rather than turn away in fear.

We need to understand this. After all, as we have seen, משה turned away out of fear of השם , which is one of our highest values. What fault is there in that? Or, to put the question differently, what imperative was there to look at the סנה , that ought to have overridden the fear that Moshe felt and that ought to have made him keep his gaze fixed on the fire.

I would like to suggest the following answer:

We all know that as human beings we have a moral obligation to alleviate the suffering of our fellow man; and as Jews, we have a particular obligation to alleviate the suffering of our fellow Jews. This is an obligation that is embodied in countless particular mitzvos, as well as in the general injunction of והתהלכת בדרכיו , to walk in the ways of הקב"ה ; מה הוא רחום אף אתה היה רחום ; as He is merciful so are we required to be merciful.

Of course, in order to help people we have to first listen to them, we have to pay attention to their needs. And, therefore, מעלים עיניו מן spoke with special disdain of someone who is הצדקה , who turns his eyes away from those who seek his charity. Helping begins with looking.

So we need to listen, and to look, at suffering, in order to help alleviate it.

But what if we can't help? What about cases of suffering where we know that there is nothing we can do or say that will be of any help? Can we turn away then, when - after all - looking will do no good?

The answer to this question can be found in a Gemara in Sanhedrin. The Gemara tells of a certain woman who was a

neighbor of רבן גמליאל , and who had lost a son. Every night she would stay up crying, and רבן גמליאל , in his home, would hear her and cry along with her, until - the Gemara tell us - he become sick from it.

Obviously anything Rabban Gamliel might have done to help this woman he must have done; but her son was dead, and Rabban Gamliel could not bring him back. What was the point, then, of his listening to her crying and crying along with her? After all, she didn't even see him do it. Why didn't Rabban Gamliel simply shut his shutters tight, delve into his learning and ignore her cries? Apparently Rabban Gamliel believed that so long as he could hear her crying he had a moral obligation to cry along with her. Even though there was nothing he could do to help, and even though she didn't even know that he was crying.

And that too stems from our emulation of the ways of הקב"ה . For when the Jews were suffering in Egypt הקב"ה appeared to Moshe in a סנה , in a lowly thorn bush. And חז"ל tell us that by doing so הקב"ה was revealing to Moshe one of the most amazing things that the Torah teaches about השם : that when man suffers, and when the Jewish people suffer, the שכניה , as it were, suffers along with them. עמו אנכי בצרה , עמו אנכי בצרה .

And here we come back to the point from whence we began. When Moshe saw the burning bush he turned away in fear. And ר"י maintains that that was wrong; despite his fear, he should have looked. Because what הקב"ה was showing משה was the צער השכינה , the pain of the שכניה itself; משה was given the opportunity to gaze into the mystery of the שכניה . That must have been a terrible, an awesome thing to gaze it. And so משה turned away in fear. We can certainly understand that. And yet - he should have looked. Despite the fear, despite the awe, even despite שמים , he should not have turned away.

Because there is an obligation not to turn away from suffering; to look suffering in the face. And for משה רבינו , in his uniqueness, that obligation extended even to the suffering of the שכניה itself. There is a great deal of suffering in ארץ ישראל today. Young men and women killed in their prime; innocent children maimed; and no one able to say how it will all end. Now it may well be that, from a practical point of view, there is little that we here in America can do. Yet we have a moral obligation not to turn our gaze away; hard as it is, there is a moral obligation to look suffering in the face.

In these trying times it is especially important for us to be in touch with our friends and relatives in ארץ ישראל , to call, to write, to visit if possible, in order to say to our brothers and sisters there: עמכם אנחנו בצרה ; we are with you, your pain is ours, your worry is ours, your travails are ours. And as we are with you now in your time of trouble, we will be with you too in your time of deliverance and rejoicing, may it come בעגלה ובזמן קריב , speedily in our day, אמן .

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting most of the following items.

Mazel Tov to Shaul Mordechai and Michal Stein on the birth of their daughter Faiga; Mazel Tov as well to grandparents Marcie and Neil Stein along with all the extended family.

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein
Jerusalem Post Friday, December 24, 2010
SENSITIVITY :: Rabbi Berel Wein

There is a value in Jewish life and law that encompasses the necessity of exhibiting sensitivity towards the feelings of others. This value is not rigidly defined in halachic terms as let us say an etrog or a succah is. It exists in a far more amorphous realm, one that is almost meant to be cultural and self understood.

Because it is not rigorously defined there are really no textbooks on the subject and from my years of experience in Jewish education, it is certainly not part of the core curriculum of most Jewish schools. This is a pity, for the lack of sensitivity to others feelings and needs has certainly created a much more fractured, aggressive and badly divided Jewish society both here in Israel and in much of the Diaspora as well.

In the nineteenth century in Lithuania Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant founded what came to be known as the Mussar movement. One of the values that he stressed almost above all others was the necessity for a Jew to be sensitive to the plight, beliefs and needs of others. The Mussar movement was greatly influential in Lithuanian Jewish life, especially in most of the Lithuanian yeshivot until World War II.

Alas, just as almost all of Lithuanian Jewry did not survive the war neither did the Mussar movement. There are still yeshivot that pay lip service to the values and texts of that movement but in truth its influence is minimal to nonexistent in today's Jewish world. What a pity!

It is not that we are violent one to another, though that is unfortunately also on the rise, as much as we are simply insensitive and unfeeling towards one another. The rabbis pointed out that even giving charity to the poor must be done in a sensitive and honorable way. Today, the industrialization of charity giving has created a terrible separation between the donor and the donee, a lack of human connection and a frightening callousness to the entire subject.

For various reasons that I will not bore you with, I found myself on a Lufthansa airplane traveling from Tel Aviv to Frankfurt am Main this past week. I have never flown Lufthansa before and I never visit Germany – my personal prejudice. But since I had to arrive in Chicago on that very day at a certain hour, the only connection to Chicago that fit my schedule was through Frankfurt am Main. So, I found myself seated on a Lufthansa airplane.

As the plane took off and the steward read the stock announcements about food service over the plane's public address system, I was struck by his statement that no pig meat is served on the flights to and from Tel Aviv. This impressed me as being an extremely sensitive statement of policy, taking into account the Jewish and Moslem passengers that make up the bulk of the traffic between Tel Aviv and Frankfurt am Main.

Maybe the history of Germany in the twentieth century still weighs on the German psyche and has made it more sensitive to others. I would certainly hope that this is the case. A friend of mine who recently accomplished his aliyah to Israel asked me if all Israeli drivers are aggressive and discourteous. I replied that one should never generalize but there is no doubt that people who are less narcissistic and aggressive and are sensitive to the needs of others around them are much safer and saner drivers. In general a large heaping of sensitivity would do wonders for the mood and temper of our society.

Sensitivity to others creates a sense of community solidarity. Solidarity is not conformity. The right to hold differing views is sacrosanct in the writings of the Talmud. Because of this, the Talmud also emphasizes that the other person's viewpoint is to be taken account and not demonized or rejected out of hand.

The schools of Hillel and Shamai disagreed over three hundred and twelve matters. Even though the school of Hillel was more numerous and authoritative, it nevertheless was always sensitive to the opinions, rulings and feelings of the school of Shamai. In many instances they withdrew their opinion in favor of the one of the school of Shamai when they understood it was a principle that the school of Shamai could not and would not abandon. Therefore the Talmud relates that both of the teachings of Hillel and Shamai are those of the living God of Israel. In

the long run of life and society, sensitivity is the lubricant that gives one a smoother existence.
Shabat shalom.

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: SHEMOT :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The Torah leaves us basically unprepared for its description of the events that are recorded for us in this week's parsha. When we last left the family of Israel at the conclusion of last week's parsha of Vayechi, the Jews found themselves comfortable, affluent, protected and settled well in the land of Goshen.

The Torah does not describe to us the process by which this situation so radically changed into becoming a slave state for the Jews. It only tells us of a new king who didn't know Yosef and, for reasons not explicitly mentioned in the Torah, became a hater and persecutor of the Jews.

The Torah seems to indicate that this is almost a natural state of affairs – to be expected. The Egyptian exile begins on a high note, deteriorates into abject sorrow and attempted genocide and ends with miraculous redemption. The Torah does not dwell upon any motives for the occurrence of this pattern of events. What did the Jews do wrong? Why was the Pharaoh such a hater? What were the economic or social factors of the time that allowed for such a dramatic worsening of the Jewish position in Egypt?

The Torah addresses none of these issues. It is almost as if the Torah wishes us to understand that these things happen blindly in human history. And, particularly in Jewish history, that the attempts of historians and sociologists to explain these irrational events and behavior patterns are really useless.

As has been often pointed out, all subsequent Jewish exiles – Babylonia, Spain, France, Germany, Eastern Europe, the Moslem Middle East – all seem to eerily conform to this original Egyptian template. As usual the Torah leaves us with more questions than it provides answers for. In effect, that is why the Torah is called the book of human life.

We are also unprepared to recognize the savior of Israel in the person of Moses. We are told how he was miraculously saved from the crocodiles of the Nile by the daughter of the Pharaoh and raised in the royal court. He sympathizes with the brutalized Jewish slaves, defends them, and is forced to flee from Egypt.

We hear nothing regarding Moses for the next sixty years until he reemerges as a shepherd in Midian, married to the daughter of Yitro, the local religious chief who, at this time, is still a pagan. Hardly the resume' that one would expect for the leader of Israel, the greatest of all prophets and the teacher of all human kind.

Where did his holiness and greatness stem from, how was it developed, who were his mentors and what were his experiences over those long decades of separation from his people? The Torah gives us no clue or answer to these questions. It effectively points out that greatness oftentimes comes from unexpected sources and from people and leaders who operate outside of the usual establishment circles.

All of life is a mystery and certainly the Jewish story remains in its base an inexplicable one. This therefore sets the stage for everything else that will now follow in the Torah. It is why the Jewish people, when accepting the Torah pledge to God that "we will do and then perhaps try to understand," if we wish to understand first we will never come to do. The Divine hand guides us but it is never subject to our rational thoughts and explanations.

Shabat shalom.

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

To weekly@ohr.edu

Subject Torah Weekly

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Shmot

For the week ending 25 December 2010 / 17 Tevet 5771

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

OVERVIEW

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shmot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother Yocheved to fulfill that role. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mt. Sinai) Moshe witnesses the burning bush where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael, the land promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the people's eyes: transforming his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker, G-d tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

INSIGHTS

Believing Your Own Press Release

"And Moshe grew, and he went out to his brothers." (2:11)

There once was a Hollywood cowboy who had come from a very 'un-cowboyish' background. He was an assistant in a men's clothing store in the mid-West.

To beef up his image a bit, the studio publicity machine had concocted a new identity for him. They did a quick face-lift on his life story, which now depicted him being discovered in a Wells Fargo telegraph office in a small cowboy town in Arizona.

It happened one day that, at the peak of his fame, the Hollywood cowboy came to that small town. As befitting his fame, he was given a ticker-tape parade down Main Street.

As he was riding on the back of his open limousine, his car passed the Wells Fargo office. He leaned across to his press agent — the very same press agent who had rewritten his past — and said to him without batting an eyelid.

"You see that Wells Fargo station. That's where I was discovered."

One of the dangers of fame is that you can start to believe your own press releases.

The Midrash tells us that when Moshe 'grew', he grew 'not like the way of the world'. The way of the world is that when a person grows and becomes celebrated and famous, he forgets — or makes himself forget — his roots, his background and his family. He seems to have a kind of insidious amnesia when it comes to their problems and difficulties.

Moshe grew up in the palace of Pharaoh with an Egyptian gold spoon in his mouth. Nevertheless, he grew up 'not like way of the world' — he never forgot the plight of his people. Moshe 'went out to his brothers'.

He went out to discover their problems and the ways he could rescue them from oppression.

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

<http://www.ohr.org.il/>

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshas Shmos

Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion

For the week ending 25 Teves 5757 (3 & 4 January 1997)

*This issue is dedicated in memory of Avraham Yosef ben Shmerel by his daughters
Tamar Rachel, Yehudit Esther, Malka, Zisa Sima.*

CASTLES BUILT ON SAND

“The Egyptians started to make the Israelites do labor intended to break their bodies” (1:13)

Henry Ford, the famous American industrialist, was once sitting on the verandah of his mansion by the sea. He saw a fisherman on the beach, lying in the sun, without a care in the world. Next to the fisherman was a bucket in which a few fish were swimming lazily to and fro. Ford called to the fisherman, who roused himself from his reverie and ambled over to the mansion.

“What are you doing there?” asked Ford.

“Relaxing” replied the fisherman.

“You know” said Ford “If you worked a little harder, you’d catch more fish.”

“And then what?” said the fisherman.

“And then maybe you’d have enough money to buy a boat.”

“Uh-huh... And then what?” said the fisherman.

“Well, if you had a boat, you’d be able to catch a lot more fish, and if you worked hard, maybe you’d be able to buy a second boat.” “And then what?”

“Well, with two boats you could catch a lot of fish, and with any luck you might be able to make enough to buy a whole fleet of boats.” “And then what?”

“Well - with a whole fleet of boats working for you, you could just take it easy and lie on the beach all day.”

“But I’m already doing that!”

People don’t work just to make money.

A person needs to have a sense of purpose, of pride in his achievements.

The Torah describes the labor that the Jews did in Egypt as Avodas Parech - Work which breaks a person. ‘Busy-work.’

Nothing diminishes a person so much as seeing his efforts as being futile, as totally without purpose. Thus, Pharaoh instructed that the Jews build Arei Miskenos - literally ‘pitiful cities.’ These cities were built on sand, and no sooner would they be completed, then they would topple and fall. Then they would have to start to build all over again, only to see the entire process repeated again and again.

There once was a prisoner in a Soviet labor camp who was confined to his cell for ten years. Every day was spent turning a large handle that protruded from his cell wall. He was told that the handle turned a flour mill next door to his cell.

At the end of ten years, when he was finally released from his cell, he saw that on the other side of the wall there was absolutely nothing. This realization was more crushing than all his long years of imprisonment. The greater the sense of purpose in one’s work, the greater is the effort that a person is prepared to invest to achieve it.

A Jew works for an eternal life in Olam Haba - the World to Come.

“Six days shall you labor (ta’avod) and do all your work (melacha), and the seventh day will be a Sabbath to Your Lord.” What transforms a person’s menial labor (avoda) into purposeful creative activity (melacha) is Shabbos the ‘taste’ of Olam Haba in this world.

Adapted from Outlooks and Insights - Rabbi Zev Leff

BELIEVING YOUR OWN PRESS RELEASE

“And Moshe grew, and he went out to his brothers....” (2:11) There once was a Hollywood cowboy who had come from a very ‘un-cowboyish’ background: He was an assistant in a men’s clothing store in the mid-West. To beef up his image a bit, the studio publicity machine had concocted a new identity for him. They did a quick face-lift on his life story, which now depicted him being discovered in a Wells Fargo telegraph office in a small cowboy town in Arizona.

It happened one day that, at the peak of his fame, the Hollywood cowboy came to that small town. As befitting his fame, he was given a ticker-tape parade down Main (or was it Mane?) Street.

As he was riding on the back of his open limousine, his car passed the Wells Fargo office. He leaned across to his press agent - the very same press agent who had re-written his past - and said to him without batting an eyelid:

“You see that Wells Fargo station? That’s where I was discovered...”

One of the dangers of fame is that you can start to believe your own press releases.

The Midrash tells us that when Moshe ‘grew’ he grew ‘not like the way of the world.’ The way of the world is that when a person grows and becomes celebrated and famous, he forgets (or makes himself forget) his roots, his background and his brothers. He seems to have a kind of amnesia when it comes to their problems and difficulties.

Moshe grew up in the palace of Pharaoh with an Egyptian ‘gold spoon’ in his mouth; nevertheless, he grew up ‘not like way of the world,’ he never forgot the plight of his people. Moshe ‘went out to his brothers.’ He went out to discover their problems and the ways he could rescue them from oppression.

Based on Yalkut HaDrush in Iturei Torah

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Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

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Parshas Shemos

But the midwives feared G-d...and they caused the boys to live.

(1:17)

Rashi emphasizes that the midwives sustained the infants with food and water, so that they would thrive. Their fear of G-d was more than fear of retribution. For that, it would have sufficed simply not to do anything negative. By not harming the infants, they would be expressing their yiraas ha'onesh, fear of punishment. Theirs was a yiraas ha'romemus, fear of awe. They were not afraid - they were awestruck. This fear captivated them, so that they were compelled to not only save the infants, but also to sustain them. The infants comprised the Jewish nation's future.

A similar idea applies concerning the middah, character trait, of chesed, lovingkindness. There are those who act kindly because it generates a good feeling internally. While this might be a selfish form of chesed, the beneficiary receives assistance, and that is what is important. Others simply cannot say no. When they are asked to do a favor, they are uncomfortable replying in the negative. Once again, the reason for acting kindly emanates from the wrong form of motivation, but, after all is said and done, the beneficiary has been helped. A higher level of chesed is performed by one who identifies with someone's needs and feels as if they are his own. He, thus, acts out of a sense of association, putting himself in the beneficiary's shoes. Last, is the one who acts kindly because it is a mitzvah. Hashem has instructed us to perform chesed, to act kindly. He is simply following Hashem's command. The meyaldos, midwives, acted positively because they feared G-d. Saving Jewish babies is a mitzvah. Hashem commands it - period. There is no more to say. We save; we sustain; we do whatever is necessary to carry out Hashem's command. It is not an issue of fear of punishment, sense of

compassion, or personal guilt; we are just simply carrying out Hashem's mitzvah

One who acts out of fear still does the right thing, but he does not necessarily maximize his efforts. He does what he must do. Not so, one who acts out of a sense of awe. He can never do enough. He seeks every avenue for performing the mitzvah in the most punctilious manner. When Horav Akiva Eiger, zl was Rav in Friedland, the city became the victim of a plague. People were dying everywhere. A number of young, nursing mothers perished in the plague, leaving over a house full of yesomim ketanim, young orphans. These infants were starving because no one was available to nurse them. Rav Akiva Eiger acted upon finding a solution to this problem.

The following Shabbos, he stood before the Aron HaKodesh and delivered a heart-rending plea that these infants be adopted by suitable surrogates who would attend to the individual needs of each orphan. The young women nursed these infants until they were successfully weaned. Every Sunday morning, after the Rav had delivered his daily shiur, lecture, in the shul, he walked to every home that served as a surrogate, to inquire about the well-being of "his" orphans. He checked the home, making sure it was clean and suitable for the orphan. He did not only do what he "had" to do; he went out of his way to provide the optimum care for the infants.

One who serves Hashem out of a sense of awe does not waver in his commitment, does not accept dispensations, and does not look for a way to ease his obligations. The Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, sustained some of the most cruel punishment during the Holocaust - all because of his refusal to do mitzvos lightly. One day, the head kapo of the concentration camp noticed that the Rebbe had not yet shaved off his beard, a requirement of all Jewish inmates. The kapo screamed at him, "What is with the beard? You know that everyone must remove his beard."

"I did not have a chance to shave it," the Rebbe answered.

"I will accept your excuse for now, but when I see you again, you had better be without your beard. I will not tolerate your insolence any longer. This is your last chance," were the kapo's instructions.

The next day, as the Rebbe was on his way to his forced labor, he once again met the kapo. The man was livid with rage because the Rebbe had not yet shaved his beard. He immediately set upon the Rebbe, pummeling him mercilessly. After the beating, the Rebbe was taken to the infirmary to recuperate. The kapo was relentless, instructing his soldiers to remove the Rebbe's beard by tearing it off his face! This was a painful and brutal form of punishment, but what else could be expected of a man to whom killing Jews meant very little?

The Rebbe stood in front of the Kapo, surrounded by Nazi soldiers waiting expectantly to carry out the Kapo's instructions, and he began to cry bitterly, "I am willing to relinquish my cot in the dormitory and sleep on the floor, in addition to you giving me twenty-five lashes of the whip, but do not touch my beard. You can do what you like, but please do not remove my beard," the Rebbe pleaded.

The words left his mouth and suddenly a miracle occurred, as the frustrated kapo screamed, "Leave my presence now! I never want to see you again!"

Understandably, the Rebbe moved very quickly, as he began to run from the Kapo. No sooner had the Rebbe begun to flee, than the kapo screamed, "Halt! Stop immediately where you are!" Fearing the worst, the Rebbe stopped in his tracks, as the kapo took out a large herring from a bag and said, "Here, fill your stomach with this!"

The Rebbe concluded the story, saying, "It was then that I realized the overriding significance of mesiras nefesh, sacrifice for the glory of Hashem. Despite the fact that the Nazis are cruel beasts, the most spiritually contaminated people on the earth, when a Jew is willing to sacrifice himself for kedushas Hashem, the sanctity of Hashem, the Almighty's salvation comes momentarily, with the blink of an eye. I went

from almost certain painful death, to life with sustenance, in the period of a few moments, all because I was not willing to renege on Kiddush Shem Shomayim, sanctifying Hashem's Name."

(Pharaoh) sought to kill Moshe; so Moshe fled from before Pharaoh. (2:15)

He saw and behold! The bush was burning in the fire, but the bush was not consumed. (3:2)

After Moshe Rabbeinu killed the Egyptian who had been striking a Jew, Dassan and Aviram - who later were to earn a warranted reputation as wicked people - Moshe's nemeses, informed on him to Pharaoh. The king did not take this matter lightly, and he immediately handed Moshe over to the executioner. Chazal tell us that the executioner swung his sword, but it broke against Moshe's neck. This is the meaning of Moshe's statement (ibid 18:4), "And He saved me from the sword of Pharaoh." The sparing of Moshe Rabbeinu from the executioner's sword is a miracle of epic proportion. It was the precursor of his ability to lead the Jewish People. It was no covert act of salvation; it was an overt miracle, witnessed by everyone. We wonder why not more than a subtle allusion to it is made in the Torah. Such a miracle should have a Biblical reference.

Later on, (ibid 4:11) following Moshe's refusal to return to Egypt and transmit Hashem's message to Pharaoh due to his speech impediment, Hashem responded, "Who gave man a mouth...? Is it not I, Hashem?" Rashi interprets this as a reference to Moshe's failed execution and the proceedings leading up to it. "Who taught you to speak in your defense when you were being judged before Pharaoh for killing the Egyptian? Who made Pharaoh mute in that he agreed to have you executed? And who made his servants deaf in that they did not take heed when Pharaoh commanded them against you? And as for the executioners, who made them blind, in that they did not see when you fled from the executioner's platform and escaped? Is it not I, whose name is Hashem, that did all of this?" Once again, our question remains: Why does the Torah ignore the miracle of Moshe's salvation from the executioner's sword?

Furthermore, the Rosh Yeshivah of Mir in America, Horav Shmuel Berenbaum, zl, asks, "What is the meaning of Hashem's reply to Moshe? Moshe demurred from going to Pharaoh, saying 'I am not a man of words' (4:10), to which Hashem replied, 'Who gave man a mouth?'" Certainly Moshe did not question Hashem's ability to remove his speech impediment. Moshe was acutely aware that, if he accepted the mission, Hashem would give him a "voice" that would impress and inspire Pharaoh. It is just that Moshe understood that in order for this to occur, it would demand miraculous intervention on the part of Hashem. Moshe felt himself to be unworthy of such extreme measures. Alternatively, Moshe was not sure that Hashem should alter the course of nature for the Jewish People. There must be a more "natural" way of affecting their liberation. Moshe simply did not want the entire experience to be of a miraculous nature.

Last, the Rosh Yeshivah asks, when Moshe turned aside to see the burning bush, what prompted him to do so? Someone of Moshe's spiritual calibre does not interrupt his spiritual line of thought to look at a fire in the wilderness. What about the burning bush attracted Moshe's attention?

In response to these questions, the Rosh Yeshivah relates an incident that occurred when Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, in his advanced years, decided to travel to Paris to repair what he thought was a spiritual deficiency. He arrived there amid great hardship, and he was forced to live in one small room in which it was practically impossible for a person to live comfortably. In addition to his living arrangements, he underwent much physical deprivation. Yet, he felt that it was all worth it. He was on a mission to serve Hashem. He was carrying out His will. Rav Yisrael later related to his students that, while he was in Paris, he slipped and fell down two flights of stairs. As he was helped up, he was hardly breathing. Truly, it was a miracle sent by Hashem that he was alive. A few days

later, he returned home. He later related, "I was never afraid; I never worried, because when I was in Paris, I was not there for myself. I had no vestige of personal interest whatsoever. It was all to perform Hashem's will. Thus, 'Paris' could not harm me."

The Rosh Yeshivah notes that Rav Yisrael did not say that he was certain that he would be saved by a miracle; rather, since he was there "for Hashem," nothing negative could happen to him. This implies that he was naturally guarded from all danger. Why? Where does nature fit into the equation? From where did Rav Yisrael Salanter derive this hypothesis?

Rav Shmuel feels that it is to be derived from our parsha. When Moshe asked Hashem, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" Hashem replied, "I will be with you. This shall be a sign that I sent you" (3:11). Rashi explains that Hashem was telling Moshe, "You ask, 'Who am I to go to Pharaoh? You are not going for yourself, but for Me, and I will be with you. The vision you see of the burning bush performing My mission and, thus, not consumed is also applicable to you. If you go on My mission, you will not be hurt.'" Rashi seems to indicate that the fact that the bush was not consumed was not the result of a miraculous occurrence, but rather it was part of the process of carrying out Hashem's will. When one is in the process of acting for Hashem, he will not get hurt.

The Rosh Yeshivah explains this phenomenon in the following manner. Under normal circumstances, certain matter has within it the power to damage and even destroy other matter. Fire can burn; falling down can break and cause pain. This is a natural occurrence which is part of the dynamics of life. When one is an inactive participant in the service of Hashem, this schema changes. His natural physical makeup is altered, and he becomes stronger - to the point that damaging matter will not affect him. This is the inference of the burning bush. Hashem intimated to Moshe that he need not worry. Just as fire is rendered powerless to consume a bush that is in the service of Hashem, so, too, will Pharaoh be helpless in harming Moshe. This is not a miraculous occurrence. It is a "stipulation" within nature that no harm can befall one who is actively involved in Hashem's service.

We understand now why Moshe stopped to look at the burning bush. When Moshe saw the bush that was not being consumed by fire, he initially thought it was a miraculous occurrence. On second thought, he wondered why Hashem would perform a miracle in the desert. What purpose was served by this? He deduced that, veritably, it was not a miracle but, rather, a natural occurrence, whereby under certain conditions matter is able to defy the destructive forces of fire. This must be a very special bush. Hence, Moshe went over to find out what about this bush granted it such power.

Moshe's dialogue with Hashem revolved around this discourse. Moshe felt it was not appropriate for him to rely on miraculous intervention when he met with Pharaoh. Hashem told him that it had nothing to do with miracles. Pharaoh was powerless to inflict any pain or injury on Moshe as long as he was on a mission for the Almighty. This is very much like the time when the executioner's sword was rendered powerless against Moshe's neck. It was not a miracle - it was natural. Moshe was part of Hashem's Divine plan; thus, he could not be harmed. For this reason these occurrences are not emphasized in the Torah, which primarily records experiences that are supernatural.

Perhaps this is the underlying meaning of the Rabbinic dictum of Shluchei mitzvah einan nizakin, "People on a mission to perform a mitzvah will not be harmed." It is not a miracle. They are on Hashem's mission. Nothing can happen to them. The following episode underscores this idea.

After World War II, officials still encountered difficulties when attempting to bring the survivors to America. Immigration quotas closed the doors to many. There was a group of yeshivah students who were stranded in a DP camp under the direction of a governor general who

refused to permit them to leave. After some investigation, it was discovered that a certain rabbi from Connecticut had a warm relationship with this governor general.

Word was brought to Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, who was intricately involved in saving Jews from Europe. He immediately sent for the rabbi and requested that he fly to Europe and speak to his friend. Lives were at stake. The rabbi agreed, and left immediately for Europe. He succeeded in his mission, convincing his friend to release the yeshivah students. Mission accomplished, he took the first available flight home.

Then tragedy struck. The plane on which he had booked his seat crashed in the Atlantic Ocean, leaving no survivors. When his wife was notified by courier, the distraught woman went right to Rav Aharon and, with a heartrending cry, asked, "Should I sit shivah, mourn, for my husband, or am I an agunah, an abandoned wife who is in limbo, since her husband's body has not yet been recovered?"

Rav Aharon replied, Es ken nit zein. "It cannot be."

"But Rebbe," she protested, "I have a notification from the carrier that the plane went down, and my husband's name was on the manifest."

With his classic determination, Rav Aharon told her, "Chazal say that shluchei mitzvah are not harmed - even on their return. I am sure that nothing happened to your husband! Go home and wait for news."

The woman went home and waited. Three days later, the phone rang. It was her husband on the line. Naturally, the woman screamed hysterically, "The plane crashed. There were no survivors. What happened?"

Her husband explained that when the plane stopped to refuel in Paris, he realized that he had *yahrzeit*. He decided to run out, grab a taxi, look for a minyan, say Kaddish and return before the flight took off for New York. He did not make it in time. The next flight to Chicago encountered a storm en route and was forced to land in Canada. "Now, please wire me some money, so that I can come home!" Those who are on a mission for Hashem are protected from all harm. This is something to remember.

So Moshe took his wife and sons...and returned to the land of Egypt. (4:20)

Moshe Rabbeinu's initiative in taking his wife and sons back to Egypt raises concern. Moshe's wife, Tziporah, and her two sons had lived in Midyan in relative freedom. They never heard the sound of a taskmaster yelling at his Jewish slaves. Worry, concern, fear, beatings, pain and death were concepts that were, for the most part, foreign to them. So why would Moshe bring them to Egypt where slavery, with its accompanying misery and pain, was the normative way of life for a Jew? Indeed, their father and grandfather, Yisro, was incredulous over Moshe's decision. Chazal relate Moshe's dialogue with his father-in-law. Yisro asked, "Where are you taking them?"

"I am taking them to Egypt," was Moshe's reply.

"I cannot understand your decision. Egypt is filled with Jews, all yearning to leave, and you are taking your wife and sons there!" exclaimed Yisro.

Moshe replied, "Tomorrow they are destined to leave Egypt and stand at the foot of Har Sinai where they will hear Hashem's voice proclaim, 'I am Hashem, your G-d, who took you out of Egypt.' My children will not hear these words in the same manner that the Jewish People will hear them."

When Yisro heard Moshe's explanation, he agreed with his son-in-law's decision and bid him a peaceful journey.

While this gives us some latitude in understanding Moshe's decision, it does not explain why his family could not go directly to Har Sinai and hear the same words expressed by Hashem, that Klal Yisrael was privy to hear. Why did they have to go to Egypt in order to go to Har Sinai? Was that the more "scenic" route? Moshe could have gone alone and left his children in the safe care of Yisro. Once the Jews were liberated from Egypt, Moshe could have sent for them and they would have met him at Har Sinai. Why make the circuitous and dangerous trip to Egypt?

Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Shlita, explains that Moshe was acutely aware that if his sons did not grow up together with the Jews-- if they did not see and feel their pain and travail-- and were not a part of the liberation experience, then Har Sinai would not hold the same meaning for them. Without experiencing exile and liberation, the words, asher hotzeitsicha mei'eretz Mitzrayim, "Who took you out of the land of Egypt," would have little meaning. Hashem was talking to Klal Yisrael. If Moshe wanted his children to be a part of that experience, they would have to first experience Egypt. Har Sinai resonates for those who have lived through the Egyptian bondage and freedom. It does not have the same meaning to the casual observer.

Rav Elyashiv adds that one who wants his children to be mekabel the Torah, to accept the Torah and integrate it into their being, must see to it that they are raised and remain in an environment conducive to Torah advancement, values, and living.

It is not for naught that Chazal state in Pirkei d'R'Eliezer, zl, concerning the pasuk, "And Avraham arose in the morning and saddled his donkey" (Bereishis 22:3), "This was the same donkey upon which Moshe's children rode back to Egypt. It is the same donkey upon which Moshiach ben David will ride when he heralds the end of our exile." Chazal are teaching us that when he went to the Akeidah, Binding of Yitzchok, Avraham Avinu communicated to us the recipe for Jewish success, the prescription for Jewish continuity: we must go yachdav - together- Avraham and Yitzchak, father and son. The finest schools and the best and most innovative educators are successful only when the spirit of the Jewish home is supportive, complementing the school. If the home environment is not consistent with the school's values and educational structure, it is extremely difficult to produce successful fruits. I am not saying "impossible" - just "difficult."

Hashem said to Aharon, "Go to meet Moshe to the wilderness. So he went and encountered him...and he kissed him. (4:27)

Aharon HaKohen has a distinguished reputation as the exemplary baal chesed. His ahavas Yisrael, love for each and every Jew, motivated him to do everything within his power to maintain harmony within Klal Yisrael. Aharon's chesed was focused toward the Jewish People. In contrast, Avraham Avinu, the amud ha'chesed, pillar of lovingkindness, saw chesed as his mission to the world. In any event, as far as the Jewish People were concerned, Aharon was the primary baal chesed. It is, therefore, strange that his acts of lovingkindness are not mentioned anywhere in the Torah. It is Chazal who derive from Biblical allusions that Aharon was "the" baal chesed. In Bamidbar 20:29, the Torah records Aharon's passing, "When the entire assembly saw that Aharon had perished, they wept for thirty days, the whole House of Israel. Aharon was mourned by everyone, men and women alike, because he pursued peace and extended himself to promote harmony between adversaries." In Malachi 2:6, the Navi describes Aharon in glowing terms, confirming his commitment to chesed. "The teaching of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and with fairness and turned many away from iniquity." Aharon's love for the Jewish People is, in fact, a family trait, to be transmitted throughout the generations from Kohen to Kohen. Prior to Birkas Kohanim, when the Kohanim bless the people, they recite a blessing which bespeaks this character trait: "And has commanded us to bless His People, Yisrael, with love." Chazal tell us that a Kohen whose relationship with the people is estranged, manifesting no love, should not take part in Birkas Kohanim. Yet, we still have no source in the Torah that confirms Aharon HaKohen's unique sense of chesed.

It has been suggested that the above pasuk, describing Aharon's greeting his younger brother, Moshe - his friendly, loving kiss of greeting - is the source from which we derive insight into Aharon's unique character. It took superhuman forces of exemplary character to quell what most of us would have felt at the time. After all, Aharon had been the leader of the Jewish People until this moment. Moshe had been ensconced safely and

comfortably in Pharaoh's palace. Aharon was the older brother. He had been, up until this point, the man in charge, Klal Yisrael's leader. To give it all up for his younger brother must have reflected powerful commitment to Hashem and outstanding love for his brother. Once he was told to go to greet Moshe, Aharon could have performed this welcome with an attitude that would have indicated a lack of excitement. He did not, because he was Aharon. He was truly excited that Hashem had selected Moshe over him.

The Torah attests to Aharon's unbiased love when it says, "Moreover, he is going out to meet you. And when he sees you he will rejoice in his heart" (Shemos 4:14). These are Hashem's words to Moshe. The Almighty was telling him, "You might think that Aharon has reservations about handing over the reins of leadership to you. Do not worry. He is overjoyed for you." Aharon loved Hashem, and he perceived whatever the Almighty asked of him to be a great opportunity to fulfill. Hashem asks - Aharon gladly performs. He had no feelings of self. It was all for others. He exemplified the true baal chesed.

Va'ani Tefillah

Az yashir Moshe. Then Moshe sang

A fascinating Midrash lends insight into the meaning of the word az, then, in the context of the shirah. Moshe Rabbeinu intimated to Hashem, B'az chatasi, "With the word az, I sinned, when I said, 'U'mei az bassi l'Pharaoh,' from the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he did evil to this people." Moshe complained to Hashem that from the time he first came to Pharaoh to demand the Jewish People's release, life for the Jew had become increasingly difficult. Moshe felt that his demands had a negative effect on Pharaoh. "Now I praise You with the same az, then."

The Bais HaLevi explains that when a person experiences a troubling situation and emerges from it relatively unscathed, he offers his gratitude to his savior. In this case, the Jews are acknowledging Hashem as their Savior. There are two ways to show gratitude. In the first case, one recognizes his suffering, a painful juncture in his life for which he is not very happy, but the joy in being saved overwhelms the pain which he has experienced. In a second situation, one recognizes the therapeutic effect the troubles and misery have had on him. He acknowledges that without the "pain," there would have been no "gain." He then thanks his benefactor for his salvation, but he also is thankful for the trauma that preceded it.

Moshe now recognizes the therapeutic value of the Egyptian bondage. Had the Jews not experienced this slavery, they would not have warranted the miracles of the Exodus and the Splitting of the Red Sea. He now tells Hashem: "We are grateful for the original slavery - for the 'az bassi,' the pain and misery of Egypt, so that now we can experience the miracles at the Sea. We thank You for the troubles, as well as for the salvation."

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Subject Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Shmos

Miriam Taught The Lesson Of Not Giving Up Hope

The Mishna [Sotah 9b] discusses the concept of Divine reward and punishment that is "measure for measure". One example cited is because Miriam waited to see what would happen to her brother's basket floating in the Nile [Shmos 2:4], all of Klal Yisroel waited for Miriam for a seven day period [Bamidbar 12:15] when she was temporarily "exiled from the camp" as punishment for speaking lashon hara against her brother.

At first glance, the fact that Miriam stayed at the riverbank to see what would happen to her brother does not seem to be such a great deed on her part. She may have stayed out of curiosity, it may have been out of concern, but it does not seem like such a significant and important act that it should require all of Klal Yisrael to wait for her in the wilderness for an entire week.

In order to appreciate the actual significance of her act, we need to see it in the context provided by the Gemara in Sotah [12a]. The Talmud states that Amram (Miriam's father) was one of the great men of the generation. When he heard Pharaoh's decree to throw all the male children in the Nile, he gave up hope and decided to divorce his wife (Yocheved), rather than bring any more children into the world who would just be drowned in the Nile at birth. Amram set the pattern for the rest of the nation and everyone followed suit and divorced their wives as well.

Miriam told her father that his decree was worse than Pharaoh's decree. Pharaoh's decree was only directed at the males. Amram's decree would affect both the males and the females. Pharaoh's decree would only affect the fate of the children in this world, Amram was decreeing that the children would not come into existence and therefore would have no life in either this world or the next world. Amram listened to the advice of his daughter. He remarried Yocheved and at the age of 130 she became pregnant and had the child who grew up to be Moshe Rabbeinu. Again, everyone else followed Amram's example and remarried the wives they had divorced.

The Gemara then relates that when Moshe was born, the house filled with light. Amram kissed Miriam on the forehead and told her "Your prophecy has been fulfilled." However, when Moshe was thrown into the Nile (to hide him from the Egyptians), Amram went over to Miriam and slapped her on the forehead and asked, "Now what happened to your 'great prophecy'?"

It is in this context that we begin to understand the meaning of the pasuk "And his sister stood away from him at a distance." The reward that Miriam later received was not just for standing at the Nile for a few moments, it was for being the heroine of the whole story of Amram and all the Jews taking back their wives. It was for being responsible for the birth of the person who became the leader of the Jewish nation. She saved her brother and in effect the entire nation because she refused to give up hope.

Things looked hopeless. At the time Miriam spoke up to her father, there were already thousands and thousands of Jewish children who had died in the Nile. By standing firm, to see what would be with her brother, she demonstrated a particularly Jewish trait – resilience and refusal to abandon hope. Miriam's heroic faith and resilience thus gave courage to the nation and saved them from the terrible fate of discouragement and despair.

The Izhbitzer Rebbe expresses a similar idea. The law is that if one loses an object and gives up hope of ever getting it back (yeesh), then the person who finds the object is entitled to keep it. However, as long as a person has not given up hope of recovering his lost object then the finder is not allowed to keep it. The Izhbitzer Rebbe explained that a person's hope is the only thing that connects him to that object. He has lost possession and he cannot use it. His hope alone still binds him to the object. Once I give up hope, I've severed any connection I have to my lost object and that is why the finder can then keep it.

That is why, the Izhbitzer Rebbe said, it is so destructive to give up hope. Whatever the situation, as long as one keeps his hope alive, there remains a potential cure, or a potential redemption, or a potential salvation to the crises. One must maintain hope in order to have a chance to see that salvation come to fruition.

Had Miriam given up hope, then the last connection to the future deliverance of the Jewish people would have been severed. This is why her act of faith was so crucial. The payback for this was that when

Miriam became a leper and the Jewish people were in the desert, the Almighty told them that they must wait for her.

Why was this an appropriate payback? Because there is one thing that should never be done in the desert and that is to wait. In the heat, in the adverse conditions of a desert, one dare not dilly-dally around. The Jewish people could have said – "Miriam will catch up with us. We cannot stick around. What will become of us?" G-d told them. "No. Remember Miriam. She had faith. She did not give up hope because she knew that the rescue of the Almighty comes in the blink of an eye. We will wait for Miriam. Do not worry about the water. Do not worry about the lack of food. Do not worry about the heat."

Miriam taught us the timeless lesson of not giving up hope when things look bleak. This valuable lesson, symbolized by her waiting to see what would happen to Moshe in the Nile, is certainly worthy of the payback of waiting for Miriam when she was not able to travel.

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

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Galus and Apathy

Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger (The TorahWeb Foundation)

A terrifying epiphany, and an unrelenting response.

It was a moment of profound insight yet it was terribly disappointing and frustrating. "Achein nodah hadavar" marks that moment, when according to Rashi, Moshe Rabeinu understood why his people were in bondage and what was prolonging their Diaspora. It would not surprise me to learn that this was a "siman lebanim" and that similar insight, disappointment and frustration have come upon leaders, albeit of far lesser measure, countless times since.

It all happened to Moshe as he intervened with concern and courage, protecting one Jew from the beatings of another. Nevertheless Moshe was dealt a sneering and degrading retort which revealed that the prior death of an Egyptian at Moshe's hand was not the well kept secret Moshe had hoped it would be. Moshe's reaction achein nodah hadavar simply seems to be expressing his own anxiety at having been discovered and dangerously exposed. However, the fact that he did not flee immediately, and waited until he was almost killed by Pharaoh, relegates this phrase, in its simplicity, inconsequential and without purpose.

Thus Chazal explain that "hadavar - the matter" refers us to the most pertinent subject to a Jew in galus, the understanding for which he yearns: why and to what end; how much and for how long. It follows that achein nodah hadavar signifies a terrifying epiphany. What did Moshe discover in the startling and defiant response of this Jew? Did he find that the galus was justified by a wanton lack of contrition, a denial of authority, or a disdain for personal courage?

Let me share with you an idea that I chanced upon in a collection of thoughts by the magnificent author Simcha Raz. Perhaps Moshe had been disturbed the day before that he alone reacted to a Jew who was being beaten. No doubt, the erstwhile advocate of his people would be able to justify their seeming indifference and defend his brothers. After all they were peace loving, submissive, foreign slaves, lacking in strength and self esteem, and not at all disposed to physically battling an Egyptian under any circumstance.

Yet the next day as Moshe saw two Jews going at each other, his defense crumbled rapidly. Even the kind eye of their greatest protector could no longer see them as meek and timid slaves, unable to get in harms way for a brother. And now Moshe was puzzled even more than before, why no other Jew jumped into the fray to protect another, just one day earlier. Were they paralyzed by apathy or had they become indifferent to the

pain of another? Could it be that Moshe was the only one of the entire nation who cared? Achein nodah hadavar!! Now that is a painful moment! Moshe learned that the length and depth of our suffering is borne out of indifference and emotional lethargy. It is borne of being numbed by pain and no longer moved by it.

Perhaps we, too, have to become more attuned to the desperate cries of our orphans and our poor that fill our mailboxes daily. Perhaps we, too, have succumbed to the rhythm and comfort of inactivity and are not nearly responsive enough to the needs of Klal Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael. Yet there is another part of the story that is not told explicitly by Chazal, but is so glaringly obvious, and that is the story of Moshe's unrelenting response. Moshe was frightened and disappointed, disillusioned and worried to no end. Nevertheless, he did not for a moment cease his efforts to arouse the Jewish people and ultimately bring them to their destiny.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Parsha Parables - Shmos 5771 - Pitching Judaism
Stories & Anecdotes that Illuminate the Weekly Torah Portion and Holidays

There is a haunting Medrash in Deuteronomy that relates to an episode in this weeks portion. After Moshe was told that he will not enter the land of Israel and will be buried in the desert, he complained. The bones of Yoseph were buried in Israel, and I will not merit even that? he asked.

The Ribono Shel Olam responded, He who embraces his land will be buried in it, he who did not acknowledge his land will not be buried in it.

The Medrash explains the Heavenly response: Yoseph acknowledged that he was from the land of Israel, thus he will be buried in it. When Yoseph's mistress accused him and said, they brought an Ivri to ridicule us (Genesis 39:14) Yoseph did not deny it. In fact, he embraced his origins, as he declared to his cell mates, For I was taken from the land of the Ivrim (Genesis 40:15).

However, when the daughter of Yisro told their father, regarding Moshe, "An Egyptian man saved us," Moshe was silent and did not deny that statement. He thus did not merit to be buried in the land.

Thus concludes the Medrash. But it is troubling. Why is Moshe blamed for not decrying the fact that he was called an Egyptian? The Torah seems to indicate that he was not even there during the conversation.

The girls left him and returned to their father. Only then did they pronounce, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and more so he drew water for us, and watered the flock (Exodus 2:19). Famed pitcher and strikeout king, Sandy Koufax, is known to all Jewish kids who grew up in the sixties as the Dodger who would not pitch on Yom Kippur. But a less known incident, that occurred years later, shocked me into questioning my own fortitude and adamancy in propagating the theological issues that are supposed to define my own existence.

Koufax, who was not an observant Jew, was interviewed a few days prior to a World Series by the famed television personality and Koufaxes (and my) co-religionist, Larry King. In the middle of the taping of the interview, Koufax asked nonchalantly. Larry, when is this program being aired?

King told him the date and Koufax thought a few moments. Why, that's Rosh Hashana! I don't do interviews on Rosh Hashana! People are going to think that I am giving this interview on Rosh Hashana!

According to Mr. Kings memoir, Why I Love Baseball, Koufax had King repeat to the audience, no less than twelve times during the taping that this is a taped interview and was not done on Rosh Hashana.

Indeed Moshe Rabeinu may have not even heard that the daughters of Yisro called him an Egyptian, as they had told their father, An Egyptian man saved us from the shepherds after they had returned home, leaving Moshe behind in the desert; either he was outside or back at the well.

But on Moshe's level, his demeanor, grace, action and perhaps even verbalization should have cried out to them, "I am an Ivri! I am not an Egyptian.," in the same manner that Yoseph admitted, declared his lineage in front of everyone whom he encountered, from those in the house of Potiphar to the jailed stewards to Pharaoh himself.

Moshe should have declared forcefully, "I am a Jew and I am not an Egyptian." Even a passive indifference about his heritage was unacceptable to a man with such a high profile as Moshe, and thus the Midrash says that Moshe's preempt was missing.

In no way am I making a perfect or even an imperfect analogy, to much lesser figures. However, if we cannot reach Moshe's level, at least we should reflect whether we worry about our lasting impressions, as much as those people who don't always wear their religion on their throwing arm.

In honor of Ronald and Sonya Krigsman shetichyu. Saadia and Sorala Krigsman and family Chaim and Ann Krigsman and family Tzvi and Hudi Krigsman and family Meyer and Sharon Weissman and family

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Shmot: Birth Announcements

Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Safran (IsraelNationalNews.com)
Tevet 16, 5771, 23 December 10

IMAGINE, the greatest of all men, the father of all prophets, the one whose name is to be associated with an eternal Torah – and what a simple and unassuming announcement of his birth. So simple is the announcement that his parents' names are not even mentioned. A man of the house of Levi went and married Levi's daughter. The woman became pregnant and had a son. Even simple folk, when announcing the birth of a newborn in the local press or synagogue bulletin, announce not merely the full names of the parents, but are sure to also include the names of both paternal and maternal grandparents. Didn't Moshe deserve at least that much social recognition?

He certainly did. The Torah's intent however, is to emphasize that the greatest of all men and most prominent of all prophets was born as all other mortals are born, from man and woman; flesh and blood. The birth of the one who had direct communication with G-d; the one who was able to enter into the prophetic state at will and to transcend the corporeal state completely – Moshe, was born from mortal flesh and mortal bat. His birth was not the result of a supernatural, miraculous feat, nor was it a divinely interfered with birth.

Moshe was born like you and me. He developed and matured into one with whom G-d could speak "mouth to mouth." The Sefer Ha-Yuchsin adds that the names of Moshe's parents are irrelevant to what he ultimately became. The individual born with attributes, qualities, and characteristics necessary to become a leader and redeemer must with his own will and energies fully develop them. The one who does can ultimately become Moshe Rabeinu.

Rav Moshe Feinstein probes further into Moshe's unseemly birth announcement. There may be good reason, he infers, for not mentioning Moshe's parents' names in parashat Shemot, but why did the Torah feel compelled to record that Amram married his aunt Yocheved, and she bore him Aaron and Moshe in parashat VaEira? Ultimately, then, Moshe

does somehow merit an appropriate birth announcement, even if many years after his birth. Why?

The mere fact that a child is born with apparent positive qualities and attributes, with great potential, is no reason to praise or extol parents, particularly when the child will have to be brought up, nurtured and educated in the midst of a galut, in a secular society and in challenging times. Parents deserve high praise and recognition when the youngster matures and is willing to assume his or her responsible place as a committed and caring member of an adult Jewish community. Thousands of children with fine qualities and great potential are born into Jewish households every year. They are unfortunately, never allowed to develop and blossom Jewishly. Their potentials are consumed by alien cultures, poisoned by all consuming distractions.

When in parashat VaEira the Torah can attest that vayigdal Moshe - Moshe was grown in both stature and greatness, as Rashi explains - at this point then, it is warranted that there be recognition of the parents. Compliments and praise are due parents not for recognizing a child's potential, but for investing all they have and then some, in assuring the actualization of the child's potential. "After it is related that 'Moshe was grown,' that he was an eved HaShem and years of his following the ways of G-d had passed, then the Torah praises the parents and mentions who they are."

This is the reason, for Rambam's admonishment in Hilchot Teshuva that it is not predetermined for anyone to be born either righteous or wicked. Rather, free will is bestowed on every human being. If one desires to turn towards the good way and be righteous, he has the power to do so. If one wishes to turn toward the evil way, and be wicked, he is at liberty to do so. Everyone, every newborn has the potential, even if not readily discernible, to become a mensch; special, kind, generous and sensitive, if only parents and educators would care to invest in the child with all that really counts.

Therefore, Rambam concludes: Every human being may become righteous like Moshe our teacher. When they do indeed become the Moshes they are meant to be, their parents' names will be splashed across headlines - with much pride, satisfaction and deserved recognition. www.IsraelNationalNews.com© Copyright IsraelNationalNews.com Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Safran serves as vice president of communications and marketing of the Orthodox Union's Kashruth Division. His most recent book is "Mediations at Sixty: One Person, Under God, Indivisible," published by KTAV Publishing House. He is the author of "Kos Eliyahu - Insights into the Haggadah and Pesach" which has been translated into Hebrew and published by Mosad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem.

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Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Shemot: True Humility

"God's angel appeared to Moses in the heart of a fire, in the midst of a thorn-bush." (Ex. 3:2)

Why did God choose a sneh, a thorn-bush to reveal Himself to Moses?

A Cure for Fever

The Talmud (Shabbat 67a) prescribes a peculiar procedure for those suffering from a high fever. The patient is advised to take a thorn-bush, and each day make a cut in it using an iron knife. When cutting the bush, he should trim it near the ground, and say:

"Thorn-bush, thorn-bush! The Holy One did not let His Presence reside in you because you are the greatest of all trees, but because you are the lowliest."

What do thorn-bushes have to do with fevers? What is the purpose of this strange procedure?

Circumstantial and True Humility

Rav Kook wrote that there are two forms of humility. The first type could be called 'circumstantial humility.' Due to infirmity, poverty, or some lack of talent, intelligence, social standing, etc., a person may feel vulnerable and insignificant.

However, this is not genuine humility. Should circumstances change, newly-found strength or wealth or prestige may very well delude one into believing in his own prominence and self-importance.

True humility comes from a different, more objective source: awareness of our place in the universe. This humbleness is independent of the vagaries of life's circumstances. It is based on recognition of our true worth, on insight into the essence of the soul, and a clear understanding of the nature of reality.

Unfortunately, the fickle nature of the human mind allows us to be easily deluded into ignoring anything beyond our own egocentric world. How can we escape such delusions?

This trap may be avoided by recognizing the transitory nature of circumstances. Poverty, sickness, and so on, have the power to make us aware of our intrinsic vulnerability. Awareness of our inherent potential for weakness leads us to properly evaluate our true worth, and thus attain genuine humility.

The Lesson of the Thorn-bush

By all criteria, the thorn-bush is a lowly and unimportant plant. It grows in barren locations, providing neither food nor shade for others. It even rejects interaction with other living things by means of its prickly thorns. Yet, precisely because of its isolation, the thorn-bush may deceive itself into believing in its own greatness. Therefore, the Sages advised cutting the bush down to its very roots. We trim away all the superficial aspects, leaving only the bush's essential worth - its roots, its connections to the rest of the universe. God placed His Divine Presence on the sneh not because of its sense of self-importance, but because of its innate lowliness - the spirit of true humility which remains after the bush has been trimmed to the ground.

The thorn-bush procedure recommended by the Talmud enables the suffering individual to recognize the purpose of his illness: attainment of sincere humility. This trait is the remedy for all strange fevers and delusions.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, p. 121)

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Subject Weekly Halacha - Parshas Terumah

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)

Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Kerias Hatorah Issues * Part 3

Sitting or standing?

The koreh and the person receiving the aliyah must stand while reading from the Torah. Members of the congregation, however, are not required to stand. Indeed, there are three views in the poskim as to what is preferred:

1. Some hold that it is preferable to stand while the Torah is being read, since Kerias ha-Torah is compared to the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai where everyone stood.1
2. Others maintain that there is no preference and one is free to sit or stand as he wishes.2
3. A third view holds that it is preferable to sit while the Torah is being read.3

The basic halachah follows the middle view that there is no preference whether to sit or stand during Kerias ha-Torah and one can choose. There are, however, some people who are stringent and insist on standing while the Torah is being read.

Most poskim agree with the following:

- * A weak person who will find it difficult to concentrate should sit.
 - * Between aliyos there is no reason to stand.
 - * For Barechu and its response, everyone should stand,4 but during the recital of Birchos ha-Torah there is no obligation to stand.
 - * The custom in most congregations is that everyone stands while the Aseres ha-Dibros and Shiras ha-Yam are read.5 As with all customs, one should not deviate from the custom of the shul where he is davening.
- Consecutive aliyos for relatives

In order to avoid ayin ha-ra, a “bad omen,” the gabbai does not call a father and a son, or two brothers [who share a father] for consecutive aliyos.6 Even if the parties involved are not concerned with ayin ha-ra and wish to be called consecutively, it is not permitted.7 Moreover, even if the gabbai mistakenly did call the relative for a consecutive aliyah, the one who was called should remain in his seat and not accept the aliyah.8 If, however, the mistake was realized only after he ascended the bimah, then he is not instructed to descend.9

L’chatchilah, even brothers who share only a mother, or even a grandfather and his son’s son,10 should not be called for consecutive aliyos. If, however, there is a need to do so, or if – b’diavad – the call to ascend to the bimah was already made, it is permitted for them to accept the aliyah.11 All other relatives may be called consecutively even l’chatchilah.

The consecutive aliyos restriction does not apply:

- * If the consecutive aliyah is the maftir on a day when a second Sefer Torah is read for maftir, e.g., on Yom Tov or Rosh Chodesh, or when the Four Parashiyos are read.12
- * In a congregation where the names of the olim are not used when they are called for an aliyah. [In some congregations no names are used for the shevi’i or acharon aliyos.13]
- * To hagbahah and gelilah, in a congregation where names are not used when calling up for hagbahah and gelilah.14

Question: How is an adopted child called to the Torah?

Discussion: The poskim disagree as to whether an adopted child should be called to the Torah as the son of the adoptive father.15 Rav S.Z. Auerbach16 rules that if the biological father’s name is known, then the child should be called to the Torah by that name. If the biological father’s name is not known, then he may be called to the Torah as the son of the adoptive father.

Question: If, mistakenly, the “wrong” Sefer Torah was removed from the Ark, may it be returned and exchanged for the “correct” Torah?

Discussion: Most poskim maintain that it is improper to return a Torah to the Ark once it has been removed.17 Although using the “wrong” Torah will cause a delay (tircha d’tzibbura) since it will have to be rolled to the correct place, it is still considered degrading to a Torah to be put back once it was taken out of the Ark. There are two notable exceptions to this basic rule:

1. If the Torah was lifted up by the person removing it, but not actually taken out of the Ark, it is permitted to set it back down and remove the correct Torah from the Ark.18

On a day when two (or three) Sifrei Torah are taken out of the Ark, and the “wrong” one was laid on the bimah mistakenly, it is permitted to pick

up the “wrong” Torah from the bimah and replace it with the correct one.19

1 Rama, O.C. 146:4, as explained by Bach and Mishnah Berurah 19.

2 O.C. 146:4.

3 This is the view of the Ari z”l as understood by many of the later authorities; see Chesed l’Alafim 135:14; Sdei Chemed (Beis, 29); Kaf ha-Chayim 146:20; Da’as Torah 146:4; Shulchan ha-Tahor 146:4. Note that this view has an early source; see Sefer ha-Machkim, pg. 15, and Teshuvos Rama mi-Pano 91.

4 See, however, Kaf ha-Chayim 146:20-21 and Halichos Shlomo 1:12, Devar Halachah 30, that the custom is to remain seated even during Barechu.

5 Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:22; Halichos Shlomo 1:12, Devar Halachah 30. See Yechaveh Da’as 6:8 for a dissenting opinion.

6 O.C. 141:6. This holds true even for shevi’i and maftir, unless the maftir is a boy under bar mitzvah; Mishnah Berurah 141:20.

7 Mishnah Berurah 141:19. Aruch ha-Shulchan 141:8 maintains, however, that one who is unconcerned with ayin ha-ra may do as he wishes.

8 Be’er Heitev 141:5; Sha’arei Efrayim 1:33.

9 Mishnah Berurah 141:18.

10 But a grandfather and his daughter’s son are permitted to be called for consecutive aliyos; Kaf ha-Chayim 141:27

11 Sha’arei Efrayim 1:33.

12 Mishnah Berurah 141:20. Some poskim do not recommend relying on this leniency when no Kaddish is recited between the aliyos, e.g., Chol ha-Moed Pesach (Sha’arei Efrayim 1:32), while others are not particular about that (Aruch ha-Shulchan 141:8). On Simchas Torah, however, all poskim are lenient about this; see Yechaveh Da’as 3:50.

13 Mishnah Berurah 141:21.

14 Teshuvos Avnei Cheifetz 16, quoted in She’arim Metzuyanim B’halachah 23:10. See also Ashrei ha-Ish, vol. 1, pg. 141.

15 Minchas Yitzchak 4:49; 5:44; 6:151, strictly prohibits this practice. See also ruling of Rav Y.E. Henkin (Yagel Yaakov, pg. 133). Other contemporary poskim find room for leniency; see Lev Aryeh 1:55 and Nachalas Tzvi, vol. 1, pg. 31-35.

16 Quoted in Nishmas Avraham, vol. 5, pg. 136 and in Halichos Shelomo 1:12-18. The same ruling applies to writing the adopted child’s name in a kesubah or a get. See also Igros Moshe, E.H. 1:99; 4:26-2.

17 See Yabia Omer 8:15-4, who quotes the various views who rule stringently. See, however, Igros Moshe 2:37, who rules that one may not object if a member of the congregation instructs the chazan to return the “wrong” Torah to the Ark.

18 Eishel Avraham, O.C. 144.

19 Peri Megadim (Mishbetzos) 140:4; Beiur Halachah 684:3, s.v. ve’im ta’ah, quoting Acharonim. Even if the “wrong” Torah was already unrolled to the Torah reading of the day (and even if the one called up for the aliyah already recited Baruch Atah but did not yet say Hashem), it is permitted to roll it up and exchange it for the correct one.

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