

Home Weekly Parsha Shemot
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

This week's portion records for us the beginning of the career of the great teacher of Israel, and in fact of all of civilization, Moshe. We are told of his miraculous salvation as a child from the River Nile and of the fact that he was raised by the daughter of the pharaoh in luxury and security. However, when he reaches an age of maturity, he realizes that the Egyptians are enslaving the Hebrews, and his sense of justice overwhelms him. When he sees an Egyptian taskmaster unmercifully beating a Jewish slave, he kills the Egyptian.

The next day however, when he sees that Jews are beating Jews themselves, he becomes rapidly disillusioned. And he's forced to flee because the Egyptian authorities are looking to arrest him and kill him for murdering the Egyptian taskmaster. He disappears from our radar screen for decades and becomes a shepherd for the high priest of Midian. When he reemerges in our story, he is called to his great mission by the Angel of God and is entrusted with the task of taking the Jewish people out of bondage and in fact of elevating them into being a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, a special group of people that would influence all of civilization from that moment onwards. If we think about this, it is a very unlikely story.

Why would God choose someone with as checkered a past as Moshe to be the leader of the Jewish people when his brother Aaron, whose background was spotless and holy and who stayed with the Jewish people for the entire time that Moshe was gone, apparently is overlooked? And why would God choose the Jewish people if they were guilty of murderous faults and, according to the opinion of the rabbis, were even pagans during that period?

It's a question that the Moshe himself asked of God. "Who am I, that you should send me?" And then he asked, "And who are they," meaning the Jewish people, "who are worthy of being saved?" The Lord did not answer him. The Lord speaks in mystery. The Lord says, "I am who I am. I will be who I will be. Just do what I say, and go forth with the mission, and don't try to fathom me. Don't try to know my name. Don't try to understand me. Your job is to obey me."

This becomes the matrix and pattern for Jewish life, in fact, for all civilized human beings throughout their history. Unlikely things always happen. Things never happen the way we think they should happen. The people who lead us are not always the people who we think we should lead us. And the events that occur are sometimes so unlikely that we cannot fathom as to why they happened and what we should do with them, yet it is the will of the Lord that pervades all human history. Human beings have freedom of choice; they can do whatever they want. However, there is a broad parameter that surrounds all human history, and that is the guiding force of Heaven that dictates events.

The rabbis and the Talmud succinctly put it in a metaphor. They say that human beings are like fish that are caught in the great net. I remember that once I saw how tuna fish were being captured by the fleets off the California coast. There is a net that is spread mechanically for miles, and in that net are thousands of fish. They are all swimming around, unaware that they're in a net. Only when the net is full, and the boats draw the net up to the decks of ships, do the fish realize that they are truly in the net.

Similarly, with human beings and with human events and, if I may add, especially in Jewish history and with Jewish events. It is very strange as to who leaders become and how events evolve. When we look at the whole pattern, we realize that it is only the story of the fish that are trapped in this great wide net, which heaven has set for us, which becomes the story of the Jewish people.

I think that this narrative that we read in this week's portion is a great example of this for it sets the scene for everything else that will occur in Jewish life throughout the centuries. It is the lesson that Moshe himself learns and attempts to communicate to us through his immortal words and through the events that he himself will experience and that will guide the Jewish people throughout their existence.

Shabbat Shalom.
Rabbi Berel Wein

The Light at the Heart of Darkness (Shemot 5779)
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

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 (Ex. 2:6). 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.[1]

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. (Ex. 2:7-9)

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, no "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 keep the child in her home to nurse him, 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. (Ex. 2:10)

Pharaoh's daughter did not simply have 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 him and bring him up as her own son.[2] 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 give a child its name, and in the case of a special individual, God Himself. It is God who gives the name Isaac to the first Jewish child; God's angel who gives Jacob the name Israel; God who changes the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah. We have already encountered one adoptive name – Tzafēnat Pa'neah – 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.[3]

Indeed Moshe – Meses – is an Egyptian name, meaning “child,” as in Ramses (which means child of Ra; Ra was the greatest of the Egyptian gods).

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 God.” 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.’”[4] They added that she was one of the few people (tradition enumerates nine) who were so righteous that they entered paradise in their lifetime.[5]

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 it comes to people, we must never generalise, never 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.

Shabbat shalom

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Shemot (Exodus 1:1-6:1)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, and God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob...” (The Opening Blessing of the Amida)

The opening of the Amida prayer stops with Jacob's name. But why should the patriarchal line be limited to three – why not four patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph? After all, Joseph's role in the Genesis narrative is unquestionably central to the entire book of Genesis. A case could be made for showing that he shares a similar fate to those of all three patriarchs. Like Abraham, he lives among idolaters and must maintain his faith and traditions within a hostile environment. Like Isaac, he suffers a personal akedah, about to be slain not by his father but by his brothers, saved not by a ram but by Midianite traders. And like Jacob, who set the foundation for the twelve tribes of Israel, Joseph provided Jacob's descendants with life and sustenance as the Grand Vizier of Egypt. Moreover, in resisting the seductive perfumes of his master Potiphar's wife, Joseph merits the unique accolade haTzadik

(literally, ‘the righteous one’) appended to his name. As a result, he has come to represent for all of his descendants the mastery of the spiritual over the physical. If indeed Joseph is known to us forever as Joseph the Tzadik, and being that he is the son of Jacob, why is he not considered the fourth patriarch? After all, there are four parallel matriarchs!

To understand why, we must compare and contrast him not with the patriarchs who precede him, but with the personality who, from the moment of his appearance in the book of Exodus, stands at center stage for the rest of the Torah and all of subsequent Jewish religious history: Moshe Rabbenu, Moses our Teacher.

In many ways, Joseph and Moses are contrasting personalities, mirror images of each other, with Moses rectifying the problematic steps taken by Joseph. Joseph was born in Israel, but became professionally successful in Egypt; Moses was born in Egypt, but established his place in history by taking the Jews on their way to Israel. Joseph was the insider who chose to move outside (he dreamt of Egyptian agriculture, as well as the cosmic universe). Moses was the outsider (Prince of Egypt), who insisted on coming inside (by slaying the Egyptian taskmaster). Joseph brought his family to Egypt, Moses took his people out of Egypt. Moses saw Egypt as a foreign country, and names his son Gershom “for he said I have been a stranger in a strange land” (Ex. 2:22). Joseph has at best ambiguous feelings about his early years in Canaan, naming his firstborn in Egypt Manasseh “since God has made me [allowed me to] forget completely my hardship and my parental home” (Gen. 41:51). Joseph, through his economic policies, enslaves the Egyptian farmers to Pharaoh; Moses frees the Jews from their enslavement to Pharaoh. And Joseph's dreams are realized, whereas Moses' dream – the vision of Israel's redemption in Israel – remained tragically unfulfilled at the end of his life.

The truth is that for the majority of Joseph's professional life he functions as an Egyptian, the Grand Vizier of Egypt. He may have grown up in the old home of the patriarch Jacob, heir to the traditions of Abraham and Isaac, but from the practical point of view, his time and energies are devoted to putting Exxon, Xerox and MGM on the map. Ultimately his professional activities enable him to preserve his people, the children of Israel; but day to day, hour to hour, he is involved in strengthening and aggrandizing Egypt.

A good case could easily be made in praise of Joseph. He never loses sight of God or morality, despite the blandishments of Egyptian society. And God would even testify that He had a special task for Joseph, personally chosen to save the descendants of Jacob and the world from a relentless famine. Nevertheless, he must pay a price for being Grand Vizier of Egypt: The gold chain around his neck is Egyptian, his garments are Egyptian, his limousine is Egyptian, and even his language is Egyptian. Indeed, when his brothers come to ask for bread, an interpreter's presence is required for the interviews because his very language of discourse is Egyptian, with his countrymen totally unaware of his knowledge of Hebrew!

The difference between Moses and Joseph takes on its sharpest hue when seen against the shadow of Pharaoh. Joseph's life work consists of glorifying and exalting Pharaoh, in effect bestowing upon the Egyptian King-God the blessings of a prosperous and powerful kingdom, whose subjects are enslaved to him; Moses flees Pharaoh's court with a traitorous act against him, ultimately humiliating and degrading him by unleashing the ten plagues.

A shepherd and the son of shepherds, Joseph becomes the first Jewish prince in history, while Moses, a genuine prince of Egypt, begins his mature years as a shepherd on the run, risking his life for his commitment to free the Israelites. Jealousy and destiny force Joseph to live out his life away from his brothers, estranging himself from them. But Moses, despite his foreign, Egyptian background, nevertheless cares for his Hebrew brothers and identifies with them. As the Torah most poignantly records:

“And it happened in those days [after the baby Moses was taken to the home of Pharaoh's daughter] that Moses grew up and he went out to his brothers and he saw [attempting to alleviate] their sufferings.” (Exodus 2:11)

Even though Joseph and Moses both change the world and preserve the Jewish people through the divine will that flows through them, their energies get channeled into different directions: Pharaoh and Egypt on the one hand, the Jewish people and Torah on the other.

This may be the significant factor in explaining why our sages stop short at calling Joseph a patriarch. He may be a tzadik, two of his sons may become the heads of tribes, and he may even deserve burial in Israel; but ultimately a hero who spends so much of his energies on behalf of Egypt cannot be called a patriarch of the Jewish nation.

It is recorded that the first chief rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, was tended to in his final years by an internationally known physician. His last words to the doctor were: "I yearn for the day when Jews who are great will also be great Jews." It was Moses who was undoubtedly the greatest Jew who ever lived.

Shabbat Shalom

Shemot: True Humility

Rav Kook Torah

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

Why did God choose to reveal Himself to Moses in a sneh, a thornbush?

Talmudic Cure for Fever

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

"Thornbush, thornbush! God did not let His Presence reside in you because you are the greatest of all trees, but because you are the lowliest."

What do thornbushes have to do with fevers? What is the purpose of this strange procedure?

Circumstantial Humility 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, and so on, 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 us into believing in our own prominence and self-importance.

True humility comes from a different, more objective source: awareness of our place in the universe. This sense of humility 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 can help us properly evaluate our true worth, and thus attain genuine humility.

The Lesson of the Thornbush

By all criteria, the thornbush 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 thornbush may deceive itself into believing in its own greatness. Therefore, the Sages counseled that we trim the bush down to its very roots. We prune away all the superficial aspects, leaving only the bush's essential worth: its roots, its connections to the rest of the universe. God rested 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 thornbush 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)

See also: Shemot: Moses Hid His Face

Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"ta

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:

Leaning on Car

Q: Is it permissible to lean on a car of someone who you do not know?

A: You must ask permission.

Cremation

Q: Rona Ramon z"l wrote in her will that she wanted to be cremated in order to spare her children from attending yet another funeral of their family (Her husband astronaut Ilan Ramon was killed when the Columbia space shuttle exploded, and their oldest son Assaf, an Israeli fighter pilot, was killed when his plane crashed). Should they listen to her?

A: All of the Poskim write that it is forbidden to listen to the wishes of someone who asks to be cremated (Gesher Ha-Chaim Volume 1 16:9. See Shut Seredei Aish 2:123-124. Shut Melamed Le-Hoiv 2:113-114), but we do not interfere with a family's matter unless they come and ask us.

Where is Hashem

Q: Where is Hashem during all of the terrorist attacks?

A: This same question can obviously be asked regarding the Holocaust and Pogroms. But where is your contract with Hashem that such things will not occur?! Rather we must increase our faith in Hashem and our courage.

Security Situation

Q: As Yeshiva students, what can we do in light of the difficult security situation?

A: 1. Increase your Emunah and courage. 2. Thank Hashem that the security situation is 99.99% great. 3. Ask your Ra"m in your Yeshiva.

Learning Torah and Terrorist Attacks

Q: It is difficult for me to learn Torah when I think about the terrorist attacks.

A: B"H you have a pure soul. You should increase your Emunah in Hashem and add Torah learning and Mitzvot, which adds to our protection. And thank Hashem that almost everything is good.

Second Day of Yom Tov

Q: If someone purchases an apartment in Israel but still lives outside of Israel, is he required to keep two days of Yom Tov?

A: Yes, in the meantime. Be-Ezrat Hashem, he should make Aliyah soon (A student of Ha-Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik would often visit Eretz Yisrael and bought an apartment here. He asked Rav Soloveitchik if he still had to keep two days of Yom Tov. He responded: Yes, nothing has changed except that you now have to pay taxes to the Israeli Government for your apartment. Divrei Ha-Rav, p. 173-174).

Emendations of the Vilna Shas

Q: Who emended the Vilna Shas?

A: Ha-Rav Shlomo Cohen, who was the Av Beit Din in Vilna. His commentary "Cheshek Shlomo" which explains his emendations, is printed at the end of the Gemara. He also wrote Shut Binyan Shlomo, and supported the Mizrachi. When Herzl came to Vilna, he came out to greet him with a Sefer Torah like greeting a king. And Ha-Rav Yechezkel Avramsky related that it is known that Reb Shlom'le's house was full of Zionism (Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah - Eretz Yisrael pp. 212-213. And Ha-Rav Herschel Schachter once related that when he learned in Yeshiva University high school, he had a Ra"m named Ha-Rav Markelos, who was a grandson of Ha-Rav Shlomo Cohen. Rav Markelos said that there was a tradition in his family that his grandfather emended the Gemara by heart, since he was a genius and knew the entire Gemara, Rashi and Tosafot by heart, and had no need to check other manuscripts. Based on this, Rav Schachter explained why in the Vilna Shas, unlike other printings, every 50 pages or so there is mistakenly a letter Shin instead of a Samech, or visa-versa, since Lithuanian Jews

switch the letters Shin and Sin, and this is the way Rav Shlomo Cohen spoke. Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein also spoke this way and instead of saying "Beit Midrash", he would say "Beit Midras").

Tears During Davening

Q: Sometimes during the Davening of Shabbat night, I have tears in my eyes because of the enjoyment of the Davening and thirst for Hashem. Is this permissible?

A: Yes. The Shulchan Aruch (Rama, Orach Chaim 288:1) writes that this is what Rabbi Akiva did.

The Temple Mount is in Our Hands

Q: Is the Temple Mount still under Israeli control in our days?

A: Certainly. Ask any soldier stationed there.

Eating at Kiddush

Q: If I attend a Kiddush, am I obligated to eat if I am strict not to eat certain Kosher certifications?

A: A person is not obligated to eat everything, but he should not come to a place and act as if the food is not Kosher. It is preferable not to attend (Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein would eat at every Kiddush he attend in order to be particular to honor the host. In the book 'Darchei Moshe' Volume 1, p. 157).

Egypt and York: Are We Forbidden to Live There? By Rabbi Avraham Rosenthal, edited by Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: The Rambam

How could the Rambam live in Egypt when the Torah forbids it?

Question #2: Cairo

Can you change planes in Cairo?

Question #3: York or New York?

Are you allowed to sleep in York? What about in New York?

Introduction

The Jewish Nation has been wandering in golus for a long time. In some countries we fared better than in others. But, even in the best of places, we still have to remember that golus is golus. There is some discussion in halachic literature concerning some of the lands where we found ourselves during this long exile. Specifically, is one permitted to return to those countries where the Jews suffered unspeakable atrocities? We will open by studying a mitzvah in which our discussion appears to be germane: the prohibition of returning to Mitzrayim.

Three Pesukim in Chumash

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Sukkah 5:1) states: "In three verses, the Jews have been warned not to return to the land of Mitzrayim:

1. 'For as you have seen Egypt today, you shall not see them ever again' (Shemos 14:13).

2. 'For Hashem has said to you, "You shall no longer return on this road again"' (Devorim 17:16).

3. 'Hashem will return you to Egypt in ships, on the road of which I said to you, "You shall see it never again"' (ibid. 28:68).

Opinion of the Rambam

The Rambam (Sefer Hamitzvos, Lo Sa'aseh #46) writes: "The prohibition of which we have been warned is that one should never live in the land of Mitzrayim. This is in order that we should not learn from their heresy and not practice their customs which are despised by the Torah. And this is what Hashem said, 'You shall no longer return on this road again' (Devorim 17:16). This mitzvah has been repeated three times." After citing the Yerushalmi that we quoted above, the Rambam concludes: "However, it is permissible to travel there for business or in order to cross to another country. This is explained in the Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin 10:8): "For dwelling you are not allowed to return; however, you may return for merchandise, business and to conquer the land."

The View of Rabbeinu Bachya

On the other hand, Rabbeinu Bachya writes in Parshas Shoftim (17:16) that this mitzvah of not returning to Mitzrayim applied only to that generation, as the Mitzrim of that era were exceptionally wicked, and Hashem did not want the Bnei Yisroel to learn from them. He continues that we can prove that the Torah did not forbid this for all generations,

since we find "that many kehilos live there from then until today. And if there was a mitzvah for all generations, the holy Jews would not be lenient. Indeed, had they done so in violation of the halacha, the Sages of every generation would have protested."

The Semag's Questions

As we have seen, Rabbeinu Bachya used the fact that Jewish communities always existed in Mitzrayim as proof that there was no prohibition, except for that generation. The Semag (Lavin #227), on the other hand, takes this point and asks a question. He writes that there is a clear prohibition in the Torah against residing in Mitzrayim, and therefore he does not understand how the Jews live there! Additionally, he questions that the Rambam, himself, although he maintained that it is forbidden to live in Mitzrayim, did live there!

As an interesting aside, Rabbeinu Eshatori Haparchi, a Rishon who lived in the fifteenth century, relates in his sefer, Kaftor Vaferach (chapter #5), that he met a descendant of the Rambam, Rav Shmuel, in Mitzrayim. Rav Shmuel related that whenever the Rambam would sign a letter, he would conclude with the following words: "The writer, who, every day, transgresses three prohibitions." (Numerous Acharonim discuss whether the Rambam could have written such a self-incriminating statement. Their arguments are presented in the new, annotated editions of Kaftor Vaferach, chapter #5, footnote #201.)

It is important to note that the Radvaz (Melachim 5:7) writes that the Rambam was forced to remain in Mitzrayim, as he was the physician of the king and many of the ministers.

Room for Leniency

The Rishonim suggest three other possible reasons why it may be permissible to live in Mitzrayim:

1) Chazal (Tosefta Kiddushin 5:4) relate that an Egyptian ger tzedek by the name of Binyamin told Rabbi Akiva that he was married to an Egyptian woman who underwent geirus, and that he intended to have his future child marry a second-generation Egyptian giyores. This was so his grandchild would be allowed to marry a full-fledged Jewess. (This is based on the mitzvah that only a third-generation Egyptian ger can marry into Klal Yisroel [see Devorim 23:9].)

Rabbi Akiva replied to him, "Binyamin! You have made a mistake!" It is unnecessary for you to do this, "as Sancheiriv came and mixed up all the nations." In other words, Sancheiriv, the king of Assyria, took all the nations of the countries he conquered and exiled them to other locations. Therefore, the people living in Mitzrayim are no longer the original Egyptians.

Based on this, the Semag (Lavin #227) suggests that the Torah's prohibition against returning to Mitzrayim is no longer in force. This approach assumes that the prohibition to live in Egypt is only when the country is inhabited predominantly by the descendants of those inhabitants who enslaved the Jews.

However, the Semag is not satisfied with this approach. He cites another Tosefta (Yadayim chapter #2) that quotes a view that disagrees with Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Yehoshua cites a prophecy from Yechezkel (29:13) that the Mitzrim will be sent into exile for only forty years, and afterwards, they will return to their country. Based on this, it would be forbidden for an Egyptian ger tzedek to marry directly into Klal Yisroel, and it would similarly be forbidden to live in Mitzrayim.

2) Rabbeinu Eliezer of Metz (Sefer Yerei'im #309) suggests that the Torah's prohibition to return to Mitzrayim is limited to one traveling there from Eretz Yisroel. However, it is permitted to go to Egypt from other lands. He bases this on the wording of the pasuk, "For Hashem has said to you, 'You shall no longer return on this road again'" (Devorim 17:16). Since the Torah specifies "this road," referring to the road from Mitzrayim to Eretz Yisroel, the prohibition applies only if one travels specifically on that route. The Sefer Yerei'im uses this approach to explain why it was permissible for Daniel to travel from Bavel to Alexandria, a major Egyptian city, the answer being that he did not travel from Israel. According to this approach, it would not be permitted to travel directly from Israel to Egypt, but one could fly Turkish Air to Istanbul, and then change planes for a flight to Cairo.

3) After citing the two previous approaches, the Ritva (Yoma 38a) writes that the correct solution is that the Torah's prohibition against living in Mitzrayim applies only when all the Jews are living in Eretz Yisroel. However, "nowadays, when it has been decreed upon us to be dispersed to the ends of the earth, everything outside the Land is considered to be the same, and the prohibition is only to leave Eretz Yisroel willingly."

Thus, in conclusion, the rishonim suggest a variety of reasons to explain why Jews lived in Egypt.

York, England

As long as we are on the topic of locations that may or may not have a cheirem, we must mention the city of York. During the years of 1189-90, the non-Jewish citizens of England were swept up into an anti-Semitic frenzy. During those years, dozens of Jews were mercilessly slain. Of course, religious incitement was not the only factor behind the slaying of the Jews. Many non-Jews, especially the noblemen, had borrowed money from Jews, and this was a convenient method of not paying their debts.

The climax to the slayings took place in March, 1190, when many members of the York community, including Rabbeinu Yom Tov bar Yitzchok – one of the Baalei Tosafos – took refuge in York Castle. After the mob set the castle on fire in order to force the Jews out, the Jews chose mass suicide over forced baptism.

There is an oral tradition that, as a result of this calamity, a cheirem was enacted forbidding Jews from sleeping in York. Although this writer did not find anything in the halachic literature concerning this cheirem, it is reported that when the Gateshead mashgiach, Rav Moshe Schwab, would pass through York on the train, he would make sure not to sleep until they were outside the city's limits.

Let us hope that we will soon merit seeing the kibbutz galiyos, the ingathering of the exiles, and the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash, bimheirah biyameinu!

*Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Shmot
For the week ending 29 December 2018 / 21 Tevet 5779
Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights*

O So Very Humble!

"Moshe replied to G-d, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?'" (3:11)

The Day of Judgment. Millions of eyes turn to the West. Trembling fingers open the envelope of destiny. "Ladies and Gentlemen, the award for the best actor in a leading role is: Fill-in-the-name."

Every camera in the building zooms in on the carefully-rehearsed "spontaneous" outpouring of emotion of the victor. Rising from his seat, he emotes all the way to the microphone and that little golden idol called Oscar. He ascends the stage. The lights dim. In a voice that drips the sincerity of a leaking faucet, he begins his acceptance speech.

Members of the Academy. Dear friends. I can't tell you what an honor it is to be standing here.

There are so many people that I have to thank. My director. My producer. My cameraman. All the crew who worked so hard on my film.

Yes, there are so many people to whom I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. But there is one person who deserves special thanks. One person without whom I would not be standing here today. One person, above all, who has been responsible for making me a legend in my own lunchtime. I know he's going to be very embarrassed when I mention his name because not only is he a leading talent, one of the most brilliant people in the industry, but he is also undoubtedly the humblest.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to thank.....Me!

You have no idea what it was like to work with Me. The incredible generosity and inspiration of spending so much time with Me. The unbelievably unselfish way that Me had in every scene we had together. The feeling that I had really formed a lifelong friendship with Me. All I can say is that I can't wait to work again with Me.

They say that this is a dog-eat-dog industry, that you can't trust anybody. But I know that whatever may happen, even if the world turns me down, I can still trust Me.

I know that at this moment Me is probably cringing with embarrassment, but I want you to know that a person can have the best script in the world and the best director in the world and the best editor in the world, but the most important person in the world is Me!

Thank you and remember: I did it my way."

There was a holy Jew who left this world of illusion not so long ago. Once, someone showed him a picture of himself. He looked at the picture and exclaimed, "Who is this holy Jew from whose face shines the awe of Heaven?" He had never looked in a mirror and had no idea what he looked like!

When G-d tells Moses to lead the Jews out of Egypt, Moses replies, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and to take the Children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Moses' reluctance is puzzling. How could he supplant G-d's judgment with his own? G-d told him to do something, so why should he fear failure?

Moses understood that G-d wanted him to use his own human powers of persuasion on Pharaoh, and his own charisma to inspire the Jews, not relying on Divine intervention. Moses thought the task was on his shoulders alone, and so he hesitated. He wasn't sure he had the necessary qualifications.

About a hundred years ago in Europe, the Chafetz Chaim dispatched one of his students to serve as rabbi in a large, distant and unlearned community. The potential rabbi balked. "The job is not for me," he said. "I'm afraid I'll make mistakes." The Chafetz Chaim replied, "Should I send someone who's not afraid of making mistakes?"

It's easy to mistake humility for a lack of confidence and low self-esteem. Yet they are very different. Realizing your limitations is the first step to greatness. It's only someone with a lack of self-confidence who believes that he is a legend in his own lunchtime.

·Source: Midrash, Shemot Rabbah 3:5

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OU Torah

*Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb
Sleepless Nights*

Can you sleep at night? There is so much trouble in the world. Violence, wars large and small, natural disasters, disease. We all personally know many who are suffering at this very moment. Some are friends and acquaintances living in plain sight. Others are individuals in the media, people whose pain we see portrayed daily on the evening news.

It is perfectly understandable to be unable to sleep at night. Yet most of us do manage to sleep quite well. We all have developed a repertoire of defense mechanisms designed to enable us to keep these troubles from our consciousness. We have compartments in our minds into which we can deposit the suffering of others, somehow sealed and kept from immediate awareness.

But there are those among us who cannot sleep, for the pain of others keeps them awake. Their empathy is so great that the suffering of others is their own suffering and cannot be compartmentalized, or even temporarily forgotten.

Indeed, rather than try to shield themselves from others' travails, they seek out those others in order to witness their suffering. They do not stop with mere observation and compassion, but actively attempt to alleviate the suffering they witness.

Such a person was Moses, to whom we are introduced in this week's Torah portion, Shemot.

Moses was raised in the very lap of luxury. He was reared as a prince in a royal palace, his foster mother the daughter of Pharaoh himself. He grew up in a protected environment in which he was able to remain unaware of, and could certainly ignore, the plight of his enslaved brothers.

But he chose to do otherwise. The very first self-initiated action of which we read in the account of Moses' life is his inquiry into the condition of his enslaved kinsfolk. "...When Moses had grown up, he

went out to his brothers and witnessed their labors..." (Exodus 2:11) He did not have to go out; he could have remained in his protected royal quarters. He did not have to "witness;" he could have shut his eyes or used any of the methods we use to shield ourselves against seeing what we do not want to see.

But that was not Moses. In Rashi's poignant phrase, "He gave over his eyes and his heart to suffer along with them." He could not sleep.

We often wonder about what qualified Moses for the leadership role he was destined to attain. For that matter, more generally, we speculate as to what qualifies anyone for leadership.

Theories of the elements of good leadership abound. Stephen Covey has written a book on this very subject entitled *The Eighth Habit*. In it he offers a chart, briefly summarizing no less than twenty such theories, with a list of hundreds of books on the topic.

The theories range from "great man" theories which contend that leaders are born to leadership because of their innate gifts. But Moses had innate handicaps which included a speech defect.

Other theories stress the motivations of leaders to lead. Moses insistently and consistently shunned the leadership role.

Still other theories stress the powers of persuasion and the gift of popularity. Neither characterized Moses. He had no apparent charisma, no formal leadership training, no career aspirations, and no special vision other than the one shown to him by God.

Of all the theories on Covey's comprehensive list, one seems to fit: the theory of "servant leadership," a theory which implies that leaders primarily lead by serving others. The primary characteristics of such a leader include listening and empathy. These were demonstrated by Moses in his very first venture out of the royal palace.

The characteristics of such leadership also include a commitment to others' growth. Moses' leadership can be seen as a life-long process of commitment to others' growth: to their freedom from slavery, to their spiritual conditions, to their ordinary needs, and to their moral and ethical education.

Some of us strive to be leaders. Most of us are content to leave leadership to others yet strive to know God, to know our own souls, and to benefit others in some small way.

The lesson of the life of Moses is that both the grand leadership that some of us seek and the more modest goals of all who are spiritually motivated can be achieved by "going out to our brothers and witnessing their condition." It may cost us sleepless nights, but it will bring us enlightened days.

In the words of an anonymous poet:

"I sought my God and my God I could not find.
I sought my soul and my soul eluded me.
I sought my brother to serve him in his need,
And I found all three—my God, my soul, and thee."

אמרי בנימן

דברי תורה, מחשבה וסיפורים מאנצורה של
הגאון רב בנימן קמנצקי זצ"ל

FaxHomily - Imrei Binyamin - Parsha Shemos

*Rabbi Binyamin Kamenetzky's Thoughts on Parshas
Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky*

*A Dvar Torah from the writings of Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l,
transcribed by his grandson, Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky*

The Power of Shabbos

After the Jewish nation began their enslavement, Hashem appeared to Moshe Rabbeinu and instructed him to go down to the Jews and relay a message. Hashem had not forgotten them, and would ultimately take them out of Egypt. The passuk tells us, "The nation believed him, and they heard that Hashem has remembered the Jews, and has seen their plight." (Shemos 4:31) There was hope, and they were uplifted.

Later on, however, Moshe went to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh responded with a harsh command, "Make the work harder for the Jews, and let them not talk about falsehood!"

My grandfather Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky would often repeat a question asked by his father, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l. When Moshe came back to the Jews after this, their response was astounding. "They did not listen to Moshe because of their shortness of breath and hard labor." What happened? Why did they listen the first time but not the second?

At the recent Torah Umesorah Presidents Conference, Mr. Gary Torgow, chairman of Talmer Bancorp, and noted champion of Jewish education, delivered the keynote address. He told this story.

A number of years ago, a ring of highly sophisticated phishing experts broke into his private email, and after studying his style and language, waited for him to travel overseas to strike. He sent a highly sensitive, confidential email to the wire department in his bank, using his exact expression and style. The email read, "I am travelling overseas, and I need you to wire \$7,000,000 to the international account I have set up. Even though I normally would conform this over the phone, I will be traveling at the exact time I need the transfer executed and will not be accessible via telephone. Please make sure to wire the money on Monday at precisely 8:30 am."

Juanita, the wire clerk, received the email, and studied it carefully. Seemingly, it was legit, but she was unsure. She called her supervisor to approve the transfer, yet voiced her hesitation as to the legitimacy of the email. Her supervisor studied it and analyzed it, and after a few minutes, confirmed that yes, this is indeed from Gary. All i's are dotted and all t's are crossed. "Go ahead with the transfer" she confirmed.

However, Juanita was not convinced. At 8:27, she still could not bring herself to send \$7M into an overseas account. Sensing her hesitation, her supervisor asked Juanita, "What are you nervous about? I told you to go ahead with the wire!" Juanita took a deep breath and firmly responded, "I know this is a fraud. It cannot possibly be from Gary." Her supervisor raised an eyebrow as Juanita continued. "Gary is a strict Shabbos observer. This email was sent to me at 10:00 Saturday morning!"

Rav Binyamin would emphasize Rav Yaakov's approach to this problem. The Midrash tells us that in the beginning of their enslavement, Pharaoh gave the Jews a day off. Shabbos, the day of rest, was theirs.

After Moshe pleaded to Pharaoh, vindictively, Pharaoh took away their Shabbos and increased their workload, not allowing them to spend Shabbos properly. They no longer had their weekly inspiration and weekly charge of energy. They were lost and dejected. Even When Moshe came to them with promises of redemption, they could not hear it.

As long as they observed Shabbos, they would read "megillos," verses from Iyov and Tehilim, that would energize them spiritually and physically, enabling them to keep their hopes and dreams alive. Shabbos gave them life and gave them purpose. And Shabbos gave them the ability to believe in miracles.

Rav Binyamin zt"l would always repeat that Shabbos is the source of blessing, hope, and life. Use it well, and you will see blessing in your life!

Good Shabbos!

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Rabbi Buchwald's Weekly Torah Message

"Getting the Jew's Out of Egypt--Two Views"

Shemos 5779-2018

In this week's parasha, parashat Shemos, we read of the enslavement of the Jews in Egypt by Pharaoh, as well as the birth of Moses and G-d's selection of Moses to lead the people out of Egyptian bondage.

The story seems straightforward, although there are a few bumps along the way. G-d tells Moses at the Burning Bush that he will lead the people out of Egypt, and that Pharaoh will not let the people go until the Al-mighty performs a series of wonders. After that, Pharaoh and the Egyptians will expel the Israelites and even chase them out of Egypt.

Rabbi Ben-Zion Firer, through a subtle textual analysis, shows that Moses and G-d had different approaches regarding the process of redeeming the Jews.

Because of his special relationship with Pharaoh, Moses had hoped that he, as an adopted Egyptian, would be able to convince the Egyptian sovereign to let the Hebrew people go. G-d, however, felt that it must not be Moses the Egyptian, but Moses the strong and proud Jew, who would lead His children out of bondage.

Because of the rapidly increasing Jewish birthrate, the new king of Egypt, who did not know Joseph, thought that the Children of Israel were growing too numerous and too strong and had become a security threat to his people. Rabbi Fierer suggests that Pharaoh's strategy was to make life so miserable for the Hebrews, that they would willingly flee Egypt. Pharaoh therefore says to his nation, Exodus 1:10, *הֲבֵיָה נִתְחַכְמָה לָּו, וְנִפְלְאוּ מִן הָעַרְוִין*, "Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they become numerous, and it may be, that if war will occur, they too may join our enemies and wage war against us, and go up from the land."

The literal meaning of this verse seems to be that Pharaoh was fearful that if a foreign army would invade, the increasingly numerous Israelites would help the enemy army defeat Egypt and then leave the country.

Rabbi Fierer offers a fascinating alternative interpretation. Pharaoh said, "Let us deal with them wisely, so that the Israelites will go up from the land, and leave and not be a threat to Egypt." However, when Moses approached Pharaoh in G-d's name and said, "Let my people go," Pharaoh had a sudden change of heart, which is the typical experience of Jewish history. When Jews wish to live in peace in a non-Jewish land, the local non-Jewish residents make life so difficult for them, hoping that they will leave. But when Jews want to leave a country, suddenly they are locked in ghettos, and are not permitted to leave.

When the daughter of Pharaoh went down to bathe in the river, she opened up the ark and saw a little boy crying, and had compassion for him. She immediately identified the child as one of the Jewish children. She said, Exodus 2:6, *מִיִּלְדֵי הָעִבְרִים הִוא*, "This is one of the Hebrew boys." These words played a decisive role in Jewish destiny. Had Moses not been identified as a Jew, but rather as a child found in the river, he would have grown up as an Egyptian and could have easily convinced Pharaoh that it was in Pharaoh's own interest and to Egypt's benefit to rid the country of the Israelites. It would not have been necessary for Pharaoh to "deal with them wisely." But, now that Moses has been identified as a Jew, the Egyptians will pay no heed to his suggestion.

Moses grows up and goes out to his brothers and sees their suffering. He sees an Egyptian beating one of his brothers, a Hebrew. He turns one way and the other, to make certain that no one is watching, kills the Egyptian and buries him in the sand. Moses was concerned that no one would witness his deed, because he still hoped to pass as an Egyptian. But, once he kills an Egyptian who was beating a Jew, he could never get away with pretending that he was Egyptian.

That is exactly what happens the next day. When Moses sees two Jews fighting, he intervenes, condemning the fighters. One of them said, Exodus 2:14, "Who made you an officer and judge over us? Do you want to kill us like you killed the Egyptian?" Moses knew that the thing was now known, and was afraid.

If Moses was fearful, why didn't he run at that moment?

Only afterward, when Pharaoh heard of the incident, and sought to kill him (Exodus 2:15), did Moses flee, because now, he was certain that the jig was up, and that he could never again pass as an Egyptian.

According to Rabbi Fierer, after all this, Moses still hoped that he could pass as an Egyptian. He flees to Midian and meets Jethro's daughters at the well. When they return, the daughters tell their father, Exodus 2:19, *אִישׁ מִצְרִי הִצִּילֵנוּ מִיַּד הָרָעִים*, "an Egyptian man saved us from the hands of the shepherds." It seems likely that even in Midian, Moses sought to maintain his Egyptian identity, because he hoped that, as an Egyptian, he would one day be in a position to save the Jewish people back in Egypt.

That is why, according to Rabbi Fierer, Moses refused, again and again, to accept the mission of G-d, to take the Jewish people out of Egypt. His notion was to save the Jewish people as an Egyptian. He hoped to one day return to Egypt, where he would advise Pharaoh to expel the Jews from Egypt.

When Moses says to G-d, in Exodus 3:11, *מִי אֲנִי כִּי אֵלֶיךָ אֶל פְּרֹעֹה, וְכִי אֹדְעֵי*, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh that I should take the Children of Israel out of Egypt?" Rabbi Fierer interprets this as if Moses is asking G-d, whether he should go as an Egyptian or as a Jew? G-d tells him that even though it will cause additional hardship for the Jewish people, and Pharaoh will refuse, he must go as a Jew.

Why didn't G-d allow Moses to approach Pharaoh as an Egyptian, which might perhaps result in accelerating the exodus?

Apparently, G-d felt that it was necessary to harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he would experience the ten plagues. It was necessary for G-d to punish the Egyptians, because they had gone beyond the "call of duty," of enslaving and oppressing the Jewish people. Once they started murdering the Jewish children by throwing them into the river, it was necessary for G-d to exact full retribution. That could not have happened had Moses petitioned Pharaoh to let the people go, and Pharaoh would have responded, "You are welcome to leave."

As the Psalmist says (Psalms 33:11), G-d's scheme always prevails.

May you be blessed.

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Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

Feeling The Pain of Others

As we begin to read the book of Shemos it is important to remember the background that led to the Jewish People's arrival in Egypt. On a simple level, it was the sale of Yosef to Egypt and the subsequent famine that brought the family of Yaakov to Egypt. However, there is more to the story of Yosef and his brothers that led to the Jewish People's exile and eventual slavery. The Torah (Devarim 4:20) describes Egypt as a "furnace of iron." Just as such a furnace removes impurities and refines the final product, so too the suffering in Egypt would serve as a way to perfect the Jewish People. A closer look at the events in Sefer Bereishis can help us understand what had to be corrected in Sefer Shemos.

When Yosef's brothers are initially accused by him of being spies they immediately attribute the events that are occurring to their sin committed twenty-two years earlier. Their words of confession encapsulate the essence of their error. "We saw his pain and heard his cries and did not pay attention" are the words they use as they repent for what they had done to Yosef. To witness suffering and be oblivious to it was their grave error; whatever rationale they may have had to sell Yosef was irrelevant in light of the suffering of a brother. Compounding their sin was the suffering they brought to their father. After they begin to confess for their insensitivity, Reuven adds that they are being punished not only for the damage they caused Yosef but also for the anguish their actions had brought upon Yaakov.

To correct this flaw of not feeling the pain of others, the Jewish People are destined to suffer greatly at the hands of the Egyptians. As they suffer together, as a people, the bonds of brotherhood and caring for one another are strengthened. They must protect one another in the hostile environment that surrounds them. The Jewish midwives who risked their lives rather than harm innocent babies and bring untold misery to the parents had learned the lessons of caring and sensitivity, even at the expense of one's own interests. Similarly, the Jewish officers who chose to be beaten by their Egyptian masters rather than inflict more pain on the Jewish slaves had internalized the message of selfless sensitivity to the suffering of others.

The individual in Parshas Shemos who personified this caring and compassion was Moshe Rabbeinu. The Torah doesn't tell us much about the first eighty years of Moshe's life. Three incidents are recorded in the Torah and from these episodes we get a sense of why Moshe was chosen by Hashem. In his position as a prince in Egypt Moshe could have easily ignored the plight of his people. Nevertheless, "He saw their suffering." Moshe deliberately goes to see the fate of his people and immediately acts to alleviate the pain of another. Seeing a slave being beaten, he risks his own life and saves the unfortunate victim. The following day he sees two slaves fighting and being hurt. His caring and sensitivity to those who are suffering extends to complete strangers. After fleeing for his life

he finds himself at a well and sees the daughters of Yisro being treated unfairly by the other shepherds and he protects them. It is only through Moshe that the Jewish People will be redeemed from their suffering and given the Torah that would guide them to care for others.

There are many mitzvos in the Torah that are supposed to sensitize us to the pain of others. Hearing the cry of the downtrodden, feeling the pain of the poor, dealing fairly with the worker, and even alleviating the suffering of animals are all part of our rectifying the mistake of our ancestor's lack of sensitivity to their brother. The Torah constantly reminds us to act towards others with care because we were enslaved in Egypt. The subsequent redemption and giving of the Torah serves as a guide for all of our interpersonal relationships and enable us to follow the example of Moshe to see the pain of others and not ignore it, but rather find the appropriate means to alleviate it.

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**Rav Yissocher Frand – Parshas Shemos
Fear of Heaven / Best Reward is Seeing Results
It All Comes Down to Fear of Heaven**

The Torah teaches, “And the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives of whom the name of the first was Shifra and the name of the second was Puah. And he said, ‘In your assisting the Hebrew women at childbirth and you see on the birth-stool, if it is a son, you are to kill him, and if it is a daughter, she shall live.’” [Shemos 1:15-16]. Chazal tell us that Shifra and Puah were actually Yocheved and Miriam. They were called Shifra and Puah based on the way they acted. Yocheved was called Shifra because she beautified the child at birth (she’ meshaperes es ha’v’lad). Miriam was called Puah because she cooed to the baby when the baby was in distress (she’ poah l’v’lad). They each loved the children so much that they handled them with tender loving care.

Pharaoh told them that they should kill the Jewish boys. However, “the midwives feared G-d and they did not do as the king of Egypt spoke to them and they kept the boys alive.” [Shemos 1:17] As a result, the Master of the Universe paid them back, so to speak, and He made for them Batim [Houses].

It is strange that the Torah introduces these two distinguished women to us as midwives or doulas who loved children. Why is it then that the Torah says that the reason they refused to listen to Pharaoh is because they feared G-d? Based on their names – Shifra and Puah – there is perhaps a more obvious reason why they did not kill the babies – it is because they loved the children and were compassionate to them. They had hearts of gold and were rachmaniyoys [merciful].

The answer is that we see from here that when push comes to shove, there is only one thing at the end of the day that is going to stop a person from doing what he should not do, and that is Fear of Heaven (Yiras Shomayim). Love will take a person only so far. When everything is fine and dandy of course they loved the children, they cooed to them and they treated the babies nicely. However, when someone’s life is on the line, love is not going to carry the day. The only thing that is going to carry the day is Yiras Shomayim.

The Almighty tells Avraham to take his son, his only son that he loved and offer him as a sacrifice. Avraham complies with the Divine command. The pasuk says, “Now I know that you fear the L-rd and did not refuse your son.” Why specifically use the accolade “one who fears G-d” (Yerei Elokim)? Why not call him a “Lover of G-d” or a “Devoted Servant of G-d”? Again, the answer is that at crunch time the only thing that is going to stop a person from not giving in to personal inclination is Yiras Shomayim.

When Potiphar’s wife attempts to seduce the righteous Yosef, his final argument to her is “I would sin to the L-rd” (v’chatasi l’Elokim). This means that in a moment of great passion, in a moment of supreme temptation, the only thing that will ever stop a person from doing what he is not supposed to do is Yiras Shomayim. It all comes down to Fear of Heaven.

Is the Reward for the Midwives Mentioned in Pasuk 20 or in Pasuk 21?

The main observation I would like to share this week is a thought I read from Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetsky. The pasuk states, “G-d did good to the midwives – and the people increased and became very strong.” [Shemos 1:20] As a reward for putting their lives on the line and heroically saving the Jewish male children, the Almighty rewarded them. The next pasuk follows with the statement, “And it was because the midwives feared G-d that He made houses for them.” [Shemos 1:21]. Rashi interprets the word “Batim” [houses] as referring to Houses of Kehuna [priesthood], Houses of Leviya [the tribe of Levi] and Malchus [Royal Dynasties]. Rashi points out that the pasuk interjects something that seems to be a historical note. In the middle of saying that the midwives acted heroically and the Almighty rewarded them, the Torah sticks in a historical fact, saying that the people became great and mighty. This is a strange arrangement of the pesukim.

Rabbi Kamenetsky writes that he once knew a person who had a premature baby. The baby received care in a NICU twenty-four hours a day, literally around the clock for two months. The parents developed a relationship with the nurses and doctors who literally kept the baby alive. Rabbi Kamenetsky writes that when they left the NICU at the end of two months, they wanted to buy something for the doctors and nurses to show their appreciation. The father pondered at length what to buy them. He went to Rav Elya Svei and asked for advice: “I want to show my Hakaras HaTov [gratitude] to them. What should I buy for them?” Rav Elya asked – “Do they need another pen or bouquet of flowers or box of chocolates?” No. Instead, on the child’s birthday, come back to the hospital and show the doctors and nurses “This little child grew up to be big” (Zeh hakatan, gadol Yiheyeh – which we say at a Bris Milah). Show them that their efforts on behalf of this tiny infant on life support in an incubator – paid off. Look what happened to this child! This is the greatest reward anyone can receive.

Rabbi Kamenetsky related this incident to the above cited strange sentence construction. Hashem was good to the midwives. He rewarded them. Rashi says that the reward is mentioned in the next pasuk (He gave them Batim.) Rav Kamenetsky suggested, however, we could also interpret that the reward is specified in this very same pasuk: The nation became populous and they became very strong! The nation of Israel emerged from these very babies whose lives were saved by the midwives. Seeing the mighty nation that emerged because of their mesiras nefesh [self-sacrifice] was the greatest reward possible for Shifra and Puah.

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Ben-Tzion Spitz

Shmot: Striving for Incompletion

Perfection is not attainable. But if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence. — Vince Lombardi

It is probably one of the more mistranslated phrases in the Bible. When Moses meets God for the first time, at the Burning Bush, God informs Moses that Moses will be The Redeemer, the one who will take the young Israelite nation out of the slavery of Egypt and on to the journey towards The Promised Land.

At that historic encounter of Man and God, Moses asks how he should describe God to the Israelite slaves. God answers cryptically that he is “Eheye Asher Eheye” which is classically mistranslated as “I am that I am,” but really means “I shall be what I shall be.” The understanding of what tense God is talking about somehow got lost in translation. God in this verse is in the future tense. (Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks has an entire outstanding book on the concept, appropriately named “Future Tense”).

The Berdichever expands on the encounter of Moses and God and on the verse of “Eheye Asher Eheye” and teaches what may seem like a counter-intuitive lesson.

He describes the Tzadik, the righteous person, who must know that every time he reaches some divine accomplishment, some gain in his spiritual service, that there is an even greater accomplishment ahead that

he has not reached. He has not reached completion. And when he reaches the next spiritual accomplishment, again, he becomes conscious of the next challenge, the accomplishment that lays ahead, and again, how he has reached another level of incompleteness. It is infinite. Man can never reach completion. He can never reach perfection. Nonetheless, man is enjoined to ever climb higher and higher. Not only God, but man, and specifically a Tzadik, somehow emulating God, is defined not merely by what he is, but rather by what he will be. And what he will be is something that is constantly growing, climbing, achieving. "I shall be what I shall be."

The Berdichever relates to a verse from Psalms where King David asks for "just one thing... to gaze upon the pleasantness of God." He explains that King David is articulating the prayer of the Tzadik, the righteous one, who only wants to gaze upon God. He wants to keep his eye on God. In today's vernacular we would say that he wants to "keep his eye on the ball." That ball being God, divine service, dedication to a spiritually rich and meaningful life.

The Tzadik, whenever he reaches some higher level, some spiritual accomplishment, doesn't want to forget for a moment that there's more, that he's incomplete, that there are infinite levels of progress that remain to a human being. He doesn't want to let God budge from his sights. He prays to God for help with that focus, with that dedication, with that constant attachment to God as our source of life, mission and purpose.

May we indeed constantly climb higher, never losing our focus.

Dedication - To the team dedicated to translating Rabbi Sacks' work to Spanish on a weekly basis.

Shabbat Shalom

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Shemos

פרשת שמות תשע"ט

ויקם מלך חדש אשר לא ידע את יוסף

And there arose a new king who did not know Yosef. (1:8)

Galus, exile, is interpreted to mean displacement. A person in exile is a displaced person. A person in exile is no longer himself; as he is an expatriate from his home, his self-image is distorted. A Jew in *galus* is a *galus* Jew who is devoid of the treasures and qualities that had been a part of his life prior to his forced emigration from Yerushalayim – or, at least, he should feel that way. The fact that we no longer feel (or ever really felt) that we are missing our "home" is, in and of itself, another and – perhaps deeper – sign of *galus*. While we might have many treasures – both material and spiritual – that are part of our lives, they are displaced, since we really belong elsewhere. That defines *galus*.

Horav Moshe Shapiro, zl, observes that the Egyptian exile, the first of our exiles, commences (in the Torah) with the words, *Vaykam melech chodosh*, "A new king arose." The redemption from Egypt begins with the words, *Hachodesh ha'zeh lachem rosh chodoshim*, "This month shall be for you the beginning of the months" (12:2). This is a reference to the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush HaChodesh*, Sanctifying the New Moon. New king – exile; new moon – redemption. The word/concept of newness, in regard to both exile and redemption, is not coincidental; it is by design. We derive from here that our exile and redemption revolve around the concept of newness, novelty. Veritably, if one were to peruse the thesaurus for synonyms for "new," he would find a host of words/terms, some of which (in the context of *galus/geulah*, exile/redemption) do not seem appropriate. As the *Rosh Yeshivah* explains, the *galus* began with one form of newness, and the redemption began with another form of newness. The exile began with the distortion of this concept; the redemption set it right. How did this transpire? We must first understand the meaning of "new."

Nothing is wrong with seeking to innovate, to add newness. The question is: at what and at whose expense? Novelty is wonderful; innovation is laudatory, when it is built upon and based on the past. *Rav Shapiro* quotes the *pasuk* in *Hoshea* 5:7, which *Chazal* cite as the explanation for, "A new king arose over Egypt." The *Navi* says, "They betrayed G-d for they bore strange children; now newness shall devour them." *Klal Yisrael* sinned by transgressing the law prohibiting

intermarriage with non-Jews. It was an innovation that was counter to the Torah. They were punished with a new month, a *Chodesh* (*chadash*, new), the month of Av, during which the *Bais Hamikdash* was destroyed and we were exiled from our Land.

Chazal teach that after Yosef died (*Vayamas Yosef*), the people repealed the *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah*. They declared, "Let us be like the Egyptians." To be like them, we had to look like them. The *Bris* could not engender an identity crisis, when the people strived so hard to be like the *goyim*. Once they did this, Hashem gave them a "new" king; actually, he was the same king with renewed decrees. When our concept of innovation is defined by doing away with the old, Hashem delivers to us something "new", that comes in the form of payback/punishment for our rejection of Him.

Our longing for novelty – rejecting the old, tried and proven for the new – is something with which we are sadly acquainted. At the close of the eighteenth century, the mother of rebellious movements, the *Haskalah*, Enlightenment, began to take root among Jews in Europe and Russia. The scourge of newness encouraged Jews, who had for centuries been removed from the influence of the gentiles, to leave the ghetto. *Haskalah* preached innovation, a new face, acculturation, assimilation, and ultimate *shmad*, apostasy. *Haskalah* was the precursor of the "isms": Communism; Socialism; and others that followed, presenting themselves as Jewish by nature, such as secular Zionism, a new religion based on the Holy Land as their religious dogma. As the *Navi Hoshea* said, "Now newness shall devour them" – and it did.

Innovation is screaming for more innovation and doing away with the old. Openness and newness seem to be holding hands, with the Jewish religion as their victim. Such newness which abrogates the old and traditional is all-consuming – in the sense that it consumes, devours and destroys any connection with the old.

We did not learn from the Egyptian exile. The redemption came as a result of newness – but it was a newness of, "This new month is yours". This type of "newness" adds new, more, building on the tried and proven, while the other type of "new" expunges the old, devours and consumes. I think the *pasuk* that best describes our yearning for the "added" new is expressed by the *Navi* (*Eichah* 5:21), *Hashiveinu Hashem eilecha, v'nashuvah chadeish yameinu k'kedem*, "Bring us back to You, and we shall return, renew our days as of old."

Simply, this reflects our yearning for a return to the days when the majesty of the *Bais Hamikdash* permeated our lives, when we were able to live as Jews in our homeland, serving Hashem and following His Torah. What is the meaning of "Renew our days as of old"? Do we seek new or old? The *Navi* is hereby relating to us the prescription for seeking newness, the approach to redemption – "renew as of old." We do not want to do away with the old – nor do we want to reject innovation if it will increase and embellish our service to Hashem. We want to renew, add newness to the old, but never regret the glorious life that we had. Those who denigrate the *shtetl* because they seek modernity and openness "open" themselves to assimilation. To them, tradition is archaic and shameful when, in fact, it should be our greatest source of pride. Perhaps our motto should be "innovation in continuity", every moment is a new moment added onto the old. As *Rav Shapiro* says, "Life of now is not life of before – a moment earlier was life of then, now is the welling forth of the moment."

One is alive because he lives now – not because he has continued from before. There is a *chiddush* in every moment. Hashem creates us with every breath. Life is the constant welling forth of life, which is renewed incessantly at every instant. That is the "new" of redemption.

וייהי כי יראו המילדות את האלקים ויעש להם בתים

Because the midwives feared G-d, He gave them houses. (1:21)

Rashi explains that these houses were the houses of *Kehumah*, *Leviyah* and *Malchus*. *Horav Yisrael Belsky, zl*, expounds on *Rashi*, demonstrating that what appears to be a homiletic interpretation (*bayis*/house is a structure of wood and stone – not a family. Thus, one must apply an interpretive approach in order to translate *bayis* to be a family) is actually the definitive meaning of the word. The Torah here

defines basis as the continuation/extension of the family unit: *Bais Aharon barchu es Hashem*, “House of Aharon, bless Hashem.” When we say this, we are expressing the fundamental nature of the descendants of Aharon *HaKohen*. Not only is each *Kohen* a physical descendant of Aharon, but he is also a living continuation of Aharon’s work and represents the fundamental principles and values which he established. Thus, when *Kohanim* perform their priestly duties, such as blessing the people, they call to mind that as descendants of Aharon *HaKohen/Bais Aharon*, they represent continuity. Aharon lives on through their commitment to upholding the duties of *Kehunah*. Each of them is the living embodiment and extension of the first *Kohen*, the Patriarch and Progenitor of *Bais Aharon*.

A debate takes place in the *Talmud Menachos* 53a concerning the value of *yichus*, pedigree, with the *Rabbanan* positing that one who has great *yichus* is worthy of great honor. Indeed, his presence at a function elevates and gives eminence to the function. Rabbi Preida disagrees, contending that it all emanates from his Torah scholarship. If he has developed a high degree of erudition, then he is certainly deserving of honor. If, however, his only worthiness is his pedigree, then he is far from honorable.

Essentially, *Chazal* are teaching us that pedigree, in and of itself, has no intrinsic value. A person should be judged by his own personal achievement – not by that of his forebears. On a deeper level, explains *Rav Belsky*, *Chazal* are teaching us that *yichus* begets responsibility. The greater one’s pedigree, the greater and loftier is his responsibility to live up to his *yichus*. Pedigree is not simply a privilege; it is an enormous responsibility.

The offspring of Aharon *HaKohen* (this applies to anyone who carries the “yoke” of *yichus* upon his shoulders) carry the priestly responsibility. They may not relinquish it. They are obligated to carry the tradition of Aharon *HaKohen* and lead a life of harmony with the principles of *Bais Aharon*. They are Aharon *HaKohen*’s living legacy. If they fail to honor that tradition, they are dishonoring *Bais Aharon*. Therefore, *Va’yaas lahem batim* means that Hashem imbued the *yiraas Shomayim*, G-d-fearing characteristic that personified both Shifrah and Puah, deeply within the character of their descendants. *Yiraas Shomayim* became a family trait, part of their familial DNA. These families who were noted for their spiritual achievement, their ability to rise above their inclinations, who served as exemplars of *yiraas Shomayim*, heralded from Shifrah and Puah. *Chazal* identify these families as *Leviim, Kohanim* and *Melachim*.

תראה אתו כי טוב הוא ותצפנודו שלשה ירחים

She saw that he was good, and she hid him for three months. (2:2)

Yocheved conceived and gave birth to Moshe *Rabbeinu*. The Torah informs us that the infant Moshe remained with his mother for three months. Interestingly, the Torah does not mention his mother giving him a name. One would think that over the three-month period, Yocheved would have named her son. *Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl*, offers an insightful explanation. A name is far more than just a title of reference. A name represents its bearer, his very essence, character and abilities. A name defines a person. This, however, can only be said of the average person who, by excelling in certain areas more so than in others, indicates that he possesses a distinctly measurable amount of ability and talent. In other words, we are all comprised of various attributes, some in which we excel more or better than in others. Thus, a name personifies the person’s abilities (or areas in which he excels) in contrast to his inabilities. If one is perfect, however, no name can define him, because he excels in all of his abilities. Without some sort of deficiency in which one demonstrates imperfection, there is no room to distinguish between: ability and inability; talent in opposition to lack thereof. What name do you give to the individual who is perfect, to one who is consummately good?

Moshe *Rabbeinu* was the epitome of human perfection. He “had it all” and made use of every one of his G-d-given gifts to execute his mission in life. What do you give to someone who has everything? Our *pasuk* says of Moshe – *Ki tov hu*, “He was good!” We simply have

no other words with which to describe him. *Tov*. Good. That was his name.

Perhaps we can explain this further. Following the creation of Adam *HaRishon*, Hashem said, *Lo tov he’yos ha’adam levado*, “It is not good that man be alone” (*Bereishis* 2:18). The Torah is teaching us a primary concept with regard to mankind. A man alone is *lo tov* – “not good.” Man was created for a purpose. *Horav Chaim Voloziner, zl*, expresses that purpose in simple, but definitive, terms: *L’hoil l’acharini* – “To help others.” We are not here for ourselves. Therefore, we cannot live a reclusive existence. When one is alone – it/he is not good.

Moshe’s first public appearance, his primary egress from the solitude of Pharaoh’s palace into the outside world, consisted of, *V’yaar b’sivlosame*, “And (he) observed their burdens” (ibid 2:11). What constituted Moshe’s “observing” his brethren? *Nosan eino v’libo lihiyos meitzar aleiheim*, “He focused his eyes and heart to be distressed over them” (*Rashi*). Moshe identified with his people. He empathized with their pain. He did not want to be alone. Throughout his life he displayed this compassion. *Tov* is the perfect person. *Lo tov* is one who is alone. When one is alone he is imperfect, because he cannot help his brother. Our mission in life is to focus on achieving the appellation, “*tov*.”

ותשלח את אמתה ותקחה

And she sent her maidservant and she took it. (2:5)

The *Midrash* translates *amasah* as “her arm” (not “her maidservant”). Thus (since she was not close to the basket), she stretched out her arm to reach the basket, and her arm miraculously became sufficiently elongated to reach the basket. The *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, derives from this episode that one should do whatever possible, to never give up, to never say, “I cannot do it. It is impossible.” One should make the attempt; perhaps he will achieve success. *Bisyah* was distant from the basket. She tried to reach it, and Hashem enabled her. Never say “never,” because everything is in Hashem’s hands.

Hashem told Avraham *Avinu*, “Look up at the Heaven and count the stars, if you can count them.” Hashem said, “So shall be your offspring” (*Bereishis* 15:5). *Horav Meir Shapiro, zl*, commented that if anyone other than Avraham would have been told to count the stars, the immediate response would be, “No way. It is impossible!” The number of stars is infinite. Who can bother counting them? When Hashem “instructed” Avraham to do so, he began counting! Hashem said, *Ko yiheyeh zaracha*, “So shall be your offspring!” The Jewish People will never say a task is impossible. “Impossible” is a word that should not be found in the Jewish lexicon. A Jew always makes an attempt. He does whatever he can. The rest is up to Hashem. It always is.

Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita, relates that when his father was a young boy living in Tel Aviv, one evening there was no running water in their house. His father and his brothers went to sleep that night without preparing a cup of *negel vasser*, water to wash their hands upon arising in the morning. Their father asked them, “Why did you not prepare *negel vasser*?” They replied, “When there is no water, one does not prepare.” Their father countered, “That is true, but why did you not at least place the empty cup next to your bed?” A Jew must do whatever is in his ability to do. The rest is (always) up to Hashem. Indeed, when we “do,” He helps.

ותפתח ותראהו את הילד והנה נער בכה ותמחל עליו ותאמר מילדי העברים ה

She opened it and saw him, and behold! A youth was crying. She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrew boys.” (2:6)

Rashi explains the transformation in the description of the child in the basket from *yeled*, boy (infant, young child), to *naar*, youth (implying that he was far from infancy), by asserting that while the child was an infant, his voice was that of a youth. Why did Hashem change the tenor of the infant’s voice to make it seem as if it were emanating from someone much older? The commentators offer a number of explanations, many of which have appeared over the years on these pages.

Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, zl, who was *Rav* in London’s West End over a century ago (he was a brilliant student of *Yeshivas Slabodka* and one of the primary staunch anchors of Orthodoxy in England and Western Europe during that period), explains this based upon the warning that

Pharaoh received from his astrologers. Until now, he had been told that the Jewish savior would be born to a Jewish mother. Now they said that the Jewish savior might be an Egyptian child, and his birth was to be that very day. This was too much for the insecure Pharaoh to handle. No longer did he decree that only Jewish male babies be drowned, but now, all newborns – both Jewish and Egyptian – were to be murdered. Every child that entered the world was a threat to him. The simple explanation for their astrological ambiguity is that Moshe *Rabbeinu* was raised in Pharaoh's palace by none other than Pharaoh's daughter. This is why the Egyptian astrologers were uncertain whether the Jewish savior was Jewish or Egyptian.

Rav Ferber explains that by having Moshe's voice "age" to the point of maturity, he gave the impression that he was not a recently born infant, but that he had been around for a while. He was certainly not born that specific day, as had been predicted by the Egyptian astrologers.

Yalkut Reuveni and *Baal HaTurim* contend that the *pasuk*, *V'hinei naar bocheh*, "And behold! A youth was crying," refers to Moshe's older brother Aharon (*HaKohen*). Aharon was all of three years old, but he was the youth who had stood watch over his little brother. Since the Jewish People maintained their traditional mode of dress (they did not adopt Egyptian styles), it was obvious that the boy who was standing guard over Moshe, and who was crying out of fear for the infant, was none other than Aharon, a Jewish boy. If he was Jewish, it made sense that the infant was also Jewish.

Perhaps we might add that *Bisayah*, the daughter of Pharaoh, sensed that the infant was Jewish, because she saw another older boy crying out of fear for the infant's safety. She understood that the infant was Jewish, because only a Jew cries for his brother. I do not negate the many organizations and endeavors headed by non-Jews. They, too, perform acts of *chesed*. The difference (I feel) lies in the tears. We act out of personal empathy. Another Jew's pain is my pain. We are all family. When a Jew is in trouble, his "brother" weeps for him. *Bisayah* knew that the infant was Jewish, because his "brother" was crying for him.

Bisayah raised Moshe in her home/Pharaoh's palace. For all intents and purposes Moshe, the infant in the reed basket, was alone in the world, cast into the water, accompanied with nothing but his parents' prayers that Hashem would protect him. *Bisayah* discovered the infant and took him home. *Chazal/Megillah* 13a) states: *Kol ha'megadel yasom b'soch baiso maaleh alav ha'kasuv k'ilu yoldo*; "Whoever raises an orphan in his house, the Torah considers it as if he gave birth to him." This phrase obviously has profound meaning. One thing is for certain, raising a child that seems neglected, giving him (or her) a new lease on life (this applies to the spiritual, as well as the physical/material), is a lofty *mitzvah* and earns one a very special relationship with the child – to the point that he is considered to be the child's (surrogate) progenitor.

We now understand, observes *Rav Ferber*, why Pharaoh's astrologers were uncertain concerning the nationhood of origin of the Jewish savior to be born that day. Indeed, Moshe was born to *Yocheved*, but raised by *Bisayah*. This allows for him to have "dual citizenship" – at least in the eyes of Pharaoh's astrologers whose prophecies were, at best, ambiguous. Thus, they did not know Moshe *Rabbeinu's* natural origins.

As an aside, *Horav Yitzchak Yeruchem Diskin*, *zl*, son of the saintly *Maharil Diskin* and successor to him at the *Diskin Orphan Home for Girls*, asked why *Chazal* underscore raising the orphan *b'soch baiso*, "in his home". They could simply have said, "Whoever raises an orphan." What meaning does the "house" have on raising the child? He explains that one is obligated to raise an orphan in such a loving manner that the child feels he/she is a member of his household. An orphan, or anyone who is challenged for whatever reason, should not feel that he is different.

In a similar vein, *Horav Yaakov Weinberg*, *zl* asked why young school children are called *tinokos shel bais rabban*. He explains that a child should be so close to his *rebbe* (and the relationship should be reciprocal, which it must be if the child is to feel that close) that he considers himself to be a *ben bayis*, member of his *rebbe's* household.

The *Klausenberger Rebbe*, *zl*, was known for his brilliance in Torah erudition, as well as for his fiery commitment to reestablishing *Klal Yisrael* following the Holocaust. His work in *Foehrenwald* and *Feldafing* oriented towards returning the hearts of the survivors to Hashem is legend. Perhaps the crowning glory of the *Rebbe's* work was the establishment of a *yeshiva* for boys and young men and a religious school for girls. These two institutions literally saved hundreds of young people from spiritual extinction. Indeed, the *Rebbe* (having lost his entire family) was considered the father of these orphans. The girls' school, which soon had 250 girls, served as a spiritual haven during a time of spiritual upheaval, with the flood of apostasy raging all around. The secularists could not understand how, after suffering such physical and emotional trauma and travail, these broken souls could still maintain their relationship of love with Hashem.

One incident, which occurred on *Erev Yom Kippur* 1946, has received much documentation. I record it to underscore how far one of the most revered and saintly *Admorim* of the last century (perhaps) altered his usual spiritual demeanor in order to comfort and hearten a young orphan.

As *Yom Kippur* approached, the principal of the girls' school came to the *Rebbe* with a request: "Is not every Jewish girl entitled to a blessing from her father on *Erev Yom Kippur*? Why should these girls lose out just because they are orphans?" The *Rebbe* was visibly moved by this request, and he acquiesced to bless the girls. Shortly before the *Kol Nidrei* service, one of the most profound, defining moments of the year, as Jews are about to usher in the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, all of the girls lined up at the window to the *Rebbe's* room. He wrapped his hands in a scarf and placed them on the head of each girl and, with great emotion, tears streaming down his face, he blessed each one in the memory of the holy souls who had perished in the Holocaust. This was "*b'soch baiso*."

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לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה