

BS"D



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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON VAEIRA - 5764

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From: Nehemiah Klein
[ndk@netivaryeh.org] Sent: Jan 22, 2004
Subject: Parshat Vaera 5764
WEEKLY SICHA OF HARAV NEBENZAHL - PARSHAT VAERA 5764

The following is the written version of HaRav Nebenzahl's sicha given every Sunday night at Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh. We try our best to

accurately present to you the Rav's words. Accuracy can sometimes get lost in the transition from spoken to written word. We would like to thank HaRav Nebenzahl for allowing us to send you this sicha without his first reviewing it. Although it does expedite matters in getting this sicha out to you, it does mean that if there is anything in the sicha that may not be understood, the fault is with us and not with HaRav Nebenzahl.

Shabbat Shalom, Nehemiah D. Klein

The Yeshiva would like to express its gratitude to Richard and Anita Grossman for their ongoing support for the Yeshiva in general and specifically our computer center. This enables us to communicate this sicha to you each week - "lehagdil Torah ulehaadira".

Please say a tefilla for refuah shlema for Baruch Yoseph ben Adina Batya he is the fifteen year old son of one of our alumni who is in great need of "rachamei Shamayim".

PARSHAT VAERA - "Nature and Divine Providence"
WONDER OF WONDERS

In this week's Parsha we read of the plague of hailstones: "The flax and the barley were struck for the barley was ripe and the flax was in its stalk" (Shmot 9:31). The flax and barley were damaged by the hailstones because they had ripened early and were thus already hard. "The wheat and the spelt, however, were not struck 'ki afilot hena' for they ripen later ('afilot' - meaning later)" (ibid. 32). Because the wheat and spelt had yet to ripen they were still soft when the hail fell, and were able to bend without breaking. This is the simple meaning of the pasuk and this in fact is how Rashi explains it. He adds, however, "there are those of our Sages who differ with this explanation, and interpreted 'afilot' to be from the word 'pilei plaot' - wonder of wonders. 'Wonder of wonders' was performed for them that they were not hit".

This latter interpretation is very difficult on three accounts: 1) Rashi's first explanation seems quite plausible harder objects do break more easily than softer ones, as the Talmud teaches "a person should always be soft like a reed and not hard like a cedar (so as not to break)" (Taanit 20b), why do the Sages quoted need to explain the pasuk in a way other than its simple interpretation, 2) Throughout the Torah and Shas we find that the word "afilot" implies "later" (see Moed Katan 6b), why did they need to provide an additional definition, and 3) Once they

are already explaining that "afilot" is from the word "plaot", wonders - why do they then add "pilei plaot" - wonder of wonders?

Allow me to offer the following explanation: The Sages quoted by Rashi agree with his initial interpretation the flax and barley were struck because they had ripened early, while the wheat and spelt did not break because they were softer. The laws of nature, however, are not sufficient to explain the events that transpired, for everything that occurred in Egypt defied the laws of nature. Nature to us means that water is water and blood is blood. In Egypt a Jew and non-Jew could drink from the same cup yet the Jew would drink water while the Egyptian got blood, this is contrary to our understanding of nature. The plague of hailstones in itself was a miracle "and fire flaming amid the hail" (Shmot 9:24) - the water did not extinguish the fire. The laws of nature did not work in Egypt, thus the fact that the wheat and spelt was not destroyed, because they had not yet ripened, while on the surface appearing to go by the order of nature was in actuality "pilei plaot" - a miracle within a miracle. Within this great wonder of hail, there existed another miracle that the wheat and spelt, as per the laws of nature, were not destroyed, I would have thought that such a fierce storm would destroy them as well. All the plagues in Egypt were what we refer to as "unnatural", therefore anything that remained loyal to the laws of nature was "a miracle within a miracle".

HIDDEN MIRACLES

In his commentary at the conclusion of the ten plagues in Parshat Bo, the Ramban writes: "From the great and well known miracles that occurred in Egypt, man acknowledges the hidden miracles. Recognizing these less visible miracles is the foundation of our entire Torah. Man can have no share in the Torah of Moshe Rabenu without believing that all that happens in our lives is miraculous there are no laws of nature or 'ways of the world' therein!". The miracles that occurred in Egypt serve to teach us that everything in this world comes from Hashem, there are no laws of nature! Anything that happens in this world only comes about because that is Hashem's will, if He desires then it will occur, if not it cannot happen. One who lacks this basic belief does not believe in the Torah of Moshe Rabenu.

Does this mean that there are no laws of nature? How then can I predict that if I place water on the stove it will boil, while if I leave it in the refrigerator it will cool down? Do I not rely heavily on machines and tools to work as they should? If there are no laws of nature who can guarantee that tomorrow the sun will rise in the East (and at the time recorded in Rav Tukochinsky's calendar), perhaps tomorrow it will rise in the West? When the Ramban wrote, as we mentioned, "there are no laws of nature or 'ways of the world', he was obviously also aware of the existence of laws of nature. These laws however, are not enough to explain WHY things happen. The fact that the sun rises in the East and sets in the West and that the earth travels from West to East is only because that is the will of the A-lmighty. If He wishes the opposite could take place. During the seven days of the flood, the laws of nature were not in force.

NATURE IS JUST AN INDICATOR

When I wish to wait for the number one bus I look for a bus stop that displays that bus line number one stops there. Does the bus stop there simply because the sign advertises that it does? No! It stops there because the Egged bus company decided that the route of bus number one will include a stop in that particular place. The writing on the bus stop is simply an indicator that I should wait there if I wish to ride that bus line. The same may be said for the laws of nature. Nature does not explain WHY things happen. I know that water will boil when placed on top of a fire, but the REASON this happens is because it is Hashem's will that water boils on the stove and not inside the refrigerator. Nature is only an indicator and should Hashem desire, He can change this with or without informing us of the change.

Why does Hashem run His world in such a manner that His Providence is concealed from His creations? Why does He not run the world in a way that makes His Providence clear to all? Why should the refrigerator not at times boil the water and the fire sometimes freeze it? Would it not then be clear to all that the fire and the refrigerator have no inherent abilities and that only Hashem boils and freezes the water?

NATURE AND FREE CHOICE

The straightforward answer is that ruling the world through a system of laws of nature is necessary in order to provide man with Free Choice. If it would be obvious that Shabbat observers were healthy, strong, wealthy, and lived long lives, while desecration of the Shabbat meant instant death, who would dare violate the Shabbat? Shabbat observance in this case, however, would not be out of fulfillment of the will of Hashem, but because desecration of Shabbat would be tantamount to eating poison. Does one who refuses to eat poison deserve a reward? Reward and punishment only make sense where Hashem's presence is hidden behind a facade of nature and is not clearly visible to man.

In addition, as we said above, the laws of nature are there for man's convenience, they are not the explanation as to why things work the way they do. Nature is there both to test man and in order to make life easier for us. Once these laws were set into place, they were not imbued with any power or abilities of their own. The Will of Hashem is the only guiding Force in this world. This is what we should have concluded from witnessing the miracles in Egypt - it is Hashem's world, He runs it in the manner in which He pleases!

THE CREATION AND SPILLED INK

Many people question the existence of a Creator, arguing that everything came about "naturally". How can one deny the existence of a Creator? Just take one look at our bodies our arms, legs, and all other parts. Everything functions in unbelievable harmony! We cannot help but feel an incredible amount of Divine Providence. The world we live in provides food for us and also for the animals even if at times this means they eat each other. The tiniest insects always find their food (unfortunately all too often they find it in my kitchen). The plants have their function as well. Blood travels to all parts of our body as does the air we breathe. The logic in this creation cannot help but enforce the idea of a Creator. We hear all about "big bangs" and explosions. Where did the material that created the explosion come from? Assuming there is an explanation for that, have you ever heard of a bang that produced such complex results?

Despite all this there are still many people who insist that there is no Creator to this beautiful world. All we need do is look out at the world to see the power of Hashem. Hashem, Who commands us how to live our lives, sustains the entire world and all its contents in precisely the right manner. If the gravitational pull were to be slightly weaker, the first generation of man would have been pulled towards the sun and burnt. If it were a bit stronger we would be driven away from the sun and frozen to death. Our body itself is amazing, if the power pulling the atoms were slightly stronger we would shrivel up into something very tiny, were it slightly less, we would be blown apart to pieces in all directions. These forces are so complex and intricate and they sustain us by providing man as well as animals with everything they need - breathing, digestion, etc. How can there not be a Creator?

Imagine if someone were to claim that the daily newspaper is a result of ink that spilled and just happened to form these words. Would anyone accept such a ridiculous claim? Spilled ink does not produce words such as "Shalom said"! To claim that the world came about by chance is as logical as claiming that the newspaper came about by chance. To attribute any independent power to the laws of nature is equally preposterous. The laws of nature are something of value and we should study and try to understand the way they work, at the same time we must realize that when Hashem so wishes, He can see to it that the

laws of nature cease to work. The world is run in accordance with the will of Hashem, when He wishes He can turn water into blood without any trouble, and He can allow a Jew to drink water from the same cup from which an Egyptian is drinking blood.

"SO THAT HASHEM'S TORAH MAY BE IN YOUR MOUTH"

The laws of nature are simply there for our convenience, we need to know more or less when the sun will rise tomorrow so we can know when to daven Shacharit. Nature provides us with a choice of whether or not to believe in Hashem. One who wishes to become an "apikores" can view nature as a force in and of itself, anyone with any intelligence, however, will simply look out at the world around him and proclaim: "the heavens declare the glory of Hashem" (Tehillim 19:2) Heaven and earth testify as to the existence of a Creator. Avraham Avinu did not learn at "cheder" or anywhere else, he simply looked out onto this vast world and said that there must be a Captain to this ship.

The Torah tells us at the end of Parshat Bo regarding the Tefillin: "and it shall be for you a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes - so that Hashem's Torah may be in your mouth - for with a strong hand Hashem removed you from Egypt" (Shmot 13:9). What is the connection between the three parts of this pasuk? We can explain that we must wear a sign on our arm and between our eyes, as a reason for our learning Torah - "so that Hashem's Torah may be in your mouth". One may ask, of what use is learning Torah, would my time not be better spent learning chemistry, physics, or biology? The pasuk continues: "for with a strong hand Hashem removed you from Egypt". In Egypt we all saw that the laws of chemistry and physics are no match for the will of Hashem. It was there that we saw that water is not really water, light can suddenly turn into darkness, and that the Jews can have light while the other nations sit in darkness. There is no meaning to nature, we believe in Torah and not in nature! This is why we learn Torah - "so that Hashem's Torah may be in your mouth". I am not saying that we should not study the laws of nature or attempt to understand them it is hard to get by without some basic understanding of them. Learning Torah, however, is of far greater importance, for it is the will of Hashem that runs the world. When He desires, He can make things go contrary to the laws of nature, as we saw when Yaakov Avinu experienced a "kefizat haderech" and arrived instantaneously at his destination.

"WHAT IS FRAIL MAN ... YET YOU HAVE MADE HIM SLIGHTLY LESS THAN G-D"

The pasuk states: "When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars that You have set in place, What is frail man that You should remember him, and the son of mortal man that You should be mindful of him" (Tehillim 8:4-5). I look at the creation and am amazed by its vastness. The sun, as great as it is, is insignificant when compared to the entire universe. The earth is an even smaller portion of this world, while Jerusalem takes up an insignificant amount of the earth. Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh takes up only a small portion of Jerusalem, and I take up but a small part of this Yeshiva. What am I in comparison to this vast universe - "what is frail man that You should remember him" compared to the entire creation, each individual is almost insignificant. Yet the very next pasuk states: "Yet, You have made him slightly less than G-d" (ibid. 6). Slightly less than G-d - how can this be? We are nothing when compared to the entire universe, while "the Heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain Him" (Divrei Hayamim II 2:5)? Who am I? I take up a mere four amot of space, perhaps even less. Furthermore, Hashem is eternal, and at most I will live my full one hundred and twenty years! Hashem is all-powerful and all-knowing, yet I know nothing and am incapable of doing anything. How can David Hamelech possibly say of man: "yet you have made him slightly less than G-d"?

The pasuk then continues "You give him dominion over Your handiwork, You place everything under his feet" (Tehillim 8:7). Do I really have dominion over Hisork? Do I really control the creation? If I

go out on an especially hot day I get a headache, if it is too cold I come home with a sore throat. If I were to cross the street on a red light, the creation will not be under my feet, but G-d forbid I may be the one underneath something ... Where then do we see: "you give him dominion over Your handiwork, You place everything under his feet"? The answer is that on a natural physical level man truly is nothing, but from a spiritual supernatural perspective man is indeed all-powerful. Man can accomplish anything he wishes and he does have dominion over the world, so to speak. A tzaddik is stronger than the world, he is above nature. A person who follows the will of Hashem and observes Mitzvot controls the world and in fact nature wishes to serve him, as we see the stones vying for Yaakov Avinu's head to be placed on them. "You have made him slightly less than G-d" - You have enabled him to govern the world.

On Rosh Hashana Hashem provides us with a New Year based on the Mitzvot that we and the rest of Klal Yisrael perform. We ask Hashem each year "zochrenu lechaim" "remember us for life". Hashem may write and seal the decree but He bases it on our actions the world is under our feet! We may be deserving or G-d forbid not so deserving, everything depends on us. Man is almost like Hashem! When he observes Mitzvot, he is greater than the world, including the stars and all the other seemingly infinite elements of this universe, yet when we do not observe Mitzvot then indeed we pale into insignificance when compared to other elements of this Creation.

HaRav Nebenzahl's sichot in Hebrew, including the recently published Sichot on Sefer Bamidbar are now available on the internet: www.judaicabooks.net (C) 5764/2004 by American Friends of Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh Lists hosted by Project Genesis - <http://www.torah.org>



From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: January 22, 2004 To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Va'eyra "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Va'eyra - Manipulation of the Dates of Exile

The pasuk [verse] states, "And the children of Kehas were Amram, Yitzhar, Chevron, and Uzziel. The years of Kehas' life were a

hundred and thirty- three years." [Shmos 6:18]. Rashi points out that although the Torah speaks of a 400-year exile of the Jews, we learn from this pasuk that these years did not occur entirely in the Land of Egypt. Rather, the exile began with the birth of Yitzchak.

The proof that part of the 400 years occurred outside of Egypt is that Kehas himself was born in Canaan. We know from the verse that Kehas was the father of Amram, who was the father of Moshe. Were we to add together the full duration of the lives of Kehas, Amram, and Moshe, they would not total 400. So when we consider the overlapping years of their lives, the fact that Kehas was born in Canaan, we know that the duration of the exile in Egypt was certainly much less than 400 years.

Rav Elya Meir Bloch makes an interesting observation. G-d issued a decree that Avraham's descendants would need to be in exile for 400 years. G-d, in His wisdom, knew that in order for the Jewish people to experience the purification process that was necessary for receiving the Torah, they needed to spend 400 years in "exile." But He was also infinitely knowledgeable in the status of His nation. He knew that, as things turned out, if they were to spend 400 actual years in Egypt, they would have never been able to emerge from exile. As it was, they had sunk so low spiritually that they could not remain in Egypt for even a moment longer.

The "400 years" were like a sliding scale. They could have begun much earlier. They could have begun much later. G-d "decided" when the 400

years began, based on the spiritual status of the Jewish people. As it turned out, the clock started when Yitzchak was born.

Rav Bloch says that in our current long exile, there have been periods -- in our times and in times before us -- that people have said that one time or another is the time that the Redemption will come. There have been great people who have recorded dates and have claimed that "this will be the year" when the Messiah would arrive. These great individuals have ostensibly been "wrong" because Moshiach did not arrive at the specified times.

Rav Bloch says that they were not necessarily wrong. Just like the Egyptian exile was to last 400 years, but it was up to G-d to decide when to start the counting, this exile too has a fixed duration. But the exact time when G-d will decide to start the count and therefore when it will end, really depends on us. If the Jewish nation merits for Moshiach to come at a certain point, he will come at that point and the calculation of the appropriate duration will "work out". Likewise, if things become so bad -- like they were in Egypt -- that G-d must bring Moshiach to rescue us before it is too late, then too, the appropriate duration will "work out". If other conditions had been met, each of the suggested dates had the potential to meet the criteria for both Moshiach and for the duration of the current exile. The Talmud quotes the pasuk in Yeshaya, "The smallest will increase one thousand fold and the youngest into a mighty nation, I am HaShem, in its time (b'eetah) I will hasten it (achi'shenah)" [60:22]. The Talmud points out that there are two designated times for redemption: Redemption "in its time" or redemption which "I will hasten". That does not mean that even the designated time (b'eetah) will be a sliding scale. The "b'eetah" of the Egyptian exile would have been after 400 years of slavery in Egypt, but G-d hastened that redemption. [Sanhedrin 98a] Our redemption too, we pray will be hastened. But even if it will not, it does have an absolute stopping point based on its pre-ordained duration.

The prognostications throughout the generations or the times in our history when people felt the time was "ripe" for Moshiach were not necessarily incorrect times for his coming. For some reason, however, the generation was not worthy. Just like G-d manipulated the dates of the Egyptian exile, he has the ability to manipulate the dates of our present exile as well.

Moshe Rabbeinu Did Not Learn The Lesson of The Frogs

There is an interesting Baal HaTurim in this week's parsha. In his cryptic and enigmatic fashion, the Baal HaTurim always provides food for thought. The Baal HaTurim points out regarding the phrase "and raise up (v'ha'al) the frogs on the land of Egypt" [Shmos 8:1] that there is only one other occurrence of the verb v'ha'al in the Torah. The other occurrence is just prior to the death of Moshe's brother: "Take Aaron and Elazar his son and bring them up to Hor HaHor" [Bamidbar 20:25].

What is the connection between raising the frogs and raising up Aharon to Hor HaHor? The Baal HaTurim references a passage in the Talmud that praises the frogs of Egypt for being prepared to jump into the ovens to obey the command of G-d. The Gemara states that the frogs that jumped into the hot ovens were miraculously saved as a reward for their self-sacrifice in sanctifying G-d's Name. [Pesachim 52b]

The Baal HaTurim states that Moshe and Aharon had an opportunity to sanctify the Name of G-d. When obtaining water for the thirsty nation at Mei Merivah, they should have spoken to the rock. By hitting the rock instead of speaking to it they made less of a Kiddush HaShem. As a result of that, they died. This is the connection. Why did Aharon have to die on Hor HaHor? Because he failed to learn the lesson of the frogs and make a supreme Kiddush HaShem, as they did.

However, in last week's Parsha, when Moshe complained to G-d that he was not doing anything to rescue Israel, G-d answered, "Now you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh" [Shmos 6:1]. The Talmud infers: NOW you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh, but you will not see what I will

do to the 31 kings of Canaan -- because you will not be there. [Sanhedrin 111a]

The question is obvious. This is not the time or reason for Moshe losing his chance to enter Eretz Yisrael. Moshe did not lose the ability to enter Eretz Yisrael because he questioned G-d's ability to save the Jews at the start of the Exodus story. How do we reconcile this statement of the Talmud with the explicit pasukim which trace Moshe's inability to enter the Land of Israel to his sin of "failing to sanctify G-d's Name" at Mei Merivah?

I saw the interesting insight into this contradiction. It was, in fact, Moshe Rabbeinu's questioning of G-d in last week's parsha that sealed his fate. The Rabbeinu Yonah says that there is one sin for which there is no atonement -- namely the sin of desecrating G-d's Name. If a person makes a Chillul HaShem, not even Yom Kippur, not even suffering will atone. Only death atones. But even though there is no atonement for Chillul HaShem, there is one mitzvah that can counteract it: the mitzvah of Kiddush HaShem (sanctifying G-d's Name).

Even if a person has severed his relationship with G-d by making a Chillul HaShem, there can nevertheless be a rebirth in that relationship through Kiddush HaShem. We are uncomfortable using the terminology, but it is as if one who has died spiritually (as a result of desecrating G-d's Name) is now "born again."

This is why the frogs lived. They jumped into the hot ovens that should have made them die, but by virtue of the Kiddush Hashem that they accomplished, they came back to life.

This is the message of Chazal: Moshe Rabbeinu's fate was sealed when he challenged G-d to do more, at the end of Parshas Shmos. However, at Mei Merivah he had the opportunity to erase that sin and to create a Kiddush HaShem. Had he done that, he would have been granted "rebirth". A new Moshe Rabbeinu, so to speak, would have emerged -- uncontaminated by the decree of "NOW you will see what I will do to Pharaoh". That new Moshe Rabbeinu could have entered into Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe Rabbeinu failed to accomplish that Kiddush HaShem at Mei Merivah. He failed -- as the Baal HaTurim writes -- to learn from the frogs what Kiddush HaShem can accomplish. Therefore, he remained with the unfortunate decree that he could not enter the Land of Israel.

[Editor's Note: As we find many times, our Biblical heroes are judged by the strictest of standards, such that even slight deviations from ideal perfection are counted as a desecration of G-d's Name. Perhaps a better way to view this is as a failure to achieve the level of sanctification of G-d's Name that would have been appropriate for people of their stature.]

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 401, Hierarchy of Brochos. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrand, Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing. Project Genesis - Torah.org is a recognized charity and depends upon your support. Please help us by visiting <http://torah.org/support/> for information on class dedications, memorials, annual giving and more. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250, Baltimore, MD 21208

<http://www.divreitorah.co.uk/shemot/vaeira.html> Shabbat Shalom!
Howard

Divrei Torah on the weekly portions
Shemot: Va'Eira Gradual Growth

The Gemara (Shabbat 55a) states: "G-d's signature is truth". This is illustrated in the Hebrew word for truth - "EMeT" , because G-d says "I am the first and the last" (Isaiah 44:6), and EMeT comprises the middle letter of the Hebrew alphabet surrounded by the first and the last. How are we therefore able to fathom G-d asking Pharaoh "... let the people go for three days in the desert to worship G-d ..." (Shemot 5:3) when it is clear from our Sidra that G-d really intended for the Israelites to leave Egypt permanently?

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky explains that when G-d said "three days" he meant it, but Pharaoh rejected that proposal. G-d then removed the offer of three days from the negotiating table and was only willing to discuss the new proposal of complete freedom. What this implies is that G-d ideally wanted the Israelites to have a temporary reprieve from Egyptian persecution before the ultimate exodus. But why?

The Torah states: "And Moshe spoke before G-d saying: 'Even the Israelites did not listen to me, so why would Pharaoh listen to me ...?'" (Shemot 6:12) . Rashi teaches that this verse is an example of a Kal VaChomer (a fortiori). Yet, just three verses earlier, we read: "... they did not listen to Moshe due to their weak spirit and hard labour". In other words, the reason the Israelites did not listen was because of their weak spirit and hard labour, but maybe Pharaoh would listen because he did not have a weak spirit and hard labour? So how can this be considered a Kal VaChomer?

Rabbi Yosef Tzvi HaLevi elucidates that the Israelites carried the tradition from Avraham that they would be enslaved in Egypt for 400 years (Bereishit 15:13) , but Moshe argued that it was time to leave now after only 210 years for two reasons. Firstly, they were of "weak spirit", meaning that they had sunk to the forty-ninth level of impurity, and if they did not leave Egypt now it could be too late. Secondly, the severity of the "hard labour" compensated for the remaining 190 years. The Israelites rejected these two arguments, hence the verse states: "... they did not listen to Moshe due to (his arguments of) their weak spirit and hard labour".

Now we can understand the Kal VaChomer. If the Israelites, who stood to benefit from believing Moshe, were not willing to accept Moshe's arguments that the time had arrived for them to depart after only 210 years, then Pharaoh was even less likely to accept Moshe's arguments since he stood to lose by believing Moshe.

We can also comprehend why G-d ideally wanted the Israelites to have a temporary reprieve from Egyptian persecution before the ultimate exodus. The Israelites were not yet ready for the final redemption - they could not cope with the leap from the forty-ninth level of impurity to the forty-ninth level of purity. A temporary exodus would have been beneficial for the Israelites because they needed time to get used to the idea of freedom to serve G-d. It would similarly have benefited the Egyptians because they needed to adjust to a life without oppressing others.

This explanation teaches us something extremely vital for spiritual living (and is particularly appropriate to mention on Rosh Chodesh which is regarded as a mini-Rosh Hashana when we should examine our Jewish growth). We all want to achieve our maximum spiritual potential, but we sometimes move too fast for growth to last. How many of us leave Yom Kippur thinking we will never gossip again or we will allocate more time for Torah study? We have to learn to help ourselves grow, in a gradual way.

From: torahweb@zeus.host4u.net Sent: January 20, 2004 To: weekly1@torahweb.org Subject: Rav Mordechai Willig - Potential and

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RAV MORDECHAI WILLIG POTENTIAL AND ACTUAL

I The first of Shevat is the new year for the trees, according to Beis Shammai. Beis Hillel says the new year is on the fifteenth of Shevat (Mishna Rosh Hashana 1:1). The Gemara (14a) explains that most of the year's rain has already ended by Rosh Chodesh Shevat. Beis Hillel's date is Tu B'shevat because that is when the trees actually blossom (Tosfos, Meiri).

This dispute may be related to two others in which (according to Rav Zevin - Le'or Hahalacha p. 304) Beis Shammai focuses on the potential and Beis Hillel on the actual. On Chanukah, Beis Shammai rules that one lights eight candles on the first day (Shabbos 21b), since, at the time of the miracle, the oil had the potential to last for eight days. Each night, as the potential decreases, we light one less candle. Beis Hillel's accepted practice is to increase from one to eight candles, as the original miracle increased, in actuality, each night.

At Havdala, Beis Shammai's beracha on the candle is "shebara me'or aish" (Berachos 51b). The past tense and singular usage refer to the primordial monochromatic fire (Gra), which represents the potential for all future fires. Beis Hillel's accepted beracha, "borai me'orai ha'aish", alludes to the actual multicolored fires of today.

Similarly, Beis Shammai ushers in a new year for trees when the majority of the season's rain, which gives the tree potential to bear fruit, has fallen. Beis Hillel delays the new year until Tu B'shevat, when the trees actually blossom.

II The respective dates of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel represent climatological and agricultural milestones. Yet the themes of potential and actual recur within the lunar cycle.

On Rosh Chodesh, the moon is nearly invisible, but it has the potential to grow for the next two weeks. On the fifteenth the moon reaches the fullness of its potential and its greatest actual size. Beis Shammai's date emphasizes potential, while Beis Hillel's focuses on the actual.

When the moon "sinned", Hashem decreed that it become smaller (Chulin 60b). According to the Rashba (cited by Rabbeinu Bachya, Bamidbar 28:15), the moon was always the smaller luminary, but its size, like the sun's, remained constant. The punishment of becoming smaller refers to the moon's waxing and waning each month.

On Rosh Chodesh we are required to offer a chatas Lashem, as an atonement for Hashem's making the moon smaller (ibid.). We need atonement for not fulfilling our full potential, a shortcoming symbolized by the moon which is almost never full. The challenge of man, which will be fully met only at the end of days when the moon will no longer be diminished each month, is to utilize his potential to the maximum.

III When Hashem first appeared to Moshe Rabbeinu, He said "Moshe Moshe" (Shemos 3:4). In contrast to "Avraham | Avraham" (Breishis 22:11) and "Yaakov | Yaakov"(46:2), where a line is drawn between the two mentions of the name, there is no line in "Moshe Moshe" (Shemos Raba 2:6).

The first name refers to the ideal person, his essence in the upper world. The second refers to the real person in this world. Only Moshe Rabbeinu realized his full potential so that no line divided between the two mentions of his name (Ruach Chaim, Avos 1:1).

Moshe merited the unique zechus of receiving the Torah because of his unique humility (Bamidbar 12:3), which surpassed that of Avraham (Chulin 89a). Moshe viewed himself as if he didn't exist, and therefore his body did not prevent his soul from realizing its full potential (ibid.). Perhaps the special status of Beis Hillel is attributable to a similar quality. Normative halacha follows Beis Hillel because they were humble, to teach you that Hashem praises one who lowers himself (Eruvin 13b).

Even though Beis Shammai were sharper (Yevamos 14a), and thus had greater potential, Beis Hillel were greater in actuality. Their fuller realization of their potential, like that of Moshe Rabbeinu, resulted from their humility. This mirrors the point of halachic contention regarding Chanukah, havdala, and the new year for trees in Shevat, in which Beis Shammai follows the potential, and Beis Hillel the actual.

Every person can be a tzadik like Moshe Rabbeinu (Rambam, Teshuva 5:2). Perhaps this means that every person can reach his full potential. After all, as the Chasidic master Reb Zusha said, we are held accountable only to the standard of our own potential - not more, but also not less.

The internalization of the fact that only Moshe Rabbeinu realized his full potential should itself be a humbling experience. On Rosh Chodesh Shevat, which represents potential, we should be moved to humility and a renewed effort to narrow the line which separates our actuality from our potential.

From: ohr@ohr.edu Sent: January 21, 2004 To: weekly@ohr.edu
Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Vaera ORAH WEEKLY - For the week ending 24 January 2004 / 1 Shevat 5764 - from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

Parshat Vaera <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1426>

Fame - I'm Gonna Live Forever "...and the staff of Aharon swallowed their staffs." (7:12)

When Aaron's staff swallowed the staffs of the magicians and remained as slim as before, Pharaoh started to fear that the staff would "swallow him and his throne."

If the staff would swallow him, why would he be concerned that his throne would be swallowed? Is his throne more than his own life? Not only that, why would he care? He wouldn't be around to see the staff swallowing his throne anywhere.

Maybe we can answer this with a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley:

I met a traveller from an antique land

Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Stand in the desert... Near them, on the sand,

Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read,

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:

And on the pedestal these words appear:

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look upon my works ye Mighty, and despair!"

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away."

A Jew works his whole life for Olam Haba, the World to Come. Someone who doesn't believe in a World to Come has to come to terms with the frightening finality of his earthly existence. How does he cope with this? By trying to create artifacts of his brief walk in this life. His hope is that he will achieve a kind of eternity because others will remember his name. He was the man who painted such-and-such, who dreamed up the world's most advanced mousetrap, who murdered the world's most famous pop star as he emerged from his limo. As the words of a famous (for how long?) pop song would have it "Fame - I'm gonna live forever."

To Pharaoh, there was one thing worse than dying - that his throne, his fame, everything that he would leave in this world would die with him.

Source: Midrash Rabba

Written and compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent: January 22, 2004 To: yhe-sichot@etzion.org.il Subject: SICHOT64 -14: "If I Forget You, O Jerusalem"

Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm) Student Summaries Of Sichot Of The Roshei Yeshiva

"If I Forget You, O Jerusalem, Let My Right Hand Forget Its Cunning"

SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A

Summarized by Yitzchak Barth Translated by Kaeren Fish

In his Guide of the Perplexed (III:45), the Rambam points out that the Torah does not mention the exact location of Jerusalem and the Temple, but rather makes use of expressions such as "the place which G-d will choose." However, in the Rambam's view, Avraham dedicated the place where he bound Yitzchak as the site of the future Temple. Furthermore, he adds,

"In my opinion there is also no doubt that the place singled out by Avraham in virtue of prophetic inspiration was known to Moshe and to many others, for Avraham had recommended to them that that place should be a house of worship."

This being the case, the Rambam needs to answer the question that immediately arises: If Moshe indeed knew the exact location of the future Temple, why is it not mentioned explicitly in the Torah?

The Rambam proposes three different answers to this question, two of them relating to the gentile world. First, he claims that were the Torah to make known the location of the mountain chosen by G-d as His dwelling place, the nations of the world would fight for that mountain in order to keep it out of our grasp. Second, there would arise a real danger that they would destroy the mountain altogether in order to prevent us from building the Temple there.

Basically, the Rambam regards all of Israel's wars as being fought on a religious basis. He explains that the aim of the Canaanites and the Philistines in their wars was not to defend their LAND so much as to defend their FAITH. Judaism had declared war on idolatry. In contrast to the pagans, whose faith centered around lifeless statues and images, Judaism placed at the center of the Holy of Holies the Tablets of the Covenant, upon which was engraved the command – "You shall not make for yourself a carved idol or any image." If the Canaanites had known the exact location of the prospective Temple, they would have tried to destroy the place – or at least to maintain their own control over it. For this reason the Torah obscures the location of the "place which G-d will choose."

At first glance, it would seem that the Rambam's view of war applies exclusively to the biblical period. In our days – so it is generally believed – wars are waged between nations for territorial or ethnic reasons rather than religious ones. However, surprisingly enough, the Rambam sets down for all generations in his halakhic magnum opus, the Mishneh Torah, the very perception discussed above, when he encourages the Israelite army as it goes out to war: "When a person goes to war, he should rely on the Hope of Israel and their Savior in times of trouble, and know that he is fighting for the oneness of G-d." (Hilkhos Melakhim 7:15)

Although modern wars would appear to be waged for territory or power, the Rambam explains that all wars between the nations of the world and Israel are ultimately directed against the Holy One, against Jewish belief, and specifically against Jerusalem, the holy city, the site of the Temple. If we remove from the Arab- Israeli conflict all the outer layers – territory, the nature of the Palestinian state and the problem of the refugees – the crux of the conflict remains an insoluble problem: Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.

Already in 1961, Teddy Kollek, the mayor of Jerusalem, told me that the President Nasser of Egypt once declared that peace would never reign between Israel and the Arab world because of the insoluble problem of Jerusalem. Even Nasser never imagined that there would be

Jews who would agree to transfer control of the Temple Mount into Moslem hands. I have often repeated my belief that the entire purpose of the Yom Kippur War was, in truth, the control over Jerusalem, rather than the issues that were claimed to be at stake. In that war we were victorious, but today there are those amongst us who are ready to give the Temple Mount to the Palestinians, in the belief that such a step will bring peace.

To my mind, such a concession is incompatible with a Jewish outlook. Just as the life of an individual is not the absolute, supreme value and there are some prohibitions for which we know we are commanded to give up our lives rather than to transgress them, so it is on the national level: there are values which society and the state are obligated to uphold, at whatever risk. Specifically in our national life there are "red lines" which must not be crossed, comparable to those issues for which an individual must be prepared to give his life.

A society that values "the sanctity of life" above all, and which does not include "a life of sanctity" as its supreme value, is destined to degenerate into corruption and moral decay. Peace, too – despite its great importance – is not the exclusive, absolute, supreme value, and there are things that cannot be sacrificed even for peace.

When the Prime Minister returned from the Camp David summit, I was appreciative of his aspiration to achieve peace on the one hand, and of his declaration that he would never sign a document giving sovereignty over the Temple Mount to the Arabs on the other. I believe that today, just as then, all the discussions concerning a peace agreement are irrelevant. In the current climate no peace agreement will be signed, since the Palestinians will not consent to declaring an end to the conflict between us and them. Nevertheless, a declaration that we are in principle not prepared to relinquish the Temple Mount is of great significance, and any Prime Minister – in the present and in the future – should swear his allegiance to our sovereignty over that site.

It should be emphasized that the importance of our sovereignty over the Temple Mount is not a halakhic or religious matter. The Rambam rules that the original sanctity with which Jerusalem was bestowed was a sanctity that remains for all eternity, since "the sanctity of the Temple and Jerusalem is such because of the Divine Presence, and the Divine Presence is never removed." Jerusalem and the site of the Temple retain their holiness for all time and in all conditions, whether under Israeli sovereignty or otherwise.

We must retain our sovereignty over the Temple Mount for nationalistic reasons, not for halakhic or religious ones. Firstly, the Moslems have claimed all along that the Temple never existed on that site, and if we transfer it to them they are likely to perceive our move as an admission to that claim. Moreover, transferring control of the Temple Mount into Arab hands represents, in effect, a severance from our historical Jewish identity. Since the dawn of our existence, Jews have upheld the importance of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount at its heart: from there the world was created, there Avraham bound his son, there King Shlomo built a dwelling place for G-d, and it was to there that Jews turned – in all generations and in all their places of exile – with the prayer, "And You shall return to Jerusalem in mercy."

Transferring this site, and the severance from historical Judaism which this would entail, would have fateful ramifications for one of the most grievous, existential problems facing Am Yisrael today – the alienation of great sectors of the nation from their Judaism. Only our historical national identity, based on the longing for thousands of years for Jerusalem and the aspiration to rebuild it and to re-establish the Temple, can unite all parts of the nation.

Some Orthodox rabbis do not attach much importance to the issue of unity between ourselves and the secular Jewish community, nor do they emphasize the significance of our historical Jewish identity; they are even agreeable to a transfer of the Temple Mount to Arab

hands. We, on the other hand, feel a responsibility towards the entire nation and understand the critical importance of closely guarding those values that characterize and mold our common Jewish identity. R. Tzadok Ha-kohen of Lublin (Tzidkat Ha-tzaddik, #54, from manuscript) writes that there are those among our nation whose sole characteristic defining them as Jews is their own self-definition:

"The crux of Judaism is being called by the name of Israel ... even if only by virtue of the fact that he is known as a Jew, that is sufficient ... for them to be joined together as one nation, and not divided to join with the other nations and to be included among them."

A person's self-definition as a Jew means, first and foremost, a feeling of belonging to historical Judaism. If, heaven forbid, we relinquish our sovereignty over the Temple Mount to the Arabs, we will be cutting with our own hands the thin thread that binds all parts of the nation, nullifying the single element that binds those Jews who are not Torah-observant to Judaism.

Like all the wars of Israel, the hidden significance of the battle being waged right now over Jerusalem is that it is really being fought for the Divine Name. Those who wish to force us to give up the Temple Mount want to cut us off from Jewish history, to nullify our national identity, and to create an unbridgeable breach among Am Yisrael. We must insist on maintaining Jewish control over the holy mountain, and pray in these difficult times that very soon we may merit the realization of the prayer that has remained unchanged for two thousand years, which we have always prayed facing the site of the Temple:

"And to Jerusalem, Your city, may You return in compassion, and may You dwell within it, as You have spoken. May You rebuild it soon, in our days, as a building for eternity, and may You soon re-establish the throne of David within it."

May this be the will of the Almighty, Amen.

(This sicha was delivered on Asara Be-Tevet 5761 [2001].)

If you have any questions, please write to office@etzion.org.il Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash Alon Shevut, Gush Etzion 90433 E-Mail: Yhe@Etzion.Org.II Or Office@Etzion.Org.II Copyright (c) 2004 Yeshivat Har Etzion

From: Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent: January 22, 2004 To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Vaera WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5764

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav CONSUMER COMPETITION (PART I)

QUESTION:

A person is negotiating the purchase of a house or a car. May another person come and bid for that item?

DISCUSSION:

Three factors must be determined in order to answer this question: 1) The extent of the negotiations; 2) The availability of other homes or cars of similar [or slightly different] size, location, condition, etc.; 3) The amount of money that the new bidder will save by buying this item and not another one which is available to him. Based on these three factors, the practical halachah(1) breaks down as follows:

* If the buyer and seller have agreed [or are very close to agreeing(2)] on a price, and there are similar items available on the market, then it is prohibited for another person to bid for the item.(3) Beis din has the right and duty to object to his bidding and to block him from doing so. If he disregards the halachah and places a bid anyway, he may be referred to as a rasha, a wicked person, publicly.(4) Even if he has already bought and taken possession of the item, he is still duty-bound to return it lest he be referred to as a rasha.(5) Beis din, however, does not have the power to forcibly remove it from his possession once he has already obtained it.

* If the buyer and seller agreed [or are close to agreeing] on a price, but there are no similar items available on the market, then it is permitted, according to the basic halachah, for the new bidder to bid for the item.(6) [A ba'al nefesh, though, should refrain from doing so.(7)]

* If the buyer and seller agreed [or are close to agreeing] on a price, and there are similar items available on the market, but the new bidder will save a big amount of money(8) if his bid is accepted, there are many poskim who allow him to bid on the

item(9) while other poskim do not accept this leniency.(10) Although beis din cannot get involved in such a case, a ba'al nefesh should refrain from entering into this position.

* If the buyer and seller did not agree [or come close to agreeing] on a price, then it is permitted for the new bidder to put in a bid on the item. If, however, the item came up for sale only as a result of the first bidder's effort [e.g., the first bidder convinced the seller to put the item on the market], some poskim hold that a newcomer may not come and place a bid on the item.(11)

QUESTION:

May a worker offer his services to a prospective employer knowing full well that he will cause another Jew to lose his job by replacing him?

DISCUSSION:

It is prohibited for one to offer his services to an employer if he will be taking away another person's job, even if his intention is to replace him only after the current contract has expired. Beis din has the right and duty to object to his behavior and to stop him from doing so. If he disregards the halachah and does so anyway, he may be referred to as a rasha, publicly.(12) Beis din, however, does not have the power to forcibly terminate the newcomer's employment once he has already obtained it.

1. In certain well-defined cases, this restriction does not apply. Among them are the following:

* If an employer asks him specifically to apply for the job(13);

* If it is known that the employer is dissatisfied with his present employee and is looking for an opportunity to replace him(14);

* If the present employee was hired initially only for a limited period of time and was never really counting on long-term employment(15);

* If he does not approach an employer directly but merely advertises his availability, even though his advertisement may result in the present employee losing his job.(16)

* If, after spending time and effort looking for a job commensurate with his training and experience, he cannot find another job, then it is permitted for him to make himself available to an employer even though a current employee may lose his job.(17) A ba'al nefesh, though, should refrain from doing so.

2. A slightly different set of rules will apply when the current employee is long-term, has established a business relationship with his employer, and has a well-founded assumption and expectation that the job is his for as long as he is interested in keeping it. In that case, many poskim(18) maintain that it is prohibited for a newcomer to directly approach an employer to hire him, even if the newcomer cannot find any other job.

3. But this holds true only if other potential employees will also refrain from offering their services to that particular employer. If, however, this particular job will attract other candidates, then there is no obligation for the observant job-seeker to place himself at a disadvantage and limit his chances, even though the present long-term employee will lose his job.

QUESTION:

Is it permitted for an employer to lure another company's employee from his present job?

DISCUSSION:

It is prohibited for an employer to lure away an employee from his present job, even if he will not employ him until his current contract has expired - unless he feels that this particular employee is superior to any other available employee on the market.

In a case where an employer and employee have established a long-term business relationship, and the employer has a well-founded assumption and expectation that the employee will remain in his employ indefinitely, many poskim hold that it is prohibited for another employer to lure the employee away. However, this holds true only if other potential employers will not actively recruit this particular employee, as explained above.

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FOOTNOTES: 1 Our discussion concerning homes covers only sales. The halachos concerning rentals, especially from non-Jews, are more stringent. A rabbi should be consulted. 2 See Pischei Teshuvah 237:3 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 237:1 quoting Perishah, who maintains that regarding this halachah, as long as the two parties were near agreement on a price, it is considered as if an agreement was reached. See Igros Moshe C.M. 1:60, who explains that this is the position of the Rama as well. Shulchan Aruch Harav, however, does not mention this Perishah. 3 C.M. 237:1. Even if the new bidder did not realize that a previous bid had been placed on the house, he is still required to withdraw his bid once he finds out about the previous agreement. 4 If the new bidder did not follow the halachah and bid on the item and now the seller is ready to sell to him, it is permitted for a third person to bid on the house at this time; Aruch ha-Shulchan 237:2. 5 In the case when his bid

was made while yet unaware of the previous agreement, some poskim (Pischei Teshuvah; Aruch ha-Shulchan 237:2) maintain that he cannot be referred to as a rasha if he refuses to return the house once he has obtained it. Other poskim, however, disagree and hold that even in that case he may be referred to as a rasha (Keneses ha-Gedolah, Tur 19; Igros Moshe C.M. 1:60). 6 Rama 237:1; Maharshah 36; Masa's Binyamin 27, based on the view of Rabbeinu Tam, who permits this type of bidding. According to the Nesivos 237:3, Shulchan Aruch, too, agrees with this ruling. 7 Shulchan Aruch Harav (Hasagas Gevul 10), Har Tzvi O.C. 2:8 and Igros Moshe E.H. 1:91, based on the view of Rashi, who prohibits this type of bid. See also Maharal (Nesivos Olam, Nesiv ha-Tzedek 3), who strongly endorses Rashi's approach to this question. 8 This is defined as being a "real bargain," savings that are indisputably substantial. When it is unclear if the amount being saved is substantial, a beis din must be consulted. 9 Rama C.M. 237:1; Avnei Nezer C.M. 17. [Igros Moshe C.M. 1:60 seems to rule in accordance with this view.] 10 Shach 237:3 based on the view of the Ramban; Aruch ha-Shulchan 237:1. 11 Teshuvos Maharshdam 259. See, however, Teshuvos Chasam Sofer C.M. 79, who seems to disagree. See also Masa's Binyamin 27, Nachalas Tzvi C.M. 237 and Minchas Yitzchak 5:77. 12 C.M. 237:2, as explained in Shulchan Aruch Harav (Hasagas Gevul 12). 13 Teshuvos Alshich 67. 14 C.M. 237:2. 15 Rav Akiva Eiger C.M. 237 quoting Teshuvos Maharshah 36. 16 Pischei Choshen, Sechirus, pg. 161. 17 Shulchan Aruch Harav, *ibid.*; Igros Moshe C.M. 1:60. 18 See earlier discussion (pgs. 39-43) for elucidation of this issue.

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From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com] Sent: January 22, 2004 To: Peninim Parsha Subject: PENINIM ON THE PARSHA BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM - Parshas Vaera

This was the Aharon and Moshe to whom Hashem said, "Take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt. (6:26) Did Klal Yisrael need two leaders to liberate them from Egypt? In truth, for the Geulah Hoasidah, the Future Redemption, when we will finally achieve ultimate redemption from the exile that is so much a part of our lives, there will also be two redeemers: Moshiach ben Yosef; and Moshiach ben David. The question remains: Why do we need two redeemers when one could do the job? I once heard a noteworthy reason. We need two redeemers to eradicate the concept of galus, exile, totally from our lives: one redeemer to take us out of galus; and the other redeemer, to take galus out of us!

Regrettably, the same idea that applied to the Jewish People as slaves in Egypt - in regard to the Egyptian culture and way of life - haunts us to this very day. Are we ready to be redeemed? Do we want to be redeemed? It is much easier to take the Jew out of Egypt than to take Egypt out of the Jew. We have become slaves to the society and culture in which we live. They way of life that prevails in modern society has, for the most part, controlled and reigned over our lives. Its mindset has become our mindset. Its art and culture has so captivated our lives that we have begun to accept what should be foreign to us as being a cultural necessity. Do we really want to be released from galus, or do we simply want galus relaxed?

It was not much different in Egypt. The Jews complained about the backbreaking labor and persecution. Did they want to leave Egypt? The decree of galus was accepted. They just wanted an "easier" galus. It was not Egypt that they wanted to leave; it was the hard work and torture that they could have done without. Have we accepted the state of galus as a way of life, as something with which we can live? Yes. We need two redeemers: one to take us out of galus; and one to remove the galus mentality from our minds.

With this idea in mind, we can better understand a compelling thought from Horav Sholom, zl, m'Belz. He notes that the word p'dus, distinction/redemption, is mentioned three times in Tanach: First, in our Parshah, (8:19), Hashem says, "I will make a p'dus, distinction, between My People and your people;" second, in Sefer Tehillim, 111:9, "He sent p'dus, redemption, to His nation," and last, in Tehillim, 130:7, "For with Hashem's kindness, and with Him is abundant p'dus, redemption." These three promises of redemption correspond with these forms of galus.

The first galus is when the Jew is exiled among gentile nations. Hashem promises to make a distinction between Jew and gentile and redeem Klal Yisrael from their exile. The second exile is more difficult. It is when the Jew is in exile among Jews; when brother imposes his rule over brother; when a Jew is uncomfortable among his own brethren. When Jews disparage and hurt each other verbally, and even physically, we have a bitter galus that is far worse than when the persecution is directed at us by gentiles. To this form of exile, Hashem responds that He will send p'dus, redemption, to His nation - to His children that are enslaved by members of His own nation.

Last, is the galus to which we originally alluded: the Jew who is in exile within himself, who is subservient to his base nature and physical desires. The Jew who has no control over himself is in a deep exile. He can ascend from the depths of his self-inflicted exile only through his own efforts. It takes courage, strength, faith and incredible siyata diShmaya, Divine assistance. Hashem will grant abundant redemption to he who raises up his hands to Hashem and requests help.

And the frog infestation ascended and covered the land of Egypt. (8:2)

Rashi tells us that the plague of frogs started with only one frog which the Egyptians beat. As they beat the first one, it multiplied and became two frogs. This continued as they beat the frogs. The more they beat them, the more they multiplied. The Steipler Rav, zl, asks a practical question: When they saw the result of their beating the frogs, why did they not stop? He explains that, indeed, rational thinking told them to stop, but they became enraged when they saw the result of their beating the frogs - and they lost control.

Anger does that to a person. When he becomes enraged, he loses control of his faculties. Chazal tell us that anger is like idol-worship. When one becomes angry, he indicates that Hashem does not control the world. Otherwise, why would he get angry? Whatever happened was the result of Hashem's decree. Control yourself! Idol worship abnegates Hashem's dominion; so does rage.

An angry person cannot sustain a relationship because he always places himself at the forefront. An individual may attempt to place the blame on others for a host of reasons, but, after all is said and done, it is he himself who should be blamed. The angry person is insecure, and he takes his diffidence out on those around him in an attempt to conceal his troubled nature. The ones who suffer the most, after the spouse, are the innocent children, who become the punching bags for his feelings of inadequacy.

One must come to grips with his problem and overcome it before it envelops and possesses him. The worst thing one can do is to concede to the problem by ignoring it. Saying it is part of my nature to be angry is self-destructive and irresponsible. Taking hold of this negative character trait and using it for the common good will transform it in a positive way. Anger can be transformed into indignancy when one sees that Torah or its causes are disparaged. In such a case, the negative undergoes a positive metamorphosis and is employed as a tool to combat indifference. So, after all is said and done, anger, like all other character traits, is something negative only when used in a destructive manner.

Only in the river shall they remain. (8:7)

Why did Hashem not make a greater miracle and rid the land and the river of the frogs? Was there some reason that the frogs were left in the river? Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, cites the Likutei Anshei Shem who compares this to a father who, after disciplining his son with his belt, hangs up the belt on the wall, so that the boy will have a reminder. The belt on the wall will "motivate" him not to do anything that will incur his father's punishment again. Hashem kept frogs around as a constant reminder to the Egyptians of what had occurred and what could easily happen again if they were out of line.

Rav Zilberstein suggests that this is a practical idea to employ to spare an individual from repeating his mistakes. The constant reminder of the consequence of sin can be a powerful deterrent. Furthermore, one should maintain a remembrance of anything that Hashem does for him. If he was spared from a terrible fate, he should have for himself some form of keepsake that will always be a reminder of what could have been.

Remembering and erecting memorials to the past are inherently Jewish actions. While one should not live in the past, one, nonetheless, should never forget it. Zachor, remember, whether it applies to Shabbos, the exodus from Egypt, or various incidents in our history. The Torah wants us to remember and never forget the lessons of the past. In our personal lives, a host of effective rituals are designed to help us to remember our loved ones who have passed on: Kaddish, Yahrzeit; Yizkor; naming our children and grandchildren after those that have died; erecting memorials; and giving charity in their names. Probably the most significant remembrance, however, is following in their righteous paths and not deviating from their legacy.

Following the death of his wife, a non-Jewish statesman took his three children to their mother's grave. The epitaph read: "Caroline Spencer, wife of J. Sterling Spencer, and mother of Joy, Frank and Mark." After reading the simple epitaph, the father turned to his children and said, "If any of you ever does anything that would have caused your mother grief or shame had she been alive, I will chisel your name off that stone." That is remembrance. That is motivation.

And so that My Name may be declared throughout the land. (9:16)

The goal of universal recognition of Hashem's monarchy and ultimate sovereignty over the world requires that all nations recognize Him. The world would hear of the miracles He wrought against the Egyptian land, and a greater awareness of His powers would be realized. The word used for declaring Hashem's Name is sapeir, which means to tell over as a story. Sipur is a story. This would suggest that there are many ways to relate Hashem's greatness, and the medium of a story is equally effective. A story is not only uplifting, it is an instrument of healing. Horav Nachman, zl, m'Breslov, a great proponent of the effectiveness of stories, notes that, prior to delving into the various mitzvos and the ensuing halachos, the Torah first relates the story of Creation and all of Sefer Bereishis. Our people carried their stories with them from exile to exile, giving them hope and inspiration. No enemy could destroy the emotion and faith achieved through an inspiring story. The ravages of exile, persecution or disease could not destroy the inspiration attained through a story. Yes, these stories of faith, Providence and Jewish resilience have kept many from succumbing to the despair and deprivation that have plagued us in galus.

There is a story that goes back a few hundred years that gives meaning to the concept of stories. When the Baal Shem Tov saw a decree threatening the Jewish People, he went into the solitude of the forest, lit a fire and poured out his heart in prayer to Hashem. The decree was averted.

Years later, when his primary talmid, disciple, the Mezritcher Maggid was compelled to advocate the needs of the Jewish People, he would go to the same place in the forest that his revered rebbe had used and said, "Hashem Yisborach, I do not know how to light the fire, but I do know how to pray." Hashem listened to his prayer, and misfortune was avoided.

When his talmid, Horav Moshe Leib Sassover, went into the forest to intercede on behalf of Klal Yisrael, he would say, "Ribbono Shel Olam, I do not know how to light the fire; I do not know how to pray in the manner of my rebbeim that preceded me. One thing I do know, however, I know the place to go. I pray that just being in this holy site will effect salvation." He succeeded in turning the tide, and - again - the Jewish People were saved.

Last, the responsibility fell on the shoulders of his disciple the saintly Rizhiner Rebbe. Sitting in his home, he looked up and spoke to Hashem. "I have not achieved the spiritual plateau of my rebbeim. I neither know how to light the fire, nor do I know how to pray. I do not even know the place in the forest which is propitious for prayer. All I can do is relate the story and hope that this will be sufficient." He succeeded.

The story was all that was left. The analogy for us is that not all people have the ability to convey the message of truth through prayer or other forms of intellectual communication. Likewise, there are those who are not necessarily inclined to derive the message unless it is wrapped in a story. A story, when related properly, can have penetrating insight and touch a person in a way that no other means of communication can.

Whoever among the servants of Pharaoh feared the word of Hashem, chased his servants and livestock into the houses. (9:20)

The G-d-fearing Egyptians had the common sense to take their animals inside. Does this indicate yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven? This is the seventh plague to have struck Egypt. Moshe Rabbeinu's track record had been perfect. Whenever he foretold of a plague occurring, it arrived on time with intensity. Only a fool would leave his animals outdoors. In the Zer Zahav by Horav Avraham, zl, m'Teshchinov, the author distinguishes the G-d-fearing Egyptian who, upon hearing of the upcoming plague, immediately took action and brought his animals inside, from his counterpart, who waited until the hail came pounding down, wreaking havoc, before he gathered in his livestock.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, derives from here that a yarei Shomayim is not one who merely does not sin, but rather it is a person who is meticulous not to come in contact with anything that might lead him to sin. This may be compared to a person who fears fire. He will make sure not to have anything of a flammable nature in his possession. It goes without saying that he will not put his hands in the fire.

And as for you and your servants, I know that you are not yet fearful of Hashem, Elokim. (9:30)

The Maharshdam, zl, notes that the dual terminology, Hashem Elokim is used only once prior to this instance. In the beginning of Sefer Bereishis, 2:4, "These are the products of the heavens and earth when they were created, in the day that Hashem Elokim, made earth and Heavens." Is there some message to be derived from this exclusion? The Maharshdam explains that the term Hashem denotes rachamim, the Divine attribute of Mercy, while Elokim denotes middas Hadin, the attribute of strict Justice. As Hashem was about to employ His middas Hadin to punish the Egyptians, He preceded it with the attribute of Mercy, demonstrated in the fact that the wheat and spelt were not destroyed. Although the Egyptians were wicked, Hashem had compassion on them. If this is the case, why did Hashem not have any mercy on the Egyptians during the earlier plagues, such as the plague of blood?

Horav Mosad ben Shimon, Shlita, explains that only concerning the plague of barad, hail, did the Egyptians manifest that they feared Hashem. It was during this plague that the G-d-fearing Egyptians took in their slaves and livestock, indicating that they believed in the plague's imminent occurrence. One who has yiraas Shomayim deserves Hashem's mercy.

Sponsored L'zchus Refuah Sheleima Boruch ben Sara Chasia B'soch She'ar Cholei Yisrael



From: RABBI BEREL WEIN
[rbwein@torah.org] Sent: January 22, 2004
To: rabbiwein@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Wein - Vaera Weekly Parsha Vaera Jan 23 2004

Many people are stubborn. Stubbornness, tenacity, purposefulness are all ambivalent characteristics. They can be positive and constructive traits under certain circumstances and they can be terribly

destructive and negative under others. Pharaoh has his heart hardened by G-d and refuses to let the people of Israel leave Egyptian slavery. But G-d only gives Pharaoh the courage of his convictions. Pharaoh sincerely does not wish to allow the Jews to leave his bondage and he is prepared to be very stubborn about it. Ordinarily, Pharaoh's stubbornness would hardly be tested. But with plagues raining down on Egypt, Pharaoh is sorely tested. Even his advisers, who had until now supported Pharaoh's stubbornness fully, finally are brought to their knees by the blows falling upon Egypt. They tell Pharaoh, "Do you not realize that Egypt is lost?"

But Pharaoh himself remains unconvinced. And his stubbornness affects Moshe and the Jewish people. There is an apparent wavering of faith among the Jews. Maybe they will never be redeemed. Perhaps Moses' promises are only dreams that will never become actualized. Facing a stubborn and intractable foe weakens one's resolve and saps the belief of triumph that is so necessary for the achievement of victory. So Pharaoh looks like a winner after all. But Pharaoh eventually will not only bend, he will break. Stubbornness is not necessarily synonymous with martyrdom.

When Pharaoh himself faces the Angel of Death on the night of Pesach, he relents and frees the Jewish people. But he will turn stubborn again when he feels that the odds are in his favor. For he is not convinced of the power or rectitude of Moshe's mission and of the G-d of Israel. He will therefore pursue his stubborn course till its bitter and unnecessary end in the deep waters of the Yam Suf. Pharaoh thus becomes the paradigm for all those tyrants and megalomaniacs who have followed him throughout the centuries. The past century especially has spawned this breed of cruel stubbornness in earnest and in numbers. From the Kaiser to Hitler, from Lenin and Stalin to Chairman Mao, from the Grand Mufti to Sadaam Hussein and Yassir Arafat the imitators of Pharaoh are clear to see. Stubbornness in the name of evil, in the cause of conquest and hatred of others, is a very negative and dangerous trait. It destroys many innocent people but eventually it destroys the stubborn person as well.

Evil is an infection of the soul. Unless it is fought and controlled it will ravage the entire body. But you will say, "Is not the secret of Jewish survival somehow rooted in our own stubbornness?" And the answer to that must be "yes." But there is stubbornness and stubbornness. The stubbornness of morality, of kindness, of Sinai and its basic commandments for our civilization (one of which has become particularly public and pertinent in our political and governmental lives) and of commitment to do the right and the just, is an admirable quality. Thus, a truly sophisticated and intelligent Jew is stubborn and flexible at the same time. In worldly matters, in the marketplace, in the tactics of home and family and education, flexibility is the watchword. "Do it my way or don't do it all," is a dangerous policy in everyday living. Openness to others and to new ideas and situations guarantees greater success and accomplishment in the world.

Parents who are flexible and not rigid in the management of their home will usually see happier results from their children. But in matters of the spirit and soul, in issues of ethics and morality, in the defense of the code and traditions of Sinai, stubbornness and backbone are the traits required for success. "But everyone is doing it," is the refrain that is used to justify negative and costly conduct. One must have the strength to say "not everyone, not me, not us, not our family, not the Jewish people." The Jewish world is reeling from a lack of stubbornness regarding the vital issues of the Jewish world - Torah, observance, the Land of Israel, Torah education, family and Jewish grandchildren. It has too much flexibility regarding these issues. It is far too stubborn regarding defending current politically correct and slogan-prone issues. Pharaoh exemplifies the wrong stubbornness. Moshe represents the correct stubbornness. We should certainly attempt to be the followers of Moshe.

Shabat Shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

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