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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **SHMOS** - 5766

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MOST OF THE PARSHA SHEET IS EFRAIM GOLDSTEIN'S COLLECTION, WITH A FEW ADDITIONS AT THE BEGINNING.

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http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2004/parsha/rneu_shemos.html
[From last year - Didn't make it in time for last year's parsha sheet]
Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger
A Legacy and a Prayer
It certainly seemed as if it was all over. He, the gadol hador and his midwife wife, who had delivered countless babies in the most trying of circumstances, had separated so that no more of their own would bear the oppression of Mitzrayim. Many others took their lead, and a gloom that was probably never repeated in our history, must have taken hold. It was only the reasoned rebuke of their very young child that convinced them to be a family once again, in order to bring at least one more generation of Jewish women into the world.
Strangely enough, this story which resulted in the birth of Moshe and as such is the seeding of our redemption, is only eluded to in the Torah. Quite ironically, the very parsha and sefer named "names" deletes the names at one of the most important junctures of the text. It is left to the Medrash to relay this event in elucidating a seemingly unnecessary narrative (2:1), "And a man went from the house of Levi and took a daughter of Levi." Ramban notes the cryptic record and he suggests that Hashem chose brevity here, in order to emphasize other aspects of the ensuing story.
Nevertheless, there must be some instruction hidden in this presentation, for otherwise the story could have been entirely relegated to the medrash without any allusion in the text.
Perhaps the cryptic record in the Torah forces us to focus on some underlying truth. It may have been the refreshing insight off their daughter, accusing them of a greater crime than Pharoh, that forced them to reconsider. But it took more than that to have them change a life altering decision. Indeed, the about face came not from their own piety, which chazal note was outstanding, nor from the youth that they brought into the world that might one day look back rather quizzically. From where, then, did they gather the strength to backtrack from a position that had already taken hold amongst their people?
The text intimates that Yocheved being a "bas Levi" and Amram coming from the "beis Levi" encouraged them to act on the advice of their daughter. Apparently, Yocheved, the "bas Levi", was moved by the legacy for which she held herself responsible. I would speculate the she could not accept that the piety of her parents and ancestors and their intricate and intimate relationship with Hashem, was destined to perish in Mitzrayim. Amram, it would seem, found strength in the home from which he came, one that already felt responsible for the religious life of their people and was tending to their needs.
Thus, the story that emerges is that our redemption took off only through those who were dedicated to the legacy of their forebears, unwilling to accept the disappointment of their mission. Perhaps that was necessary for Hashem to invoke that same concern some 23 pesukim later and on several occasions after that (3:15, 6:3). It may well be that the assuredness of their faith in their parents' efforts and their ensuing actions became a prayer that was accepted to bring about the birth of Moshe.

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http://www.onefamilyfund.org/index.asp?ID=291
A Modern Day Burning Bush --
by Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman,
Young Israel of Midwood
The beginning of the mission to bring the Jewish nation out of bondage in Egypt is what we read in the Torah portion of our return from Israel. Moshe's mission begins with a vision of a burning bush, on fire but not consumed. That must have been marvelous and moving to behold. I know that it was, because on our own just-completed mission to Israel, we saw the same thing. And I want to share that vision with you.
The Torah describes the scene as Moshe first beholds the bush:
"And he saw an angel of G-d in a conflagration of fire from within the bush, and he looked and the bush was burning with fire, but it was not consumed. And Moshe said, 'I will turn aside and see this great sight – why the bush is not being burnt.' And G-d saw that he had turned to see, and He called to him."
The passage seems to emphasize Moshe's decision to go and look at the bush. It might simply have said: And he turned to see, and G-d called to him. Why all the detail: Moshe decides to go and look, and G-d sees that he is going to look, and so on.
The Midrash Tanchuma elaborates on this emphasis and says: "G-d said to him: 'You made the effort to look, you merit that I reveal myself to you."
In other words, G-d revealed himself to Moshe because he took the trouble to go and see the burning bush.
Why was that so praiseworthy? Who wouldn't go and see such a marvel, if only out of curiosity? Why should that deserve reward?
I believe that the answer is that Moshe understood that something of tremendous significance – something not of this world – was taking place at the bush. That much he could tell – and sense – even from afar. He knew that if he went to see it he would be face to face with a spiritual revelation. But he also knew that where spirituality is concerned, you can't just be a sight-seer. The Holy Presence in the bush is not a tourist attraction. For Moshe to go and see it would mean for him to be changed by it, to have his life changed, perhaps beyond recognition. And that might have given him pause.
But he went anyway: "I will turn aside and see". He was prepared to go and see something that would change him, that would change his life, that would change his destiny. That was a fateful and a courageous decision. And because of that decision g-d revealed Himself to Moshe.
One cannot see the bush burning with fire and not be changed. One cannot see the bush standing up to the fire and be unmoved. One cannot see the Holy Presence on fire and remain indifferent.
We went to Israel last week to see extraordinary things. And we did. We went to be moved, and we were.
But the most extraordinary things that we saw were the people: People whose courage and whose conviction and self-sacrifice for

Israel is beyond imagining. We visited communities that are under constant fire, and yet remain undaunted.
They are the bush that is engulfed in fire, yet is not consumed, and continues to flourish and grow. And we were privileged to see them.
And every one of us was changed by that sight.
Every day that we spent in Israel was a revelation, but perhaps the most incredible day was Sunday, when we traveled to the Jewish communities of Gush Katif, in the Gaza strip.
We saw Jews living in tiny communities - 200 families, 80 families, 60 families, 13 families - surrounded by a sea of murderous enemies, and fortified only by their conviction and their faith.
We saw the people of Netzarim, 63 families surrounded on all sides by Palestinians, the only access road attacked so often that it can only be traversed by armed convoys. And we met their children, wonderful beautiful children, and they sang for us, and we danced with them. And we got back into our armored bus and waited for the armed convoy to take us back.
And we looked back and marveled at that bush burning with fire and not being consumed.
We met the people of Kfar Darom, like Rabbi Shmuel Bar Ilan, who leads a kollel of young men studying for Rabbinic ordination. He showed me his house, where he has been living for a year, and the marks of the four mortar shells and the one Kassam rocket that have fallen right around his home in that year. And he told me how convinced he was that the salvation was taking place around us, and how grateful he was to be part of that process.
And they too are a bush burning with fire and not being consumed.
We traveled to Shirat Hayam, a tiny village – less than a village, two rows of abandoned Egyptian buildings, 6 km from the Egyptian border. Four years ago four young people took them over, after terrorists killed their friend. That is a common pattern in the territories – after a Jew is killed, his friends put up a new settlement, in defiance. Now, four years later, there are 13 young families in Shirat Hayam, perched on the beach, surrounded on all sides by Palestinians. Even the beach side is dangerous, because terrorists can come in by boat. I cannot forget the sight, as we left, of a young mother swinging her baby as she turned back towards that tiny cluster of buildings, surrounded by implacable enemies.
And she, too, is part of that bush burning with fire and not being consumed.
We talked with a social worker who works in Gush Katif, and he told us of the pressure of living under fire, of women who make sure their house is tidy each morning, so that in case they are killed in the course of the day people will not come into their homes and find them messy; of teenage children who wet their beds each night; of 3,800 mortar shells that have fallen on the small towns of Gaza since September of 2000; and of the incredible courage of people who remain, and the many new families who have moved in, despite the fear and the terror. Incredibly, there are more young people waiting to move in than there are homes available.
Nor is such self-sacrifice limited to Gush Katif. On Tuesday we traveled to Samaria, and we stopped in Kedumim, where we spoke with the head of the town council, Daniella Weiss. She described how she first went to settle in Kedumim, with four sleeping bags for herself, her husband, and their two small children. And now, her children are following in her footsteps, staking out communities on hilltops. And she told us how her son-in-law was killed, when a terrorist snuck into her daughter's home. And she told us how her daughter was in the house, hiding behind a desk, holding her hand over her small daughter's mouth to keep her from betraying their presence. How she saw the terrorist's shoes, saw him turn away, at which point she ran out of the house. And she told us, with tears in her eyes, that her daughter had married again, and that she was the matchmaker. And she explained to us that despite what had happened, her family remains in Samaria, because if Jews run in Samaria, in the heart of Israel, then they will soon be running everywhere.
And she and her family are also a bush burning with fire that is not being consumed.
And one cannot see that without being changed.
I know that I was. I will not be able to read of terrorist attacks in Israel without thinking of those many victims whom we met and who shared their stories and their tears with us; I will not be able to read of children under fire without thinking of those bright young faces in Netzarim; I will not be able to hear the word settlements without thinking of the brave people of Kfar Darom, and Shirat Hayam, and Kedumim, and all the other places that we saw.
I went to Israel skeptical about the possibility of the settlements holding out against the demographic reality and worldwide hostility. But the unbelievable self-sacrifice of the people who are settling Israel is so overwhelming that it has to be considered a historic force in its own right. Indeed, the Talmud in Berakhot says that self-sacrifice has the force to effect miracles.
And if that is so, then we can expect miracles in Israel.
I hope and pray that they will come soon, and that just as the burning bush that Moshe saw was the harbinger of salvation, so too this bush that burns today in Israel will portend the salvation for which we yearn.

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http://www.artscroll.com/Chapters/

Living Each Week
By Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski
Parashas Shemos

The king of Egypt said to the Jewish midwives, that the name of one was Shifrah, and the name of the second, Puah. And he said, "When you deliver [the Jewish women, you shall see on the birthstool;] if it is a son then you shall kill him, and if it is a daughter, she may live" (Exodus 1:15-16)

Rashi says that Shifrah and Puah were in actuality Yocheved and Miriam, the mother and sister of Moses and Aaron.

Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech states that Pharaoh knew that asking the Jewish midwives to destroy male newborns would be futile, and that their high moral values would never permit them to commit so heinous a deed. He therefore began an insidious effor to undermine their moral values, and the very first step was to give them Egyptian names. They were no longer to be called Yocheved and Miriam, but Shifrah and Puah. This first tiny step of Egyptian enculturation would be followed by another, and then yet another, until eventually their assimilation would be so complete that they would be detached from traditional values, even so far as to ultimately consent to infanticide.

Obviously, one does not jump from a name change to infanticide, but a gradual erosion of ethics and values may very well begin with what may appear to be an innocent deviation from tradition. Tiny increments of alien enculturation could follow one upon another, virtually imperceptibly, until the separation from one's value system is total.

"[The midwives] did not do as the king of Egypt bade them and they let the children live" (1:17). This verse is not repetitive, but refers to two separate actions. Firstly, they rejected the Egyptian names and refused to initiate any deviation from tradition. As a result of their maintaining their Jewish identity, they avoided progression into pagan mentality, and hence prevented their moral deterioration into infanticide.

The message is clear. Violation of the basic ethics and morals of Judaism may begin with what appears to be a rather trivial and innocent departure from tradition.

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http://www.chiefrabbi.org/
Covenant & Conversation
Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from
Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth [From 2 years ago 5764]
http://www.chiefrabbi.org/tt-index.html
Shemot
This week's Covenant and Conversation owes its genesis to my teacher, Rabbi Nachum Rabinovitch. One of the great Maimonidean scholars of our time, he taught us, his students, that Torah leadership demands the highest intellectual and moral courage. He did this in the best way possible: by personal example. The following thoughts, which are his, are a small indication of what I learned from him - not least that Torah is, among other things, a refusal to give easy answers to difficult questions.
It was, in its way, the most fateful encounter in Jewish history. Moses, a fugitive in Midian, is tending his flocks. It is the slow movement in the symphony of his life. His first taste of leadership was not a happy one. He had intervened to protect an Israelite slave from being beaten by an Egyptian taskmaster. The next day he tried to bring peace between two Israelites who were having a quarrel. Their reaction was indignant. "Who appointed you as a prince and leader over us?" He had not yet thought of becoming a leader, yet already his leadership was being challenged. It was a taste of things to come.
Realizing that his intervention the previous day had already become known, Moses escapes from Egypt and finds refuge in Midian where his true identity is unknown. Jethro's daughters, whom he rescued from rough treatment at the hands of local shepherds, tell their father that "An Egyptian man saved us." Moses looks, speaks, and dresses like an Egyptian. He marries one of Jethro's daughters and settles down to the life of a shepherd, quiet, anonymous, and far from Pharaoh and the Israelites.
Yet his memories do not leave him alone. They come into sudden focus as he is tending his sheep and his eye catches sight of a strange phenomenon:
Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of G-d. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight-why the bush does not burn up." When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, G-d called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." "Do not come any closer," G-d said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the G-d of your father, the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Isaac and the G-d of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at G-d.
G-d tells him that the moment has come. He has heard the cries of the Israelites. In response both to their cries and to the promise he made with the patriarchs, He is about to bring them out of slavery and He calls on Moses to lead them. The drama of the exodus is about to begin.
One sentence in this passage intrigued the sages: "At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at G-d." They noticed a parallel between these words and a later passage, after the golden calf, when Moses comes down from the mountain having secured forgiveness for the people, and new tablets to replace those he had broken when he first saw the calf. The text reads:
When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. On this, the sages commented:
Rabbi Samuel ben Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Jonathan: in reward for three [pious acts], Moses was privileged to receive three [forms of reward]. In reward for "and Moses hid his face," he was given a radiant face. In reward for "he was afraid," he merited that "they were afraid to come near him." In reward for "to look upon G-d," he merited that "he sees the form of the Lord."
It is a lovely idea. Moses, who came closer to G-d than any other human being before or since, took on some of the characteristics of G-d himself - not that he became G-dlike (Moses, like every other figure in the Hebrew Bible, remains human, not divine) but that his face shone from the encounter.
One detail in the sages' commentary, however, is strange. The first two rewards are straightforward - a kind of measure for measure. Because he hid his face, his face became radiant. Because he was awestruck by the burning bush, he became awe-inspiring (the Israelites were "afraid to come near him"). But what about the third - because he was afraid to look at G-d, he was rewarded by seeing G-d? Either it is right or wrong to "look at G-d." If it is right, why was Moses afraid? And if it is wrong, why was he later rewarded with something that should not have happened?
One question, according to the sages, troubled Moses. "Why do the innocent suffer?" Why is there evil in the world? Moses burned with a sense of justice. When he saw a slave beaten, or two people fighting, or young women being roughly treated by shepherds, he intervened. Later, when his mission to Pharaoh initially made things worse for the Israelites, not better, he said to G-d: "O Lord, why have you brought trouble to this people . . . You have not rescued your people at all." Moses belonged to the tradition of Abraham who said to G-d, "Shall the judge of all the earth not do justice?"
This is the question of questions for biblical faith. Paganism then, like secularism now, had no such doubt. Why should anyone expect justice in the world? The G-ds fought. They were indifferent to mankind. The universe was not moral. It was an arena of conflict. The strong win, the weak suffer, and the wise keep far from the fray. If there is no G-d or (what amounts to the same thing) many G-ds, there is no reason to expect justice. The question does not arise.
But for biblical faith, it does. G-d, the supreme power of powers, is just. Was this not why he chose Abraham in the first place, so that he would teach his children and his household to "keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just"? Why then do the good suffer, while evil men prosper? It is a question that reverberates through the centuries, in Jeremiah, the book of Job, ancient rabbinic midrash, the kinot ("laments") of the Middle Ages, and post-Holocaust literature. It was this question that stayed with Moses and gave him no rest. Why are the Israelites enslaved? What wrong did they do to warrant it? Why is the brutal regime of Egypt so strong? Where is the justice in the world?
Pain, harm, suffering are evils. Yet there are circumstances in which we make our peace with them - when we know that they are necessary for some good. To be a parent is to be troubled by the cry of a child in distress, yet we willingly give a child medicine, and put up with its cries, when we know it will cure the illness from which the child is suffering. A surgeon must, at a certain point, treat the patient on the operating table as an object rather than a person, for were it otherwise he could not perform the surgery. A political leader may have to make a decision that will have a disastrous impact on some people - thrown out of work as a result of stringent economic policies, even killed on the battlefield as the consequence of a decision to go to war. One who shrinks from these choices because of a strong sense of compassion may be a good human being but a wholly inadequate leader, because the long term result of a failure to make tough choices may be far worse. There are times when we must silence our most human instincts if we are to bring about good in the long run.
It was just this - my teacher argued - of which Moses was afraid. If he could "look at the face of G-d," if he could understand history from the perspective of heaven, he would have to make his peace with the suffering of human beings. He would know why pain here was necessary for gain there; why bad now was essential to good later on. He would understand the ultimate justice of history.
That is what Moses refused to do, because the price of such knowledge is simply too high. He would have understood the course of history from the vantage point of G-d, but only at the cost of ceasing to be human. How could he still be moved by the cry of slaves, the anguish of the oppressed, if he understood its place in the scheme of things, if he knew that it was necessary in the long run? Such knowledge is divine, not human - and to have it means saying goodbye to our most human instincts: compassion, sympathy, identification with the plight of the innocent, the wronged, the afflicted and oppressed. If to "look at the face of G-d" is to understand why suffering is sometimes necessary, then Moses was afraid to look - afraid that it would rob him of the one thing he felt in his very bones, the thing that made him the leader he was: his anger at the sight of evil which drove him, time and again, to intervene in the name of justice.
Moses was afraid to "look at the face of G-d." But there are two primary names of G-d in the Bible: Elokim and Hashem (the so-called tetragrammaton, the four-letter name). Elokim, say the sages, refers to G-d's attribute of justice. Hashem refers to his compassion, his mercy, his kindness. At the burning bush, Moses was afraid to look at Elokim. His reward, years later, was that he saw "the form of Hashem." He understood G-d's compassion. He did not understand - he was afraid to understand - G-d's attribute of justice. He preferred to fight injustice as he saw it, than to accept

it by seeing its role in the script of eternity. When it came to kindness and mercy, Moses was inspired by heaven. But when it came to justice, Moses preferred to be human than divine.
So it was throughout history. Jews, however deeply they believed in G-d and divine providence, never made their peace with what seemed to them to be injustice. Albert Einstein spoke of the "almost fanatical love of justice" that made him "thank his stars" that he belonged to the Jewish tradition.
Nowhere is this clearer than in the book of Job. Job protests the injustice of his fate. His comforters tell him he is wrong. G-d is just, therefore there is a reason for the tragedies that have befallen him. Throughout the long dialogue we sense that Job is on the brink of blasphemy, that it is his comforters who speak the truth. Yet at the conclusion of the book our expectations are suddenly overturned. G-d says to Eliphaz and his colleagues: "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken as you ought about me, as my servant Job has done."
It is an astonishing volte-face. Better the protests of Job than the acceptance of fate on the part of his friends. Yes, there is an ultimate justice in the affairs of mankind. But we may not aspire to such knowledge - not because we cannot (because, being human, our minds are too limited, our horizons too short) but because we morally must not, for we would then accept evil and not fight against it. G-d wants us to be human not divine. He seeks our protest against evil, our passion for justice, our refusal to come to terms with a world in which the innocent suffer and the evil have power.
It is that refusal - born not out of a lack of faith but precisely the opposite, the conviction that G-d wants us to be active in pursuit of justice - that drove Abraham, Jeremiah and Job; that drove successive generations of those inspired by the Bible to fight slavery, tyranny, poverty and disease; that moves us to become G-d's partners in the work of redemption. Faced with the opportunity to understand the troubling aspects of history from the vantage-point of G-d, Moses was afraid to look. He was right, and for this he was rewarded. G-d does not want us to understand the suffering of the innocent but to fight for a world in which the innocent no longer suffer. To that, Moses dedicated his life. Can we, his disciples, do less?

[From Efraim Goldstein efraimg@aol.com]

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet

Parshat Shemot 5766

שבת פרשת שמות

Jerusalem Post Jan 20 2006

STRENGTH AND POWER Rabbi Berel Wein

Over the centuries of exile and dispersion, the Jewish people have in the main been portrayed as a weak, defenseless people, subject to the varying whims of inimical rulers and to the vagaries of time and society. To a great degree, this characterization was of necessity an accurate one. Alone and outnumbered, persecuted by dogmatic faiths and jealous hatreds, the Jewish people survived by an inner strength and belief in the justice of their cause, the truth of their beliefs and an unswerving commitment to their better tomorrow. This inner strength, more powerful than any weapon of destruction, was reflected by the words of the prophet Zecharia who long ago proclaimed: "Not by strength nor by might, but rather by My spirit, says the Lord of Hosts." But the Jewish people became restless under the yoke of servile acceptance of the abuse and suffering heaped upon them. What the Jewish world was willing to accept because they had no choice in the Middle Ages in Europe, it was less willing to do so in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Zionism was built upon the bedrock of Jewish power and strength. Jewish participation in the revolutionary movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – Communism, Socialism, Anarchism, etc. – was founded more or less on the famous dictum of the great murderer Mao Tse Tung: "Power comes from the end of the barrel of a gun." This change of attitude was a radical departure from traditional Jewish thought and attitude over the years of the Exile. In my opinion, this was one of the greatest changes that Zionism wrought within the Jewish society and how Jews began to think about themselves and their future, vis a vis their enemies and foes.

Over the long years of exile, Jews were always taught to have a low profile, never to provoke, confront or antagonize the non-Jewish society that they lived in. The destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust provided a painful opportunity to reassess this behavior pattern and attitude. The new idea of Jewish power and physical strength, of no longer accepting indignities, discrimination and abuse, took hold in the Jewish communities of the United States and the Land of Israel in the latter half of the twentieth century. In The United States this was a matter of legal battles, public education to equality and a Jewish sense that the United States was different than all other places of exile and that eventually a realization that a Jew could be accepted as an American without compromising one's Jewishness would take hold. In the Land of Israel this new Jewish attitude of assertiveness took on the form of armed conflict and power from the barrel of a gun. The success of Israel in all of its wars changed the image of the Jew in much of the world. The accusation of servility and being parasites now was changed into the canard of Jewish aggression and unwarranted use of its military might. Just look up the UN resolutions against Israel to understand the world's changed perception of us.

But just as abject servility was no answer to the "Jewish problem," unrestrained use of strength and power has also proven to be an unworkable long range solution. This is especially true, since the exercise of physical strength and power sadly expunged God's spirit and Torah values from many of those who wielded this new found strength and power. The Israeli statement that "when strength doesn't work, try more strength" has not really achieved much in our social lives and in the diplomatic arena of the world. The Torah is a Torah of balance, of the balancing of contradictory ideas and philosophies. Not exercising power is suicide for Israel and the Jewish world in today's world of terrorism and profound danger and exisistentialist threats. But a nation without spirit and tradition, without rituals and common observances, cannot triumph on the basis of physical power and strength alone. The values of a secular society alone, devoid of Jewish content and tradition, and fully reliant solely on physical power and strength, will prove insufficient to carry us past the difficult challenges that yet await us. By not emphasizing the idea of "My spirit" in our society, not in its politics, on its roads, in the everyday conduct of its citizens, we do a great disservice to ourselves and to future generations. Strength and spirit were meant to be applied and used wisely and in consort one with another. Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha SHEMOT Rabbi Berel Wein

The Torah in this week's parsha informs us that there "arose a new king – a Pharaoh that knew not of Yosef." The Talmud advances two opinions as to who this new king was. One opinion is that he was truly a new king, who out of ignorance and prejudice knew not of Yosef and how he saved Egypt in its darkest days of famine and depression. The other opinion advanced there in the Talmud is that it was the same old Pharaoh that had been blessed by Yaakov and saved by Yosef but that now he chose not to remember Yosef and his past grand achievements. Rashi here in this parsha quotes both opinions of the Talmud. This second opinion implies somehow that this Pharaoh must have lived a very long life since the enslavement of the Jews by the Egyptians did not begin until well over a century after the death of Yosef and his brothers. It is therefore reasonable to see in these seemingly contradictory opinions of the Talmud a lesson and perspective on Jewish history and current events. The two opinions are in reality but two sides of the same coin – the coin of ingratitude, hatred of the "other" and selective historical memory. The new Pharaoh and the old Pharaoh are

really the same type of historical tyrant and hater. And they are both to be considered very dangerous to Jewish survival and to civilization generally. And in every generation they arise once again to threaten us and all of humanity.

There are those who are truly ignorant of the contributions of the Jewish people to the general welfare of humanity and civilization. Inundated with false indoctrinations and malicious conspiracy theories, overwhelmed by religious or secular fanaticism, seeking instant utopia whose pursuit justifies the most murderous means imaginable, this new king knows not Yosef and also sees the Jews as a mortal threat. The new king in the past century was mainly represented by the Communist movement, by the Soviet Union. The poison of anti-Semitism which the Soviet Union disseminated throughout the world has survived the fall of that evil empire itself. It haunts us to this very day. But there was also the old king who knew not Yosef. Jewish contributions to the development of Wilhelminian Germany and to the Weimar republic were purposely forgotten by the German people in World War II. The twelve thousand Jews who died in World War I fighting for German victory were willfully expunged from the German mindset. The old king was ungrateful and immoral. The contributions of the Jews to Moslem society have been great and long-lasting. Yet, the old kings and the new kings that govern much of that society today choose to forget and not know and now demand the extinction of the Jewish state and people. The narrative of Shemot repeats itself today in Europe and Africa and here in the Middle East. The world needs a good lesson of teaching in the parsha of Shemot. So too do the Jewish people. It will make us wiser and more realistic about our present and future course as a people and as a country. Shabat Shalom

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TORAH WEEKLY—Parshat Shmot
For the week ending 21 January 2006 / 21 Tevet 5766
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

OVERVIEW

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

INSIGHTS

Soul Food

"Every son that will be born - into the River shall you throw him!." (1:22)

EDiets.com, Fat Loss '4' idiots, The South Beach Diet, The Scarsdale Diet, The Atkins Diet, The Mediterranean Diet, The Blood Type Diet, The Negative Calorie Diet, Weight Watchers, Macrobiotic, Vegans, Vegetarians, Fruitetarians, Breathetarians.

Never before in history have there been so many opinions as to what we should and should not eat.

Apart from their physical benefits, many of today's diets also focus on the purported spiritual benefits of eating and refraining from certain kinds of foods and food mixtures.

The Jewish People however, have had their own spiritual diet for well over three thousand years. The Torah describes which foods bring us to a clearer contact with G-d and which foods distance us. It also describes foods that are not in themselves deleterious to our spirituality but are damaging when combined, like milk and meat.

In this week's Torah portion, the Egyptians mercilessly cast Jewish babies into the river. The Midrash describes that the river brought all of those little Jewish children to desert lands and ejected them on the shore. There the Divine Presence nurtured them. G-d commanded the rock on one side of these babies to produce honey, and He commanded the rock on the other side to give forth oil and nurse the infants.

Later at the parting of the sea at Yam Suf it was these same children who recognized G-d and cried out "This is my G-d and I will glorify Him!"

When we take care of what goes into our children's mouths by giving them the benefit of kosher food we are helping them to ingest a spirituality that will one day surface in their coming to recognize G-d in a world where His existence is doubly concealed. Source: Shmot Rabba 1:29

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

PARSHAS SHEMOS

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

Rashi cites Chazal who say that Shifrah and Puah were none other than Yocheved and Miriam, Moshe Rabbeinu's mother and sister, respectively. Shifrah was given this name because she was meshaper, had beautified the newly-born infant. Puah, Miriam, was given her name, because she was poeh, had spoken soothingly, calming down the infant. We note that up until this point Yocheved and Miriam had not been mentioned by their real names. The only names by which we know them are names describing their interaction with the infant. One would think that such elementary and natural activity, something which is commonplace among women, would not draw attention to the extent that it be worthy of acknowledging with a name.

Horav Yerucham Levovitz, zl, the venerable Mashgiach of pre-World War II Mir, explains that names are important, playing a critical role in describing a person's essence. Therefore, when the Torah refers to Yocheved and Miriam as Shifrah and Puah, it is indicating that these names characterize them. A simple, everyday activity has the power to convey the essence of a person. This teaches us that in This World there are no minor actions or major actions. It is all based on the individual who carries out the activity. A great person lives and acts with greatness. Every activity is an indication of his distinctiveness. A small person, on the other hand, can take the most distinguished activity and trivialize it, thereby distorting its significance. A great person earns a place in the Torah for the manner that she communicates with an infant. It becomes her benchmark, her signature. We derive from here that the man defines the activity, rather than the action defining the man. Horav Chaim Kamil, zl, would cite from Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, that those who eulogize great Torah leaders by relating their everyday activities as stories and episodes in their lives - err greatly. These incidents are not just merely episodes; they were defining moments, which characterize the preeminence of these individuals. He cited the interaction in the Talmud Moed Katan 28a that occurred between Rabbi

Chiya and the Angel of Death. The Angel of Death could not find a means of gaining access to Rabbi Chiya. One day, the Angel of Death appeared at Rabbi Chiya's door as a poor man asking for a slice of bread. Rabbi Chiya gladly gave him some bread. The Angel then asked, "The master has compassion on a poor man. Why does he not have similar compassion on "that man standing outside the door"? At that moment the door was opened and the Angel of Death displayed his fiery rod, thereby revealing his true identity, so that he was able to carry out his mission of taking Rabbi Chiya's life.

This story is mind-boggling. What similarity is there between giving a poor man a piece of bread and giving up his life to the Angel of Death? Evidently, when Rabbi Chiya gave a slice of bread to a poor man, it was more than a simple, kind gesture. He was giving a part of his life to the man. This is the level of sensitivity he manifest upon giving charity. Rav Chaim would add that to portray Rabbi Chiya as a man who was openhearted and gladly gave bread to the poor would be a grave error. He did not just give bread; he gave his life!

We now understand the profundity of Rav Yeruchem's statement: The individual defines the action. Rabbi Chiya transformed the act of sharing a slice of bread with a poor man into a lofty gesture. He gave with his heart and soul, tantamount to giving up his life. Likewise, one woman can "pooh pooh" an infant, and the act has little or no meaning, while another woman can do the exact same act; but it is an act of spiritual ascendancy that defines her character.

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

The effect of one little gesture can be outstanding. Bisyah, the daughter of Pharaoh, stretched out her hand to an infant in the water. Did she have any idea who this infant was? Did it cross her mind that this infant would lead the Jews out of hundreds of years of slavery to her father? Did she know that this infant would become the quintessential rebbe of our People and the father of prophecy? Did she realize that, as a result of this gesture, she would be eternally famous, earning the gratitude of every Jew throughout the millennia? She certainly knew nothing. She acted because it was the correct thing to do. A baby is in the water: you save it. She would deal with the consequences later. Can we imagine what might have occurred, how history would have been transformed, had Bisyah not stretched out her hand to save Moshe? Certainly Harbei shluchim laMakom, "The Almighty has many agents," and His Divine plan will always succeed in being carried out. Bisyah, by her small gesture, became one of those fortunate agents.

Every Jewish child is a potential Moshe. We have no clue what his future might be, if given the proper environment and education. If the opportunity arises, as it did for Bisyah, one should follow her example and respond accordingly. While some sit around and call meetings or convene committees, others move forward and act. They will make the difference.

The Chafetz Chaim, zl, would relate the following narrative to demonstrate the significance of early and immediate intervention. The Maggid, zl, m'Dubno was once walking down the street when he chanced upon a poor blind man, dressed in tattered, old clothes, being led by a young boy. The average person would turn his head away from this despairing sight. The Maggid was not the average person. When he saw pain, he felt pain. While another person might have bemoaned the anguish that others sustained - and even have expressed his own gratitude to the Almighty for providing him with healthy eyes and a basic livelihood - the Maggid was not just "another" person. He immediately went over to the poor pair and queried them, "My brothers, where are you from, and where are you going?"

The blind man was too depressed to respond. He had had enough of "do-gooders" who eased their consciences with friendly salutations. He needed much more than a "good morning" greeting. The young boy, however, looked up to the Maggid with pleading eyes, explaining that his father had been sick for a while. He had lost his vision. His mother had recently succumbed to a grave illness. The hapless pair were alone in the world, with the young boy left to care for his father. The father was becoming agitated. "With whom are you speaking?" he asked his son in an aggravated tone. "Come, we must move on."

It was the Maggid who replied to the father's query, "Please, my friend, you will go soon. Tell me. Have you eaten yet today?" "No," answered the boy. "I am taking my father to the community soup kitchen, so that we can eat something, and then we will return home."

The Maggid said, "Come with me. I will prepare a meal for you that will be far better than anything you could get at the soup kitchen." The young boy's eyes began to tear with gratitude. The mere thought of a filling meal, a kind word, a smile from a benevolent rav was overwhelming. Even his father acquiesced gracefully to the Maggid's invitation. After the meal, when everyone was relaxed, the Maggid asked the pair, "Would you care to remain in my home as permanent guests? I will provide you with a warm, clean room, three nourishing meals a day - all for free. Moreover, the young lad will be enrolled in the local cheder, where he will study Torah in an environment that is best suited for him, both socially and spiritually."

The father was in a quandary. No one had ever been so nice to them. True, there had been individuals who were kindhearted, to a point. To be so selfless, however, to offer so much for nothing, this had never before occurred. The young boy was delighted. He thrived and began to smile again. With a brilliant mind and an insatiable desire to study Torah, he quickly excelled in his studies and rose above his peers. His father eventually succumbed to his many ailments, but left the world knowing that his ben yachid, only child, was provided for.

The young boy matured and become an erudite Torah scholar. His fame as a posek, halachic arbitrator, spread throughout the region. He accepted the distinguished rabbanus, rabbinic pulpit, in the city of Brodie. Yes, this young boy was none other than the saintly Horav Shlomo Kluger, zl. The Chafetz Chaim would conclude the story, "Can you imagine if the Maggid would not have made the gesture of inviting them to his house? Had he been just like everyone else, we might not have had a Rav Shlomo Kluger!"

Moshe grew up and went out to his brothers, and he observed their burdens. (2:11)

From the reading of the pasuk we may deduce that Moshe's "growing up" meant to leave the splendor of his palatial surroundings and enter into the world of responsibility, the world of sharing the pain with his fellow Jews. Rashi teaches us that Moshe's shouldering responsibility meant to "see their suffering and grieve with them." It was not enough to simply be aware of their pain. Raising awareness was not enough for Moshe Rabbeinu. Feeling their pain would motivate action. The Alter, zl, m'Kelm says that Moshe pictured in his mind the images of their slavery, to the point that he felt that he was with them, suffering from their pain. Moshe hurt so much that when he complained to Hashem, he said, "My Lord, why have You done evil to this people?" (Shemos 5:22). How does one talk like this to Hashem? Indeed, Chazal tell us that the Middas haDin, Attribute of Strict Justice, wanted to strike Moshe, but Hashem intervened, saying, "Leave him be; he speaks for the pain of the Jewish People."

This was Moshe Rabbeinu. He felt their pain to the point that he complained to Hashem. Chazal tell us that his criticism was worse than the sin of mei merivah, striking the rock instead of speaking to it. Yet, Hashem overlooked Moshe's infraction because he spoke out for the Jewish pain. He reacted to the pain because he hurt. We derive from here that what might be viewed as a sin for a great person might actually be considered a laudatory act for someone who is spiritually less distinguished. Horav Yaakov Neiman, zl, explains that an individual who is on a lower spiritual plane will invariably act in a manner commensurate with his spiritual proclivities and with his understanding of right and wrong. Thus, what he considers a praiseworthy endeavor may, in fact, be regarded for someone on a much higher spiritual plateau to be sinful. He interprets this into the Tefillah which we recite for geshem, rain, on Shemini Atzeres. We entreat Hashem in the merit of Moshe Rabbeinu who "hit the stone and water came forth." This is difficult to understand, considering that Moshe's act of striking the stone was viewed by Hashem as a grave sin, which ultimately was the basis

for barring Moshe from entering Eretz Yisrael. How can Moshe's action be used as a merit for us?

Rav Neiman explains that while striking the stone was an error on Moshe's part, it was viewed negatively only in the context of his elevated spiritual status. For us, or anybody else, however, that action might have constituted a mitzvah! Klal Yisrael was famished. They needed water. Moshe responded accordingly, because when they hurt, he also hurt. Moshe's error was the result of an overwhelming love for - and sensitivity to the needs of - each and every Jew. For him, this act was tainted ever-so-slightly by a vestige of sin. For us, it would be a mitzvah. In that merit, we supplicate Hashem for water.

He saw and behold! The bush was burning in the fire but the bush was not consumed. Moshe thought, "I will turn aside now and look… why will the bush not be burned?" And Hashem called out to him from amid the bush. (3:2,3,4)

Moshe Rabbeinu's first prophetic vision consisted of a strange fire that was burning in a bush, yet the bush was not being consumed. His curiosity was piqued and he investigated this wondrous sight. Hashem then "introduced" Himself from amid the burning bush. Obviously, there is so much to be derived from this encounter. We will focus on a few of the lessons. The thorn bush is the lowest, the least distinguished of the various forms of vegetation that grow in the wilderness. Yet, Hashem chose to reveal His Glory through a burning flame in a lowly thorn bush. This conveyed a message to Moshe: Imo anochi b'tzarah, "I am with him/them in his/their anguish." Even when the nation has fallen to the nadir of depravity, to the lowest of the forty-nine gates of tumah, spiritual impurity, the people can rise up and merit Divine Revelation. The Jew, regardless of how far and how deep he has fallen, can always come back. The "light" is always on.

Conversely, there is another lesson to be derived from considering another perspective of this revelation. The greatest individual, one who has even risen to the point that he has been granted Gilui Shechinah, Divine Revelation, must know that he is still nothing more than a lowly thorn bush, who can just as easily sin with a golden calf. Did this not happen with Klal Yisrael? They experienced the miracles which catalyzed yetzias Mitzrayim, our liberation from Egypt. They stood at the foot of Har Sinai and received the Torah amid the greatest Revelation to ever occur. Yet, they quickly fell into the abyss of sin and worshipped the Golden Calf.

Chazal teach us in the Talmud Berachos 57a, that poshei Yisrael, Jewish sinners, are filled with mitzvos, like a pomegranate is filled with seeds. Even the Jews who are lowest on the spiritual totem pole, those who are referred to as a poshei Yisrael, still can perform mitzvos in order to achieve the status of a burning bush. Furthermore, as Horav Avraham Yaffen, zl, infers, one can be aflame with the fiery enthusiasm of Torah, he can be a sneh boeir baeish, fiery thorn bush, but still remain a bush. The lowly bush within him does not become consumed. Some, however, are able to pull themselves out of the muck and rise up out of the thorn bush.

The fiery bush that does not become consumed conveys another message. The Midrash says that the bush signifies Klal Yisrael; the fire represents Egypt. The lesson is: the Egyptians can burn us, but they cannot consume us. Klal Yisrael suffers throughout the millennia, but we are still here. We will not be consumed. The Alshich HaKadosh wonders why the Jewish People are compared to a lowly thorn bush? Is this metaphor not more applicable to the gentile world?

The Alshich explains that in Egypt, there was no distinction between Jew and Egyptian. The Jew had descended to the forty-ninth level of impurity. It reached the point that the Heavenly Angels could not discern between the two. "They are both idol worshippers," they said. There is, however, a distinction. Regardless of the Jew's descent into depravity, he is still a thorn bush. The thorns are part of a bush. They have roots. They connect to something, to a source. The inhabitants of the gentile world are like thorns - plain, loose thorns that become consumed in the fire. The Jews are a burning bush that continues to live. It burns, but it does not burn out. We have roots in our unique ancestry. We are firmly rooted in a foundation of holy Patriarchs and righteous forebears. Yes, we might have become like thorns, but we are still connected to the bush. We always have hope.

In support of these ideas, we find in the Midrash that Chazal relate that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha was once asked by a gentile why Hashem appeared to Moshe in a thorn bush. Rabbi Yehoshua immediately responded, "If He would have appeared in a date palm or a sycamore, you would have the same question." In other words, some people just want to ask questions. They are not interested in the answers. Regardless of this, Rabbi Yehoshua explained that the Almighty wanted to convey the lesson that every place, its lowliness notwithstanding, is filled with the Shechinah. There is no place anywhere in which the Shechinah is not to be found.

The Maharal m'Prague adds that this idea applies equally to people: there is no person that is not suited for Divine Revelation. As noted before, Klal Yisrael had descended to the forty-ninth level of tumah. Yet, they experienced the mora gadol, awesome power, which the author of the Haggadah interprets as Gilui Shechinah, Divine Revelation. This was the precursor to accepting the Torah. Every Jew, despite how low and how far away he might have fallen, can be privy to Divine Revelation.

Last, I recently saw an inspiring thought. In the Mechilta D'Rashbi, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says that there was another interesting phenomenon connected with the thorn bush. It had flowers blooming on it. Now, let us peruse our tumultuous history. There have been fires: the Romans; the Crusades; the Inquisition; the pogroms in Europe; the Cossacks; the Holocaust. Yet, throughout all of these infernos, the Jewish attitude towards our Torah and its study and dissemination never waned. In fact, it bloomed. Amidst the flames, the Torah, our lifeblood, kept coursing through our nation. It never stopped, and it never will.

Va'ani Tefillah

Kol davar she'hayah b'klal v'yatza min ha'klal l'lameid.

Anything that was included in a generalization, but was then singled out from the general statement in order to teach something.

When a law that should have been included in a general statement is isolated for the purpose of teaching us a halachah, we do not view it as being singled out to teach only about itself, but to imply a lesson concerning the entire general law. For example, there are thirty-nine categories of labor that are prohibited on Shabbos. The Torah, however, distinguishes one of them: the law of havarah, lighting a fire. This was done to teach us that in regard to the general law of prohibited labor on Shabbos, each and every melachah, form of labor, is forbidden in its own right - individually. Thus, if one were to act b'shogeg, unintentionally, and transgress a number of melachos, he must offer a Korban Chatas, Sin-offering, as penance for each and every melachah that he had performed. The melachah of havarah was l'lav yatzas, taken out to emphasize that each melachah stands alone as a lav, negative commandment, and incurs its own individual punishment. In this case, the prohibition that was originally included in the generalization was singled out to teach a lesson concerning the entire generalization.

Sponsored In memory of Mrs. Toby Salamon

Rav Kook on Shemot: Going To Peace

After agreeing to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses took leave of his father-in-law. Jethro blessed Moses “Go in peace” [Ex. 4:18]. Actually, Jethro said “Go **to** peace.” The Talmud [Berachot 64a] picks up on this fine nuance:

“One who takes leave from his friend should not say ‘Go in peace’ (“lech BE-shalom”), but ‘Go to peace’ (“lech LE-shalom”). Jethro told Moses ‘Go to peace’ - Moses went and succeeded in his mission. David told his son Absalom ‘Go in peace’ - Absalom went and was hanged.”

“When taking leave of the deceased, however, one should say ‘Go in peace.’”

What is the difference between these two salutations? Why is one appropriate for the living, and the second for the dead?

Life is full of struggles, both spiritual and physical. We are not doing our acquaintances a favor by pretending these battles do not exist. Implying that the road is easy will only lower his guard, lessening his preparation for the obstacles that lie in the way towards his ultimate goal.

Therefore, we should warn our friend at the start of his journey:

know that peace and tranquility are far from us. There are many who strive against us; there are many obstacles on the way that must be overcome. We tell our friends "Go to peace." Proceed towards your destination, but don't expect that the path itself will be peaceful and easy. The road is full of impediments. Only by overcoming them, will you reach peace and completeness.

Of course, the story is much different for souls who have already completed their journey on earth. Their material struggles are over; these obstacles no longer exist. The soul may continue to grow in that world too, but the path is a tranquil one. Therefore, we take leave from the dead by saying "Go in peace."

With these two salutations, the Sages contrasted the nature of this world and the next. The physical world is replete with struggles and turmoil which we must be prepared to face. The World to Come, on the other hand, is one of rest and peace, which we need not fear.

[adapted from Ein Ayah vol. II, p. 396]

Rabbi Mordechai Willig
The TorahWeb Foundation
Moshe and Aharon

I

"I am not a man of words". With this argument, Moshe Rabbeinu refused Hashem's request to lead Am Yisrael out of Egypt. After seven days, Moshe asks Hashem to appoint his brother Aharon instead. Hashem became angry, and Moshe finally acceded to His request (Rashi 4:10).

As a result of Hashem's anger, Moshe who was to be the koheing gadol, lost the position to Aharon (Rashi 4:14). Alternatively, Moshe was destined to lead Am Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael. Because he refused to accept Hashem's mission for seven days, after seven days of prayer his request to enter Eretz Yisrael was denied (Vayikra Rabba 11:6).

The ability to speak, which defines man, requires a combination of the physical organs of speech and the abstract process of thought unique to the human soul (Targum Onkelos, Breishis 2:7). Moshe Rabbeinu's self-described speech handicap can be attributed to a weakness in this combination. Because he was exceedingly spiritual, Moshe was not a man of words (Maharal, Gevuros Hashem, 28).

Nonetheless, Hashem told Moshe, "[go to Egypt.] I shall be with your mouth and teach you [v'horaisicha] what you should say." The Medrash interprets that Hashem would recreate Moshe, as in vatahar, meaning a new conception, thereby removing his speech impediment (Shemos Rabba 3:!5).

The role of a kohein is to sublimate physical offerings into spiritual service. Similarly, life in Eretz Yisrael demands that physical activities, such as planting and fighting wars, be part of a spiritual personality. Moshe Rabbeinu, by his own admission of faulty speech, disqualified himself from serving as a Kohein and leading Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael.

Had Moshe accepted his mission earlier, Hashem would have recreated him, thereby perfecting his speech. This new Moshe would have been able to be a kohein and lead Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael.

II

When Hashem accepted Moshe's refusal to be the sole leader to go to Pharoh (3:10), He appointed Aharon to be Moshe's "mouth" (4:16). This partnership represents, in a broader sense, the partnership of individuals devoted exclusively to spiritual activities with those involved with worldly matters.

"Aharon and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread with Yisro before Hashem" (18:12). Moshe did not partake of the meat, rather he was standing and waiting upon them (Rashi). Eating before Hashem represents the combination of the physical and spiritual. This is the mandate of Am Yisrael, as opposed to non-Jews, who can offer only burnt offerings (Menachos 73b). Aharon, the kohein, is especially dedicated to the idea.

Moshe, however, is entirely spiritual. As such, he did not partake of the meal. Nevertheless, his presence was critical. Those involved in worldly matters must maintain a strong connection with those who are devoted exclusively to spiritual activity (Rav C.Y. Goldwicht, Asufat Ma'arachot, Purim 2001 ed., p. 285).

Correspondingly, those who pursue spiritual goals, such as learning Torah full time, must appreciate the indispensable role of supporters of Torah who earn a livelihood. "Behold hoe good and how pleasant is the dwelling of brothers in unity (Tehillim 133:1). This refers, in particular, to Moshe and Aharon (Krisus 5b).

The menorah, made by Moshe and kindled by Aharon, consisted of seven candles (Bamidbar 8:2-4). The three candles on each side faced the middle ones. The right three symbolize those learning Torah, while the left three represent those earning a livelihood who support those who are learning. It is only with the joint efforts of both groups that Hashem's plan is fulfilled (Sforno).

This legacy of Moshe and Aharon survived the churban, and, as such, is greater than the Beis Hamikdash itself (Rashi 8:2, as explained by Eim Habanim meicha). The Beis Hamikdash was destroyed because of baseless hatred (Yoma 9b), and can only be rebuilt with greater unity within Am Yisrael.

As we read about Moshe and Aharon and the first ge'ula of Am Yisrael, let us strengthen the unity that their brotherhood represents, and thereby hasten the final ge'ula.

Mishpacha January 18, 2006
In Praise of Erlichkeit
by Jonathan Rosenblum

I once heard Rabbi Moshe Eisemann of Yeshivat Ner Israel describe the virtues of an older generation of German Jews. Few of those who came to age before the World War II had any yeshiva background. By the standards of today, they were not learned. Yet when their yeshiva and Bais Yaakov-trained children returned home with new dinim, they immediately immediately started acting in accord with the new dinim without question. And they produced children who are a crown of glory.

Mr. Julius Halberstadt, who passed away recently, in his nineties, personified that generation of German Jews. I had the privilege of being the Halberstadts' next door neighbor in Israel for more than twenty years. On their visits to Israel, they served as surrogate grandparents for our children and instructors in the art of child-raising for my wife and me.

Mr. Halberstadt's early years were rich in great deeds – deeds of which no one who knew him in his later years would have had any suspicion, so little inclined was he to talk about himself. At the beginning of the War, he was interned in the Gur detention camp near Marseilles. The inmates were allowed to leave the camp only one day a week. Many used that day to travel more than an hour to the U.S. consulate in Marseilles to try to arrange visas, but by the time they arrived, the lines were already too long to get in.

On one of those trips, Mr. Halberstadt caught the attention of a distinguished looking gentleman, who turned out to be the consul-general. Mr. Stevenson gave him a pass to come to the consulate every day, and to bring with him the papers of another 30 inmates for processing. The hundreds of visas thus obtained were lifesaving. All those in the Gur detention camp when the Nazis invaded were eventually sent to Auschwitz.

After being warned of the imminent German invasion, Mr. Halberstadt traveled by ship to the United States from Northern Africa. He returned to Europe two years later as a medic in the U.S. Army, participating in the D-Day landing at Normandy. As one of the few German-speaking soldiers, he was given the task of interrogating German POWs. One morning, he

overheard one German POW tell another that he had a grenade hidden under his armpit. He immediately pulled out his pistol and told the prisoner to spread his arms. The grenade fell to the ground and disaster was averted.

In the waning days of the war, Mr. Halberstadt traveled to Brussels, where his parents had spent the war in hiding. He had learned their address from a relative in London and surprised them by appearing unannounced at their door in his army uniform.

The Jews of Brussels were then on the verge of starvation. Mr. Halberstadt used his army connections to provide them with desperately needed food. He also used the army postal service to connect Jews in Brussels to their relatives abroad and to receive letters and packages for them.

IT WAS, HOWEVER, MR. HALBERSTADT'S ERLICHKEIT, not the deeds of his youth, that makes him a model for others. His physical appearance – tall, thin, and ramrod straight – mirrored the man: absolutely straight. His children never saw him in tefillin at home. Upon arriving in Israel, his first order of business was always to find out the times of all the nearby minyanim. When in Eretz Yisrael, he would remain at Shachris long after anyone else reciting Tehillim.

No minyan in which he davened started before he arrived. If he wasn't there, it was not yet time. As he once explained to me, he had a clock at work, a clock at shul, and he knew how long it took between one and the other.

Mr. Halberstadt's meticulousness about minyanim was an expression of something much deeper. He did not cut corners with the Ribbono shel Olam. His children saw someone who personified, "Shevisi Hashem l'negdi tamid – I have placed Hashem constantly before me."

Ostentation of any kind was anathema to him. Just convincing him to buy a new suit, as long as the old one could be worn, required all his wife's, yblct"a, persuasive powers. Making money easily held no allure for him. The only money he ever wanted was that he earned with the work of his own hands. Before the War, his mother presciently advised him to learn a trade that would be useable everywhere, and for 67 years, he earned his living as a skilled maker of dental fixtures. Any profits from the business were placed in low interest savings accounts.

That lack of concern with the material world served as a complete protection against all forms of envy and gave the Halberstadts an unequalled ability to participate joyously in others' simchas. Every day in Israel, they seemed to be going to the simcha of some nephew, niece, greatnephew or greatniece, all of whom they knew by name. A steady stream of family came to visit when they were in the country.

Perhaps the traits that I'm describing seem like small things. They are not. Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner once pointed to Mr. Halberstadt on a Shabbos morning in Yeshivat Chaim Berlin and said, "You see that Yid; that's true aristocracy."

A rabbi who runs a hotline for troubled chareidi teenagers once told me that the best protection parents can provide their children is yashrus (being straight). Your word must be a word. Don't have your children tell someone you are not home when you are. And above all, never let them suspect that you do not yourself believe the educational messages that you are giving them. In short, no shtick.

The Halbertadt children knew that their Torah education was their father's most important concern. After joining our Shabbos table once, Mrs. Halberstadt gently reproofed me for not involving my younger children more in the Torah discussion. She shared with me all the ways that her husband had always found to hold the interest of their children in the parashah discussion.

It is thus no surprise that the Halberstadts were blessed with exemplary children. Both sons are menahalim of major yeshivos. And a son-in-law is a maggid shiur. Several grandsons are already known figures in the yeshiva world. At Mr. Halberstadt's levaya in Eretz Yisrael, the large crowd was almost exclusively comprised of bnei Torah – either family members or talmidim of his sons' yeshivos.

That itself was the greatest tribute to an erliche Jew, who did not have the chance to learn in yeshiva himself but left behind generations of bnei Torah.

Please address all comments and requests to HAMELAKET@hotmail.com