

# Torah Tidbits

כ"ה שבח תשפ"א 9<sup>TH</sup> JAN 1402 ISSUE

פרשת שמות

PARSHAT SH'MOT - SHABBAT MEVARCHIM

ב"ה  
Over  
40  
Years  
OU ישראל



## REVISITING A DREAM

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin  
Faculty, OU Israel  
page 21



## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Rebbetzin Shira Smiles  
Faculty, OU Israel  
page 28



ותקרא שמו משה  
ותאמר כי מן-המים  
משיתהו

שמות פרק ב', פסוק י'

YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT SH'MOT

Candles 4:16PM • Havdala 5:33PM • Rabbeinu Tam 6:10PM

## WEEKLY INSPIRATION

Why do we extend a thank you to the Kohanim as they leave the duchan or bima from which they blessed the congregation? Were they not commanded by the Torah to bless the people of Israel?

Indeed they were, but of their own accord they added the precious element of love - *Ha'mevarech et amo Yisrael be'ahava*. For that they deserve our thanks.

Reb Aryeh Levin, the "Tzaddik of Jerusalem" (A Tzaddik for Eternity, p.427)

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## SHABBAT MEVARCHIM



This Shabbat Parshat Sh'mot we bench Rosh Chodesh Shvat  
Rosh Chodesh is Thursday January 14

המולד יהיה ביום רביעי שלשים וחמש דקות ושלושה חלקים אחרי חמש בצהרים  
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# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



CANDLES	SH'MOT	HAVDALA	VA'ERA	
			Candles	Havdala
4:16	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	5:33	4:22	5:38
4:34	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	5:35	4:40	5:41
4:35	Beit Shemesh / RBS	5:33	4:41	5:39
4:32	Gush Etzion	5:33	4:38	5:39
4:32	Raanana/ Tel Mond/ Herzliya/ K. Saba	5:33	4:38	5:39
4:32	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	5:33	4:38	5:39
4:32	Netanya	5:33	4:38	5:39
4:34	Be'er Sheva	5:35	4:40	5:41
4:33	Rehovot	5:34	4:39	5:40
4:16	Petach Tikva	5:33	4:22	5:39
4:31	Ginot Shomron	5:32	4:37	5:38
4:20	Haifa / Zichron	5:32	4:26	5:37
4:30	Gush Shiloh	5:32	4:37	5:37
4:33	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	5:34	4:39	5:39
4:31	Giv'at Ze'ev	5:33	4:37	5:38
4:32	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	5:33	4:38	5:39
4:34	Ashkelon	5:35	4:40	5:41
4:33	Yad Binyamin	5:34	4:39	5:40
4:23	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	5:29	4:29	5:35
4:28	Golan	5:29	4:34	5:35

**Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 6:10 PM** • next week - 6:16 pm

Times According to My Zmanim (20 min. before sundown in most cities,  
40 min. in Yerushalyim and Petach Tikva, 30 min. in Tzfat/Haifa)



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# OTHER Z'MANIM



## JERUSALEM

**RANGES 11 DAYS WED - SHABBAT  
 22 TEVET - 3 SHVAT (JAN. 6 - JAN. 16)**

Earliest Talit and Tefilin	5:45am
Sunrise	6:40 - 6:39am
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema (Magen Avraham: 8:33 - 8:46am)	9:12 - 9:13am
Sof Z'man T'fila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	10:03 - 10:05am
Chatzot (Halachic noon)	11:45 - 11:48am
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:15 - 12:19pm
Plag Mincha	3:46 - 3:54pm
Sunset (counting elevation)	4:55 - 5:03pm

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## Rabbi Avi Berman Executive Director, OU Israel

Until this year, we were used to a world where for the most part we have been in control of our lives. We decided when to go grocery shopping, when to vacation, or whether to travel for a simcha. The primary example I came up with for something being out of my control was being stuck in traffic or having someone slam into my car. Otherwise, there were few instances in which I felt that life was out of my control. Pre-Corona, my wife and I would discuss an issue, make decisions about our lives, and share the plans with our kids.

I am writing this after coming out of a ten day *bidud* which gave me ample time to reflect. Most people are very respectful of other people's time. If we know someone is traveling to a certain city and we need to send a package to someone in that city, we recognize that the person's time is valuable and politely ask if they would do us a favor and deliver the item. We will bring them the item and thank them.

Yet, this era is different - not because we

are any less polite, but because the germs are invisible. Without even realizing it, people are putting other people into *bidud*, essentially removing them from their "regular" lives for 10-14 days. Someone woke up feeling fine and came to meet with me in my office, and a couple days later he notified me that he apologizes but he found out he is Covid-19 positive, and I need to go into *bidud*.

This was my second time in *bidud* (the first was upon returning from AIPAC Policy Conference towards the start of the pandemic when *bidud* was a new concept), and due to her work as a nurse, my wife has been in *bidud* four times. Just as I got out of *bidud*, one of my sons went into *bidud* after coming in contact with someone in his Yeshiva who tested positive. In some ways, it is a surreal experience. I couldn't hug my kids, and I had to cancel my Thursday night radio show and many other meetings.

All of this caused me to ask myself, "Do I really have control over anything?" I don't mean this in a depressing way. Rather, it helped me strengthen my priorities. At the end of my first day in *bidud* I realized that it was up to me to take advantage of



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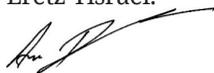


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a week without traveling or face to face meetings. I wanted to maximize my time in *bidud* and decided to spend my time learning Torah and enjoying seforim I've been wanting to pick up for a while. I called people I haven't spoken with in a long time to see how they are doing and catch up.

Whether we are home due to the *seger* or are alone in *bidud*, the one thing nobody can take away from us is our thoughts and how we spend our time.

I cannot think of a better example of remaining positive and not letting circumstances break someone than Yonatan Pollard. *L'havdil elef alfei havdalot*, I am in no way comparing being in *bidud* to what Yonatan Pollard went through. Yet, I think we can all learn from the decision he made to remain a free man in his mind and aspire to come to Israel, and on that note, I'd like to give a special welcome to Yonatan and Esther Pollard. The OU Israel family is praying that you have long, healthy, and fulfilling lives together in Eretz Yisrael.



Avi  
Executive Director, OU Israel

May the Torah learned in this issue  
be dedicated in loving memory of  
our mother and grandmother

**Lillian Stein a"h**

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# SH'MOT

## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SE德拉 SUMMARY



**Rabbi Reuven Tradburks**  
Director of RCA  
Israel Region

The Jewish people are in Egypt. A new Paro is concerned with the size of the Jewish people. Increasing decrees of hard labor, infanticide and finally actively drowning the male babies are made. Moshe is born, raised in Paro's daughter's home. After seeing the Jews mistreated, he flees to Midian, marries and settles there. At age 80, Moshe encounters the burning bush. G-d instructs him to go to Paro and demand, in G-d's name, to free the Jewish people. Moshe, after attempting to refuse this mission, goes to Paro. Paro increases the burdens. The people complain.

**1<sup>st</sup> Aliya (1:1-17)** 70 Bnei Yisrael descended to Egypt. They grew exceedingly numerous, filling the land. A new king who



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knew not Yosef arose. Afraid that the Jews would join with enemies of Egypt, he sought to weaken their numbers. A labor tax was followed by oppressive labor. Then the midwives were instructed to kill the Jewish babies. The midwives feared G-d and did not heed Paro's directive.

The book of Sh'mot, of Exodus is radically different from Bereshit. In Bereshit we followed G-d's promise of the land of Israel to the Jewish people. It was the story of people; Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah. Then, Yosef and his brothers. And overlaid to the story of people is the Divine refrain, "I give to you the land promised to Avraham". It is almost like a song with a chorus; each person is the verse, with the chorus of G-d's promise of the land repeated. Avraham and his life, with G-d's promise repeated. Yitzchak and his family, with G-d's promise repeated. Yaakov and then the Yosef story, with G-d's promise repeated. In Bereshit the people are centre stage, with G-d ever present but of few words; the repeated promise.

In Sh'mot G-d and man switch places. It is the story of Divine control of Jewish destiny. He is the Main Director, the Jewish people the mere stage actors. He no longer lurks, with repeated promises. He acts, dominates, controls, manipulates. He initiates, communicates, commands. Later, at Sinai, He reveals Himself.

We must read the narrative asking ourselves: is this man or is this G-d? Is man acting of his own accord, or is he

merely appearing to act of his own, directed knowingly or not by G-d? When is He guiding and when not? It's often hard to tell.

Paro acts to weaken the Jewish people. Vicious actions, including murder. The midwives fear G-d, refuse to murder. There is no mention of G-d's actions. We have seen this before. G-d's name is absent from the sale of Yosef, as it is here. Man does a mighty fine job of cruelty all on his own. G-d appears when we hit bottom.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Aliya (1:18-2:10)** The midwives defend their actions to Paro. Moshe is born, placed in the water in a basket. Paro's daughter rescues him. Miriam arranges for Moshe's mother to nurse him. He is returned to Paro's daughter and named Moshe.

When Moshe is born his mother "saw that he was good". And he was placed in the water, albeit in a basket. Those 2 elements, water and "it was good", immediately remind us of the first day of creation. In the beginning "the spirit of G-d hovered over the waters" (Genesis 1:2). And when light was created, "G-d saw the light and it was good." Moshe's being placed in the water and his mother "saw that he was good" could be the Torah's way of saying there is a new creation story taking place: with Moshe's birth, a new world for the Jewish people has been created.

In loving memory of my mother  
**Karin Fürst**  
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*Ari Shalit and family*

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**3<sup>rd</sup> Aliya (2:11-25)** Moshe matures. He goes out to see the travails of his brothers. He defends a Jew by killing his Egyptian aggressor, and then saves a Jew from a Jewish aggressor. He flees for his life to Midian. He aids Yitro's daughters, is welcomed by Yitro, marries Zipporah, has a child Gershom. "For I am a stranger in a strange land". G-d sees the suffering of the Jews and remembers his covenant with Avraham, Yitchak and Yaakov.

Moshe names his son Gershom, for "I am a stranger". Which strange land is he referring to? Being a Jew in Egypt? Or being an Egyptian in Midian? Where is Moshe's home?

The story to this point is the story of people; G-d has yet to appear. In a world without G-d's presence, there are good people and bad people. Paro, evil. Midwives, good. Moshe's parents, brave. Paro's daughter, good. Moshe's sister, altruistic. Egyptian slave master, cruel. Jews struggling, violent. Yitro, welcoming.

And Moshe? Goes out. Concerned. Helps the ones who need help. Feels angst; a stranger.

G-d appears. His name appears 5 times in 3 verses. Everything changes now. Or perhaps

not. All the human activity to this point; has He orchestrated it, or is it people doing what people do? Some good, some not?

**4<sup>th</sup> Aliya (3:1-15)** Moshe and the burning bush. Moshe, Moshe, Hineni. G-d speaks, Moshe cowers. G-d tells him: I have seen the suffering of my people. I will save them from Egypt and bring them to the land of milk and honey. I am sending you to go to Paro and he will release my people from Egypt. Moshe objects: who am I to go to Paro? And the Jewish people will question who sent me. G-d says: tell them the G-d of their forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov sent you.

The entire story of the Torah changes here. G-d moves from the unseen force behind human action to directly dictating human activity. He tells Moshe that He will take the Jewish people out of Egypt and bring them to the land of Israel. Up until now, the Jewish people have been promised the land but have lived only with the promise, not with its fulfillment. They have not seen the Hand of G-d but have rather detected it behind the events. As Yosef said "G-d has brought me to Egypt to save the family." He never heard that. He peered behind the veil and detected it.

The veil is drawn. Moshe is told in vivid detail exactly what will transpire. The Jews will be sent out by Paro. The story of the Exodus from Egypt is a pillar of Jewish belief because it is a blatant, direct display of G-d's Hand in our history. It is His Hand in full display, not behind the veil.

Moshe is reluctant because he doesn't

Condolences to  
Sarah Eiferman and the Singer family  
on the passing of

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הכהן סינגר ז"ל

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know how to digest this. This is unlike any other moment, sui generis, without precedent. And hence Moshe is reticent.

5<sup>th</sup> Aliya (3:16-4:17) G-d continues: Gather the people. Tell them that I will take them to the Land. They will listen. Go to Paro. I know he will not listen. I will smite the Egyptians. You will be loaded with gold, silver and clothing from the Egyptians. Moshe is still convinced that the people will not believe him. G-d gives him signs: staff turns to snake and then back, hand turns leprous and then back. And water to blood. Moshe objects: I am not a good speaker. G-d says: I give speech to man. I will send Aharon with you. He will speak. Take your staff.

As Moshe hears more details and is given signs to bring to the people, he reluctantly acquiesces to being the human conduit for the Divine Hand. He realizes that his human weaknesses are irrelevant; he is merely the puppet in the hand of the puppeteer. Oh, he will need to deal with the other humans – the Jews, Paro – but he already knows their responses. Moshe embarks on the most momentous display of Divine Providence in history.

6<sup>th</sup> Aliya (4:18-31) Moshe gets Yitro's blessing to return to Egypt. G-d tells Moshe that those seeking his death have died. G-d tells him to tell Paro: G-d says Israel is

 Mazal Tov to  
**Deena & Steve Sattler**  
and family on the birth of a  
**GRANDDAUGHTER**

  
**Jeff Mor**  
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my first born. Send out my son, for if you do not, I will slay your first born. Zippora circumcised her son. Aharon greets Moshe. They gather the people. The people believe that G-d will redeem them.

G-d adds one more thing to Moshe; Israel is My first born. As if to say – “Moshe, this is a story of love. I view the Jewish people as my beloved first born.” And. Refusal by Paro will result in Divine punishment. Our western ethos is uncomfortable with these central principles of Judaism: G-d’s Hand in history, G-d’s love for the Jewish people, and Divine punishment. As Rabbi Sacks, z”l, said; Radical then. Radical now.

7<sup>th</sup> **Aliya (5:1-6:1)** Moshe and Aharon approach Paro, requesting a 3-day journey to the desert to celebrate. Paro refuses. He increases the workload. Conflict arises

between the Jewish workers and the Egyptian supervisors. The Jews criticize Moshe for increasing their burden. Moshe complains to G-d. G-d reassures him that through a strong hand, Paro will send them out.

Moshe encounters the uncomfortable reality of human beings. The unfolding of the Divine plan does not preclude resistance. People don’t embrace the Divine plan with open arms. Man meanders as the Divine plan unfolds. But unfold it does. ■

## STATS

13th of 54 sedras; 1st of 11 in Sh’mot  
Written on 215.2 lines in a Torah (18th)  
7 parshiot; 6 open, 1 closed  
124 p’sukim - 15th (tied with Emor)  
1763 words - 14th (Emor: 22nd)  
6762 letters - 16th (Emor: 23rd)  
2nd in Sh’mot in those three categories

## MITZVOT

No mitzvot are counted from Sh’mot. One of 17 sedras without mitzvot.

## HAFTORAH ISAIAH 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23

This week’s haftorah echoes the reading of this week's parsha of Sh'mot on a number of levels.

Mazal Tov to  
**Cyril & Golda Simkins**  
and family on the birth of a  
**GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER**

**OU Israel**   
**Together with the State of Israel**  
**Welcomes Home**  
**Yonatan and**  
**Esther Pollard**  
After 35 years of prayers and  
longing we offer thanks  
to Hashem for your safe return.  
**ושבו בנים לגבולם**  


One of the connections to the parsha is the message of redemption which is stated by the prophet Isaiah - "and you shall be gathered one by one, O children of Israel." This sounds very similar to the message of the Almighty to Moshe, communicated at the Burning Bush.

Although the haftorah emphasizes the future redemption of Israel, it also spotlights certain admonitions concerning the Jew's wayward behavior and disloyalty to God.

On a positive note the prophet exclaims: And it will come to pass on that day that a great shofar will be sounded, and those lost in land of Assyria and those exiled in the land of Egypt will come, and they will prorate themselves before the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem,"

The haftorah ends on a soaring note: "Now Jacob will no longer be ashamed, and now his face will not pale. For when he sees his children, the work of my hand, in his midst, who shall sanctify My name...and the God of Israel they will revere." ■

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## IN THE PARSHA

# Imagining Redemption

Passover, *Pesach*, is approaching. Fast approaching.

Now you may argue that it is still almost a full three months away, and you'd be right. But those who study *Daf Yomi*, the daily study of a page of Talmud, are already several weeks into their in-depth reading of the tractate of *Pesachim* and are already steeped in discussions about the search for *chametz*, leavened bread, and its elimination, and are considering the definitional parameters of *matzah*, unleavened bread, and *marror*, bitter herbs.

Of course, *Daf Yomi* students are accustomed to taking the long-range view, and, wouldn't you know it, they will be completing this fascinating tractate which treats the holiday of Passover so comprehensively during the week just prior to *erev Pesach*, a mere several days before the eve of Passover!

Those of us who are not committed to the rigorous *Daf Yomi* daily regime, which includes the great majority of Jewish people, will begin our rapid and

inexorable march toward Passover this week. For it is on this Shabbat that we begin the book of *Sh'mot*, the story of the Exodus. And henceforth, for many weeks, every weekly Torah portion deals, in a dazzling variety of ways, with the drama of our servitude and our redemption, with the heroes of the Exodus and with its villains.

Each *parsha*, for the next many *Shabbatot*, provides us with a not-to-be-missed opportunity to prepare ourselves, intellectually and spiritually, for the wonderful holiday which lies ahead.

Somehow, more than any other Jewish holiday, we tend to speak of "preparing" for Passover. These preparations entail a variety of activities. Cleaning the house, for example, and making sure that none of the foods forbidden on *Pesach*, even in minute quantities, are to be found. This certainly is an onerous chore. Purchasing the provisions for quite a few festive meals is an expensive and time-consuming task. Another important task is assuring that there are sufficient quantities of the ritual foods such as *matzah* and *marror*, the ingredients for *charoset*, and sufficient wine for the entire household. And a proper Seder table requires appropriate decorations, which include tablecloths, silverware, candlesticks, goblets, and often

floral arrangements and embroidered pillowcases and *matzoh* coverlets.

The more scholarly among us will spend significant time intellectually preparing for the festival. The Talmud tells us that the proper length of time necessary to review the laws and customs of Passover is thirty days, beginning on the day of Purim and extending throughout the entire Passover holiday. Preparation must also involve at least a perusal of several *haggadot*, if not careful study of at least some of one's personal favorite *haggadot*.

But I have often thought that we are called upon for an extremely unique and quite challenging preparation which is often overlooked. I refer to the passage in the *haggadah* which originates in the Mishnah and which reads:

“In each and every generation, a person is obligated to see himself, *lirot et atzmo*, as if he personally left Egypt, as it is written, “And you shall explain to your son on that day, ‘It is because of what the Lord did **for me when I went free** from Egypt” (Exodus 13:8).

Note the underlined phrase: “for me when I went free.” We are called upon to personally visualize ourselves as having experienced the Exodus in all of its detail. How many of us are capable of such an imaginative feat?

For me, this is the greatest challenge of the entire Passover experience: imagining myself, picturing myself, as a helpless slave and then reliving the frustration of the initial phases of the redemption process;

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personally witnessing a series of wondrous miracles; living through the original Passover experience, safely protected in our slave quarters while, hurriedly and almost surreptitiously, gulping down that first Passover festive meal.

And feeling, in the depths of my bones, the burst of sudden freedom, casting aside bonds and chains, and marching as a free man into an unknown wilderness. Is this not an almost impossible task? Can I possibly relive the powerful emotions that my ancestors felt millennia ago? How am I to “see myself as if I personally left Egypt”?

It is in response to such questions that I suggest a careful reading of all the Torah portions that we will be encountering, beginning this Shabbat and continuing for the next many weeks. My plan is to devote my columns for each of those weeks to a suggestion or two which might prove helpful in achieving this goal of creatively reimagining the entire experience as if we were there.

Let us begin our adventure with a teaching of the great commentator, Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, *Ramban*, or Nachmanides. He provides a brief introduction to the entire *Chumash Sh'mot*, commonly called the Book of Exodus. But the very point of his introduction is to reject the common title of this second book of the Bible. Instead, he insists that the book be known as the “Book of Redemption,” *Sefer HaGeulah*. Why is he so insistent on his choice of this unusual title for this sacred and multi-themed book? And what does

*geulah*, redemption, even mean?

*Ramban* considers the second book of the Torah to be the sequel to the first book, which is commonly referred to as the book of Genesis. For *Ramban*, Genesis is primarily a book about the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is less a book about the creation of the universe than it is a book about the creation of the people of Israel. Its theme is “the status of our forefathers,” by which he means the ethical and moral stature of our first ancestors.

With the descent of our people into Egypt, exile, and slavery, there is a loss of “the status of our forefathers,” a diminution of their ethical and moral stature. Redemption is the process by which we regain that status, that ethical and moral stature. Redemption is not the Exodus from Egyptian bondage. Rather, it involves the revelation at Sinai, the construction of the Tabernacle, and, ideally and ultimately, the return to the Land of Israel. Redemption is the reclaiming of the ethical and moral stature of our patriarchs.

Following this approach, the requirement of “seeing ourselves as if we personally left Egypt” is less about imagining ourselves as slaves, or even imagining ourselves as marching out of Egypt as free men. Instead, it is about the implications of freedom for our reclamation of the ethical and moral stature of our forefathers.

*Ramban* offers us a profound insight: a slave, a person in bondage, is not free to act ethically and morally. This is certainly true of a person who is literally enslaved. But it is also true of one whose choices in

life are dictated by political propaganda, cultural influence, pressures to conform blindly, and other forces with which we are all very familiar nowadays.

*Ramban's* thirteenth century concept of “the status of our forefathers” is explained beautifully in the nineteenth century commentary of Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, known as the *Netziv*, in his introductory remarks to the book of Genesis. For the *Netziv*, the defining quality of our Patriarchs was the characteristic of *yashrut*, which he defines as an ethic that transcends piety and saintliness and extends to the ability to relate to people very different from oneself, working together with others in a harmonious and constructive fashion.

We now know of one way that we can “see ourselves as if we have left Egypt.” To do so, we must each come to grips with what it means for us to experience redemption. Following *Ramban* and *Netziv*, our charge is to reclaim what the former calls the “status of our forefathers” and what the latter terms the ability to act *yashar*. We must improve our ethical conduct, our interpersonal relationships, by cooperating with others in our surroundings and especially with those who are different from us. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were *yesharim*, and it is by emulating their “status” that we “leave Egypt,” depart bondage, and experience redemption.

Please join me again next week as we explore other approaches to the difficult task of “seeing ourselves as if we left Egypt.” ■



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Former Chief Rabbi of the  
United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

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## Women as Leaders

This week's parsha could be entitled "The Birth of a Leader." We see Moses, adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, growing up as a prince of Egypt. We see him as a young man, for the first time realising the implications of his true identity. He is, and knows he is, a member of an enslaved and suffering people: "Growing up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labour. He saw an Egyptian

beating a Hebrew, one of his own people" (Ex. 2:10).

He intervenes - he acts: the mark of a true leader. We see him intervene three times, twice in Egypt, once in Midian, to rescue victims of violence. We then witness the great scene at the Burning Bush where God summons him to lead his people to freedom. Moses hesitates four times until God becomes angry and Moses knows he has no other choice. This is a classic account of the genesis of a hero.

But this is only the surface tale. The Torah is a deep and subtle book, and it does not always deliver its message on the surface. Just beneath is another far more remarkable story, not about a hero but about six heroines, six courageous women without whom there would not have been a Moses.

First is Yocheved, wife of Amram and mother of the three people who were to become the great leaders of the Israelites: Miriam, Aaron and Moses himself. It was Yocheved who, at the height of Egyptian persecution, had the courage to have a child, hide him for three

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months, and then devise a plan to give him a chance of being rescued. We know all too little of Yocheved. In her first appearance in the Torah she is unnamed. Yet, reading the narrative, we are left in no doubt about her bravery and resourcefulness. Not by accident did her children all become leaders.

The second was Miriam, Yocheved's daughter and Moses' elder sister. It was she who kept watch over the child as the small ark floated down the river, and it was she who approached Pharaoh's daughter with the suggestion that he be nursed among his own people. The biblical text paints a portrait of the young Miriam as a figure of unusual fearlessness and presence of mind. Rabbinic tradition goes further. In a remarkable Midrash, we read of how, upon hearing of the decree that every male Israelite baby would be drowned in the river, Amram led the Israelites in divorcing their wives so that there would be no more children. He had logic on his side. Could it be right to bring children into the world if there were a fifty percent chance that they would be killed at birth? Yet his young daughter Miriam, so the tradition goes, remonstrated with him and persuaded him to change his mind. "Your decree," she said, "is worse than Pharaoh's. His affects only the boys; yours affects all. His deprives children of life in this world; yours will deprive them of life even in the World to Come." Amram relented, and as a result, Moses was born.<sup>1</sup> The implication is clear: Miriam had more faith than her father.

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1 *Sh'mot Rabbah 1:13.*

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Third and fourth were the two midwives, Shifrah and Puah, who frustrated Pharaoh's first attempt at genocide. Ordered to kill the male Israelite children at birth, they "feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live" (Ex. 1:17). Summoned and accused of disobedience, they outwitted Pharaoh by constructing an ingenious cover story: the Hebrew women, they said, are vigorous and give birth before we arrive. They escaped punishment and saved many lives.

The significance of this story is that it is the first recorded instance of one of Judaism's greatest contributions to civilisation: the idea that there are moral limits to power. There are instructions that should not be obeyed. There are crimes against humanity that cannot be excused by the claim that "I was only obeying orders." This concept, generally known as "civil disobedience", is usually attributed to the nineteenth century American writer Henry David Thoreau, and entered international consciousness after the Holocaust and the Nuremberg trials. Its true origin, though, lies thousands of years earlier in the actions of two women, Shifra and Puah. Through their understated courage they earned a high

place among the moral heroes of history, teaching us the primacy of conscience over conformity, the law of justice over the law of the land.<sup>2</sup>

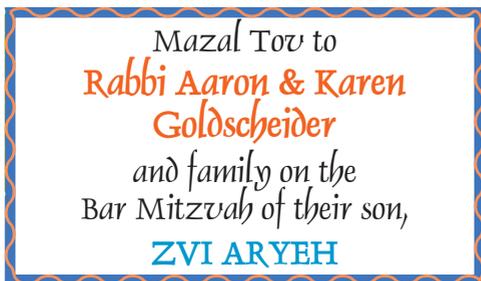
The fifth is Tziporah, Moses' wife. The daughter of a Midianite priest, she was nonetheless determined to accompany Moses on his mission to Egypt, despite the fact that she had no reason to risk her life on such a hazardous venture. In a deeply enigmatic passage, we see it was she who saved Moses' life by performing a circumcision on their son (Ex. 4: 24-26). The impression we gain of her is a figure of monumental determination who, at a crucial moment, had a better sense than Moses himself of what God requires.

I have saved until last the most intriguing of them all: Pharaoh's daughter. It was she who had the courage to rescue an Israelite child and bring him up as her own in the very palace where her father was plotting the destruction of the Israelite people. Could we imagine a daughter of Hitler, or Eichmann, or Stalin, doing the same? There is something at once heroic and gracious about this lightly sketched figure, the woman who gave Moses his name.

Who was she? The Torah does not mention her name. However the First Book of Chronicles (4:18) references a daughter of Pharaoh, named Bitya, and it

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<sup>2</sup> *There is, of course, a Midrashic tradition that Shifra and Puah were other names for Yocheved and Miriam (Sotah 11b). In seeing them as separate women, I am following the interpretation given by Abarbanel and Luzzatto.*



was she whom the Sages identified as the woman who saved Moses. The name Bitya (sometimes rendered as Batya) means “the daughter of God”. From this, the Sages drew one of their most striking lessons:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to her: “Moses was not your son, yet you called him your son. You are not My daughter, but I shall call you My daughter.”<sup>3</sup>

They added that she was one of the few people (tradition enumerates nine) who were so righteous that they entered paradise in their lifetime.<sup>4</sup>

So, on the surface, the parsha of Sh'mot is about the initiation into leadership of one remarkable man, but just beneath the surface is a counter-narrative of six extraordinary women without whom there would not have been a Moses. They belong to a long tradition of strong women throughout Jewish history, from Deborah, Hannah, Ruth and Esther in the Bible to more modern religious figures like Sarah Schenirer and Nechama Leibowitz to more secular figures like Anne Frank, Hannah Senesh and Golda Meir.

How then, if women emerge so powerfully as leaders, were they excluded in Jewish law from certain leadership roles? If we look carefully we will see that women were historically excluded from two areas. One was the “crown of priesthood”, which went to Aaron and his sons. The other was the “crown of kingship”, which went to David and his sons. These were two

3 Vayikra Rabbah 1:3.

4 Derech Eretz Zuta 1



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roles built on the principle of dynastic succession. From the third crown – the “crown of Torah” – however, women were not excluded. There were Prophetesses, not just Prophets. The Sages enumerated seven of them (Megillah 14a). There have been great women Torah scholars always, from the Mishnaic period (Beruriah, Ima Shalom) until today.

At stake is a more general distinction. Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron in his Responsa, *Binyan Av*, differentiates between formal or official authority (*samchut*) and actual leadership (*hanhagah*).<sup>5</sup> There are figures who hold positions of authority – prime ministers, presidents, CEOs – who may not be leaders at all. They may have the

<sup>5</sup> Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, *Responsa Binyan Av*, 2nd edn., no. 65.

power to force people to do what they say, but they have no followers. They excite no admiration. They inspire no emulation. And there may be leaders who hold no official position at all but who are turned to for advice and are held up as role models. They have no power but great influence. Israel’s Prophets belonged to this category. So, often, did the *gedolei Yisrael*, the great Sages of each generation. Neither Rashi nor Rambam held any official position (some scholars say that Rambam was chief rabbi of Egypt but most hold that he was not, though his descendants were). Wherever leadership depends on personal qualities – what Max Weber called “charismatic authority” – and not on office or title, there is no distinction between women and men.

Yocheved, Miriam, Shifra, Puah, Tziporah and Batya were leaders not because of any official position they held (in the case of Batya she was a leader *despite* her official title as a princess of Egypt). They were leaders because they had courage and conscience. They refused to be intimidated by power or defeated by circumstance. They were the real heroes of the Exodus. Their courage is still a source of inspiration today. ■

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## Revisiting A Dream

Turn back with me for a moment to Pharaoh's dreams...

Oh, I know that you might well object: *We've moved on. We've closed the Book of Bereishit. The Yosef story is behind us. Why turn back now?*

And yet, my invitation still stands. For there is, I believe, another way to view Pharaoh's visions; an easily missed subtext that lends powerful significance to all that is to follow.

As a first step, let's apply a basic rule of Torah study:

*Whenever the Torah repeats an event or discussion in the text, compare the two recorded versions. Inevitably, variations between the accounts will appear, conveying messages of critical importance.*

As a case in point, consider Pharaoh's dreams...

We first encounter these visions in real-time; as the Torah details the nocturnal reveries of the sleeping king. Shortly afterwards, however, the text reviews the king's retelling of the dreams. At this

point, the Torah could simply have stated: *And Pharaoh described his dreams to Yosef.* Instead, we are treated to a second, detailed description of these visions; this time through the eyes of the Egyptian King.

And, sure enough, as we compare Pharaoh's version of the dreams to the real-time account, significant differences emerge. These variations offer a telling glimpse into the king's heart; as we see how he interprets, and is affected by, his troubling reveries.

Primary among the variations is one detail, absent in the first account of the dreams, yet present in Pharaoh's recounting. So deeply does this detail seem to disturb the king, that it causes him to suddenly awake.

As Pharaoh's first dream reaches the climactic moment when the seven lean cows swallow the seven healthy cows, the real-time version reads:

"And the seven cows of poor appearance and gaunt flesh consumed the seven cows of beautiful appearance and good health, and Pharaoh awoke."

In contrast, Pharaoh recounts:

"And the emaciated, inferior cows consumed the first seven healthy cows. *And they came inside them and it was not*

*apparent that they came inside them- for their appearance was as inferior as before; and I awoke.”*

Pharaoh can apparently accept the possibility of lean cows devouring healthy cows.

In his world, after all, nations conquer other nations with regularity. Through subterfuge and cunning, the seemingly weak can even defeat the seemingly strong.

What Pharaoh cannot accept, however, is the possibility that the victor in a battle should remain unchanged. *In the King’s world, conquest invariably bestows upon the conqueror increased physical power and strength.* This rule is the basis of Pharaoh’s own supremacy. When, in his vision, the lean cows remain visibly unaffected after consuming the healthy cows, Pharaoh’s world is threatened. He awakens abruptly, sorely troubled and distraught.

Yosef sets the King’s mind at ease by explaining both the existence of the lean cows and their unchanged status in symbolic terms. Pharaoh’s visions,

he asserts, represent natural challenges which can be overcome through proper planning.

Could it be, however, that Pharaoh’s fears are actually well-founded; that there is a subtext to his dreams, unknown to Pharaoh and perhaps even to Yosef? For Pharaoh and his people are indeed about to be threatened, in ways they can scarcely begin to imagine.

The King’s dreams set in motion a series of events that will eventually give rise to the birth of a unique nation within his very realm. This eternal Jewish Nation-forged through the slavery, exodus and revelation described in the Book of Shmot-will not be bound by the rules governing Pharaoh’s world. Spiritual fortitude will overcome physical strength, as this seemingly weak people outlasts the most powerful empires in the history of mankind. Pharaoh’s kingdom will be only the first to fall in the face of the Jews’ inexorable march across the face of history; a march that will ultimately lead to their own nation’s redemption.

Throughout this journey, the Jewish Nation will not measure its success in terms of increased physical strength but in the unbroken maintenance and development of its enduring spiritual heritage.

“Lean cows” will consume “robust cows.” The physically weak will overcome the strong, yet remain unchanged; over and over again. Pharaoh’s world is about to crumble; he has good reason to be troubled by his dreams.

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Pharaoh's dreams grant us perspective, not on our nation's historical journey, but also on the unique challenge of our times. Outwardly, the parameters of our passage have changed from those predicted to Pharaoh. We are clearly no longer the "lean cows," outlasting our enemies through faith and devotion alone. Against all odds, we have come home. Miraculously, we have created our own state; a power to be reckoned with on the world stage; courted even by nations that were once our sworn enemies. We stand committed to meet those who still threaten us, confident in our strength and ability.

And yet, as succeeding generations of Israeli citizens have come to realize, we cannot let go of that which has made us unique. The very faith in HaShem and loyalty to his law that has sustained us on our journey till now- must be woven into the fabric of our lives in the Jewish State.

Our story has not yet ended. We are challenged to meet this chapter of success as we have met countless chapters of struggle; with an abiding recognition of HaShem's role in our lives, a clear recognition of our continued dependence upon Him, and a deep commitment to the lives he wishes us to lead.

The parameters of our journey have changed from those depicted in Pharaoh's dream; but it's up to us to recognize that the fundamental rules have not.... ■

*Rabbi Goldin is the author of the OU press volumes "Unlocking the Torah Text," and "Unlocking the Haggada."*

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# PROBING

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER  
Faculty, OU Israel Center

# THE PROPHETS

The twenty-seventh perek of Sefer Yishayahu, the chapter that opens this week's haftarah, is actually the last of three prakim in which Yishayahu closes a series of prophecies addressed the idolatrous nations of the world by warning them of the punishments that Hashem will rain down upon them in the future. In this latter perek, the navi reassures Israel that, though they too had sinned and would be punished as well, they, however, would never be destroyed-as would the other nations. In fact, G-d reassures them that, after their punishment, they will be gathered from the Diaspora and be returned to their land. It is at this point that Yishayahu closes the prophecy with the well-known nevuah that we quote during the Yamim Nora'im "Uva'u ha'ovdim b'Eretz Ashur...", that the dispersed of Israel will be brought back to Yerushalayim, there to worship Hashem.

And then comes "Hoy".

And in one word, the entire mood and theme of the prophecy changes.

"Hoy", "Woe", is a term that Yishayahu uses to introduce harsh words; words of criticism, of condemnation and of punishment. And indeed, harsh words do follow. As this next perek begins, the navi, who prophesied during the time of the exile of the ten tribes, turns his attention to Efrayim, the Northern Kingdom, and condemns their "drunkenness" and hedonism which they glorify but which leaves them blind to their sins. As a result, the prophet warns them, their wealth and opulence in which they take pride, will be swiftly consumed by the enemy.

He then turns to his people, the Kingdom of Yehudah, and tells them that, although they were spared punishment, they too are liable for punishment for their sins and their refusal to listen to the warnings of Yishayahu – but are guaranteed that they will not be destroyed. The final psukim



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are taken from the end of the twenty-ninth chapter and close the haftarah with words of comfort and encouragement, promising that, ultimately, the Jewish nation will sanctify Hashem's name and bring glory to their ancestors.

So...what does all of this have to do with Parashat Sh'mot???

This question that troubles us today, troubled many of the parshanim who find much of the symbolism and esoteric meanings of the haftarah quite difficult to understand. Some find the connection in Yishayahu's promise of a return to the Land of Israel after the nation's suffering in Galut, found in the haftarah, with Hashem's promise to bring the people to the Promised Land after their enslavement in Egypt, as described in the parasha. Rashi sees the connection in the haftarah's opening words that, according to his commentary, refer to Ya'akov arrival into Egypt, something mentioned in the parasha's opening words. I suggested in last year's article, that can see the connection in the navi's description of teaching the people of his time as one would teach a young child, "tzav latzav, kav lakav" in small "steps" – analogous to the condition of Israel in Egypt who were first learning of G-d and His promise of redemption from Moshe Rabbeinu.

I would like to suggest perhaps yet another connection, one that reflects a general theme found in both the parasha and in the haftarah. Yishayahu's words that begin by promising punishment and destruction to the idolatrous nations and then continue

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to warn both the Northern and Southern kingdoms that they too would be punished. But the contrast between both warnings is clear: one will end with destruction and one will end with survival. The history of the Jew is one of Sin – Suffering – Survival. It is difficult to convince a suffering people that it will ultimately survive. And, throughout the millennia, Jewish leadership faced that very challenge. How will they convince their communities, in the cities, in the shtetls or in the ghettos that their nation will survive?

So they would turn to Yishayahu and deliver hi message and, then teach them that this is how the nation was born – in Egypt, in slavery, in suffering – but they survived. To a nation in distress, Chazal offered them the Shabbat Parashat Sh'mot. "Listen to the parasha", they said, "Hear the words of the haftarah", they urged – for that is where you will find solace and hope.

As we do today, as well. ■

*Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive: <https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library/>*



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## Moshe's Leadership Quality

What is so unique about Moshe Rabbenu that he was selected as the leader of Am Yisrael? The Torah does not explicitly specify anything about Moshe's leadership qualities. In fact, quite the contrary. We are told that Moshe had a speech impediment, something that may be considered as a handicap for an orator. What was so special about Moshe that warranted him being selected as the leader of Am Yisrael?

Perhaps the simple reading of the text itself gives us the answer.

The Yam Simcha (also see Nechama Leibowitz) points out that the first three interactions that Moshe has with others that are described in the Torah portrays Moshe's true personality. Moshe is present at three disputes, and rather than

act as a passive bystander, he leaps into action to protect the underdog.

First, we are told that he left the palace in Egypt to assist his brothers that were being oppressed by the Egyptians. When he witnessed an Egyptian whipping a Jew, Moshe defended the Jew. He could not bear the suffering of his people.

Second, we are informed that Moshe witnessed two Jews quarreling and interfered by asking how one can raise his hand to hit his fellow Jew.

Third, when Moshe arrives in Midian, and we would expect him to act like a fugitive, he publicly defends Yitro's daughters from the other shepherds and assists them with feeding their cattle.

What do we learn about Moshe's personality from these scenarios? He could not stand idly by when injustice was being committed. Moshe showed compassion to the oppressed. He did not distinguish between a dispute among a Jew and a non-Jew, a dispute between Jews, and a dispute between non-Jews.

Once, the Ostrovstzer Rav, Rav Meir Yechiel Kalshtock, and Rav Chaim Ozer were vacationing together. They each urged

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the other to offer a dvar torah, but each kept urging the other to be the one to talk. Finally, Rav Chaim Ozer said, but you're a *gavra raba*, a great man, so you should give the dvar torah! The Ostrovstzer responded, "no, let me explain to you who is really a *gavra raba*". In Gemara Makkos 22b, Rava states "How foolish are those who stand up out of respect for a Sefer Torah but do not stand up out of respect for a *gavra raba* (great individuals)." Rava goes on to explain that the Torah dictates that a person may be judged to receive 40 lashes, while the Rabbis limited the number of lashes to 39. From this we see how powerful the rabbis really are. The Ostrovstzer asked: Why did Rava offer as his proof a pasuk from the end of sefer devarim, while he could have brought a proof from a much earlier pasuk, in Parshas Emor?! The Torah dictates that one should count 50 days between Pesach and Shavuot and the Rabbis determined to count only 49 days. This too would be illustrative of how the Rabbis were able to reduce by one number a Biblical directive?

He answered with the following

explanation. To be considered a *gavra raba* – a great individual, it's not just one can reinterpret the simple meaning of a pasuk. Rather, it is one who is concerned with minimizing the pain of another individual! Even if that other Jew be a sinner, reducing his pain reflects greatness and makes him be considered a *gavra raba*.

What made Moshe Rabbenu a *gavra raba*? Moshe witnessed another person's suffering and he had to get involved. He felt the pain of others, even absent a personal relationship with them. A Jewish leader is someone who gets involved, who tries to alleviate the suffering of others, no matter who they might be. He seeks to make the world around him a better place. He does the right thing even when it is not in accordance with the popular opinion.

We should emulate Moshe Rabbenu. To recognize the pain of suffering of others and to do everything we can to improve their predicament. We cannot remain as mere bystanders, but rather, take responsibility and action in order to achieve justice and make this world a better place. ■



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## What's in a Name?

A name reflects the essence of an object or person. Why is the second *sefer* of the Torah called 'Sh'mot'; in what way does this title encapsulate the story of slavery and redemption? Further, the names of the *Shevatim* are already mentioned at the end of *Sefer Bereisheet* in the description of their descent to *Mitzrayim*. What information does this first *passuk* add to the scope of the next stage of *Am Yisrael's* journey?

The classic approach as mentioned in the *Ramban* (*Sh'mot* 1;1), is to connect the two *sefarim* together and continue the thread of events. What happened in *Sefer Bereisheet* informs what will occur in *Sefer Sh'mot*. We find that the *Midrash* too addresses this question and teaches that the Jewish people were redeemed because they did not change their names, style of dress and

language. Thus, the very name of the *sefer* underscores one of the merits of their redemption.

### The tribal names themselves gave the people hope of redemption

Rabbi Brazil in *Bishvili Nivra Haolam* quotes the *Igra D'kalla* who details the two decrees Paroh gave to the Hebrew midwives. First, they had to change their names and then they were instructed to kill the baby boys born to the Jewish women. Paroh understood the power of a name and the identity it creates. His hope was that once the midwives underwent this change in character, it would be easier for them to relate to the children as mere numbers and to kill the babies. (This clearly recalls how the Germans, *yemach shemam*, numbered the Jewish prisoners to strip them of any sense of self and identity.) Rav Brazil further notes that our *passuk* first lists the names of the *shevatim* and only then states that 70 family members went down to *Mitzrayim*. One's name is a *segulah* for a person to connect to his inner essence and not be influenced by outside forces. This is the secret of living as a redeemed person in a hostile environment.

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*Seforno* suggests that the emphasis on *Sh'mot* highlights how the *shevatim* lived up to their given *kochot* inherent in their names. Rav Gifter adds that the *shevatim* were able to adapt to any situation in which they found themselves. These same individuals from *Eretz Canaan* were able to maintain their standard of piety and strength of spirit in the land of Egypt. Rav Elyashiv takes this one step further. The *Midrash* notes that each of the *shevatim*'s names reflected an aspect of redemption. For example, Reuven – Hashem **saw** their oppression, Shimon – Hashem **heard** their cries. The tribal names themselves gave the people hope of redemption, enabling them to remain steadfast in their righteousness and integrity throughout the difficult exile. The names infused conviction and promise, fostering the redemption.

Rav Eisenberger in *Mesilot Bilvavam* explains that when a child is given a name, it is with hope that he or she remains unwavering to the essence of what the name reflects. After 120 years, one of the last acts of the *Chevrah Kadisha* is to mention the name of the deceased. This is to invoke a merit for the deceased that he maintained the principles reflected in his name. This is akin to what *chazal* teach us about Yosef who maintained his spirituality wherever he was, even in the depravity of Egypt.

Herein is the theme of *Sefer Sh'mot*; faithfulness and loyalty to the essence in one's name activates the power of personal and national redemption. ■

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## Turn Aside!

For eighteen years, R' Chessed Halberstam was one of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's personal attendants. He also had a unique *shlichus*: each day, he had the privilege of driving Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson, a'h, the Lubavitcher Rebbitzin, to a park on Long Island. There she would enjoy some fresh air, feed the birds, and enjoy some desperately needed private down-time.

One day, as they neared their exit on the Long Island Expressway, they found that their regular route was closed off due to construction. The side streets were congested and the traffic moved very slowly. As they were driving, they noticed a group of people gathered outside a house and a number of people crying.

When they stopped at the traffic light, the Rebbetzin turned to the driver and asked him to return to the spot where the people had gathered. They turned around and arrived at the scene. Movers were *shlepping* furniture and loading up a truck belonging to the county marshal. R'

Chessed found out what was happening: A poor Russian family was being evicted from their home because they were in arrears for the rent.

The Rebbetzin inquired how much the woman owed, and if the marshal would accept a personal check. The sum that the family owed was \$6,700. When the marshal confirmed with the bank that the check was covered, the Rebbetzin wrote out a check for the full amount, gave it to the bailiff, and asked him if the same men who took the furniture out of the house could please bring it back in. She then quickly took leave of the scene before the family would recognize who their benefactress was.

As they made their way to the park, R' Chessed couldn't contain himself and asked the Rebbetzin what had prompted her to give such a large sum to a total stranger: "When I was a little girl, my father (the Frierdiker Rebbe) told me that anytime something causes us to deviate from our normal routine, there is a Divinely ordained reason. When I saw the detour sign instructing us to deviate from our regular route, I remembered my

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father's words and immediately thought to myself: every day we drive by this street; suddenly the street's closed off, and we're sent to a different street. I realized that we had been sent along this route for a purpose"

.....

In this week's *sedra*, while fleeing from Egypt, Moshe makes his way through the remote desert toward Midyan: וַיָּרֶא ה' כִּי סָר לְרֵאשִׁית וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּה "Hashem saw that he [Moshe] had turned aside to see the burning bush, and God called out to him from amid the bush..." (*Shemos*, 3:4).

The great Mashgiach of Mir, Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, zt"l wondered why this is such a noteworthy occurrence, "Wouldn't anyone turn to look and see such an uncommon, extraordinary sight? How could someone not notice a burning bush in the middle of the desert, ablaze and not being consumed?" However, if we are not present in all our ways, we might do just that.

"*Sar liros*, Moshe turned aside to see..." Our sages (*Shemos Rabbah*, 1:27) suggest that this is not a description of what occurred, rather an indication of the type of person that Moshe Rabbeinu was: someone who stopped to notice, someone who saw and internalized the Divine message in whatever was occurring.

Even more significant than what Moshe saw on the road — the content of the experience — was the awakening that he experienced as a result: how Moshe Rabbeinu saw himself as a result of the experience. In "turning aside" he was not

just moving toward the burning bush; he was moving toward himself. Moshe learned and recognized that he was being called upon, that there was a message that he needed to transmit, and that he was capable of helping to bring redemption.

Moshe's experience at the *Sneh* was the starting point of a life of leadership, of *nosei b'ol chaveiro*, 'lifting the burden of another' and sensitivity to the needs of others. Because Moshe Rabbeinu interpreted what he encountered on the road as instructive, not merely special or out of the ordinary in itself, he saw *himself* differently. This experience prepared him to be the teacher and transmitter of Torah to *Am Yisrael*.

Cultivating a growth mindset and being awake to all that we encounter orients us toward enjoying the sights, sounds and spiritual opportunities along the way.

In our daily routines and inevitable deviations and detours, may we believe in the Divine guidance of our journey, and 'turn aside' toward embracing our life's purpose and mission. ■

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**10:15 AM**

**Rabbi Aharon Adler**

The Giants Who Shaped Modern Orthodoxy <https://zoom.us/j/403831319>

**11:30 AM**

**Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz**

Mishlei: Wisdom for Life (L'Ayla) <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82280847618>

**2:00 PM**

**Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld**

Men's Gemara Chabura S,T,TH <https://zoom.us/j/887981820>

**4:30 PM**

**Rabbi Hillel Ruvell**

Men's Gemara B'youn S,M,W,Th <https://zoom.us/j/86466998217>

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Sefer Ezra (L'Ayla) <https://zoom.us/j/144986284>

**10:30 AM**

**Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider**

Rav Soloveitchik on the Parsha <https://zoom.us/j/700303855>

**11:45 AM**

**Rabbi Shmuel Herschler**

Ethics, family and society in the writings of Rav Hirsch, Rav Kook and Rav Soloveitchik <https://zoom.us/j/81925157325>

**4:30PM**

**Rabbi Hillel Ruvell**

**7:00 PM**

**Rabbi Baruch Taub**

Parshat HaShavua <https://zoom.us/j/888974573>

**9:00 PM**

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**9:00 AM**

**Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz**

Minchat Chinuch <https://zoom.us/j/89983298537>

**9:15 AM**

**Mrs. Shira Smiles**

Torah Tapestries (L'Ayla) <https://zoom.us/j/98629920642>

**10:30 AM**

**Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**

Parshat HaShavua <https://zoom.us/j/195174554>

**2:00 PM**

**Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld**

**5:00 PM**

**Mrs. Sylvie Schatz**

Chazal: Insights Into Our Times (L'Ayla) <https://zoom.us/j/85177782268>

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9:00 AM

**Rabbi Shimshon Nadel**

Halacha and Medina <https://zoom.us/j/6878683646>

10:15 AM

**Rabbi Anthony Manning**

Contemporary Issues in Halacha and Hashkafa <https://zoom.us/j/460662359>

11:30 AM

**Rabbi Alan Kimche** Great

Jewish Thinkers <https://zoom.us/j/772450422>

4:30PM

**Rabbi Hillel Ruvell**

7:00 PM

**Rabbi Baruch Taub**

Halacha <https://zoom.us/j/709706986>

8:30 PM

**Rabbi Ezra Friedman**

Practical Kashrut <https://zoom.us/j/698124792>

8:30 PM

**Rav Meir Goldwicht**

(Hebrew) Parshat Hashavua <https://zoom.us/j/2244321902>  
Passcode: 18

THURS, JAN 14

9:00 AM

**Rabbi Ian Pear**

Meaning in Mitzvot <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83538640996>

10:15 AM

**Rabbi Baruch Taub**

Parshat HaShavua <https://zoom.us/j/615813416>

11:30 AM

**Rabbi Shai Finkelstein**

Unlocking the Messages of Chazal <https://zoom.us/j/488542635>

2:00 PM

**Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld**

4:30PM **Rabbi Hillel Ruvell**

8:00 PM

**Rabbi Ari Kahn**

Parshat HaShavua <https://zoom.us/j/2624570009>

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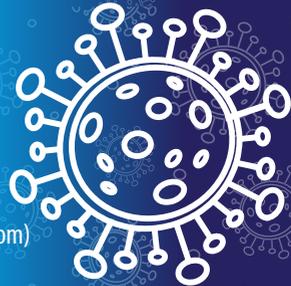
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# SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

**P**arshat *Sh'mot* introduces us to *Moshe Rabbeinu*; his birth and subsequent childhood being raised by the daughter of *Paroh*, his exile as he flees to *Midyan*, and of course the seminal moment when *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* reveals himself to *Moshe* with the supernatural vision of the thornbush that is completely engulfed by flame, but somehow is not consumed.

Many *meforshim* have questioned the significance of this particular medium, the supernatural 'burning bush' as the vehicle for *Moshe* to receive his sacred mission to lead the Jewish People, and to bring them forth from *Mitzrayim*.

The Chasidic Masters in particular, saw important messages represented by this supernatural encounter.

The *Shem Mishmuel*, the Rebbe of Sokatchov *zy'a*, suggests that the thornbush is the humblest of trees, and *Har Sinai* is the humblest of mountain tops. These two specific factors were meant to convey to *Moshe Rabbeinu* whom the *Torah* will later describe as being exceedingly humble:

וְהָאִישׁ נְטוּשָׁה עֵנוּ [עֲנִיּוֹ] מְאֹד מְכַלְלֵי הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה

*Now Moses was a very humble man, more than any other man that was upon the face of the earth.*

In presenting this sacred call to *Moshe*, in such a way, says the *Shem Mishmuel*, Hashem meant to convey to *Moshe*, that indeed he was perfectly suited for this sacred mission, specifically because he was humble, that even this humble thornbush, on this humble mountain top, can become a conduit for *Hashem* to reveal miracles.

The *Noam Elimelech*, *Reb Elimelech of Lijensk zy'a*, sees the supernatural occurrence of the bush being engulfed by flames, but not being consumed, as an important lesson for each of us. The thornbush represents the thorny presence of the *yetzer hara*. The flames, says the *Noam Elimelech*, represent the passionate fire of dedicated *Avodat Hashem*. The imagery of the burning bush, explains *Reb Elimelech*, is meant to serve as a constant reminder, that even if we are on fire in our *Avodat Hashem*, the thorny *yetzer hara*, is never truly consumed, it is ever present, and we

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must ever be aware, and work to overcome its challenges to our spiritual growth.

The *Netivot Shalom*, the *Slonimer Rebbe zy'a*, suggests that the thornbush is meant to represent the Jewish People. Throughout our long history, *Am Yisrael* has indeed been surrounded by flames—flames of hatred, flames of immorality, yet despite each of these factors, says the *Slonimer Rebbe*, those flames will never entirely consume the Jewish People.

*Yehi Ratzon*, may each of us find *chizuk* from each of these three beautiful teachings, and strive to live lives of humble *avodat Hashem*, ever wary of the *yetzer hara's* constant presence, and be strengthened in knowing that indeed the Jewish People are eternal. ■

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## Double Doubt

The Talmud (*Avodah Zara* 75:b) discusses the case of a Jew who accidentally used a non-Jew's utensil to cook food. The Sages permit certain foods in such a case, based on the understanding that food cooked in an *eino ben yomo* utensil (a utensil that was not used in the past twenty four hours) is permitted. Early halachic authorities (see *Beit Yosef* YD 122) wonder how the Talmud could rely on such an assumption. The accepted explanation is that there is a "*sfeik sefeika*" regarding utensils. In cases of a *sfeik sefeika*, or double doubt, the halachic ruling is generally lenient. Later authorities dispute over when *sfeik sefeika* applies (see *Shach* YD 110:63). Regarding utensils that may or may not be *ben yomo*, the double doubt rule is applicable. The *Tosafot*, *Rosh* and *Ran* explain the double

doubt as follows: The first doubt relates to whether the utensil was used in the past twenty-four hours. The second doubt relates that regardless if the utensil is *ben yomo*, perhaps it was used with foods that are distasteful (and therefore do not prohibit the foods cooked afterwards) or foods that give no flavor. (This concept of foods/combinations that don't prohibit is beyond the scope of the present article. For more information, see *Beit Yosef* YD 103) Based on these doubts, the *Shulchan Aruch* (122:6) rules that if one accidentally used a utensil from a non-Jew and is unable to determine its status, the food is permitted based on the concept of *sfeik sefeika*.

The *Shulchan Aruch* (122:7) rules that the same logic can be applied to Jewish owned utensils. In a case where it is unclear if a utensil is *ben yomo*, the *sfeik sefeika* rule can be applied. However, the *Pitchei Teshuva* (122:6) asserts that the *sfeik sefeika* can only be used after the fact (*bediavad*) or in

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a case when there is no way to determine the *ben yomo* status of the utensil. In short, relying on the double doubt regarding a Jewish-owned utensil can only be done when the *sfeik sfeika* is absolute doubt. However, when the information can be determined even if it would require much effort, one cannot rely upon the doubt (see *Be'er Heitev* 122:4). It would seem from many later authorities that if one had a true doubt regarding a utensil's *ben yomo* status, the halachic ruling would allow one to use the utensil ab-initio (*lechatchila*) as if it were *eino ben yomo*, based on the *sfeik sfeika* (see Responsa *Be'er Sheva* 30).

To summarize:

- Based on the Gemara, it would seem that a doubt regarding the *ben yomo* status of a non-Jew's utensils render them permissible.

- Early authorities explained the Gemara's logic based on the concept of *sfeik sfeika* (double doubt).
- The same rule applies to kosher, Jewish-owned utensils.
- If there is a way to determine the utensil's status, even with some effort, the double doubt rule may not be applied.
- If one is unsure if a utensil is *ben yomo* and has no way of determining its status, the utensil may be used as if it were *eino ben yomo*. The same would apply if food had already been cooked in the utensil when the question arose. ■

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RABBI AARON

Editor, Torah Tidbits

GOLDSCHIEDER

# Within Every Jew, A Burning Bush

Upon seeing the burning bush Moshe said to himself, 'I must pause and attempt to understand this enthralling site', "מדוע לא יבער הסנה" "Why will the bush not burn?" (*Sh'mot* 3:3)

Studying this unforgettable event today we must also seek to apprehend the messages conveyed in this vision.

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik zt"l suggested the following three exquisite lessons:

## 1. What Did God's Voice Sound Like?

The Midrash says that when God spoke it sounded just like Moshe's father's voice (*Sh'mot Rabbah* 3:1). For a moment Moshe thought that his father was somehow there, that apparently he came to see him.

The midrash posits this surprising interpretation based on one word in the pasuk "God said, "I am the God of your **father**, the God of Abraham, Isaac and the God of Yaakov"; then Moshe hid his face

because he was afraid of looking at God." (*Sh'mot* 3:6). The verse references Moshe's father.

This is the very first time that the lines of communication were opened between the Master of the World and Moshe. The Rav taught: "The mere fact that Amram's voice was the medium or the implement which the Almighty chose in order to get acquainted with Moshe tells us something very important. It's important to the modern Jew, perhaps even more so than it was to Moshe" (*The Rav Thinking Aloud*, Holzer, pp. 25-26).

The Rav continued and explained based on his own experience. He said that many people he has interacted with over the years shy away from Judaism because they say it is too rigid. They say that the biblical God is angry, vengeful, and vindictive. The Father in Heaven is stern and unforgiving.

This concept is completely false. Judaism is like a mother and father. It is a very tender religion. It is saturated with sympathy and love.

The Rav cited the Rambam, often described as the great rationalist, describing a Jew's relationship with God: "What is the proper love? A person should love God exceedingly...a person's mind should be tied to loving God, and he is preoccupied

with it constantly [or: singing about it constantly - *Raavad 7*] as if he were lovesick with the illness of love of a woman, whom he thinks about constantly...More than this should be a person's love for God..." (*Rambam Hilchot Teshuva 10:3*)

At the Burning Bush Moshe took the position that the Jewish people deserved punishment (see Rashi on the pasuk). The Holy One blessed Be He had to convince him he was making a mistake about the Jewish people. The message of the first encounter is the Almighty as being warm-hearted and tender loving father or mother.

## 2. A Fire At the Core

The bush was shaped like a circle with a fire in the center, and the fire did not spread to the periphery. The Rav posited that this is what Rashi was pointing to when he interpreted the phrase *be'labat eish* as *b'lev eish* (3:2). *Lev* (heart) means the center. So when Moshe asked '*madua lo yiv'ar ha'sneh*' (3:3), he was not asking, "why is the bush not consumed?", but, "why does the fire not spread to the periphery?" The fire was confined to one point in the center. Moshe was asking "what type of fire is limited to a point and does not spread?" (*Chumash Mesoras HaRav, Shemos, p.22*).

The message to Moshe, who had lost faith in his brothers in the aftermath of the fight between Dan and Aviram, was to perceive the potential found in the Jew. Through the appearance of the burning bush, whose fire in the center did not spread, God imparted the message that while the Jews of Egypt externally appeared cold, in their

hearts they hid a fire.

In every Jew there is a '*ratzon elyon*', a sublime desire to do that which is correct. When we look at people we must always search for the virtuous aspects in their character.

The Rav once commented: "There is now a tendency towards isolation in our Orthodoxy. I have never seen it before. I have lived in many countries and among many people, it did not exist. Reb Chaim Soloveitchik, my grandfather, never excluded a single Jew. A single Jew. And, by not excluding, not expelling, by not excommunicating, by not speaking ill when somebody passed by...If Moshe would have excommunicated the Jews of Egypt who knows what would have happened to us" (*The Rav Thinking Aloud, Sh'mot, pp. 18-19*).

The Rav expanded on this theme quoting the *Midrash Tanchuma (Sh'mot 20)* which comments on the duplicative phrase *raoh raiti, I have surely seen the affliction of my people* (3:7); "You (Moshe) see one sight, but I see two sights." After the incident of Dan and Aviram, Moshe saw a people not worthy of redemption. However, says God, I see beyond the facade. When one penetrates into the depths of the Jew, one recognizes that the Jew quests for freedom and quests for His God (*Noraot HaRav, Vol. 8 pp. 77-78*).

The Rav's beautiful interpretation appears to echo his great-grandfather's insight in his *Beit Halevi* ד"ה ראה ראיתי את עני עמי (ומו). The double language of *raoh raiti* reflects the notion that after so many years in exile

and slavery the Jewish people themselves lost a sense of their own true greatness. He offered a parable of a wealthy man now impoverished who over time no longer can conceptualize the nobility and confidence he once exuded. God knows the potential of the Jew. Although they may have forgotten their true character, God never did.

### 3. Moshe Hid His Face

Perhaps, the Rav's most breathtaking interpretation regarding the story of the *sneh*, pertains to the following pasuk: "Moshe hid his face because he was afraid to look toward God" (3:6).

The Talmud debates whether this act of Moshe was praiseworthy or not (*Berachot* 7a). Rav Yonatan maintains that it was Moshe's fear of looking at the *Shechina* which merited his becoming the greatest of prophets.

Rabbi Soloveitchik commented that it is difficult to fathom Rav Yonatan's position. Why was it so meritorious of Moshe to look away? After all, the fire of the bush was burning. The infinite light called him. The Master of the Universe waited, yet Moshe's face remained hidden. Furthermore, Moshe now had the opportunity to experience all that was hidden, to understand with clarity the ways of God. All the mysteries of the world could now be clarified.

The Rav suggested a remarkable answer. Moshe trembled in the face of complete knowledge. What frightened Moshe was if he had not turned away, he would lose his

attribute of *chessed*, the feeling of empathy and love regarding his fellow Jew. If he were to understand all the attributes and ways of God he would see there is really no evil in the world. If Moshe had this knowledge he could not perform *chessed* with a poor person, because he would understand why poverty was appropriate for that person. He could not have mercy for the sick because he would have complete understanding why God acted this way towards this person.

Man's poverty and sickness must be seen as evil and suffering and evil must be fought.

So great was Moshe's love for his Israel that he sacrificed the sublime of human striving, the knowledge of God, and chose to merit the trait of mercy and *chessed*. (*Chumash Mesoras HaRav, Shemos, p.25*)

This final lesson from the Rav brings to mind a most wonderful Chassidic teaching.

There is a saying that everything in the world is here for the service of God. A student once came to his master, the Alexander Rebbe, and asked him, how can one possibly serve God by being an atheist? The Rebbe answered that you have to be an atheist when someone asks a favor of you. If you believe in God, then you'll think, I will pray for you, I will bless you - but I don't need to do anything, because God will do it.

So when someone asks a favor of you, you have to be a complete atheist - as if God won't do anything - you have got to do it, there is no one else! (*Holy Brother, Halberstam, p.155*) ■



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## DIVREI MENACHEM

BY MENACHEM PERSOFF

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# Oh To Be a Stranger!

Parshat Sh'mot introduces us to the notions that separate us as a people from others. A tension arises between the new king of Egypt who did not know Yosef and the Hebrews that lived in Goshen in a remote part of northern Egypt. Today, we might call the disparate views of Jews living in foreign lands and the oppressive treatment they received at the hands of their host countries: “Anti-Semitism.”

In truth, that term was only coined in 1873 by the German political agitator Wilhelm Marr. However, anti-Semitism can be traced back all the way to our Parsha and the Exodus. Following R. Hirsch, the “new Pharaoh” was a king that conquered Egypt who did not know of the special treatment offered to Bnei Yisrael on account of the bond with Yosef. He had no grievance with the “Jews” *per se*; they had done nothing wrong. Similarly, Amalek would attack the people on their way out of Egypt for no apparent reason.

However, kings are paranoid. Since Egypt, the strongest world power, had no *a priori* cause to fear the Jewish presence, R.

Hirsch surmises that the conquering force brought many of their people to live in Egypt. The Israelites were now competitors for land; they were multiplying at such a rate that they would burst out of Goshen and permeate the kingdom.

Now the new Pharaoh did what many rulers did to placate the populace they were (now) subjugating, namely the Egyptian people. Like the Nazi regime (and others throughout history), the autocrat created a lower, inferior class singled out as “too powerful.” In other words, Pharaoh’s Jew-hatred was a political measure instituted from above to strengthen his use of force and violence. This new lower class could be roundly condemned as pariahs; their measly status gave the rest of the population a feeling that compared to the Jews, they were “free men.”

Pharaoh then concocts a new case against the Israelites: Because of their great numbers, the Jews will eventually rise against us; they will side with our enemies. Because of their wealth, they are an excellent source of tax-revenue: They should pay for their rights to be among us – but more so, the tax burden, the extortion, should afflict these undesirable foreigners.

Finally, Bnei Yisrael became slaves, “with crushing hardness” – בפרך, the Hebrew word implying (further) separation from

the Egyptian population, now with dehumanizing hard labor and all manner of embittered work. It sounds uncannily familiar to those who endured the Nazi Holocaust: No longer did the people have rights, including rights of appeal or redress.

Rav Hirsch points out a compelling historical message in the light of the above. What had transpired was precisely what Hashem had told Avraham: The three elements of the plan for Avraham's descendants were now fulfilled, namely, that the people would be strangers in a foreign land, that they would be enslaved, and finally they would be persecuted.

How do we understand the unfolding of history? Are the Pharaohs of this world tyrants or tools? As is known, Hashem gives us free choice. These rulers were indeed tyrants. And over the centuries, anti-Semitism in all its pernicious forms served these despots, one way or another. As a people, we have suffered indescribable insults at the hands of other nations – and the perpetrations continue until this day.

We might understand these torments as a national purification of our collective soul or as suffering as a prerequisite for the eventual Ge'ulah. Whatever our interpretation of Jew-hatred, let us at least raise our consciousness regarding strangers in *our* midst. Let us bear in mind that of the twenty-four times the Torah talks of people's rights, the "stranger in the land" receives special protection. ■

Shabbat Shalom!

Menachem Persoff

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# FROM THE VIRTUAL DESK OF THE OU VEBBE REBBE

RAV DANIEL MANN



## Is Rounding Up Ribbit?

**Question:** I was told that the “Paybox” app that allows sending money enables payments only of full *shekalim*. So when my wife and many others use it to repay a friend who bought something at the grocery that has an *agurot* element, they must round the numbers. Is rounding up a problem of *ribbit*?

**Answer:** [For those who are unfamiliar with Paybox (an Israeli company), it resembles Paypal but is mainly for non-commercial payments, as people make groups (of various sizes – similar to WhatsApp) for different payment purposes.]

Torah-level *Ribbit* applies only if it was stipulated at the time the loan was made that the borrower must pay back more than he received. However, it is Rabbinically prohibited for the borrower to decide later to give more (*ribbit meucheret* – Bava Metzia 75b).

A pertinent leniency exists regarding a different case of Rabbinical *ribbit*. It is forbidden to lend an amount of a

commodity with the stipulation that he will return the same amount of that commodity (*se'ah b'se'ah* - Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 162:1). The reason it is forbidden is due to the possibility that the commodity's price will go up (perhaps even sharply) and the borrower will be compelled to return more, value-wise, than he received. Among the leniencies of *se'ah b'se'ah* (see *ibid.* 1-3), the relevant one for us is that people may lend a loaf of bread for a loaf of bread (Rama, YD 162:1, based on Bava Metzia 75a). Rashi (*ad loc.*) implies that this is a special leniency for the Rabbinic *se'ah b'se'ah*, raising the question as to whether it applies to other Rabbinic *ribbit* cases. However, the Rama (*ibid.*) cites the explanation (as does Mishna Berura 450:2) that people do not care about small amounts of fluctuations. Realize that regarding *ribbit*, much depends on intentions and assumptions about them. On the one hand, if one demands interest, it is forbidden by Torah law to take even less than a *peruta* worth (which is rarely a halachically significant value) of interest (Shulchan Aruch, YD 161:1). In contrast, in some cases when it is clear that the ostensible interest is not being given out of a duty to compensate the lender, *ribbit* is not violated (see Bava Metzia 75a).

Should we then say that an innocuous, small amount of *ribbit meucheret* (like our

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case) should be permitted? The problem is that direct *ribbit meucheret* might be worse than *se'ah b'se'ah*. The latter does not look like *ribbit*, as one returns the same thing he took. In contrast, here, a clearly larger amount, even if only by a little, is being given during repayment (see Brit Yehuda 5:8), which may make it *assur*. Still, after a long analysis, the Minchat Yitzchak IX:88 says that one who does not have exact change may give more than owed if the difference is insignificant. (The Minchat Yitzchak still suggests to tell the lender to give the change to *tzedaka* on the borrower's behalf). While recent *sefarim* cite the Minchat Yitzchak in more strict (Torat Ribbit 45:12) and more lenient (The Laws of Ribbis (Reisman) p. 43) manners, we can assume that nowadays rounding up a half a shekel between friends is insignificant. Since intention and how things look are important, if indeed Paybox requires its users to round to the shekel and still people happily use it, then for these people, it is **clearly** insignificant (see Bava Metzia 75a, regarding *talmidei chachamim* for whom it is clear it is not being given as *ribbit*).

The only question is in a case, where at the time of the "loan," it was known that payment was going to need rounding, e.g., they always pay each other with Paybox, and they always round up (i.e., even by more than half a shekel) because it is not nice to borrow and then pay back less. There, one could get into Torah-level *ribbit* of a small amount. In those cases, it would be right for the recipient to give to *tzedaka* (as above) or say that the overly reimbursed owes change at some point and keep an at least loose accounting. But if everyone truly is not *makpid* on small amounts, then it is best and natural to simply follow the regular rules of rounding. ■

*Eretz Hemdah has begun a participatory Zoom class - "Behind the Scenes with the Vebbe Rebbe" - an analytical look at the sources, methodology, and considerations behind our rulings, with Rav Daniel Mann. Contact [info@eretzhemdah.org](mailto:info@eretzhemdah.org) to join while places are open.*

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**RABBI GIDEON**

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## Playing Safe

Last week we saw the problem of continuing to run a mikvah during the Covid 19 pandemic. The concern was not the water of the mikvah itself that did not transmit the virus, rather, the possibility of the infection being passed from one person to the another in the waiting room or the preparation room.

PUAH held many discussions with experts and the taskforce responsible for Corona. Together we developed a protocol of how to run the mikvah. Two major directives were established; the first concerned the supervision of the level of hygiene in the mikvah. Each area was placed under a responsible supervisor, usually from the local rabbinate, who was accountable for the mikvah. They made sure that the already existing protocols for maintaining the highest possible levels of hygiene, were being adhered to exactly. The water was chlorinated and checked and spot checks were done to ensure that the water was safe.

The second set of instructions concerned the possibility of women meeting each other in the mikvah or passing the infection from one to the other. First,

while in the past women were able to make all preparations in the mikvah building itself, the new reality restricted that possibility. Women had to prepare at home and only come to the mikvah to immerse and then go home. This limited the time that women spent in the mikvah, which reduced the possibility that they would come into contact with other women. It also diminished the need for cleaning rooms in between use by two different people.

This was a new experience for many women who were used to using the facilities in the mikvah. Not everyone has the entire equipment at home and this gave rise to a number of halachic questions as to how to make preparations at home and then go to the mikvah.

In addition, all surfaces had to be cleaned in the mikvah between each person. Women had to make appointments for the mikvah and each woman was given a specific time slot. This was also a new reality and needed more planning and preparation.

One thing that we learned was that it is much easier to supervise a government controlled mikvah, as opposed to a private one. Some may have thought that a small private mikvah may be easier to control, but such an establishment

functions independently and is not regulated by any official authority.

It was not easy to encourage everyone to follow the new guidelines.

More on that next week. ■

*The Puah Institute is based in Jerusalem and helps couples from all over the world who are experiencing fertility problems. Offices in Jerusalem, New York, Los Angeles & Paris. Contact (Isr) 02-651-5050 (US) 718-336-0603 [www.puahonline.org](http://www.puahonline.org)*

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# TOWARDS MEANINGFUL

## TEFILLA

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



## ברכות קריאת שמע

After completing the Pesukei dZimra, we arrive at the next section of Shacharit, the ברכות קריאת שמע. The Gemara Brachot 11a tells us that קריאת שמע in the morning needs to be recited with 2 brachot beforehand, and one bracha afterwards.

Each of these three brachot has a different theme. The first bracha of יוצר אור, which we will discuss here, is about Hashem's creation of nature. The second bracha רבה רבה focuses on Hashem's love for us, His chosen people. Finally, the bracha following Shema focuses on Geula, redemption. These themes are intrinsically connected to קריאת שמע. How so? The main theme of קריאת שמע is accepting Hashem as King. Hashem's sovereignty is expressed through His control over nature and through His chosen people. Forces of nature obey Hashem in their every action; the Jewish people obey Hashem's mitzvot throughout the day. Therefore, a discussion about Hashem's control over nature and a discussion about His control over His people are the perfect introduction to קריאת שמע itself. Additionally, it makes sense at the conclusion of קריאת שמע to discuss Hashem's protection and redemption of

the Jewish people, since this is a direct consequence of our acceptance of עול מלכות שמים.

As we mentioned earlier, the main theme of the (very long) bracha of יוצר אור is that Hashem is the master over nature. We begin with the פתיחה, the opening part of the bracha –

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'... יוֹצֵר אֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא אֶת הַכֹּל:

in which we praise Hashem for creating the light and darkness, and everything as a whole.

We then make the very important statement of

*And in His goodness renews creation constantly on a daily basis.* This is an extremely crucial point! We are not praising Hashem for an action that He did in the past, for the fact that He created the world thousands of years ago. Rather, we are acknowledging the fact that Hashem is actively involved in our lives and in running the world on a daily basis. This statement *needs* to be emphasized prior to accepting עול מלכות שמים.

We go on and recount all of Hashem's amazing creations – 'מה רבו מעשיך ה'!

We then use the Alef Bet to list many of the ways that Hashem controls nature -

אתה ה', יוצר המקאורות:

קל ברוך גדול דעה. הכין ופעל זקרי חמה. טוב יצר כבוד לשמו. מאורות נתן סביבות עזו...

*The blessed God, great in understanding, prepared and brought about the rays of the sun. The Generous One created glory for His name. He placed luminaries around His strength....*

As we mentioned in the past, when we give praise using the Alef Bet structure, we are in essence saying that the One we are praising does everything, from A-Z, there is no shortage of ways we can describe His greatness.

At the end of this very long bracha, we again focus on the same theme of Hashem's control over nature.

המחנך בטובו בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית... ברוך

*In His goodness He renews every day, continuously, the work of creation...Blessed are You, God, Creator of the luminaries.*

It is important to note that though we have praised Hashem's control over nature numerous time during Pesukei dZimra, here the focus is different. Here, the goal is not to appreciate all Hashem does for us, but rather to enable us to fulfill with 100% clarity the mitzvah of עול מלכות שמים, accepting Hashem as King.

In between these two sections is a very long section about מלאכים, angels, in which we discuss the daily service of the angels, which climaxes with the famous words of קדוש קדוש קדוש. What does this have to do with our theme? The מלאכים are Hashem's

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“messengers” so to speak. They watch every single detail of Hashem’s mastery of nature. For example, the Midrash (Bereishit Rabba 10) tells us that every single blade of grass has a corresponding angel assigned to making sure that it grows. And so, as they watch firsthand as the beauty of nature unfolds before them, they can’t help but burst forth in praise. The *malachim* teach us how to look out at Hashem’s hand in nature, recognize Hashem’s Omnipotence, be overwhelmed with awe, and from there to arrive at accepting עול מלכות שמים.

וְכֹלֵם פּוֹתְחִים אֶת פִּיָּהֶם בְּקֹדֶשׁ וּבְטָהָרָה. בְּשִׁירָה וּבְזִמְרָה, וּמְבָרְכִים וּמְשַׁבְּחִים וּמְפָאְרִים וּמְעֲרִיצִים וּמְקַדְּשִׁים וּמְחַלְּלִים: אֶת שֵׁם הָאֵל הַמְּלַךְ הַגָּדוֹל הַגְּבוּר הַנּוֹרָא. קְדוֹשׁ הוּא. וְכֹלֵם מְקַבְּלִים עֲלֵיהֶם עַל מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם זֶה מִזָּה... וְנוֹתְנִים בְּאֵהָבָה רְשׁוּת זֶה לָזֶה לְהַקְדִּישׁ לְיוֹצְרָם

*All of them open their mouths in holiness and purity, with song and music, and bless, praise, glorify, extol, sanctify and ascribe kingship to the name of the Almighty, the great, powerful and awesome King, Who is holy. They all accept upon themselves the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, one*

*from another, and they all lovingly grant permission to each other to sanctify their Maker...*

Before we arrive at קריאת שמע and fulfill the fundamental daily mitzvah of accepting עול מלכות שמים, this first of the ברכות קריאת שמע teaches us to use the nature around us and the example of the *malachim* to be prepared to really accept Hashem’s rulership over us.

One crucial lesson we learn from the *malachim* is how to praise and accept Hashem **as a nation**. It’s not enough for each of us to do so as individuals. We, like the *malachim*, need to be “בְּאֵהָבָה רְשׁוּת זֶה לָזֶה”, to *lovingly grant permission to each other to sanctify our Maker*. There are many different types of Jews coming from all across the spectrum, and we may agree or disagree on many different issues, but we need to be able to make room to allow everyone to praise Hashem together, no matter where they are coming from. We must remember that “כולם אהובים”, Hashem loves us all and is waiting for us to sing to Him in unison! ■

— Cut and paste into your siddur — — — — — 

Each of the three ברכות קריאת שמע has a different theme. The first bracha of יוצר אור is about Hashem’s creation of nature. The second bracha אהבה רבה focuses on Hashem’s love for us, His chosen people. Finally, the bracha following Shema focuses on Geula, redemption. These themes are intrinsically connected to קריאת שמע. How so? The main theme of קריאת שמע is קבלת עול שמים, accepting Hashem as King. Hashem’s sovereignty is expressed through His control over nature and through His chosen people. Those topics, therefore, are the perfect introduction to קריאת שמע itself. Additionally, it makes sense at the conclusion of קריאת שמע to discuss Hashem’s protection and redemption of the Jewish people, since this is a direct consequence of our acceptance of עול מלכות שמים.

# Real Life Rescues

Inspiring Stories of United Hatzalah First Responders



## The Post Office Can Wait

Two months ago, on Monday afternoon, an accident had occurred on Ramatayim Street in Hod Hasharon. A motorcyclist had crashed into the back of a truck, causing the rider to be thrown onto the pavement. A passerby immediately called United Hatzalah's Dispatch and Command Center, who then identified volunteer Roie Baharazi as the nearest EMT to the scene.

Roie was located on the same main street because he was at the post office. He had been waiting in a line for over an hour. Just as his turn came and his number was called, Roie's communications device rang, alerting him to the nearby accident. Without a second of hesitation, Roie ran out of the post office, hopped on his ambucycle, and drove to the location of the accident.

Roie reached the given location in under a minute, along with another United Hatzalah volunteer EMT who had been two streets over when the incident occurred. The duo located the injured driver and quickly immobilized him by affixing a neck brace and placing his arm in a sling. After the man was immobilized, Roie treated the man's open wounds, which were bleeding but not profusely. The second volunteer EMT assisted the driver by helping him reposition his leg which the driver said was hurting and was in a painful position.

15 minutes later, an ambulance arrived to take the man to the nearest hospital. Once the patient was transported to the hospital, Roie returned to the post office to take a new number and brace himself for another hour-long wait. When Roie finally arrived at the clerk's window, the employee asked Roie why he had left before only to return half-an-hour later. Roie explained to the man what United Hatzalah does, and how come it was Roie's duty, and the duty of all of the other volunteers of the organization, to drop whatever it is that they are doing and rush to help a stranger.

"All Israelis can empathize with the nightmare of waiting in line at the post office. However, I didn't regret my decision, even as I pulled a new number out of the machine the second time around," Said Roie. "There are always other EMTs around, and if I did not respond to the call, someone else surely would. But knowing that I was closest and would be the first to respond, means that The person who needs help would suffer a bit less if I go. Thus, I feel it is my responsibility to respond to any emergency that comes my way so that I could provide the person with expert care and alleviate their suffering a bit faster. how could I shift that responsibility onto someone else? I was very close to the scene and my ambucycle was waiting for me outside. So despite waiting in line for over an hour, I was the closest responder, and for all I knew, someone's life could be on the line. When I am faced with the decision to receive my package in the post office a bit sooner or save a life, there is no question about it, and the post office can wait."



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### The Nursing Rebellion

What was Yocheved trying to do when she places baby Moshe in the reeds? Was this a desperate act by a lonely mother trying to keep her son alive? Most of us read it as faith in the face of uncertainty. We hold our breath along with Miriam wondering what will happen to the fragile baby in the basket and breathe a sigh of relief when Bat Pharaoh arrives and defies the odds deciding to save the Jewish baby. But I

think there is another more compelling read which communicates a radically different message. I want to suggest a more empowered read. Yocheved and Miriam were women with a plan. They were not accidental beneficiaries of Bat Pharaoh's good graces, not passive pious women who refused to give up. Yocheved and Miriam were political agents who authored the plan that saved Moshe.

The Torah indicates that Yocheved had time to plan. If the decision to put Moshe on the Nile was the result of a sudden, unforeseen change in circumstances, the text would simply state that Yocheved

could no longer hide Moshe, initiating a state of emergency. But specifying that Moshe was hidden for three months implies that there was a hiding period which, from the outset, gave Yocheved a three-month window in which to figure out what to do next. That is exactly the upshot of the Midrash that says that Moshe was born prematurely.

Once the hiding was over, Yocheved intentionally switched to the “teivah” plan of floating an ark on the Nile. The creation of the little ark with the detailing of its thorough waterproofing, even the seemingly superfluous “and she placed the child in it,” all slow down the action considerably and indicate deliberate action, not a hasty escape. The baby is placed in a specific spot, still waters in semi-camouflage. It wasn’t a public space so that any good-natured Egyptian woman might find him. It wasn’t with the flow of the river so that Divine Providence would carry the baby to the home of the best adoptive parents. And it wasn’t at the door of an Egyptian church, relying on kind institutions, even though the baby’s sanctuary turned out to be the Palace of the benevolent daughter of Pharaoh. Yocheved placed the baby precisely where it was found.

What does Miriam want to know when the verse states “she stood off a distance to know what will be done to him.”? Is she unsure if God cares or has the power to save? It sounds like Miriam has a vision and is anxious to know how exactly it will play out. Put together, it sounds like Miriam and Yocheved have time to plan,



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take action towards a plan and want to find out about this plan.

Before we detail the plan as I see it, I would like to point out problems with reading the encounter between Miriam and Bat Pharaoh as conventionally understood. If this is a first-time meeting between two adversaries: Jew-slave and daughter of the Pharaoh that just issued a bitter decree ordering all Egyptians to drown baby boys in the river, then how does Miriam leap out of nowhere to bluntly and rudely initiate conversation with the Princess giving an immediate, unsolicited suggestion: “Shall I go call a Jewish wet nurse?” If the genocidal plan of Pharaoh issued to the entire nation was widely known, why does Bat Pharaoh publicly declare “this is a Jewish child” with her maidservants within earshot? Why does Miriam make a point to call a specifically Jewish wet nurse? We naturally jump right to the midrashic answer. Bat Pharaoh tried to nurse the baby, as did all the surrounding Egyptian wetnurses and failed. But in jumping to the Midrash, we admit the glaring problem with a simple read. Why does Miriam chance leaving her audience with the Princess to actually bring an appropriate wet nurse to the scene? How could Miriam anticipate Bat Pharaoh agreeing to such an imposition on her time? Why does Bat Pharaoh need to offer to pay this wet nurse? Is it not obvious that she is returning the baby to her mother who needs no extra motivation to go and nurse the baby?

If we continue to read this story as two natural enemies who meet across the trenches and over the course of a few

exchanged lines, grow to trust each other, then I don’t understand the motivations of either side. If Bat Pharaoh is motivated by motherly instincts for a beautiful foundling, why does she agree to immediately send it away into the danger zone from which it just tried to escape? How does she trust these two Jewish women from nowhere with her newly adopted baby? What guarantee does she have that the baby will return when weaned? And I don’t understand Miriam and Yocheved. If they are trying to solve the problem of the inability to hide Moshe in Goshen, why do they interrupt Bat Pharaoh who seems to have taken an immediate liking to Moshe from just taking the baby home to the palace? If they are afraid of Moshe’s assimilation into the Palace and loss of Jewish identity, then why bring him to the Palace after nursing? Were they hoping for a better, “less Egyptian” home for Moshe? Or was Bat Pharaoh the perfect sanctuary? If so, then just let her take the baby home. Again, the idea that Moshe needs to be suckled by a Jewish wet nurse only serves to show that the simple read leaves big unanswered questions. The “only Jewish milk for Moshe” thesis is a large imposition on the text which points us, I think, in a different direction.



The entire encounter by the riverside is a set-up, planned and executed jointly by Bat Pharaoh, Yocheved and Miriam. Miriam is the mastermind; the Midrash calls it her prophecy. Bat Pharaoh arrives at the appointed time. Miriam and Yocheved are in place. Bat Pharaoh leaves her maidens on the shore as she wades in to check if the *teivah* is there. She gives a quick wink to Miriam, returns to shore and the play begins. “Maid-servant, please go fetch that strange looking basket. Oh, what a cute Jewish child I have found,” declares Bat Pharaoh, lingering on the word Jewish for effect. Enter Miriam, stage right: “I can get you a Jewish wet-nurse to suckle this child.” “Great idea, please do it.”

Miriam, in a loud voice “Is the mother of this child anywhere nearby?” Enter Miriam with Yocheved looking surprised.

Bat Pharaoh: “Please take this child and nurse it for me and I will pay you for it.” Exit Miriam and Yocheved with baby Moshe. End. Suf.

The stiffness of these lines, their hollow and demonstrative tone, the unrealistic staging and lack of any time sense, the flatness of emotion, no fear nor trepidation are taken directly from the text and stand in stark contrast to the other terse but emotionally resonant dialogues that fill the Torah. The intended audience, the maidservants, stand aghast. Did their mistress really, blatantly defy the law of the land? Did she knowingly, brazenly protest her own father’s decree? The Midrash puts these words explicitly into the mouth of the maidservants.

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**Wednesday, December 30** - Rabbi Manning’s shiur was sponsored by **Simon and Anna Wiseman** in memory of **Natan Meir ben Shimon Hacohen z”l, Norman Cohen**, father of Anna Wiseman, on his Yahrzeit, 18 Tevet

**Thursday, December 31** - all learning was dedicated by **Nechama Charles** לעילוי נשמת, her beloved son, **R’ Yisrael ben R’ Avraham z”l** on his first yahrzeit

**Sunday, Jan 3** - Rabbi Breitowitz’s shiur was sponsored by **Chana and Yakov Kooper** in loving memory of Chana’s Mother **Johanna bas Eliyahu a”h** - yahrzeit י”ט טבת

**Sunday, January 3** - Rabbi Breitowitz’s shiur, **Monday, January 4** - Rabbi Sam Shor’s shiur & **Tuesday, January 5** - Mrs. Sylvie Schatz’s shiur anonymously sponsored for the spiritual success of **Bracha Galia bat Alter Tuvia HaLevi v’Ayala Dina, Tehila Tiferet bat Alter Tuvia HaLevi v’Ayala Dina, & Dov Yaakov ben Alter Tuvia HaLevi V’Ayala Dina**

**Monday, January 4** - Rebbetzin Pearl Borow’s shiur was sponsored by **Rabbi Jay and Ruby Karzen** in honor of Rabbi Karzen’s Birthday, our 64th Wedding Anniversary, 35th Yom Aliyah Anniversary and Great-Grandchild #19  
KAYN YIRBU !!!!

**Tuesday, Jan 5** - Rebbetzin Shira Smiles shiur was sponsored in memory of our mother, **Elka Bat Mendel HaLevi a”h** - yahrzeit כ”א טבת by her children the **Mandel/Lebovits/ Kronenberg/Wiener Families**

**Tuesday, January 5** - Rebbetzin Shira Smiles’ shiur is sponsored by **Phyllis and Esther** in loving memory of their mother **מרת הינדא בת יהודה צבי הכהן ע”ה** on her yahrzeit ט”ז טבת

Rabbi Manning's shiurim for the 2021 academic year have been sponsored anonymously in the merit of an aliyat neshama for

**Matsiyahu ben Yisrael z"l,  
Aharon ben Menachem Lev z"l and  
Eliana bat Yaakov a"h**

Rabbi Kimche's shiurim for the 2021 academic year have been sponsored anonymously in the merit of a

**refuah shelaima for Janet bat Hannah**

**Tuesday, January 12** - Rebbetzin Shira Smiles

Shiur is sponsored by **Renee and Shmuel Becker** in celebration of their 55th Wedding anniversary and 51 year aliyah anniversary!

Tuesday, January 12 - Rabbi Goldin's Shiur is sponsored by **Yaffa Silberberg** לעילוי נשמת her beloved husband

**Aryeh Leib Meir Silberberg Hacohen z"l**

He valued Torah learning all his life

women of Egypt, Bat Pharaoh chief among them, initiate the nursing rebellion that blossoms into the Exodus. The Jewish slaves no longer furtively hide their babies but instead, through concerted bi-partisan political action, nurse them openly in their own homes. This is the story of a man from Levi, who took a woman from Beit Levi. It is a story about any Jewish man and any Jewish woman who came to build a Jewish home based on Jewish milk, Jewish language.

Now, I admit it is hard to believe in such a radically different read. This read supposes that Miriam and Yocheved had prior access to Bat Pharaoh. That they knew each other well enough and trusted each other deeply enough so that when the powers tried to separate them, each backed up the others' story. Bat Pharaoh stood by her hired Jewish wetnurses. And the Jewish mothers kept up the feigned story that they were only nursing Bat Pharaoh's child. When called upon, they delivered the baby to the palace. This story supposes Yocheved, Miriam and Bat Pharaoh were brave enough to openly defy the law of the land. That they knew they could transgress Pharaoh's decree so long as they put up a thin cover story. They understood that so long as all the women worked in concert, each playing their role in this ruse, they could succeed in defying Pharaoh's draconian policies. It was not a power struggle. Pharaoh would always win in a contest of strength. Rather, it was a ploy, a language game, knowing that Pharaoh was committed to a semblance of fairness. These women understood that

Pharaoh would keep up appearances and was powerless to run completely counter to prevailing norms. That would be a lot to suppose but for the fact that all these suppositions can be learned directly from the previous story of the Hebrew midwives, call it the birthing rebellion. The official Hebrew midwives defied Pharaoh's demand to kill the Jewish males at birth. Commentators debate whether they were Egyptian midwives for the Jews or Jewish midwives. What seems clear is that Shifra and Puah are the heads of an entire network of midwives. They explain their failure to kill with the following excuse, "we tried Pharaoh but, what can you do, those Jewish women gave birth before we even arrived." To which, Pharaoh had no reply. God rewards the midwives with "houses." Maybe these are the safe houses where mothers nurse their young that follows.

How did it work? Here is a Midrashic invention of my own, that I believe is true to the spirit of the story. Shifra and Puah are summoned to appear before an open Commission of the court for failing to implement the Jewish Plan. The media comes out in force. They testify that they tried to implement the plan, but Jewish women are different and not dependent on public health services to give birth. On the way out, a female hand surreptitiously pulls them into a side room. "I understand exactly what you are doing," says Bat Pharaoh, "and I want to help."

Initially, I was troubled that what I thought was such a compelling read found little

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support in the sources. But then I found this Midrash (Megillah 13a).

". . . and these are the children of Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh who was taken to wife by Mered." And who was Mered? Mered is Caleb because he rebelled against the advice of the ten spies who married Batya who rebelled against the self-referencing idolatry of her father (גלולי בית אביה). However, Sh'mot Rabbah, based on later verses in Divrei HaYamim tells us about a different wife for Caleb. "and Caleb took for himself Efrat and had a son, Chur." Who is Efrat? She is Miriam who made Israel fertile and flourish. Thus Mered (rebellion) had two wives, Bat Pharaoh and Miriam. In their merit, in the merit of the righteous women, our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt. ■



## TORAH 4 TEENS

## BY TEENS NCSY ISRAEL



**Rabbi Yosef  
Ginsberg**  
Co-Regional  
Director, NCSY Israel

Sefer Sh'mot opens up by going through the names of Bnei Yisrael at the time of entering Egypt. It lists each one of the Shevatim and then collectively totals them to 'seventy souls that emanate from Yaakov'. A question, though, begs to be asked. In Parshat Vayigash Perek 46, the Shevatim are already listed and named, why does the Torah repeat their names here?

Rashi explains that when the Torah listed the names in Parshat Vaiyigash, that was during their lifetime. However, in our Parsha, it enumerates them at their death. Why is it important to enumerate them at their death? It is to show how dear they are to Hashem as they are compared to the stars, which according to Sefer Yeshayahu, Hashem counts every night as they come out and every morning as they go away.

It's a beautiful idea that Rashi is teaching us, how dear the Shevatim were to Hashem, but we can be compared to many things, why does Rashi choose to compare us to the stars? The Sfat Emet, second Rebbe in the Gur Chassidic dynasty, answers that Bnei Yisrael need to know that Hashem loves them. Just as Hashem created the

stars in order to penetrate and illuminate the darkness, so too is our purpose. We as Jews were created and sent by Hashem in order to illuminate all places of darkness in this world.

Whenever we see darkness which represents bad in this world, we have a responsibility to penetrate those dark depths and do something about it. Hashem did not only give this responsibility on a national level, but rather He counts every light, every Jew, one by one. Each one of us has the responsibility to dispel darkness wherever we find it. Even more so, each one of us has a Godly given strength in order to accomplish that. May we merit the dispersion of all darkness and the coming of Mashiach speedily in our days.

Shabbat Shalom!



**Adira Marcus**  
9th Grade,  
Chashmonaim

## One Decision Can Make the Difference

In this week's parsha, we learn of the beginning of the enslavement of Bnai Yisrael in Egypt – and the beginning of their redemption.

A fundamental question can be asked: How did the enslavement begin? How did the Jewish People – a vital component

of Egypt's thriving economy – become enslaved to the Egyptians, and why did the Egyptians bother enslaving them?

The Midrash says that the enslavement began when the Jewish people made the decision to stop giving their children circumcisions. Recognizing that the exile of Egypt had first begun after Yosef's death, and that it was going to be a long and spiritually challenging exile, the Jewish people felt that becoming closer to the Egyptians and trying to find favor in their eyes would ultimately save them from destructive exile. They were wrong. As Rabbi Shalom Rosner says: "if the Jewish people don't make kiddush, the gentiles will make Havdalah." Our historic attempts to assimilate in society have been our undoing.

Instead, the key to our success is embracing what makes us special and different: Torah. We must not be embarrassed of our rich history and of our value system, we should celebrate them.

Like the fateful decision to stop circumcision – which led to terrible hardships for our people, we, too, can make the fateful decision to turn things around for good. One decision can make all of the difference. ■

*NCSY Israel is the premier organization in Israel, dedicated to connect, inspire, empower, and help teen olim with "Klita" to the Land of Israel by encouraging passionate Judaism through Torah and Tradition. Find out more at [israel.ncsy.org](http://israel.ncsy.org)*



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