



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

Sefer Shemot begins by recalling the names of Yaakov Avinu's children who came to live in Egypt, and the passing of that entire generation. The Torah then tells us:

וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ-חַדֵּשׁ עַל-מִצְרָיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִדְעַ אֶת-יְסָפָה: —

"A new king rose over Egypt, who did not know of Yosef."

Our *meforshim* (commentaries) are struck by this statement, given Yosef's influence and prominence in Egypt, how could it be possible that just a generation later, a new King would come upon *Mitzrayim*, who did not know of Yosef?

Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch zt'l suggests that the language of "*A new King rose over Egypt*" connotes not a normal legitimate succession to the royal throne, rather some sort of hostile takeover from a foreign power. Had the new ruler been part of the indigenous Egyptian royalty, he surely would have heard of Yosef!

Rashi quoting the *gemara* in *Sotah* offers these two keen insights:

— Rav and Shmuel differed in their interpretation of these words. One said that he was really a new king; the other said that it was the same king but he made new decrees. — he conducted himself as though he did not know him.

Onkelos interprets the verse as follows:
וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ-חַדֵּשׁ עַל-מִצְרָיִם זְרֹתָה יוֹסֵף
-And a new King rose upon Egypt, who did not fulfill the decrees of Yosef.

What decrees or specific decree that Yosef enacted, did this new *Paroh*, decide to either ignore or do away with?

The **Chatam Sofer zt'l** offered this brilliant insight:

What was the gezeira which Yosef decreed?, that every Egyptian male should be circumcised. The Egyptians interpreted this as being a statement not solely of morality or values, but that somehow this would impact and control the population during the difficult lean years of famine which Yosef predicted.

However, Yosef's true intent was that if circumcision would become the norm within Egyptian society, then it would be ensured that the subsequent generations of the Jewish People who would come to live in Egypt, would not feel the pull to assimilate and give up the mitzva of brit mila.

As Paroh came to realize that the Jews were indeed continuing to have many offspring, and that circumcision did not impede fertility in anyway, he realized that he had misinterpreted the intent of Yosef's gezeira, and therefore chose to retract or ignore this

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decree, and end the mandate that every Egyptian male should be circumcised.

Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlop zt'l points out that from the time of Yosef's initial meeting with *Paroh*, when *Paroh* summoned Yosef to interpret his troubling dream, and Yosef replies that it is *Hashem* who will offer the answer, *Paroh* had accepted Yosef's faith and trust in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. However, with his expressed desire to abandon and reject the decrees and lessons of Yosef *HaTzadik*, *Paroh* is essentially saying I no longer trust and put my faith in *Hashem*, I no longer trust you, or your G-d!

This actually comes out in *Paroh*'s later reply to *Moshe Rabbeinu*- *I do not know your G-d, and I shall not set the Jewish People free.*

Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl, shlita astutely



points out that we learn a fundamental lesson from *Paroh*'s changed approach and words. When a person forgets or denies the good that another person

has done for him, in the end this will lead to a denial of the good which *Hashem* does for each of us.

May each of us be blessed to learn this eternal lesson, to be steadfast in our practice of *hakarat hatov*, to continue to see the good in one another, to see and appreciate the divine spark within one another, and to appreciate the many, many gifts that *Hashem* provides each of us with day in and day out. ■



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