



# הַמִּזְרָחִי

# HAMIZRACHI

## PARSHA WEEKLY

PARSHAT SHEMOT 5783 • 2023










### ISRAEL Parsha Picture









אִישׁ מִצְרֵי הַצִּילָנוּ מִיַּד  
הַרְעִים וְגַם דָּלָה דָּלָה  
לָנוּ וַיִּשְׁק אֶת הַצֵּאֵן:  
שמות ב:יט

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In memory of our kind, devoted, caring, fun-loving selfless dear friend and Aishet Chayil extraordinaire,  
Elaine Mehler א"ח ה' גיטל ע"ה יהודית ברכה בת נחמיה ושרה גיטל ע"ה  
on the occasion of her Shloshim. Elaine truly embodied the essence of a Bat Torah.

Dedicated by the Banner, Baruch, Deluty, Gardner/Korn, Horowitz, Izso, Kaplan, Poleyeff, Shoenfeld and Warburg families.



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# The Pharaoh Factor

## Masterful Antisemitic Propaganda



**Rabbi Doron Perez**  
Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

The virus of Antisemitism layed deep roots in Ancient Egypt. The new Pharaoh we meet in the beginning of this weeks' Parasha and in the new book of *Shemot* turns on the Children of Israel. He chooses to forget how their forbear Joseph was the great savior of Egypt in the face of devastating regional famine. He ingeniously foresaw the famine, created a systematic economic plan to overcome it and enriched the Egyptian royal coffers beyond. Inflicted by the virus of illogical hatred of Joseph's family and descendants, Pharaoh unleashes a propaganda campaign to discredit the Children of Israel and to create the false impression that they are somehow an existential threat to the wellbeing of the state.

The global community is recovering from the after effects of the two year pandemic of the Covid 19 virus and its harmful mutations. We have unfortunately become familiar with the dynamics of viral infection. A brief analysis of the dynamics of deception in the way the virus infects the body provides a powerful backdrop to understand the similar workings of Antisemitism in general and the original collective Jew Hatred that Pharaoh unleashed in Egypt in particular.

### Masters of Deception

The main aim of a virus is to reproduce and multiply. As a simple microscopic clod of organic matter, it cannot do so on its own. The **only** way it can reproduce is to infiltrate a living organism with reproductive abilities and then hijack its reproductive mechanism – an ingenious

yet diabolical double act of trickery and deception.

This is how biological viruses multiply and spread contagion. And this is precisely how the virus of antisemitism, and particularly today's mutation of anti-Zionism, works as well.<sup>1</sup>

Let us analyze these dynamics of deception to gain a clearer understanding of their inner workings and to develop a strategy to counteract the virus of antisemitism in its current incarnation of Israel demonization.

### Deception #1 – Infiltrating the Host

The immune system is the body's tool to ensure its physical health and survival. All living beings have varying degrees of sophisticated immunity networks to protect against harmful foreign bodies (pathogens) which can infect and spread disease. Viruses are pathogens and so must find a way to circumvent the immune system to gain entry. No way in? No chance of survival and reproduction. Viruses have therefore evolved to become maestros of deception.

How does this deception work?

To enter the cell, a virus floats up to or lands on a cell and then attaches itself to a receptor. Receptors are proteins situated on the cell surface that act like protective locks, and only a specific key will fit these "locks." The duplicitous virus contains proteins shaped just like that key, which slot into the receptor. This starts a process that leads to the virus entering the cell whole or gradually injecting itself into the cell.

Like a Trojan horse, it can now unleash a surprise strike from the inside.

### Deception # 2 – Hijacking the Host's Production Line

The virus' second act of trickery is hijacking and corrupting the cell's reproductive mechanism. While the cell is programmed to reproduce its cells, it 'unknowingly' becomes hijacked by the virus and instead of only producing its own cells, it produces the virus' infected cells.

The sneaky seizure takes place as follows. Every cell in our bodies is a tiny factory, constantly making proteins and reproducing new cells. Viruses and living cells use DNA and RNA, the two main molecules critical to genetic functioning. DNA provides the code for cell activity, while RNA converts that code into proteins to carry out cellular functions.

These molecules act like instructions, so when viruses bring their DNA and RNA instructions to the cell, they trick the cell into following them and generating all the necessary conditions for the virus to multiply. New copies of the virus can then be constructed inside the cell and the formerly vital cell now becomes an assembly line for new virus particles. The helpless cell is now serving the virus, manufacturing thousands of new particles which are released to continue corrupting countless more cells. Contagion awaits.

### Antisemitism Today – Infiltration and Hijacking the Host

The same is true with antisemitism. Antisemitism is a virus of prejudice and discrimination that is relatively innocuous unless it can find a host. The host this virus requires is the human heart and mind, containing thoughts, emotions and motivations.

It is not easy for destructive ideas to penetrate the heart because human beings have a strong natural moral immune system: a conscience. Our ethical compass prods us to do good and to resist hateful and self-destructive behavior. This is why antisemitism must present itself in a morally legitimate form. It can only

circumvent the moral immune system and stimulate people to act if it can be morally justified. To be effective, evil must present itself as good.

### Pharaoh's Propaganda Machine

Remarkably, this is precisely how the Ramban explains Pharaoh's seemingly perplexing strategy against the Jews in Egypt.

Pharaoh did not overtly decree the destruction of the Jews but instead devised covert and deceptive plans of evil: "Come let us deal shrewdly with them in case they increase, and if war breaks out they may join our enemies, fight against us and escape from the land."<sup>2</sup>

Why did the all-powerful leader need to hide his plans? Why did he present the Jews as a fifth column and a threat to national security to justify his intended genocide? Why demand their labor and then initiate the secretive scheme of midwives murdering babies at birth? What was he afraid of?

The answer, says the Ramban,<sup>3</sup> was Pharaoh's need to bypass Egypt's moral defense mechanism on two levels. Firstly, it would be treasonous and immoral to murder a people without cause, particularly when they were welcomed into Egypt by a previous Pharaoh. Even corrupt rulers cannot suddenly exterminate people without any moral pretext and sense of justice. Secondly, many of his own people would simply not have agreed to participate in the massacre. Internal public opinion must be enlisted; otherwise, the indiscriminate slaughter of former friends and neighbors would not be tolerated. And so Pharaoh shrewdly found a way to penetrate the unsuspecting hearts of his own people.

When practitioners of evil believe they are acting for the preservation of their society and the sake of a greater good, all moral checks and balances can be sidestepped. The masses themselves become the very reproductive mechanism of the virus of hatred and bigotry.

### Legitimizing Hate – Human Rights and Human Wrongs<sup>4</sup>

Rabbi Sacks explains that antisemitism in all its mutations follows the very same mechanism of psychological and moral deception to inculcate perverse and prejudiced beliefs. The hatred at the heart of antisemitism is the lowest form of evil, and so it requires legitimation from the highest sources of moral authority.

In the Middle Ages, the moral arbiter of the age was the Pope, and so we had Christian anti-Judaism. In post-Enlightenment Europe, it was science, which resulted in the twin foundations of Nazi ideology, Social Darwinism and the so-called Scientific Study of Race. Today, the highest source of moral authority is human rights. This is why Israel – the only fully functioning democracy in the Middle East with a free press and independent judiciary – is regularly accused of the five cardinal sins against human rights: racism, apartheid, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and attempted genocide.

The new antisemitism has mutated so that anyone can deny that he or she is an antisemite: "I'm not an antisemite. I have no problem with Jews or Judaism. I only have a problem with the State of Israel."

However, this defense does not hold water. There are currently 56 Muslim countries and 103 Christian majority nations, but only one Jewish State. Israel constitutes a mere one-quarter of 1% of the landmass of the Middle East. And yet Israel is the only one of the 193 member nations of the United Nations whose right to exist is regularly challenged, with Iran and many other powerful groups openly committed to its destruction. Anti-Zionism, which denies only the Jewish people a right to their own country, is merely another form of antisemitism, for it denies Jews the same rights as other peoples and demonizes them in the process.

As long as antisemites invoke human rights in their nefarious battle against the Jewish people, no matter how perversely they apply these arguments, the deception of the virus is complete. Vice masquerades as virtue and evil as ethical.

*Continued on page 10*



PIRKEI AVOT

# How To Be Free (Part 2) — True Freedom

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**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi  
Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel



אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי... והלכות מעשה אלקים המה והמכתב מכתב אלקים הוא חרות על הלכות (שמות לב),  
אל תקרא חרות אלא חרות, שאין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה... (אבות ו:ב)

Last week, we began studying Rebbi Yehoshua ben Levi's declaration that only those involved in Torah study are truly free. Rebbi Yehoshua derived this idea from the Torah's description of the writing on the *luchot* as "charut," a word spelled the same way as "cheirut, free."<sup>1</sup> What is the significance of this source? Why does the Torah choose this method of teaching us about freedom's dependency on Torah learning?

## Freedom From Others

We saw that many commentaries link Rebbi Yehoshua's words to Rebbi Nechunya's earlier assertion that Torah scholars are exempted from taxes and other communal responsibilities.<sup>2</sup>

These responsibilities are not the only way people subjugate themselves to others. Many do so by linking their identity to other people's values and expectations. Because our true essence is our identity, doing this subjugates us in the most basic way. The worst form of slavery is that of our spirit, not our body. True freedom is not achieved through political emancipation. It is achieved by following our personal intended life path. We are only free when we realize our true (natural) selves.<sup>3</sup>

Rav Kook<sup>4</sup> linked slavery and freedom to spiritual independence as opposed to social standing. Many live free of any and all restrictions or obligations (and may even own their own slaves), but they are, in actuality, slaves because they feel beholden to society's expectations.

Conversely, many are physically enslaved, but actually free because they maintain their spiritual independence. An excellent example of this phenomenon were the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto. Though slave

laborers of the Nazis, Rav Oshri<sup>5</sup> — Rav of the Warsaw Ghetto — directed them to continue reciting the *berachah* of *shelo asani aved* because they were free in spirit (and fully able to choose to commit themselves to *avodat Hashem*).<sup>6</sup> Others can only control us physically; our spiritual identity is totally in our own hands.

The Torah teaches us eternal heavenly truth, wisdom and direction. Its study gives us the ability to free ourselves from contemporary fleeting perspectives.

The gift of Torah has enabled Jews in hundreds of countries and countless social and cultural milieus to transcend contemporary values by using Torah to reconnect with Hashem's eternal ones. The reality of modern communications has submerged us even more deeply and intensely within broader society. Now more than ever, it is critical that we use Torah learning and Torah values to help us sustain our spiritual independence.

## Freedom From (A False Version of) Ourselves

Torah learning also frees us from an internal, more subtle form of slavery: the subjugation to our own physical drives and desires and the pursuit of meaningless activities.<sup>7</sup> Focusing on important things helps us avoid focusing upon what is not.<sup>8</sup>

Contemporary society sees freedom as (merely) the lack of external control — freedom from commitment and responsibility. In his famous 1941 State of the Union (that later became known as The Four Freedoms Address), FDR spoke about the freedoms of speech and worship and the freedom from fear and want. Facing the evil Nazi regime which limited these freedoms, FDR defined the values the

United States and her allies went to war to defend.

In a broader historical sense, FDR's address responded not only to the Nazis of his generation, but also to the abuse of millenia of monarchies and dictatorships who institutionalized slavery and serfdom and curtailed basic freedoms. Modern democracies rejected these ills by establishing human rights as unalienable. Sadly, their emphasis on freedom also fostered a lack of responsibility and meaning. Unburdened by governmental mandates and societal norms, many people have become focused upon meaningless pursuits.

Our *mishnah* teaches us that the only way to transcend the physical and the meaningless is to engage in the meaningful — *talmud Torah*. People need a mission to be passionate about. By developing a passion for Torah learning, we minimize engagement with things less meaningful.

The Maharal<sup>9</sup> explains how Rebbi Yehoshua derived this idea from Torah's description of the letters of the *luchot*. The letters were engraved from the front through the back of the rock in a way that left the internal parts of the letters Samech and Mem Sofit disconnected from (and thus unsupported by) their physical surroundings. Despite their lack of physical support, these parts of the letters (miraculously) remained suspended in mid-air. So too, explains the Maharal, a person's focus on the spiritual helps him avoid dependency upon the physical.

## Freedom To Be Our True Selves

There is a fourth way that Torah study and *avodat Hashem* facilitate freedom. They not only free us from commitment (*sur mei'ra*),

Continued on page 10

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

# The Bat and the Bayit



**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

The Book of Shemot begins with re-counting Ya'akov Avinu and his children – 70 *nefesh* (souls) of Bnei Yisrael who journeyed to *Mitzrayim* – *ish u'beito* – each man and his *bayit* (home).<sup>1</sup> A few verses later, we find Pharaoh calling *Bnei Yisrael* a threatening nation – *Am Bnei Yisrael*. Every *am*, nation, begins as a *bayit*, a home.

Therefore, before G-d fulfills His promise of *u'lakachti etchem li l'am* “and I will take you to me as a people,” they must first re-identify as a *bayit*. For even if the locale will not change for hundreds of years, the people will – they will multiply, assimilate, and as Moshe Rabbeinu highlights to G-d, they will be susceptible to forgetting their past.

*Bnei Yisrael* cannot leave *Mitzrayim* as a nation until they demonstrate their faith within the family unit. To this end, they are commanded to sacrifice the *Korban Pesach* in the context of their houses and homes – “and to put blood on their doorposts.”<sup>2</sup>

Because only when we identify our homes with the blood reminiscent of *Brit bein HaBetarim* and with the Divine promises of our past may we proceed to religious nationhood. Perhaps that's why the word *bayit* appears eight times as the *mila mancheh* (leading word) in Chapter 12, as a pre-condition for national-religious formation.

How are we meant to undergo this transformation from individuals to families?

We find 10 chapters charting the *Bnei Yisrael's* development from oppression through redemption. We learn of challenges of leadership, tenacity of faith, patience in the process. The people are

exposed to *otot* and *moftim* – signs and wonders – witnessing the rise and fall of Egyptian technology and agricultural industry. They gradually migrate back to their lands in Goshen with each plague, and they learn how to follow a different calendrical system – expressive of our unique lunar traits, providing for waxing, waning and perpetual renewal, as opposed to the static solar powers of ancient Egypt.

Nevertheless, the narrative begins with stories of individuals who plant the seeds of redemption. Not Moshe Rabbeinu alone, but rather numerous women of unclear identity – midwives who risk their lives to save Hebrew children,<sup>3</sup> a mother, a sister and the daughter of Pharaoh who are determined to provide salvation for a newborn child, and daughters of a Midianite priest who reciprocate with sustenance to their “savior.”

All the women in Chapter 2 of Shemot are noted as *banot* – daughters. The leading word *bat* appears eight times: *Bat Levi*, *Bat Paroh*, *Bat*, and *Bnot Yitro*. They are ultimately responsible for the metamorphosis from eight occurrences of *bat* to eight occurrences of *bayit* by Chapter 12 – the perfect inclusio!<sup>4</sup>

The Torah is teaching us that it is the *bat* (daughter) who builds the *bayit* (home). Our story of national redemption begins with individuals who appreciate that they are continuing the dreams, destiny and moral values of their parents, connoted through their consistent identity as daughters.

Yocheved, albeit the mother of Moshe, is never noted in matriarchal terms, but rather as *bat Levi* – the quintessential

daughter<sup>5</sup> born to Levi in *Mitzrayim*. Chazal teach us<sup>6</sup> that she was born *bein hachomot* – between the walls, on the Canaan-Egyptian border; she is the bridge between past and future, between the 70 descendants of Ya'akov and the 600,000 soldiers of a nation who will leave Egypt to return home. Through identifying as the daughter of Levi, she perpetuates the values and covenants of the past as she raises the leaders of the next generation.

Even at age 130, when she gives birth to Moshe, Yocheved is still called a daughter! Rabbi Yehuda bar Zveida (in Bava Batra 120a) teaches that she was reborn as a daughter – her wrinkles disappeared and her youth was restored. As long as we see ourselves as daughters to our mothers and fathers, as a continuum of the families we come from, we are inspired to build the homes and leaders of the future<sup>7</sup> – with youthful vigor and optimism, even in the face of oppression! Through the “book-ends” of the redemption of story (*bat bayit*), the Torah teaches us the secret of Jewish survival!

1. Ibn Ezra – his children, Chizkuni – his wife.
2. Exodus 12:3.
3. According to Rav and Shmuel, the midwives are a mother-daughter/daughter-in-law team.
4. Inclusio is a literary device based on a concentric principle, creating a frame by placing similar material at the beginning and end of a section.
5. Even after the Exodus, in Numbers 26:59, she is still referred to as “Yocheved the daughter of Levi born to Levi in Egypt”!
6. Bava Batra 120a.
7. Midrash Shochar Tov, Proverbs 14.

# Halachic Q&A



## **Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon**

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council  
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

**Question: Are tefillin boxes considered “tashmishei kedusha?” Can they be thrown in the trash?**

Answer: They are tashmishei kedusha and require genizah (SA OC 154:3). They are defined this way because they directly interact with the bayit of the tefillin/straps which have kedusha on their own.

Something which is a tashmish of a tashmishei d'kedusha does not require genizah. Additionally, a tashmish of a mitzvah, such as a tallit bag, can be thrown away, although it is better to put it in a bag in the trash.

**Question: If somebody eats frozen strawberries throughout the year and then eats a fresh one in its season, does one make a shehecheyanu?**

Answer: You should make a shehecheyanu, as it is apparent that these are from the new season. Eating frozen strawberries, even in the proper season, would not require a shehecheyanu as their renewal is not apparent, and they may not even be from the new season (MB 225:18).

**Question: Is it a problem to return the wine to the bottle after making kiddush?**

Answer: After drinking from a cup, the remaining wine is considered pagum (defective). You can add a bit of wine from the bottle into the cup to remove its status as pagum and then return all of it to the bottle (MB 128:27).

**Question: If I pay for a snack at a vending machine and find two, what should I do? Should I assume it was somebody who paid before me and therefore it is hefker now? Or should I assume it was a mistake by the machine and try to return it to the owner of the machine?**

Answer: It's a complicated question. I think that its status is hefker, as this is a risk that the owner of the machine takes. I don't think that you need to struggle to find him. If he can be easily found, it is proper to tell him and give it back if he wants it.

**Question: On Friday night before going to sleep, I realized that our cholent was cooking on “high” in the slow cooker. I forgot to turn it to low before Shabbat. At this point, the cholent was fully cooked and would burn if it was left in the slow cooker overnight. We had guests coming the next day. Was I allowed to take out the cholent and put it on the plata?**

Answer: You are allowed to put it on the plata, as the Gemara in Shabbat says that you can move from a kira (burner) to a kira.

**Question: I heard that during a pidyon haben, you first wash and eat hamotzi and only after do the pidyon. Is this true? And if so, why is this different than other seudot mitzvah?**

Answer: Yes that is correct. You wash hands, eat hamotzi, and then at the beginning of the meal do the pidyon. The Terumat Hadeshen explains that the reason is to publicize the mitzvah.

**Question: What should a Kohen do when the other Kohanim started Birkat Kohanim before being called? How essential is the calling? If it is essential and the Kohen has missed his chance to make the bracha, should he still say the pesukim?**

Answer: The Kohanim are generally supposed to start after being called (SA 128:10). This specific case is not brought up in the Shulchan Aruch or Nesei Keilim. It seems that while the kriyah is required lechatchila, it is not me'akev, as we know that one Kohen does need kriyah to begin. Therefore, it would be correct to say the brachot with the Kohanim.

**Question: The Beit Midrash announced that if certain sefarim were not claimed, they would be brought to genizah. Can I take seforim from this pile (after the allotted time) even if there is a name and number on the sefer?**

Answer: It seems that you may take them. If there is a phone number, it is proper to call them. It would be best to put up a sign on the Beit Midrash door that says: anyone who brings seforim to the Beit Midrash does so with the recognition that they will be made hefker (ownerless) if they are not taken (and provide a specific amount of time).

● *Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.*



# תקציר פרשת שמות

הרבנית שרון רימון  
Tanach teacher and author



עם ה', משה וציפורה הבינו שכדי לאפשר למשה להיות בדרגה נבואית גבוהה כל כך, שבעזרתה יוכל למלא את שליחותו, הם צריכים להיפרד.

בספר במדבר מרים מתרעמת על משה: "וַתִּדְבֹר מִרְיָם וְאַהֲרֹן בְּמִשְׁחָה עַל אֲדֹת הָאִשָּׁה הַפְּשִׁיטָה אֲשֶׁר לָקַח... וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֲרֹק אַף בְּמִשְׁחָה דָּבַר ה' הֲלֹא גַם בָּנוּ דָּבַר" (י"ב א-ב). מרים יודעת שה' איננו מצפה מנביאיו וכהניו להפרד ממשפחותיהם. הקדושה בעם ישראל איננה מנותקת מחיי המשפחה אלא מהווה חלק מהחיים. אולם, דרגת נבואתו של משה רבנו היתה שונה מדרגת נביאים אחרים, ומרים כנראה לא הבחינה בכך, ולכן לא הבינה את הפרידה בין משה לציפורה. וה' מוכיח אותה על כך: "...אִם יִהְיֶה נְבִיאִים ה' בְּמִצְרָאֵה אֱלֹיו אֲתוֹדֵעַ בְּחִלּוֹם אֲדַבֵּר בּוֹ: לֹא כֵן עֲבָדֵי מִשְׁחָה בְּכָל בֵּיתִי נֶאֱמָן הוּא: פֶּה אֵל פֶּה אֲדַבֵּר בּוֹ וּמִצְרָאֵה וְלֹא בְּחִידַת וְתִמְנַת ה' יִבִּיט... (ו-ח). ציפורה, אשר הבינה את גדולתו המיוחדת של משה, היתה מוכנה להיפרד ממנו באופן זמני, ולשלם מחיר אישי כדי לאפשר לו למלא את שליחותו ולהנהיג את העם.

בהמשך מתברר, שגם לציפורה עצמה יש חלק בבניין הרוחני של משה. כאשר משה עוזב את בית יתרו, בדרך למילוי השליחות שה' הטיל עליו במעמד הסנה, מתרחש מפגש בין משה לה': "וַיְהִי בַדְבָר בְּמִלּוֹן וַיִּפְגְּשׁוּהוּ ה' וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַמֵּיתוֹ: וַתִּקַּח צִפּוֹרָה צֹר וַתִּכְרַת אֶת עֶרְלַת בְּנֶה וַתִּגַּע לְרַגְלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי חָתָן דְּמִים אַתָּה לִי: וַיִּרְף מִפָּנָיו אֶז אֲמָרָה חָתָן דְּמִים לְמֹולַת" (ד, כד-כו), פגישתו הנבואית של משה עם ה' דורשת שלמות גבוהה מן הרגיל. ציפורה קולטת את הסיטואציה – היא מבינה שמשה מתחייב בנפשו בגלל פגם כלשהו שמונע ממנו להיות ראוי למפגש עם ה'. דווקא ציפורה, שלא באה מעם ישראל, הבינה את הערך הגדול של כריתת הברית של עם ישראל עם הקב"ה שמתבטאת בברית המילה. היא מלה את אליעזר ומצהירה בכך על הקשר הייחודי בין ה' לישראל, וכך, בזכותה משה ניצל ויכול להמשיך בשליחותו.

לאחר סיפור ברית המילה ציפורה נעלמת מסיפורי התורה, והיא מופיעה רק בחזרת יתרו אל עם ישראל לאחר יציאת מצרים. יתכן שאחרי המפגש הטראומתי

שהוא דמות המנהיג המרכזית בסיפור גאולת בני ישראל ממצרים. אך יחד איתה התורה מספרת על דמויות של נשים שהיו משמעותיות בתהליך הגאולה. אחת מן הנשים הללו היא ציפורה אשת משה. מה פשר נישואיו של משה עם ציפורה, בת יתרו כהן מדין?

משה בורח ממצרים בגלל העוול הנעשה שם לבני עמו, ובגלל התחושה שאפילו בני ישראל עצמם נגועים באותה התנהגות פסולה. בהגיעו למדין הוא פוגש ביתרו, ורואה בו דמות רוחנית (ראה בפרושי רש"י וא"ע, לפיהם יתרו עבד את ה' ולא היה כהן לע"ז). בביתו של יתרו יושב משה שישים שנה. הוא מתרחק מאווירת העבדות והשפלות שבמצרים, מתרחק מן העוולות המוסריות, ובונה לעצמו עולם רוחני משמעותי, ויכולת מנהיגות. הקשר המיוחד בין משה ליתרו בא לידי ביטוי גם בנישואיו של משה עם ציפורה, בתו של יתרו.

# מ



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# The Hebrew Wonder Woman



**Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir**  
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

In the book of Genesis there were matriarchs – Sara, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah – who were singular women, unique in their generation. What sort of generation came after them? The book of Exodus introduces us to a generation that consists entirely of powerful women. This is our first encounter with a kind of Hebrew wonder woman, who has assumed mythological proportions down through the ages:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמִילְדוֹת הָעִבְרִיּוֹת אֲשֶׁר שָׁם הָאֵחָת שִׁפְרָה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פּוּאָה

וַיֹּאמֶר בְּיִלְדוֹכֶן אֶת הָעִבְרִיּוֹת וּרְאִיתֶן עַל הָאֲבָנִים אִם בֵּן הוּא וְהַמְתּוּ אֹתוֹ וְאִם בַּת הִיא וְחִיָּה

וְתִירְאֵן הַמִּילְדוֹת אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים וְלֹא עֲשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵיךְ מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וְתַחֲיִין אֶת הַיְלָדִים

וַיִּקְרָא מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמִילְדוֹת הָעִבְרִיּוֹת לְהוֹן מְדוּעַ עֲשִׂיתֶן הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְתַחֲיִין אֶת הַיְלָדִים

וְתֹאמְרֶן הַמִּילְדוֹת אֶל פְּרָעָה כִּי לֹא כִנְשִׁים הַמִּצְרִיּוֹת הָעִבְרִיּוֹת כִּי חַיּוֹת הֵנָּה בְּטָרָם תָּבוֹא אֲלֵהֶן הַמִּילְדוֹת וְיִלְדוּ

וַיִּיטָב אֲלֵקִים לְמִילְדוֹת וַיְרַב הָעָם וַיַּעֲצְמוּ מֵאֵד

וַיְהִי כִּי יָרְאוּ הַמִּילְדוֹת אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם בְּתֵמִים

Now the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one who was named Shifrah, and the second, who was named Puah. And he said, “When you deliver the Hebrew women, and you see on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall put him to death, but if it is a daughter, she may live.” The midwives, however, feared G-d; so they did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but they enabled the boys to live. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, that you have enabled the boys to live?” And the midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are skilled as midwives; when the

midwife has not yet come to them, they have [already] given birth.” G-d benefited the midwives, and the people multiplied and became very strong. Now it took place when the midwives feared G-d, that He made houses for them. (Exodus 1:15-21)

This is the description of two extraordinary Hebrew women in Egypt. Their legacy is one of faith in G-d in the face of a brutal dictator, having the courage to resist conventional thinking and behaviors, together with the willingness to take risks for the sake of the next generation, to persist in living the Jewish way.

Tzachi Michaeli from Kiryat Shmona sent me the following thought:

“These days we hear more and more about the ‘feminist lobby.’ But we need to be precise and acknowledge that this lobby, which supposedly represents half of our people, the female half, only raises its voice, like a shofar, at events that protest the status of women, as if their voice represents that of all Jewish women.

I think that the real women's lobby was established in this week's Torah portion. Everything started there. For the first time, Israel receives the designation of ‘am’ or nation, albeit from Pharaoh. Among Pharaoh's harsh decrees is an order for the Hebrew midwives to kill every Jewish boy at birth. How will the women of this new nation, the nation of Israel, react?

Shifrah and Puah, who are actually Yocheved and Miriam, are, in fact, the first representatives of the Jewish nation, that only now has taken shape in Egypt, to appear in the Torah.”

And how is the uniqueness of these righteous women expressed? The midwives, however, feared G-d; so they did

not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but they enabled the boys to live. In defiance of the Egyptian dictator, the midwives do not kill the baby boys, and the Torah makes a point of telling us that these women made sure the boys grew up strong by worrying about and caring for them in secret. Shifrah and Puah see reality in a positive light – after all, Jewish boys are being born – unlike Pharaoh. And everything that happens is because they remember that HaShem, not Pharaoh, is their true king. Rashi comments with a quote from the prophet Yechezkel/Ezekiel (19:2): ‘How was your mother a lioness!’, reminding us that Israel is compared to a lioness. This is the first women lobby: positive action, faith, defiantly giving birth, joy.”

Up until this point, our focus has been exclusively on the midwives. But there are other members of the feminist lobby. Notice what we are told immediately afterward: Amram marries Yocheved and Moses is born. What does his mother do?

וַתְהִר הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתִּרְא אֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב הוּא וַתִּצְפְּנֵהוּ שְׁלִשָּׁה יָרְחִים

וְלֹא יָכְלָה עוֹד הַצְּפִינוּ וַתִּקַּח לוֹ תֵבַת גֹּמָא וַתַּחְמְרָהּ בַּחֲמֹר וּבְצִפָּת וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת הַיְלֵד וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּרֵי עַל שִׁפְתֵי הַיָּאֵר

The woman conceived and bore a son, and [when] she saw him that he was good, she hid him for three months. [When] she could no longer hide him, she took [for] him a reed basket, smeared it with clay and pitch, placed the child into it, and put [it] into the marsh at the Nile's edge. (Exodus 2:2-3)

That is, Yocheved is also a lioness, who acts with the same spirit. And then Miriam appears, a little girl who acts like a mature woman of faith. According to the Midrash, Miriam influences her parents to remarry

*Continued on next page*



# For the Shabbat Table



**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**  
Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi  
Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**A**nd Moshe was shepherding the flock of Yitro his father in law, the Priest of Midian, and he led the flock far away into the desert and he came to the mountain of G-d, to Chorev. And the angel of The L-rd appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and he saw and behold the bush burned with fire but the bush was not consumed” (Shemot 3:1-2).

Hashem’s revelation to Moshe at the burning bush heralds a momentous turning point in Moshe’s personal life and in the history of the people of Israel. The Midrash informs us that it is not by coincidence that Hashem appeared to Moshe at the time he was tending sheep.

Indeed, the Midrash claims that Hashem tested the credentials of potential leaders by their shepherding skills. Commenting on the compassion showed to each individual sheep by King David, the Midrash says:

“Said The Holy One Blessed Be He, ‘He who knows to shepherd flock, each man (sheep) according to his potential, he should come and shepherd my people’”.

The Midrash then continues to inform us how Moshe arrived at the burning bush:

“Once, when Moshe Rabbeinu was attending the flock of Yitro in the desert, a young lamb ran away. He ran after it until it reached a shelter, as it reached this shelter, it came across a pool of water and the lamb stood to drink. When Moshe caught up with him, he said, ‘I did not know that you ran away because you were thirsty; you must be tired’. He put the lamb on his shoulders and started walking. Said The Holy One Blessed Be He, ‘(If) you are so compassionate to treat the flock of flesh and blood thus, by your life you shall tend my flock, the people of Israel’” (Shemot Rabba 2:2).

The young lamb represents the Jew that has strayed. Rather than see this as an act of rebellion and reject the lamb, Moshe

follows it step by step. He could have let this single lamb go, but he understood the importance of each and every lamb. Upon catching up, he did not act with anger or disdain but tried to understand why it ran away. Understanding that the lamb did not run away as an act of rebellion but because it was thirsty, he raised it up on his shoulders to bring it back to where it belongs. Seeing how Moshe dealt with this wayward lamb, Hashem chose him to be the shepherd of his people, Israel.

We should never reject those who have strayed, nor should we look upon them with disdain or disregard. To bring them back to the flock, we must try to understand what they are thirsty for and why they strayed in the first place. Most importantly, we should realise that every single person is important.

Shabbat Shalom!

*Continued from previous page*

– they feared they would have a boy who, by Pharaoh’s decree, would be thrown into the Nile River – and never lose hope. So Moses is born and his sister Miriam watches over him from the river’s edge:

וַתִּתְצַב אַחֲתָיו מֵרַחֵק לִדְעָה מֶה יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ

His sister stood from afar, to know what would be done to him. (Exodus 2:4)

This is a breathtaking passage. Some of the commentators explain that Miriam, being a prophetess, knew that everything would turn out okay, that salvation would come, except she did not know how it would happen. Therefore, she was not

under duress, she was just standing there, waiting to see how things would work out for the best. “His sister stood from afar, to know what would be done to him,” and then a third woman enters the picture:

וַתֵּרֶד בַּת פַּרְעֹה לָרְחוֹץ עַל הַיָּאֵר וְנִעְרַתֶּיהָ הִלְכָה עַל יַד הַיָּאֵר וַתֵּרָא אֶת הַתִּבְיָה בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת אֶמְתָּהּ וַתִּקְרָהּ

וַתִּפְתַּח וַתֵּרְאֶהוּ אֶת הַיֶּלֶד וְהִנֵּה נֹעַר בְּכֶה וַתְּחַמְלַל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר מִי־לִי הָעִבְרִיִּים זֶה

Pharaoh’s daughter went down to bathe, to the Nile, and her maidens were walking along the Nile, and she saw the basket in the midst of the marsh, and she sent her

maidservant, and she took it. She opened [it], and she saw him the child, and behold, he was a weeping lad, and she had compassion on him, and she said, “This is [one] of the children of the Hebrews.” (Exodus 2:4-5)

If previously it was only the Hebrew midwives, and then a Hebrew mother and her daughter, who opposed Pharaoh, now the daughter of Pharaoh herself joins in opposing him. This is an impressive, powerful display of sisterhood, and these women would become heroic figures in the history of Am Yisrael.

Continued from page 3

Is there any hope? How can we possibly overcome the moral deception of antisemitism in our time? We feel so vulnerable to destructive forces beyond our control. Thankfully Jewish history has taught us that we are not alone *לא אלמן ישראל* – “Israel is not an orphan” and we are blessed that our Father in Heaven somehow provides the ability to overcome all such adversity. Indeed as we are familiar with in the *Haggadah of Pesach* ‘In every generation there are those who threaten to annihilate us’ – this is an unfortunate part of human and Jewish life for the time being. But just us we were able miraculously survive Pharaoh with the

unprecedented Exodus from Egypt so too are we able through the Grace of G-d to overcome all such adversity. As the Sages continue the above famous quote from the *Hagaddah* – ‘However, the Holy One Blessed Be He extricates us from their (enemies of Israel) grip.’

We believe that spiritual and moral light will ultimately supersede immoral darkness; that evil is transient, while G-d and goodness are permanent.

May the light of the State of Israel dispel the demonic darkness of deception and discrimination.

Continued from page 4

but also help us realize our true potential. *Avodat Hashem* and Torah make an intrinsic positive contribution (*asei tov*).

The Kuzari used this idea to answer the Kuzari king’s question about his intended *aliyah*. The king asked why he sought to incur the additional *mitzvot* and responsibilities *aliyah* would generate. The Kuzari responded that “commitment to Hashem is the ultimate freedom, and subjugation to Him is the ultimate honor.”<sup>10</sup>

Though we understand the Kuzari’s association of honor with *avodat Hashem*, it is harder to explain why he saw *avodat Hashem* as freedom. We understand that *mitzvot* are important responsibilities, but how does fulfilling them make us *free*?

Rav Kook<sup>11</sup> explained that (only) *avodat Hashem* helps us realize our soul’s true potential and forge our true identity. Food and sleep sustain our physical existence but do not help us realize our personal potential. We accomplish that only through *avodat Hashem*.

This is why we use specifically the phrase *ben chorin* and the word *cheirut*, as opposed to *chofesh*, to describe our freedom. *Chofesh* means the lack of responsibility to another.<sup>12</sup> *Cheirut* connotes true freedom.

We characterize the *yom tov* of Pesach as *zman cheiruteinu* because Yetziat Mitzrayim’s goal was more than just liberation

from servitude to Mitzrayim. More importantly, it facilitated *avodat Hashem*.

The story we tell on the Seder night is not about our physical liberation from Mitzrayim. The *Hagadah* summarizes the process we commemorate and celebrate on the Seder Night as our transformation from *ovdei avodah zarah* to *ovdei Hashem*: “*Mit’chilah ovdei avodah zarah hayu avoteinu, v’achshav kervanu hamakom la’avodat.*”

Though we appreciate being freed from physical slavery, we focus on the transition to “*avodat haMakom*” because that is what gives our life (and physical freedom) meaning and purpose. It is what makes us “*benei chorin*” — truly free people.

May our appreciation of true freedom and the Torah’s ability to help us achieve it inspire us to maximize our opportunities to involve ourselves in it.

1. Rabbeinu Shem Tov explains that the inference is from the Torah’s usage of this word instead of the more common “*chakuk*.” See Yirmiyahu 27:20 and Kohelet 10:17 which use the root “*ch-r-n*” to refer to freedom.
2. Avot 3:5. See also Shemot Rabbah (41:7) and Avot D’Rebbi Natan (20:1) which mention a number of forms of suffering the study of Torah helps one avoid.
3. Many Chassidic masters (See for example Likutei Halachot Shabbat 7), understood this idea to be part of Hashem’s lech lecha commandment to Avraham. Avraham could only find himself by abandoning the milieu in which he was raised. The Noam Elimelech

1. In a number of articles that appeared a few years ago in our *HaMizrachi* magazine, I developed the biological virus analogy to give us a context to better understand the dynamics of Antisemitism. There I discussed two traits of viruses: 1. The ability to mutate, and 2. To quickly spread contagion. Here I focus on two more traits of viruses: their deceptive abilities to : 1. Circumvent the immune system, and 2. To corrupt the cellular reproductive mechanism.
2. Shemot 1:10.
3. Ibid.
4. These paragraphs are based on Rabbi Sacks’ teachings in *Future Tense*, 99-100.

(Parshat Lech Lech D”H Oh) explains that this is true even if one is surrounded by *tzaddikim*.

4. Ma’amare HaRe’iyah pg. 157.
5. Shu”t Mima’amakim (3:6).
6. Rav Soloveitchik took this idea further in speaking about the need to free ourselves from complete commitment even towards relatives with whom we have a deep relationship: “Only man who has Hashem as his king and whose absolute commitment is only to Him, is unburdened and free. People make many types of commitments. What commitment is more positive and ideal than that of man to his family and children? The Torah commands us to develop an intense love for our children. But together with this it seems that *Akeidat Yitzchak* comes to teach all generations to not allow this relation to become a complete commitment — to become *avodah zarah*. People make many commitments. The broad-ranging commitment to Hashem frees many from these commitments (by limiting them — R.T.) and is therefore complete freedom. Commitment to country can also become *avodah zarah*... We have only one absolute commitment and that is to Hashem and His Torah” (*Al Hateshuvah*, pg. 141).
7. See Meiri and Midrash Shmuel to Masechet Avot 6:2. Rav Hirsch (Ma’agalei Shana 3:40) adds that when godliness is removed from one’s heart and soul, he loses his *cherut* because he inevitably becomes committed to the pursuit of base pleasures.
8. The Ri MiToledo connects this to Kohelet 10:17.
9. Derech Chayim, Avot 6:3.
10. See *Akeidat Yitzchak* (Devarim 26:1) who expressed a similar sentiment.
11. Olat Re’iyah D”H *Shelo Asani Eved*.
12. See Shemot 21:5 and Devarim 15:12,13,18.

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# Turning Curses into Blessings



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Genesis ends on an almost serene note. Jacob has found his long-lost son. The family has been reunited. Joseph has forgiven his brothers. Under his protection and influence the family has settled in Goshen, one of the most prosperous regions of Egypt. They now have homes, property, food, the protection of Joseph, and the favour of Pharaoh. It must have seemed one of the golden moments of Abraham's family's history.

Then, as has happened so often since, "There arose a new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph" (Ex. 1:8). There was a political climate change. The family fell out of favour. Pharaoh told his advisers: "Look, the Israelite people are becoming too numerous and strong for us"<sup>1</sup> – the first time the word "people" is used in the Torah with reference to the Children of Israel. "Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase" (Ex. 1:9-10). And so the whole mechanism of oppression moves into operation: forced labour that turns into slavery that becomes attempted genocide.

The story is engraved in our memory. We tell it every year, and in summary form in our prayers, every day. It is part of what it is to be a Jew. Yet there is one phrase that shines out from the narrative: "*But the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and the more they spread.*" That, no less than oppression itself, is part of what it means to be a Jew. The worse things get, the stronger we become. Jews are the people who not only survive but thrive in adversity.

Jewish history is not merely a story of Jews enduring catastrophes that might have spelled the end to less tenacious groups. It is that after every disaster, Jews renewed themselves. They discovered some hitherto hidden reservoir of spirit that fuelled new forms of collective

self-expression as the carriers of G-d's message to the world.

Every tragedy begat new creativity. After the division of the kingdom following the death of Solomon came the great literary prophets, Amos and Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Out of the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile came the renewal of Torah in the life of the nation, beginning with Ezekiel and culminating in the vast educational programme brought back to Israel by Ezra and Nehemiah. From the destruction of the Second Temple came the immense literature of Rabbinic Judaism, until then preserved mostly in the form of an oral tradition: Mishnah, Midrash, and Gemara.

From the Crusades came the Hassidei Ashkenaz, the North European school of piety and spirituality. Following the Spanish Expulsion came the mystic circle of Safed: Lurianic Kabbala and all it inspired by way of poetry and prayer. From East European persecution and poverty came the hassidic movement and its revival of grass-roots Judaism through a seemingly endless flow of story and song. And from the worst tragedy of all in human terms, the Holocaust, came the rebirth of the State of Israel, the greatest collective Jewish affirmation of life in more than two thousand years.

It is well known that the Chinese ideogram for "crisis" also means "opportunity." Any civilisation that can see the blessing within the curse, the fragment of light within the heart of darkness, has within it the capacity to endure. Hebrew goes one better. The word for crisis, *mashber*, also means "a child-birth chair." Written into the semantics of Jewish consciousness is the idea that the pain of hard times is a collective form of the contractions of a woman giving birth. Something new is being born. That is the mindset of a people

of whom it can be said that "the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and the more they spread."

Where did it come from, this Jewish ability to turn weakness into strength, adversity into advantage, darkness into light? It goes back to the moment in which our people received its name, Israel. It was then, as Jacob wrestled alone at night with an angel, that as dawn broke his adversary begged him to let him go. "I will not let you go until you bless me," said Jacob (Gen. 32:26). That is the source of our peculiar, distinctive obstinacy. We may have fought all night. We may be tired and on the brink of exhaustion. We may find ourselves limping, as did Jacob. Yet we will not let our adversary go until we have extracted a blessing from the encounter. This turned out to be not a minor and temporary concession. It became the basis of his new name and our identity. Israel, the people who "wrestled with G-d and man and prevailed" (Gen. 32:28), is the nation that grows stronger with each conflict and catastrophe.

I was reminded of this unusual national characteristic by an article that appeared in the British press in October 2015. Israel at the time was suffering from a wave of terrorist attacks that saw Palestinians murdering innocent civilians in streets and bus stations throughout the country. It began with these words: "Israel is an astonishing country, buzzing with energy and confidence, a magnet for talent and investment – a cauldron of innovation." It spoke of its world-class excellence in aerospace, clean-tech, irrigation systems, software, cyber-security, pharmaceuticals, and defence systems.<sup>2</sup>

"All this," the writer went on to say, "derives from brainpower, for Israel has no natural resources and is surrounded by hostile neighbours." The country is living

proof of “the power of technical education, immigration, and the benefits of the right sort of military service.” Yet this cannot be all, since Jews have consistently overachieved, wherever they were and whenever they were given the chance. He goes through the various suggested explanations: the strength of Jewish families, their passion for education, a desire for self-employment, risk-taking as a way of life, and even ancient history. The Levant was home to the world’s first agricultural societies and earliest traders. Perhaps, then, the disposition to enterprise was written, thousands of years ago, into Jewish DNA. Ultimately, though, he concludes that it has to do with “culture and communities.”

A key element of that culture has to do with the Jewish response to crisis. To every adverse circumstance, those who have inherited Jacob’s sensibilities insist: “I will not let you go until you bless me.” That is how Jews, encountering the Negev, found ways of making the desert bloom. Seeing a barren, neglected landscape elsewhere, they planted trees and forests. Faced with hostile armies on all their borders, they developed military technologies they then turned to peaceful use. War and terror forced them to develop medical expertise and world-leading skills in dealing with the aftermath of trauma. They

found ways of turning every curse into a blessing. The historian Paul Johnson, as always, put it eloquently:

Over 4,000 years the Jews proved themselves not only great survivors but extraordinarily skilful in adapting to the societies among which fate had thrust them, and in gathering whatever human comforts they had to offer. No people has been more fertile in enriching poverty or humanising wealth, or in turning misfortune to creative account.<sup>3</sup>

There is something profoundly spiritual as well as robustly practical about this ability to transform the bad moments of life into a spur to creativity. It is as if, deep within us, a voice was saying, “You are in this situation, bad though it is, because there is a task to perform, a skill to acquire, a strength to develop, a lesson to learn, an evil to redeem, a shard of light to be rescued, a blessing to be uncovered, for I have chosen you to give testimony to humankind that out of suffering can come great blessings if you wrestle with it for long enough and with unshakeable faith.”

In an age in which people of violence are committing acts of brutality in the name of the G-d of compassion, the people of Israel are proving daily that this is not the way of the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of life

and the sanctity of life. And whenever we who are a part of that people lose heart, and wonder when it will ever end, we should recall the words: “The more they were oppressed, the more they increased and the more they spread.” A people of whom that can be said can be injured, but can never be defeated. G-d’s way is the way of life.

#### AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Why do you think tragedy can lead to creativity?
- Have you experienced this in your own life or with people in your life?
- What examples of this phenomenon, turning curses into blessings, can you find in Jewish history?

1. Ex. 1:9. This is the first intimation in history of what in modern times took the form of the Russian forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In the Diaspora, Jews – powerless – were often seen as all-powerful. What this usually means, when translated, is: How is it that Jews manage to evade the pariah status we have assigned to them?
2. Luke Johnson, ‘Animal Spirits: Israel and its tribe of risk-taking entrepreneurs,’ *Sunday Times*, 4 October 2015.
3. Paul Johnson, *The History of the Jews*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987, p. 58

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# The Third Beis HaMikdash



**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

In order for Moshe to establish himself as a true navi, he needed to perform certain signs and wonders. Hashem gave him three signs to perform for Bnei Yisrael. First, he was to turn his stick into a snake and back again into a stick. Then he was to change his hand into a leprous one and back again to one with normal skin. Finally, he was to pour water from the river and convert it into blood on the dry land.

Interestingly, the Torah uses the term אחרון, usually translated as “last,” when referring to the middle sign, even though it was to be followed by the third and final sign. It shall be that if they do not believe you and do not heed the voice of the first sign, they will believe the voice of the os acharon” (Shemos 4:8).

This indicates that in Biblical Hebrew, in contrast to Modern Hebrew, the terms ראשון and אחרון do not necessarily mean “first” and “last.” Rather, ראשון may also mean previous or prior, and אחרון may mean subsequent or latter.

This forms the basis of the Tosfos Yom Tov’s answer to a question prompted by the passuk, גדול יהיה כבוד הבית הזה האחרון מן הראשון – “The glory of this last Beis HaMikdash will be greater than that of the first” (Chaggai 2:9). How is it that we pray for the building of the Third Beis HaMikdash if the navi Chaggai told us that the Second Beis HaMikdash would be the final one? The Tosfos Yom Tov explains, using the passuk in our parsha as the proof-text, that the term אחרון means latter, and not last. Thus, this nevu’ah in no way contradicts the fulfillment of other prophecies foretelling the building of the Third Beis HaMikdash.

Rav Matisyahu Strashun basing himself on the Zohar, offers a somewhat different interpretation of the passuk in Chaggai. The passuk should be read as if הזה and האחרון are hyphenated, הזה-האחרון referring to the Second Beis HaMikdash and האחרון to the Third Beis HaMikdash. Thus, the navi was saying that the Second Beis HaMikdash was considered the beginning of the Third Beis HaMikdash. The uplifting message of Chaggai was that the glory of the Second-Third Beis HaMikdash, with the third viewed as a continuation of the second, will outshine that of the First Beis HaMikdash.

Rav Soloveitchik, quoting Rav Chaim, suggested a similar explanation of the nevu’ah of Zecharyah (4:1-14) that is read on Shabbos Chanukah. In the nevu’ah, the navi saw two olive trees, with two clusters of olives next to two golden presses. Golden oil flowed miraculously through seven ducts into each of the seven lamps of a golden menorah. The two trees represented two anointed men (4:14), the Kohen Gadol and the king of the Malchus Beis Dovid, both of whom are to be anointed with olive oil. Thus, the vision alluded to a Golden Era of the Beis HaMikdash.

The navi could not understand this, because it simply did not correspond to reality. The Second Beis HaMikdash period during which Zecharyah lived was not graced by a Davidic King; there was no Jewish sovereignty until the time of the Chashmona’im. The Kohanim Gedolim were elevated to their position by wearing the special garments associated with Kehunah Gedolah, not through anointing, as the shemen hamishchah (anointing oil) had been concealed earlier by King Yoshiyahu.

Furthermore, the Second Beis HaMikdash period was plagued by yearly replacements of the Kohen Gadol and by arguments between the Perushim and Tzedukim – hardly a Golden Era of Divine Presence!

Thus the navi asked, “What are these, my Lord?” The mal’ach who was speaking to me spoke up and said to me, ‘Do you not know what they are?’ And I said, ‘No, my Lord’” (4:4-5). In response, the mal’ach explained with the cryptic words “Not through armies and not through might, but through My spirit, says Hashem” (4:6).

Rav Chaim explained this answer based on the Rambam’s statement that Yehoshua’s kiddush (sanctification) of Eretz Yisrael was accomplished through kibbush (conquest), while the second kiddush of Ezra was accomplished through chazakah (settlement). At the time of the destruction of the First Beis HaMikdash, once the Babylonian armies conquered Eretz Yisrael from the hands of the Jews, the kiddush of Yehoshua vanished, since his conquest was reversed. However, Ezra’s kiddush was “not through armies and not through might, but through My spirit” – that is, the desire of Hashem to rest His Shechinah on the Land. This type of kiddush could not be undone.

Zecharyah’s vision was in essence a representation of the hashra’as haShechinah (Divine Presence) that will accompany the Third Beis HaMikdash. Hashem showed this vision to Zecharyah at this juncture, the beginning of the Second Beis HaMikdash period, because the vision referred to the truly glorious Third Beis HaMikdash Era, which really began with the building of the Second Beis HaMikdash. The wondrous and splendid description of a Golden Era of the Beis HaMikdash,

*Continued on next page*



# Moshe's Path To Greatness



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**  
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

**A**s we begin Sefer Shemot, we are introduced to Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest of Am Yisrael that ever lived, and somebody who leads Klal Yisrael out of Mitzrayim and to Mattan Torah.

The most significant lesson we can learn from Moshe's greatness in the Parsha is not from what the Torah tells us about Moshe, but from what it doesn't say and from what is often missed.

When and where did Moshe Rabbeinu accomplish his greatness? We all know about the highest levels reached by Moshe Rabbeinu in Torah, Avodah and Yir'at Shamayim. However, a quick glance at the pesukim don't appear to reveal any information as to where and when Moshe went on the path to achieve this. In fact, the answer lies in exactly what the Torah does not say.

We encounter Moshe Rabbeinu in the pesukim shortly after his Bar Mitzvah, fleeing from Egypt. We then encounter him again 67 years later at the age of 80, standing at the burning bush. What happened during those 67 years that are excluded from the narrative?

These years of 'silence' are exactly the time and place where Moshe achieved



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his greatness. These were the years in which he worked on himself. Yet Moshe Rabbeinu wasn't working himself in the midst of his brethren. He was far away from Klal Yisrael. Moshe was unique in that he was raised and lived for most of his teenage and adult years away from his fellow Jews and he was still able to develop himself into a true Eved Hashem. We can only imagine the strength and faith Moshe Rabbeinu must have had to become the person he became, despite the environment he grew up and lived in.

The Rambam in the beginning of the 6th Perek of Hilchos Dai'os tells us about human nature. He writes, "It is natural for a person's character and actions to be influenced by his friends and associates and for him to follow the local norms of

behaviour." A person has a natural nature to follow the people around him and to follow in the customs of the people in the country in which he lives. Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu, who grows up far away from all of Klal Yisrael, is able to reach the ultimate Madreiga because he resists the pull and temptations of the people around him.

Rav Yaakov Emden writes in the name of his father, the Chacham Tzvi, that a person's Avodat Hashem should be so great that if you are the only remaining Jew in the world, G-d forbid, you wouldn't waiver in your faith, even for a second.

When we are out in the workplace and surrounded by our non-Jewish neighbours, we are among people to whom our way of life is strange. There is a tendency to compromise; if not in action, at least in expression. However, we learn from Moshe Rabbeinu that it's exactly in those situations where a person can achieve greatness. When you resist the temptation to be like the people around you is when you grow closer to being a true Eved Hashem.

● Edited by Yehuda Kaufold and Josh Harris.

*Continued from previous page*

malchus, and Kehunah Gedolah did, in fact, apply to this Second Beis HaMikdash, in the sense that it began a continuum that will conclude in the Third Beis HaMikdash era.

Rav Soloveitchik added that this is the meaning of the navi's description "He will

bring out the cornerstone with cheers of 'Grace! Grace!' for it" (Zecharyah 4:7). This does not merely refer to the placement of the cornerstone of the Second Beis HaMikdash at the time of Zecharyah, but also connotes the fact that the entire enterprise of the building of the Second Beis HaMikdash was to serve as the foundation

of the Third Beis HaMikdash. The Second Beis HaMikdash itself was the cornerstone of the Third Beis HaMikdash.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha.

# Mercy and Compassion for all Creatures



**Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef zt"l**  
Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel

“P

aro's daughter went to bathe in the Nile, while her maids walked along the Nile's edge. She saw the box in the rushes and sent her slave-girl to fetch it. Opening [the box] she saw the boy. The lad began to cry, and she had pity on him” (Shemot 2:5-6).

Our chachamim explain that when Paro's daughter Batya saw the box floating in the Nile she opened it and saw Moshe in it. Her maidens said to her, “Hasn't your father commanded to drown all the Jewish children? And should one of the people disobey your father, that's one thing, but you are the king's daughter! How can you not listen to your father's voice? Batya then reneged and decided to leave Moshe in the Nile and not save him. Immediately Hashem placed some mercy in her heart and she was too stirred to be compassionate and decided to save Moshe.

“The lad began to cry”, our chachamim ask, Moshe was a baby, so why is he called a “lad”? This reason is that his voice was like a lad's. Moshe Rabbeinu was destined to teach 600,000 Jews Torah. In those days there was no microphone, therefore Hashem graced him with a powerful voice, this is indicated by the words “a lad crying”, that his voice was powerful. This is the straightforward meaning. The Gemara (Sota 12a) relates that Rabbi Yehudah explained that Moshe had the voice of a lad just like we said. Rabbi Nechamiah said to him if so you have made Moshe Rabbeinu blemished, but rather it teaches that his mother made him a wedding canopy in the box, she said I won't merit to see his chuppah.

However, there is another explanation given by Rav Yehoshua Zeitlin z"l in his work “Hagahot Chadashot”. This rav lived in Shkolv, [Belarus]. In that city was a ruler called Zorich who was an anti-Semite and from time to time would decree upon them harsh decrees. The Jews, from their perspective, became accustomed to going to him and giving him great sums of money as a bribe, as it were so that he would annul his decrees. But this wicked man realized that each time the Jews would bring him money, so he increased with more harsh decrees. Until one time, he decreed the harshest of decrees upon the Jews. The Jews didn't know what to do, therefore they came to the leaders of the kehillah. First to the rav to seek his counsel on what to do. The rav said, “To my mind don't give anymore bribes but rather I will write a carefully drafted letter to Empress Catherine (1729-1796) and in it, I will detail all the harsh decrees of this wicked ruler. She will certainly appoint a panel to investigate him and through this, we will be able to free ourselves from this wicked tyrant.” The heads of the kehillah said, “We are afraid, lest the ruler avenges us should we do this.” The rav replied to them that there is nothing to fear, “I will write the letter and the ruler will know nothing of the letter!”

The rav was very wise and well-versed in Russian. He wrote the letter to the empress, beautifully written, like pearls and full of beautiful terms, in a fine style. He sent the letter via messenger to Empress Catherine.

The letter reached the empress and she called her courtier General Grigory

Potemkin (1739-1791). She presented him with the letter and ordered him to appoint an investigative panel which he shall chair, to investigate the ruler in the city of Shklov. However, the empress added, “Look general, such a beautifully written letter! What lovely writing! I want you to bring before me the person that wrote this letter on behalf of the Jews!”

The general traveled to Shklov, accompanied by the unique investigative panel. They went and investigated the ruler's actions and inspected his ledgers, finding serious corruption that was committed by the wicked Zorich. They sacked him from his post. After a while, the general ascertained who had written the letter. He turned to the rav and instructed him to accompany him to the empress because she wanted to meet him.

The rav arrived before the empress and began to speak gently before her and he explained the plight of the Jews. Then suddenly he raised his voice and began to explain the Jewish people's distress under the rule of the wicked tyrant. The empress said to the rav, “Until now you spoke gently, why are you now shouting?” The rav replied, “I am not shouting! Rather the good people, who this tyrant crushes, they are shouting, and their cry is coming out of my throat! Therefore I am shouting!” The empress listened and the rav found favor in her eyes. She appointed him as an advisor to the court, a position which he held and he was a great minister for the Jews and with her help, he was able to affect many secret matters for his people.

*Continued on next page*

# It's All in the Family



**Rabbi Shalom Rosner**  
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

**T**he opening of Sefer Shemot references the 70 offspring of Yaakov that descended to Mitzrayim. Yet, the actual names specifically mentioned are limited to the eleven sons of Yaakov (Yosef was already situated in Mitzrayim). Rather than rename all of the individuals as appears in Parshat Vayechi, the Torah uses the phrase

“אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיִם אֵת יַעֲקֹב  
אִישׁ וּבֵיתוֹ בָּאוּ:”

“And these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt; with Jacob, **each man and his household came**”

The emphasis at this juncture is two-fold. One on the “family” unit. Each of the tribes arrived in Egypt with their respective children (households). Second, each tribe had their own family but the common denominator was that they were tied to Yaakov, not only physically, but in the spiritual arena as well.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains the significance of the family at this time. As we embark on the second book of the Torah, referred to by the Ramban as “*sefer hagalut v’hageula*” (the book of the exile and exodus), the book that relays the story of the creation of the Jewish nation, we must understand that a nation is comprised of not only individuals, but of families. Tradition is transmitted from parent to child. In order for a nation to survive, family



**Only by combining the strength of each family are we able to build an everlasting nation.**

must serve as its foundation. As the tribes entered *galut*, they took with them what they learned from their father Yaakov and transmitted it to their children. Only by combining the strength of each family are we able to build an everlasting nation.

We not only descended to Egypt as families, there is an emphasis on families when we exited as well. The korban Pesach which was sacrificed on the eve of *Yitziyat Mitzrayim*, had to be eaten together with one’s family. The salvation was not merely on an individual level, but for it to be eternal, it had to encompass the family.

It is no coincidence that we refer to a family structure as a “family tree” rather than a family map or chart. A family tree consists of many branches – each representing another family unit, yet they are all connected to the same trunk or roots. Essentially, they receive their “nourishment” from the same source, even though they are independent from each other. Each child builds their home based on

the *masoret*, the morals and principles received from their parents.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach explains why we compare a chatan and kallah to “*invey hagefen*”, the vines of grapes in a similar manner. Vines, unlike trees, cannot stand on their own. They require something upon which to lean. Both the bride and groom should lean on each other and use the lessons they learned from their parents as a foundation upon which to build their *bayit ne’eam b’yisrael!* We may add that families are referred to as “*mateh*” a stick, perhaps to highlight that they serve as that backbone.

As we begin our journey through *sefer Shemot*, let us utilize this time to fortify our household. To appreciate the unique attributes of each child, while maintaining a cohesive family unit. To avoid the sibling rivalry that permeates the parshiyot in *sefer Bereshit*. To be able to properly convey the beauty of the Torah and our excitement when engaging in the performance of *mitzvot* to our children. By transmitting the *masoret* to the next generation, we are ensuring the eternal blossoming of the Jewish nation.

*Continued from previous page*

Likewise, regarding Moshe Rabbeinu it states, “a lad crying”, because Moshe represented all of Am Yisrael and their shouting sounded from his throat. Therefore “a lad crying”, means that his voice was

heard with strength, because this was a bitter cry of all Am Yisrael and not just the cry of one person!

Moshe Rabbeinu loved people and brought them close to Torah [see Avot 1:12]. And his

primary virtue was mercy, which we too have to emulate with all creatures in the world, and anyone who is compassionate to creatures, likewise Heaven will have compassion on him [see Shabbat 151b].



# Shemos: The Book of Names



**Michal Horowitz**  
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**S**efer Shemos, literally “The Book of Names,” begins with the words: “And these are the names of the children of Israel, who were coming to Egypt, Yaakov, each man and his household came: Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and Yehuda; Yisachar, Zevulun, and Binyanim; Dan, Naftali, Gad and Asher... and Yosef was in Egypt (Shemos 1:1-5).

The opening to the book of Shemos is information the Torah has already made known to us in Sefer Bereishis, as the pasuk says: “And these are the names of the children of Israel who were coming to Egypt, Yaakov and his sons, the firstborn of Yaakov was Reuven (Bereishis 46:8).” The Torah then proceeds to delineate the families of Yaakov that came down to Egypt.

As we open the book of Shemos, and we learn about the painful and oppressive shibud Mitzrayim, why does the Chumash begin with the emphasis on names, and then proceed to enumerate each of the names of the sons of Yaakov?

R' Yitzchok Zilberstein teaches, “And these are the names: The holy Shelah instructs that after Shemoneh Esrei, an individual should recite a verse that begins with the first letter of his name and ends with the last letter of his name. This is a segulah that protects a person from forgetting his name when he will ultimately stand before the Heavenly Court, after his passing.

“The Nimukei Ridvaz explains that it is common practice for criminals to be identified by a number, instead of their name. This suggests that the criminal is no longer worthy of being considered a person and being called by a name. Similarly, the Ridvaz continues, regarding a person whose heart turns away from Hashem, the Torah warns that Hashem will erase his name (Devarim 29:19). In other words, Hashem will strip the sinner

of his name and refer to him instead by his crime or misdeed.

“This idea is also expressed in Tehillim (109:13-14), which states: Let their name be erased; may the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before Hashem, and the sin of his mother not be erased. Rather than being remembered by their name, evildoers are remembered by the name of the sin they committed. By remembering our names on the future day of judgement, we demonstrate that we are worthy of being called by a name, not by a number or by the name of a sin” (Aleinu L'Shabei'ach, Shemos, p.31-32).

With this teaching in mind, and the significance of a person's name, perhaps we can propose another reason that the second book of Torah is known as Shemos, “Names,” and that the sefer begins by listing the names of the Children of Israel who descended to Egypt.

It is in the first perek of Shemos that we learn of the terrible, back-breaking labor to which the Israelite slaves were subjected. The Egyptians financially oppressed them, forced them into slave labor, oppressed them with torturous work, and ultimately, killed their sons. The labor was so futile and demeaning, that it was meant only to break the slaves (Rashi to Ex.1:13), both in body and spirit. The infanticide was meant to erase any future vestige of Am Yisrael: “And Pharaoh said to the midwives: when you birth the Hebrews, and you will see upon the birthing stool, if it is a boy, you shall put him to death, and if it is a girl, she shall live (Shemos 1:16).”

In an environment such as this one, when the enemy tries to strip the slave of his very essence and humanity, it is possible for the tortured, exhausted, and broken slave to think of himself as a mere number,

and forget that he ever had a name... To counter this, the story of the shibud Mitzrayim begins with the following words: “And these are the NAMES of the children of Israel.” No matter what the enemy does to try to destroy us, we remember that we always have a pure, untainted, untouchable essence – the neshama and spirit of a Jew – and it is that very spirit that is represented in our names. For though in each and every generation they arise to destroy us, the names, the Shemos, of the Bnei Yisrael, are eternal.

One summer, during his stay in the Catskill Mountains, R' Moshe Feinstein zt'l was being seen by a doctor and his wife, a nurse, both of whom were Holocaust survivors. The pair were far removed from the world of yeshivos, and only knew that their patient was a famous rabbi. One day, the nurse said to her nephew, Yitzchak Herschkopf, who had come to visit, “We have one patient who is a celebrity. His name is Rabbi Moshe Feinstein. He has an appointment tomorrow, would you like to meet him?”

Yitzchak, who had learned under R' Moshe's son-in-law, R' Moshe Tendler, was excited beyond words. The next day, he donned his Shabbos clothing and seated himself in the doctor's waiting room. A few minutes later, R' Moshe entered, accompanied by a family member. The nurse – Yitzchak's aunt – came to receive R' Moshe. She spoke to him as if they were close friends, in an affectionate – but wholly inappropriate – manner.

As soon as she left the room, Yitzchak began to apologize for his aunt's behavior. R' Moshe quickly put his finger to the boy's lips to silence him and said, “She has numbers on her arm,” he said softly, “she is holier than I am” (Reb Moshe, Artscroll, p.266-267).

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# No Other Alternative



**Rabbi Menachem Leibtag**

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

“**A**nd now go for I am sending you to Pharaoh – and **take** My people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” (3:10)

Moshe has been commissioned to serve as G-d's agent to bring about His divine plan. But the question arises, what is that plan? **How** does G-d plan to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt? Why does He need an agent? Why must there be **makkot**? Why all the ‘theatrics,’ the ‘pomp and circumstance?’

It is commonly assumed that the only obstacle preventing Bnei Yisrael's return to Eretz Canaan was their enslavement to Egypt. However, if we consider their condition more realistically, we realize that Bnei Yisrael had no other alternative other than remain in Egypt. Even if Pharaoh had granted them permission to emigrate, could a nation of some two million people [ex-slaves] survive the lengthy, arduous journey through the desert? And even if they could make it to Canaan, could they conquer the land with its walled cities and formidable, armed enemies? As the “meraglim” themselves concluded, such a plan would be suicidal!

Thus, despite the hardships of their enslavement, Bnei Yisrael had no realistic alternative other than staying in Egypt. When Bnei Yisrael cry out for salvation, they desire only a lighter workload and a little taste of freedom; they do **not** yearn for Zion.

With this in mind, we can suggest an answer to both our questions: G-d has no intention to fool Pharaoh. He is concerned with two independent issues:

- 1) To redeem Bnei Yisrael from Egypt - to fulfill Brit Avot;
- 2) To ‘teach’ Pharaoh and his country the lesson of “**Ani Hashem**” – that there exists a **G-d** above them.

In His “hitgalut” to Moshe at the “sneh,” G-d charges Moshe with the responsibility of dealing with both issues. Let's begin with the latter by asking a more basic question: why must Moshe confront Pharaoh in the first place? If the entire purpose of Yetziat Mitzrayim is simply to fulfill “brit Avot” and take Bnei Yisrael to Eretz Canaan, why involve Egypt in this process at all? Surely G-d could create circumstances whereby Bnei Yisrael would emigrate without official Egyptian authorization. For example, let G-d cause a sudden change in Egyptian policy, or make just one miracle where all the Egyptians would fall asleep for 48 hours, etc.

Nonetheless, at the “sneh” we find G-d insisting upon Bnei Yisrael's receiving Pharaoh's permission to leave.

Moshe's confrontation with Pharaoh constitutes a critical element of G-d's plan. G-d does not tell Moshe to ‘trick’ Pharaoh. Rather, Moshe must confront Pharaoh over the fundamental issue of religious freedom – the basic right of any people, especially an oppressed nation, to worship G-d. The fact that Pharaoh, the king of Egypt – the world superpower and center of ancient civilization – rejects this request shows that he considers himself above his fellow man. He acts as though he himself is a G-d; G-d must therefore teach him (and any future Pharaoh/monarch) the lesson of “v'yadu Mitzrayim ki **ani** Hashem.”

Therefore, from a universalistic perspective, the primary goal of Yetziat Mitzrayim is that Egypt – the center of ancient civilization – realize that G-d is above all Man – “v'yadu Mitzrayim ki **ani** Hashem.” Moshe must deliver this message to the Egyptian people, in G-d's Name, directly to Pharaoh. The **makkot** ensure the Egyptians' understanding of this message.

Hence, when Moshe is commanded to go to Pharaoh and demand Bnei Yisrael's right

to worship their G-d, it's not a ‘trick,’ but rather a basic, human demand.

On the other hand, from Am Yisrael's perspective, the central purpose of Yetziat Mitzrayim relates to the fulfillment of G-d's covenant with the Avot, that Bnei Yisrael return to Eretz Canaan in order to become G-d's special nation. As Bnei Yisrael must prepare themselves for this redemption, Moshe must convey this message to them. Ultimately, this redemption will take place in wake of the events that unfold once Pharaoh allows Bnei Yisrael to leave after the Ten Plagues.

The basic principle that Bnei Yisrael have no realistic alternative other than remain in Egypt answers our second question as well. Had the Egyptians heard a rumor that some messianic leader offered to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt to some Promised Land, they would have scoffed at the very thought. Could a multitude of slaves possibly organize themselves into an independent nation? Could they survive the journey through the desert? Could they conquer the kings of Canaan? Are there any neighboring lands as good as Egypt?

No one was keeping any secrets. Even the majority of Bnei Yisrael felt that this idea would lead to national suicide. Why should the Egyptians believe this ‘rumor’ any more than Bnei Yisrael did? Throughout Sefer Shmot and Sefer Bamidbar, we find the people time and time again expressing their desire to return to Egypt. As the “meraglim” themselves later conclude, it is the only logical alternative.

An ultimate goal of the Nation of Israel is to establish a model society that can bring all mankind to recognize G-d. At Yetziat Mitzrayim – when Israel becomes a nation – it is significant that Egypt – the center of ancient civilization and the epitome of a society that rejects G-d – must recognize

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# The Spoils of Egypt



**Rabbi Eli Mansour**  
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**W**hen G-d spoke to Moshe for the first time, and instructed him to return to Egypt and lead Beneh Yisrael to freedom, He mentioned that when the people will leave Egypt, “they will not leave empty-handed. Each woman will borrow from her neighbor...silver and gold utensils, and garments...” (3:22). Beneh Yisrael would “borrow” their Egyptian neighbors’ belongings, and bring these possessions with them as they left Egypt. Indeed, we read later (12:35) that the time of the Exodus from Egypt, “And Beneh Yisrael did as Moshe said – they borrowed from Egypt silver and gold utensils, and garments.”

The implication of the text is that Beneh Yisrael deceived the Egyptians, “borrowing” their belongings knowing full well that they would never return them. The obvious question arises as to why G-d would command such a thing. Why would He have Beneh Yisrael act immorally and fool the Egyptians? True, G-d had promised Abraham Abinu that after his descendants would endure a period of oppression in a foreign land, they would then leave with great wealth (Bereshit 15:14). But G-d clearly had an infinite number of ways to make this happen. Why did He choose to have Beneh Yisrael “borrow” their Egyptian neighbors’ possessions without the intention of giving them back?

In fact, the Or Ha’haim Ha’kadosh notes that the Torah emphasizes that “Beneh Yisrael did as Moshe said” – meaning,

they took the Egyptians’ belongings only because they trusted Moshe’s instructions. The Rambam writes in Hilchot Yesodeh Ha’Torah that if a prophet, whose authenticity has already been confirmed, instructs the people to transgress a Torah command, then as long as he does not call for that command’s permanent abrogation, he should be obeyed. Moshe was now calling upon the people to commit a clear violation of Torah law – to deceive the Egyptians and essentially steal from them, by pretending to borrow their possessions when in truth they were taking them to keep. The people obeyed this command only because Moshe – a confirmed prophet – instructed them to do this as a “Hora’at Sha’a” – an extraordinary, one-time provision. Such conduct normally is strictly forbidden, but an exception was made in this instance, as G-d had commanded the people to take their Egyptian neighbors’ possessions.

Why was this exception made? Why did G-d want Beneh Yisrael to take the Egyptians’ belongings this way?

An answer may be suggested in light of the Gemara’s discussion in Masechet Pesachim (39a) about the Misva of Marror. The Mishna there establishes that the preferred vegetable to use for fulfilling this Misva is “Hazeret,” which the Gemara defines as “Hasa” (lettuce). The Gemara explains the connection between “Hasa” and Beneh Yisrael’s enslavement in Egypt, stating, “Why were the Egyptians compared to Marror? To teach you that just

as this Marror is first soft and then hard, the Egyptians, too, were at first soft, and then became hard.” The lettuce leaves are soft when they first begin to grow, and eventually harden. The Egyptians, too, began treating Beneh Yisrael “softly,” with outward kindness, before becoming harsh and cruel. Rashi explains that the Egyptians lured Beneh Yisrael to become their slaves by first offering attractive salaries for their labor. But then, after Beneh Yisrael signed up to work as laborers, the Egyptians stopped paying them, and they ended up as the Egyptians’ slaves.

Our Sages in the Midrash explain how each of the ten plagues which G-d brought upon Egypt punished the Egyptians “Midda Ke’negged Midda” (“measure for measure”), corresponding to the crimes they committed against Beneh Yisrael. By the same token, we might assume that Beneh Yisrael’s deception of the Egyptians, too, served as a punishment “Midda Ke’negged Midda.” Beneh Yisrael’s enslavement was brought about through deception – and so it ended through deception. The Egyptians fooled Beneh Yisrael by promising long-term, gainful employment, when in truth their intent was to enslave them. G-d punished the Egyptians by having Beneh Yisrael now deceive the Egyptians by “borrowing” their belongings without any intention to return them. This exceptional command was given for the purpose of punishing the Egyptians, of having them fall victim to deception just as they had cruelly deceived Beneh Yisrael.

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As you suffer through the pain and tribulations of galus, the Chumash tells us, and as the enemy – from Pharaonic Egypt to Nazi Germany R”L – tries mightily to

remove our identity from us, never, ever forget: these are the names of the Children of Israel who were coming to Egypt.

For our identity, our names, our essence, and our souls, can never be extinguished or destroyed.



# The Preciousness of Life



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“וילך איש מבית לוי ויקח את-בת-לוי”

“and a man from the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi.”

**T**he Gemara in Sota 12a explains where Amram “went” in the pasuk. He had, after all, already married Yocheved earlier:

Where did [Amram] go? Rav Yehuda bar Zvina says: He “went after” his daughter’s advice. The Tana says: Amram was the great scholar of the generation. When Paroh decreed that every baby boy would be thrown into the river, he said “we are working for nothing.” He stood up and divorced his wife. Then everyone stood up and divorced their wives as well. His daughter said to him, “Abba, your decree is worse than Paroh’s decree. Paroh decreed only against the boys and your decree is also against the girls. Paroh only made a decree in this world. But your decree is in this world and in the next world.

We can understand Miriam’s argument that under Paroh’s decree, only the boys would be deprived of life, but that under Amram’s decree, no girls would be born either. But her second argument, that under Paroh’s decree, the boys would at least have a share in the world to come, but that under Amram’s decree, the boys would not have a share in the world to come, is more difficult to understand. Rashi on the Gemara in Sota explains that under Paroh’s decree, the boys would still have a share in the world to come because “they are born and then die and then come back to life in the world to come.” Amram apparently agreed with Miriam’s point since he remarried Yocheved. But why did he agree? How do these children acquire a share in the world to come after only a few hours of life? They would never have the opportunity to do

mitzvos or learn Torah. On what basis can they have a share in the world to come?

In addition, the Gemara in Eiruvim 13b concludes that “it would be easier for man not to have been created, than to have been created.” If this is the case, how could Miriam have argued, and how could Amram have agreed, that it would be better for the boys to be born and then immediately killed than not to have been born at all?

I recalled a beautiful teaching of one of the great baalei Mussar of our generation, Rav Chaim Zaichik of Novarkdok in his sefer Ohr Chadash. Rav Zaichik was explaining the purpose of a newborn baby’s life. He pointed out that a newborn baby has no *דעת*, no intelligence. He does not make any choices or have any conception of what is happening around him. He cannot see or hear very much for the first few days of life. What, then, is the quality, purpose and nature of that life? Rav Zaichik answered that “nevertheless, [a newborn baby] is fortunate by virtue of his very existence in the air of this world, the world of free choice, in the air of the marketplace in which one acquires the world to come.” Rav Zaichik explains that merely being in the air of the world of free choice, the infant acquires a share in the world to come. Although a newborn is the subject of others’ choices at the beginning, rather than being an active participant in the process, his mere presence in this world gives him a connection with the marketplace of free choice.

Life in this world is so precious that even a one-day-old baby, who accomplishes nothing on a conscious level, acquires the world to come through his very existence in the world of free will. If a

one-day-old child’s life in this world is so precious, then our time which we can use to do mitzvos in this world must be even greater. Our entire life in the world to come built from the mitzvos we accumulate in this world. In fact, the world to come is also called *גן עדן*, the garden of delight. When we do mitzvos and learn Torah, we are planting seeds which grow into the beautiful garden which is our life in the world to come.

Miriam told her father, and he ultimately agreed with her, that it is worthwhile for a child to live for just a few hours in this world as opposed to not being born at all. The suffering he experiences and breathing the air of the world of choice for even a short time will give that child a place in the world to come. Rav Moshe Feinstein once wrote to a woman who had lost a baby that she should know that in the time of the resurrection of the dead, the baby will come back to life and she and her husband will have the opportunity to raise him. Even though the child had lived for a very short time, that was enough for him to acquire his “ticket” into the next world where they would be together again.

Every second in this world is so precious. What are we going to bring back to the next world? Are we busy collecting silliness and worthless trinkets? Or are we filling shopping bags full of Torah and mitzvos to bring home from the marketplace of free choice.

We should all realize how precious every second of life is, and we should grab every single opportunity for more Torah and more mitzvos and not waste our lives with nonsense and vanity. With that, may we merit *ביאת משיח צדקינו שיבא במהירה בימנו אמן*.

# A Road-Map to Peace in Israel



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**T**he Torah shares only three incidents about Moses' life prior to G-d choosing him as a leader and prophet:

1) As a young man, Moses goes out among his brethren and sees an Egyptian overseer brutally beating a Hebrew. He strikes down the oppressor, burying him in the sand.

2) The next day, Moses attempts to bring peace between two Hebrews who are fighting, but the aggressor is indignant and says, "Who appointed you as a prince and leader over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Realizing that his intervention the previous day had already become known, Moses escapes from Egypt and finds refuge in Midian.

3) In Midian, Moses probably wants nothing more than peace and tranquility. Instead, he finds himself embroiled in yet another conflict. He witnesses the local shepherds bullying a group of girls who were first in line to draw water from a well. He immediately rises to their defense, driving off the offending shepherds.

These are the only episodes we know about Moses (besides the circumstances of his birth) prior to his selection by G-d as a leader, because they express a paradigm indispensable to leadership: A leader must have the courage to battle injustice wherever it exists. In all three instances, Moses is deeply committed to fighting injustice. He intervenes when a non-Jew oppresses a Jew, when two Jews fight, and when non-Jewish men oppress non-Jewish women. When it is necessary to kill, he is willing to kill. When it is sufficient to talk he is ready to talk; when it is necessary to fight, he is prepared to fight. One who rejects the choice of aggression out of a sense of compassion may be a kind human being but a wholly inadequate leader, because the long-term results of a failure to battle evil are far worse.

In modern terms, Moses is politically incorrect. He does not lecture the Egyptian taskmaster about "the cycle of violence" or give him a lesson on "rage management." Moses knows that by the time he will complete his lecture the Hebrew might be dead. Moses is aware that at times, violence is a moral, though difficult, choice. It saves the lives of the innocent.

Prohibiting moral killing, guarantees immoral killing. It is violence used by police that stops violent criminals from murdering and hurting innocent people. There are many innocent men and women alive today solely because someone used violence to save their lives. If someone had killed the hijackers of 9/11 before they commandeered the planes, thousands of lives would have been saved.

Throughout history, many chose not to emulate Moses' example. During the Second World War, for example, when it appeared that Nazi Germany will attempt to capture England, Mahatma Gandhi offered the British the following advice:

"I would like you to lay down the arms you have which are useless for saving you or humanity. You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions. Let them take possession... If these gentlemen choose to occupy your homes, you will vacate them. If they do not give you free passage out, you will allow yourself, man, woman and child, to be slaughtered, but you will refuse to owe allegiance to them."

To the Jews of Germany Gandhi offered a similar message:

"I am as certain as I am dictating these words that the stoniest German heart will melt [if only the Jews] adopt active non-violence. Human nature ... unflinchingly responds to the advances of love. I do not despair of his [Hitler's] responding

to human suffering even though caused by him." Had Gandhi convinced the English to lay down their arms and practice non-violence, the Jewish people would have been annihilated, democracy and human rights would have disappeared, and the world would have been plunged into a new Dark Age of unimaginable cruelty. War, while always unfortunate and painful, is not always evil; sometimes, fighting a war is the most moral thing to do.

Astonishingly, the nation that Moses created -- Israel -- has in recent years emulated Gandhi rather than Moses. With the Oslo accords, we invited our sworn enemies to take parts of our homeland in the belief that they would reciprocate with peace and goodwill. Instead of declaring outright war against the terrorists and their infrastructure, we chose to practice restraint and non-violent diplomacy. Many of us believed then, and many Jews still believe, that the stoniest terrorist heart will melt in response to our peaceful advances.

In 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain appeased Adolf Hitler, by allowing the German Fuhrer to occupy the Sudetenland for a mere promise of peace. Chamberlain then returned to England and announced that he had brought "Peace in our time." Winston Churchill denounced him as a naive appeaser who believed that he could buy Hitler's goodwill by giving in to his immoral demands. "You were given a choice between war and dishonor. You chose dishonor and you will have war."

Sadly, the same has transpired with Israel. By relinquishing parts of our homeland, Israel chose dishonor. In return, Israel received war. The relentless terror is a direct result of the tragic policy that believes in appeasing terrorists and not destroying them. Appeasement is suicidal for the innocent and ensures victory for the evil.

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# Shemos: Firgun



**Rabbi Judah Mischel**

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**F**rom its humble beginnings in the shtetl of Mir, Belarus, to fleeing to Shanghai and relocating in Yerushalayim — for more than 200 years — the Mirrer Yeshivah has been a center of Torah learning and personal development. A scion of the Mirrer Yeshivah leadership, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, *zt'l*, had arrived there as a teenager from Chicago. After thirty years of learning, he finally assumed the position of Rosh Yeshivah in 1990. He was an unparalleled *masmid* and showed almost superhuman resilience and determination in learning and spreading Torah, even while facing the challenges of severe Parkinson's disease for much of his adult life.

Through his efforts, guidance and care the Yeshivah grew five times larger, becoming the largest center of Torah in the world. Today, a visitor to the Yeshivah will be met by the roar of thousands of voices of learning, recital and holy debate, like an enormous lion of fierce spiritual power. In addition to teaching and maintaining personal relationships with countless talmidim, the Rosh Yeshivah shouldered the financial responsibility of the entire enterprise, and became one of the greatest builders of Torah and Yidishkeit in modern Jewish history.

Once, while at a wedding of a talmid at a hotel in Bayit Vegan, Jerusalem, Rav Nosson Tzvi heard that the hotel's rooftop lounge offered a sweeping view of the entire city. Excitedly, he asked to go upstairs and take a look. Although in his advanced stages of Parkinson's disease, each and every step was a challenge, he threw incredible effort into walking, and after much time he arrived exhausted at the elevator. As he rested, a student accompanying the Rosh Yeshivah sought

to understand his Rebbe's intent: since when was he so interested in the view?

Smiling ear to ear, Rav Nosson Tzvi explained, "Didn't you hear? Yeshivas Knesset Yisrael, 'the Chevron Yeshivah', is expanding their campus in Givat Mordechai! I've been davening for its successful completion for so long. I want to see their progress!"

At the time, Rav Nosson Tzvi was wrestling with heavy debt from his own ambitious building projects and expansions — on top of the overwhelming financial burden of the many Mirrer institutions. Yet, he rejoiced triumphantly at the sight of another yeshivah's success.



After the tragic fratricide story of Kayin Hevel, *Sefer Bereishis* goes on to detail the heart-wrenching conflicts between Yishmael and Yitzchak, Eisav and Yaakov, and Yosef and his brothers. Only after leading us through these painful, adversarial and dysfunctional sibling rivalries, the Torah brings us to *Sefer Shemos*, the account of our redemption. Here begins the account of *tikun*, the antidote to all those negative patterns and broken family relationships.

In our *sedra*, as Moshe ascends to the leadership of Am Yisrael, he feels uncomfortable; perhaps his older brother, Aharon, would feel slighted. But the *Ribbono shel Olam* assured Moshe that he need not be concerned:

But he said, "Please, My G-d, send through whomever You will send... make someone else Your agent..."

Hashem became angry with Moshe and said, "There is your brother Aharon...He, I know, speaks readily.

Even now he is setting out to meet you, **and he will be happy to see you.**"

(*Shemos*, 4:13-14)

A literal translation of the last phrase is "He will see you, and rejoice in his heart." Rashi confirms that Aharon was genuinely happy for his brother, and celebrated his success. *Midrash Rabba* says, "They would both rejoice in one another's greatness (achievements)."

Together, Moshe and Aharon are role models of brothers who complement one another and work together. They had the admirable *midah* of *firgun* — a trait of genuine, unselfish delight and pride in the accomplishments of the other.

"Look, how 'good' and how 'pleasant' it is when brothers dwell in unity!"

(*Tehillim*, 133)

Here, "good", refers to Moshe, as when he was born, his mother "saw that he was good." Likewise, "pleasant", refers to Aharon, who reconciled alienated spouses and friends. As the *Kohein*, Aharon blessed all with *Shalom*, leaving a trail of pleasantness wherever he went.

Moshe wished for his older brother Aharon to lead, while Aharon deferred to his younger brother, Moshe. They covered for one another and wished one another success. Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai reveals that in merit of Aharon's *firgun*, rejoicing over his brother's achievements, he merited to wear the *Urim v'Tumim*, the breastplate of the *Kohein Gadol*: "The heart that rejoiced over the greatness of his brother was given the joy of being adorned with the breastplate upon which was inscribed the names of all of Am Yisrael."



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# What's in a Name?

## Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

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.

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.

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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It is no mistake that our Redemption from Egypt manifested through two brothers who worked together in harmony. They had different roles but they considered each other equals, not competitors. And this is a lesson for us as well: when we are confident in ourselves and comfortable with our role in the world, we can be *m'fargein*, happy that our brothers and friends are successful. Rambam, in *Sefer haMitzvos*

(206), defines *firgun* as a core Jewish value: "Whatever I wish for myself, I should wish the same for that person."

Reb Yerucham Levovitz in *Da'as Chochmah u'Mussar*, notes that the greatest among us can be swept up in jealousy and stink-eye. Indeed, how challenging it is to not become ensnared in some subtle form of rivalry, and to fully and sincerely rejoice in one another's success. But this points to the exalted level of Aharon and why

he is one of the most beloved holymen in our history.

May we be elevated above the perception of inner lack which drives jealousy and competitiveness, and may we climb to see the awesome panoramic view of the 'goodness' and 'pleasantness' of our people. May we celebrate one another's achievements and successes, and in this way wear the 'breastplate of Aharon', inscribed with the name of every Jew, upon our heart.

# Women and the Cause of Reason



**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi**  
Popular Torah teacher and author

Pharaoh, that wise man, was the king of scenarios. Before anyone even thought of taking over his country, he wanted to cure the plagues preemptively... He calculated the data with strategic precision: "Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the ground." ... a situation that was likely to occur, he said, but then he took a strange step: he wanted to destroy the male babies.

Why not the females who give birth to the babies! Is not that more likely? The Or Chaim answers this great question: "As the proportion of females would increase they would be forced to look for Egyptian husbands due to the dearth of eligible Jewish males. Once the two peoples began to merge through intermarriage there was no longer any fear that they would try to emigrate. Moreover, from a mystical point of view, intermarriage results in holy souls becoming so intertwined with souls of impure origin that any eventual separation would become well nigh impossible." (Or Chaim, Shemot 1:16) Pharaoh wanted only one thing - he

wants masses of women to be left alone in the world, without men to marry them. In such a scenario, a sensible woman will break from loneliness. A sensible woman, according to Pharaoh, cannot remain alone, she will marry an Egyptian and then Pharaoh would benefit not only from the cessation of births, but also from the total assimilation and erasure of identity.

Pharaoh could not imagine that the women would come with a different scenario. "A locked garden is my sister the bride." A locked garden is a depressing description. A description of a place full of potential for seed and fruit and beauty, but it is the disappearing garden. All that goodness is now closing up, and even Moshe can not understand how this bush can not burn, how this daughter, this flame of fire, is closing up. "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground."

There is no such thing as a sensible woman, the midwives tried to explain to Pharaoh. He has a "woman" as an archetype. "A woman should behave like this under such circumstances." But his "data" was wrong. He could not apply the cause of reason because there is no such thing as a "woman." There are women. "The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian

women!" There are women here you do not know, Pharaoh. They will be the non-statistical case, they will be thinking outside the box, they will be a show that no one expected, like a soap bubble that "appeared before Pharaoh." (Midrash Rabbah).

You will remember their names in this book, Sefer Shemot, because they are neither a "people" nor a "woman". They are women with first names: Shifra, Puah, Yocheved, Miriam, Tzipora, and Batya. They will prepare drums for the splitting of the sea, the most improbable act of nature, they will emerge to build a Tabernacle if they believe in the likelihood of a Divine presence in a structure of cloth and wood, they will be the first to receive the Torah, and they will absolutely not participate in the reasonable act - to find an alternative leader in the form of a calf if the previous leader did not come.

Do not try to explain women. Do not start with reasonable reasons. A woman is not "destined to...". She will always act because of a higher article that commands her choice in life, she will always see G-d: "The midwives, feared G-d." And as unlikely as it may sound, we all carry this original thinking of the Egyptian women within us, because they live here, within us.

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G-d, specifically at the moment when Am Yisrael becomes a nation.

Initially (and unfortunately), this goal must first be achieved through force, by Moshe's **mateh** and G-d's **ten** Plagues. Ultimately, when Israel becomes a nation in its own land, this very same goal can be achieved in a more 'peaceful' manner - i.e. through education - should Bnei Yisrael integrate the message of Moshe's **dibbur** and the principles of G-d's **ten** Commandments.

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The terror war on Israel, like World War II, is a war against the Jews. Losing is catastrophic. Losing is not an option. This is no time for appeasement or restraint. This is a time for righteous might.

The prophets of Israel were the first to conceive of peace as an ideal. Isaiah gave voice to the great words engraved in the imagination of the West: "Nation shall not lift up sword against Nation; neither shall they learn war anymore." But the way to

hasten Isaiah's vision is to fight evil, not allow it to flourish. At another time when the Jews needed to forcefully confront their enemies, the prophet Joel declared, "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears." The use of moral violence must always be the last resort. But when all other attempts fail, righteous might is the only response to immoral violence.

# Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin  
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In Parashat Shemot, Moshe's mother famously placed him in a basket along the river:

וְלֹא-יָכְלָה עוֹד הַצִּפּוּי וַתְּקַח-לוֹ תֵּבַת גֹּמָא וַתַּחמְרָה בַּחמֶר וּבְצִפָּת וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל-שֹׁפֶת הַיָּאָר:

"When she could hide him no longer, she got a wicker basket for him and caulked it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child into it and placed it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile." (Shemot 2:3)

The word translated as "basket" here is תֵּבַת. Others translate it as "little-ark" to recall the only other story in the Tanakh where the word תֵּבַת appears – the story of Noah's ark in Bereshit 6-9.

In both cases, the word refers to a box-like boat. And in both stories, the תֵּבַת is a vehicle of protection that led to salvation: for all of humanity with Noah, and later

the nation of Israel was saved by Moshe who was protected by his תֵּבַת.

While תֵּבַת only appears in Bereshit and Shemot in biblical Hebrew, it expanded its use in rabbinic Hebrew. It was used as a general word for "box,"<sup>1</sup> and specifically for the "ark" (closet) that holds the Torah scrolls<sup>2</sup> (although the biblical word for the Ark that carried the Tablets of the Law in the desert is אָרוֹן, which today means "closet.")

It is fairly easy to understand how תֵּבַת progressed from the boat-like box of the Torah to the more general box of the Talmud. But what about another meaning of תֵּבַת – "word"?

Two theories are suggested by the linguist Alexander Kohut in his dictionary *Arukh Hashalem*.

The first theory is that תֵּבַת meaning "word" comes from a different source, and

is related to an Arabic root meaning "cut." He found a parallel in the word מִיֵּלָה. It can also mean "word," but as well can indicate cutting – as in בְּרִית מִיֵּלָה, "circumcision."

His second theory is that תֵּבַת as "word" refers to letters connected as if they were in a box. So for example, in Menachot 30a, the Talmud notes that when writing a Torah scroll, the space between one תֵּבַת and another תֵּבַת must be the size of one small letter. Perhaps each word was considered to be included in an invisible rectangle, separated from the other words.

Both suggestions are plausible, although have challenges to their arguments. In any case, Moshe can always be associated the תֵּבַת of his ark, even if he didn't consider himself "a man of words" (Shemot 4:10)

1. For example, Mishna Tahorot 8:2.
2. For example, Mishna Taanit 2:1

## Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh  
Mizrachi Melbourne

Using all the letters of my name (once only), one can form 2 words that are names of objects, both of which appear in the Parsha.

Who am I? What are the objects?

### Answer to the Parsha Riddle

Mouth = פה (4:10 & 11)

Rock = רב (4:25)

The name משה (2:21, 4:25) wife of Moshe Rabbeinu, can be rearranged to make names of two objects that also appear in the Parsha:





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