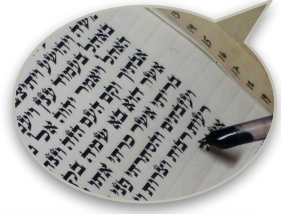




The Collective Conversation

Weekly Torah Essays from the
Young Israel of Scarsdale Community



Sefer Shemot

Parshat Shemot

Tevet 5784 / January 2024



Benjamin on your Bar Mitzvah !

to the entire Raskas family !

Growth — A Doubly Important Observation

By Gabriel Ralph Raskas

In this week's parsha, Shemot, we see the harsh times that Moshe and Bnei Yisrael went through in Eretz Mitzrayim. Early in the Parsha, Yocheved was unable to hide her new born son anymore so she placed him in the river. Soon thereafter, Moshe was taken in by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in the household of Pharaoh. The Torah tells us,

וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַתְּבִאֶהוּ לְבַת־פַּרְעֹה וַיְהִי־לָהּ לְבֵן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי מִן־הַמַּיִם מִשִּׁיתָהוּ

When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who made him her son. She named him Moses, explaining, "I drew him out of the water." (Bereshit 2:10)

In the next pasuk we learn,

וַיְהִי אִ בְּיָמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־אֶחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מַכֶּה אִישׁ־עִבְרִי מֵאֶחָיו

Some time after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen." (2:11)

Rashi asks what's the point of repeating that Moshe grew up—why does the Torah record it in consecutive pesukim? Rabbi Yehuda, the son of Rabbi Illa'i, gives one answer to this question. He says that the first mention of growth was regarding Moshe's physical growth, the second reflects his growth in rank in the household of Pharaoh.

In the sefer Ki Mitzion, which was written by Ben Tzion Rothenberg, Shlita, and is based on Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl, Shlita, we learn that that the first time the Torah wrote that Moshe grew, it was referring to growth

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of his personal rank in Pharaoh's household. The second mention of Moshe's growth refers to his growth in רוחניות, spirituality.

Even though it was hard for Moshe in the house of Pharaoh, where he faced many challenges, he was able to overcome these difficulties. As it says in the pasuk,

וַיִּפֹּן כֹּה וְכֹה וַיֵּרָא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ וַיִּהְיֶה אֶת־הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ בַּחֹל

"He turned this way and that and, seeing no one about, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." (2:12)

This demonstrates Moshe's unwavering loyalty and connection to his Jewish identity despite growing up in the midst of a foreign culture. His actions showcase his deep compassion and sense of justice, as well as his willingness to take risks for the well-being of his fellow Jews. Even though Moshe grew up around Egyptians, he was still able to grow in his relationship with Hashem, and that led him to gain a stronger connection with all of his Jewish brothers and sisters. In Pirkei Avos, Rabbi Eliezer says,

יְהִי כְבוֹד חֲבֵרְךָ חֲבִיב עֲלֶיךָ כְּשֻׁלְךָ

Let the honor of your friend be as dear to you as your own.
(Pirkei Avot 2:10)


Moshe portrayed this perfectly while being raised in the house of Pharaoh. Moshe's behavior is a lesson for us all to be the best possible friend and community member we can be.

During this difficult time for Klal Yisrael, we need to be able to feel the pain of all of our Jewish brothers and sisters who have been terribly hurt. We all need to step up in our own ways and strive to be like Moshe Rabbeinu, who felt the pain of the Jewish people. Moreover, unlike Moshe, we are fortunate to have been given the opportunity to live in a community filled with tremendous Yiddishkeit and we all must take advantage of this opportunity.

May we all have the zechus to grow and deepen our love for Hashem and all of our Jewish brothers and sisters.

Gabriel Ralph Raskas moved to Scarsdale with his family in 2008. He is currently studying at Yeshiva Torat Shraga during his gap year and is very excited to be home from Israel to celebrate the Bar Mitzvah of his younger brother, Benny boy!

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