

Good Shabbos, everyone.

Mazel Tov to Shlomo and Joy Shulman on the *aufruf* of their son, Yehuda, and his upcoming marriage to Tova Ginsparg. May Yehuda and Tova be *zoche* to build a *bayis ne'eman beYsrael*.

Thank you to the sponsors of today's drasha:

- Jeremy and Devora Gradon, "In recognition of all the people who called, visited and made donations on behalf of our mother, Mrs. Vera Gradon, of London, England."
- Mervyn Myers, "In honor of my wife, Adele Myers, on our 55th wedding anniversary today, January 9th, with much love and admiration."

Mazel tov! May you have many more happy and healthy years together!

Thank you to all the sponsors for their support of the shul. May Hakadosh Baruch Hu reward you with *bracha*, *hatzlacha*, and good health!

This week, we were confronted with astonishing images of a mob of protesters breaching the United States Capitol building, causing the Members of Congress to be removed for their own safety. It looked like a video we would expect in other countries; not what we would expect in this country. This threat to the basic principles of our democracy shakes us all to the core. Freedom of speech and the right to protest peacefully are sacred constitutional rights of every American, but violence has no place. The images of antisemitic slogans, which accompanied some of the protesters, were also jarring. We are taught in **Pirkei Avos3:2** *הוי מתפלל בשלומה של מלכות* to *daven* for a stable government, something we do in Shul every Shabbos, and at this time we must intensify our *tefillos* for our government and pray that law and order, safety and security will be restored to our country. We *daven* that the United States of America can regain its reputation in the world as a beacon of freedom and justice.

In other upsetting news, Johns Hopkins University has launched an investigation into a Teaching Assistant named Rasha Anaya, in the Chemistry Department, who posted on her social media her dilemma whether she should lower the grades of Jewish students. In a tweet she wrote, "*ethical dilemma: if you have to grade a zionist students exam, do you still give them all their points even though they support your ethnic cleansing? Like idk [I don't know]*" When 77% of the respondents replied, "*Free Palestine! Fail them,*" she wrote, "*like I agree...*" Whether or not she actually lowered grades is irrelevant. The open expression of antisemitism, which is on the rise in our country, is deeply disturbing. It is all too common in our long history of *galus*. It is something we begin reading about in today's Parsha with the beginnings of *sh'ibud Mitzrayim*. It is the story of the Jewish people and our persecution in *galus*. We began reading what is called the Book of Exodus by the Septuagint, called the ספר הגאולה, Book of Redemption, by Chazal, and referred to in Chazal and Rishonim as the Sefer Shemos; the Book of Names,

The **Chasam Sofer** writes, based on a Zohar, that the same way Adam HaRishon called things by names by identifying their essential characteristics and understanding their true nature, the names of the Jewish people who came down to Mitzrayim represent and include within them the holiness of the Jewish people for all generations...

תורת משה שמות פרק א פסוק א: ואלה שמות בני ישראל. י"ל כמו שבכלל השמות שקרא אדם הראשון, תכונת כל דבר ודבר בשמו אשר קרא לו אדם, כך בכלל שמות בני ישראל כל קדושת ישראל של דורות הבאים, וכשיצאו ממצרים הכל יצא עמהם. . . וזה שאיתא בהגדה לא את אבותינו בלבד גאל הקדוש ברוך הוא אלא אף אותנו גאל עמהם שנאמר ואותנו הוציא משם, וזה כוונת הזוהר עיין שם ותבין.

But there is a glaring question regarding the names in this Parsha. The opening paragraph lists the names of the *shevatim* who came down to Mitzrayim—ואשר, ובנמין, דן, ונפתלי, גד, ואשר. But the names which come later are anything but straightforward. The Torah seems to intentionally change the names of the key players in the narrative and give new names to many. The antagonist, the new king--*melech chadash*--is not named. Later, we are introduced to him as Paraoh. Amram and Yocheved, the parents of Moshe Rabbeinu, are simply called *Ish Mibeis Levi* and *Bas Levi*. Bas Paraoh is not named. Moshe Rabbeinu was called by the name he was given on account of his being drawn out of the water, a seemingly trivial detail in his life. Of everything Moshe would go on to do—everything he represented--why call him a name based on the fact that he was drawn out of the water?

And last but not least, the midwives who stood up to Paroah and heroically saved the baby boys, who Chazal teach us were Yocheved and Miriam, were called Shifra and Puah in the Torah for their role in pampering and soothing the babies.

As **Rashi** teaches from the Gemara in Sota 11b

שפרה – זו יוכבד על שם שמשפרת את הולד:

שפרה Shifra — This was Yocheved. She bore this additional name because she used to put the baby after its birth into good physical condition (משפרת) by the care she bestowed upon it (Sotah 11b).

פועה – זו מרימא שפועה ומדברת והוגה לולד כדרך הנשים המפייסות תינוק הבוכה.

פועה Puah — This was Miriam. She bore this additional name because she used to call aloud and speak and croon to the baby just as women do to soothe a child when it is crying (Sotah 11b).

I heard an interesting follow up question on the *meyaldos*, the midwives, from **Rabbi Betzael Rudinsky** in the name of the Divrei Chaim of Sanz. Why is the Torah stressing these small, seemingly insignificant details? If the midwives indeed saved Jewish babies at great risk to themselves, the fact that they soothed and cared for babies seems nice but quite insignificant. Why would the Torah go out of its way to give them these names—focusing on what appear to be small, side accomplishments. This is especially true in light of the Chasam Sofer's comment that a name represents an identity! These women saved lives—why focus on soothing babies?

Rabbi Rudinsky answered that what makes great people great is the little things they do. Their focus on the small things, despite their exalted levels, is what make them larger than life...Their attention to detail...the fact that they go above and beyond the call of duty...that's what truly defines them as great.

Big people can stand up to adversaries and oppressors. In heroic moments, they make difficult choices. But **giant** people are able to see the needs of everyone—even babies...and are able to soothe the babies in small detailed ways. The Torah is highlighting that these giants of human beings didn't just save babies with single acts of courage, they also nurtured them in small and significant ways. It is the small things that define us. These small acts truly defined these extraordinary women.

This week, someone gave me as a gift, the new biography of **Rav Moshe Kulefsky**, zt'l, a beloved rebbe at Ner Yisrael for more than fifty years, who later was a Rosh Yeshiva there for a short period of time, when I was learning there. In discussing the care and attention he gave to the Iranian *bachurim* who came to the yeshiva, many without parents here to look after them, and symbolizing his *rachmanus* towards all those who needed extra attention, the book records the following story. *“A Russian fellow living in Baltimore made a bris and named his son Yaakov Moshe after Rav Kulefsky. Someone asked him if he had ever learned in Rav Kulefsky's shiur. He replied that he had met Rav Kulefsky only once. However, one incident made such a profound impression on him that he decided to name his baby after him. This fellow had a Russian friend who did in fact learn in Rav Kulefsky's shiur. When this bachur (whose father was not in this country) became a chassan he invited Rav Kulefsky to attend his vort, which was being held in a community center for Russian Jews. **Rav Kulefsky came in at the beginning of the vort and stayed the entire time, until the last guest left, just like a father sits next to his son at these occasions.** This made such an impression that the bachur's friend thought that he would want his son to grow up like such a person and thus named his son Yaakov Moshe after Rav Kulefsky.”*

Small gestures define great people. Great people notice others and go the extra mile to help them. They are not too aloof to notice the needs of others. We see this in Moshe Rabbeinu's hesitation to take on the role of leader because it may hurt his brother Aharon. **Rav Ruderman**, zt'l, in his *Sichos Avodas Levi* Maamar 29 cites the **Alter of Slabodka's** observation that Moshe was so concerned with not hurting his brother's feelings that although the greater good was at stake—saving the Jewish people--he would not do it in a way that hurt his brother. Big people pay attention to small details. They do not become so absorbed with their grand vision that they ever lose sight of others.

מבואר מהמדרש שמשה רבינו לא רצה להיות שלוחו של הקב"ה להוציא את בני ישראל ממצרים מפני שחשש פן יפגע בכבודו של אהרן שהיה נביאם של ישראל עד הנה. וקשה טובא, שאם הקב"ה צוהו להוציאם ממצרים א"כ בודאי הוא ראוי לתפקיד זה יותר מאהרן, וא"כ איך שייך שמשה מיאן להיות מושיעם של ישראל? וביאר הסבא מסלבודקא שמכאן מבואר החומר של פגיעה בכבוד חבירו, שאע"פ שקבלת התפקיד של "מושיעם של ישראל" היא לטובת כלל ישראל והקב"ה בעצמו ביקש ממנו שיקבל עליו תפקיד זה, מכל מקום אינו כדאי לעשות כן אם על ידי זה יפגע בכבודו של חבירו. והרבה פעמים שמעתי מהסבא מסלבודקא שהיה מדגיש החומר של פגיעה בכבוד חבירו.

Rav Yehuda Amital, founding Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion, explained the founding principle of the yeshiva based on a famous story with the Alter Rebbe, the **Baal Hatanya**.

Once, while the Alter Rebbe was at home immersed in learning, he heard the cries of a baby. Interrupting his learning, he went down the stairs and lovingly picked up his grandchild, who had fallen out of his crib. Holding the infant until his cries subsided, he put him back in the crib and rocked him gently for a short while until the baby fell back to sleep. The Alter Rebbe's son, Reb DovBer, who would become known as the Mittlerer Rebbe, was in the same room as his baby but was so engrossed in his learning that he was oblivious to everything that had happened. When Reb DovBer finally felt his father's presence, the Alter Rebbe rebuked him and said: "One must never be so immersed in his studies [or the service of Hashem] that he does not hear the cry of a child. One must never be so immersed in anything—even avodas Hashem-- such that they cannot hear the cries of others in need.

But there is another crucial component that the Torah is highlighting. The true attributes of a person, his true motivation and intention, is recognized through the little things he does—because typically little things are done when **no one is watching**—and no one would ever know. It shows a level of *lishma* in their devotion. Shifra and Puah standing up to the decree—saving the baby boys for their mothers—that is heroic and courageous—but it is in plain sight. There is a certain glory in taking a public stand. The extra things they did—to soothe the babies, that would have gone unnoticed, and that didn't "need to be done"—no one would have heard about it, if the Torah had not pointed it out. That is the mark of true greatness...pure intentions.

Similarly, Moshe Rabbeinu's greatness was shown in the first incident when he left his comfortable palace—an act he thought no one observed...

שמות פרשת שמות פרק ב פסוק יא (יא) וַיֵּהוּ אֵין אִישׁ וַיֵּהוּ בְּיָמֵי הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל-אֶחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מַכֶּה אִישׁ-עִבְרִי מֵאֶחָיו (יב) וַיִּפֶן כֹּה וַיֵּרָא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ וַיִּבֶן אֶת-הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ בַּחֹל

Moshe grew up—he left the palace—went out to his people and observed them in their slavery and saw an Egyptian man beating a Jew. He looked around and saw no one was there, and he killed the Mitzri and buried him.

Why does the Torah stress that no one was watching? I would like to suggest that the Torah is highlighting that he was not looking for fanfare or glory. Moshe Rabbeinu was interested in only one thing—doing what was right. The fact that no one was there to observe made this an even greater act.

Mesilas Yesharim Perek 16 writes about the level of doing *mitzvos lishma*—doing the right thing simply because it is right. What the **Rambam** calls *לעשות האמת מפני שהוא אמת*.

...שלפעמים האדם הולך ועושה מצוה לשמה ממש, שכך גזר אבינו שבשמים, אמנם לא יחדל מלשתף עמה איזה פניה אחרת, או שישבחוהו בני האדם או שיקבל שכר במעשהו. ולפעמים, אפילו אם לא יהיה מתכון ממש לשישבחוהו, בשמוח לבו על השבח ירבה לדקדק יותר, כעין מעשה של בתו של רבי חנינא בן תרדיון) ע"ז י"ח א: (שהיתה פוסעת פסיעות יפות, וכיון ששמעה שאומרים כמה נאות פסיעותיה של ריבה זו, מיד דקדקה יותר. הרי התוספת הזו נולד מכח השבח ששיבחוהו .

...sometimes a person does a mitzva really for its own sake, namely, that thus our Father decreed, but he cannot refrain from including with it some other motive, such as that other people praise him or that he receive a reward for it. Sometimes, although he does not actually intend that others praise him, nevertheless in rejoicing on the praise received, he puts more effort to improve it. This is similar to the story of Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon's daughter who was once walking in a graceful manner. When she heard (the Romans) saying: "how beautiful that girl walks," she immediately tried to become more meticulous [in her gracefulness] (Avodah Zara 18a). Hence, this addition stemmed from the spurring of the praise with which they praised her.

...והנה באמת זהו המבחן שבו נבחנים ונבדלים עובדי ה' עצמם במדרגתם, כי מי שיודע לטהר לבו יותר, הוא המתקרב יותר והאהוב יותר אצלו יתברך. הם המה הראשונים אשר בארץ המה, אשר גברו ונצחו בדבר הזה, האבות ושאר הרועים אשר טהרו לבם לפניו. הוא מה שדוד מזהיר את שלמה (בנו) דברי הימים א כח:ט: (כי כל לבבות דורש ה' וכל יצר מחשבות מבין).

In truth, this is the criterion through which the servants of G-d themselves are tested and differentiated in their respective levels. For he who knows more how to purify his heart is likewise drawn closer and is more beloved by Him, blessed be He. These are the ancient ones in the land, who overcame and were victorious in this area, namely, the forefathers and the other shepherds who purified their hearts before Him. This is what David exhorted his son Shlomo: For the L-rd searches all hearts and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts"

This level of *lishma* is highlighted in the "small" and private actions of Yocheved and Miriam. It represented the *lishma* attitude of everything they did.

But there is one more very significant idea expressed through names, specifically Moshe Rabbeinu's name.

פסיקתא זוטריתא (לקח טוב) שמות פרשת שמות פרק ב פסוק י: ותקרא שמו משה. משוי היה ראוי לומר, שהרי משה משוי היה, אלא על שם ישראל שהוא משה אותם והוציאם ממצרים... לכך נקרא שמו משה שהוא משה אחרים...
חזקוני שמות פרשת שמות פרק ב פסוק י

משה משוי אין כתיב כאן אלא משה לומר כשם שמשיתיהו כן יהיה הוא משה אחרים פי' יהיה מושה ישראל ממצרים.

The **Psikta**, and later the **Chizkuni**, ask why he was not named *mashui*—משוי drawn out. *Moshe* means to draw out. The **Psikta** answers that the name was not referring to an incident, his past, but to a mission—his future. His life purpose would be to draw the Jews out of Egypt. His name was his mission; to take his own life experience and have empathy for one who is vulnerable and needs help.

Rav Hirsch comments:

רש"ר הירש שמות פרשת שמות פרק ב פסוק י: (י) משה קרוב ל"מצה", למשוך מן המים בכוח, לשאוב. גם "משה" הוא הפרדה מלאכותית מכל חומר נזולי אחר. לא "משוי", מי שנמשה מן המים, קראה את שמו, אלא "משה" – המציל מן המים. אולי בא זה לרמוז על מגמת החינוך, שהעניקה הנסיכה לבנה המאומץ, והרושם העמוק שעיצב את אופיו משחר ילדותו. במתן שם זה ביקשה לומר: אל ישכח כל ימי חלדו, שהושלך אל המים, ונמשה מתוכם על ידי. על כן יהיה כל ימיו בעל לב רך, וקשוב לייסורי הזולת, ויהיה נכון תמיד להיות מושיע בעת צרה, להיות "מושה".

She did not name his, "משוי one who was drawn out of water, but משה, "one who delivers from the water." This may indicate the direction of education the princess gave her foster son and the deep impression that was made on his character from early childhood. By giving him this name, she wished to say: As long as he lives he must never forget that he was thrown into water and that I drew him out of it. For this reason he should always be softhearted and attentive to the suffering of others, and he should ready at all times to be a Moshe, a deliverer in time of trouble. Furthermore, his Hebrew name is to make him ever conscious of his origin.

And this explains why Moshe is called Moshe. It comes from the fact that he was drawn out of the water. He was saved and given a mission to use his experience to save others, which he fulfilled valiantly.

Names in TaNa"Ch represent core identity. The names in this Sefer are *midos* which the Jewish people have inherited—of empathy, of compassion, and of greatness. As Rashi teaches at the beginning of the Parsha, the Jewish people are compared to stars. Stars are extremely powerful, but not always visible...

But as **Rav Boruch Sorotzkin** writes

הבינה והברכה ר' רפאל ברוך סורוצקין ר"י טלז

ואלה שמות. רש"י להודיע חיבתן שנמשלו לכוכבים...הדמיון לכוכבים הוא ג"כ שאף שלפעמים ביום מעונן אין נראים הכוכבים אבל בעצם ישנם רק שהענן מכסם מעין הרואים, כך בני ישראל הם לעולם במעליותם רק לפעמים החושך והענן מכסה מעליותם מעין הרואים.

*The comparison to stars is that on cloudy days, the stars are not visible but they are still there, just covered for the time being. Similarly, the Jewish people are always filled with glory, but the darkness and the clouds obscure it from the human eye. May we never forget who we are, or where we came from. May we never forget about our responsibility to help others. And he lesson of our ancestors that greatness is not diminished by hearing the cry of others—it is enhanced. May we always listen to others and respond, and may Hakadosh Baruch Hu listen and respond to our tefillos and bring about the ultimate *geula bimhera viyamenu*...amen.*