

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT SHEMOT

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

SHARE THE PAIN!

The Gemara Sotah (11a) tells us that Pharaoh had three advisers: Yitro, Iyov and Bilam. Pharaoh wished to decide how to deal with the Israelite "problem". He sought the opinion of each of his three advisers.

Bilam, was an evil man and relished the prospect of eradicating the Jewish people. He advised Pharaoh to kill the male Israelites.

Iyov was opposed to any plan to destroy the Jewish nation. Rather than display his true feelings on the issue, he refrained from offering any opinion and he remained silent. Yitro, on the other hand, vocally rejected Pharaoh's idea of exterminating the Jewish people. Yitro believed it was wrong that these people should be made to suffer for no crime other than being Jewish. Yitro's loud protests angered Pharaoh and Yitro had to flee Egypt to save his life.

The Talmud continues by telling us that each of the three advisers were rewarded or punished according to his deed. Bilam was killed by the very people he sought to exterminate. Iyov, who remained silent in the face of Jewish oppression, was afflicted with a life of pain and suffering. Yitro, who fled because of his opposition, sacrificing his position of leadership and life of comfort and wealth in Egypt, eventually became the father-in-law of Moshe and his descendants merited serving as prominent judicial leaders in the Sanhedrin.

Hashem dealt Mida Keneged Mida – measure for measure with all three of them. On retrospection one can understand both Yitro and Bilam's reward and punishment, yet it is difficult to comprehend why Iyov's

punishment was so severe.

In fact, even if Iyov had objected, Pharaoh would have still enacted his decree. Iyov's only sin was remaining silent. Why then did he have to suffer such a harsh life, where tragedy followed tragedy?

The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot lists 48 ways to acquire Torah. We are taught for example that studying, listening, minimising one's sleep are all ways of acquiring the Torah.

One way out of the 48 seems to stand out. The 39th way is - Nosei Be'ol Chaveiro – participating in the burden of one's fellow. Why should participating in the burden of one's fellow, enable us to acquire Torah?

Hashem gave Am Yisrael the Torah as a nation. We were all there at Har Sinai, in fact all the future souls of our nation were there. The Torah was not handed down to one individual; rather it was handed to the nation. One of the intrinsic messages in this action was that to uphold and to learn this Torah, there needs to be unity. One needs to see himself as part of the other person, one big family.

Choosing a leader isn't easy. When it came to redeeming Am Yisrael, Hashem chose Moshe from the tribe of Levi. What action reveals Moshe's potential as a leader, and what was so special about the tribe of Levi? When the Torah relates the lineage of Reuven Shimon and Levi (Shemot 6:14-16) the Torah states the sons of Reuven... The sons of Shimon... yet when it comes to Levi, the Torah states "These were the NAMES of the sons of Levi...". Why does the Torah emphasize the names of Levi, while those of Reuven and Shimon are seemingly ignored? The Sh'lah HaKadosh (Rav Yeshayahu HaLevi Horowitz) explained that in Egypt the nation was subjugated to servitude. The

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tribe of Levi, however, were not. One might have expected them to enjoy this status and "forget" about their brothers. It is to this that the Torah emphasises the names of Levi's children. He named his sons after his brothers' bondage. "Gershon" -- for they were "Gerim" (aliens) in a foreign land. "Kehat" -- for they gritted their teeth (Kehat) in their suffering. "Merari" -- for their lives had been embittered (Maror). Levi wished to actively participate in his brothers' anguish, identifying with them in their times of stress he named his sons accordingly. It is for this reason the Torah stresses their names. Similarly, the Torah relates that "Moshe grew up, and he went out amongst his brethren, and he saw their suffering" (Shemot 2:11). Moshe was a prince in Pharaoh's palace. He had everything going for him. Yet he knew his identity and he yearned to relate to his people. The Midrash comments that Moshe saw their suffering and cried: "How my heart goes out for your suffering! If only I could die for you, to spare you your suffering." Moshe removed his princely garments and went out into the field to try to help his brethren make the bricks and mortar, just so that he could be a part of their pain. According to the Midrash, Hashem said

to him: "You left your comforts to participate in the pain of Israel as an equal; I will leave the company of the Higher Ones so that I may speak with you." It is for this reason that Moshe was chosen as a leader. A leader must be able to see beyond the physicality to delve deep and feel the emotional suffering as if that suffering is happening to him. Moshe felt it, he was distressed, and he acted accordingly. The Alter of Kelm comments that earlier we find the Torah relates that "Hashem Saw and Hashem Knew" (that the time had come for redemption) (Shemot 2:28). Rashi, explaining this verse, uses virtually the same expression as he did concerning Moshe: "G-d placed his eye upon them and did not remove his heart from them." The Alter of Kelm explains that G-d was inspired - as it were - by the actions of Moshe. It was Moshe's own similar actions that triggered G-d's looking at and taking to heart, so to speak, the troubles of the Jewish people. Such is the power of Am Yisrael, when we are together, when we truly feel for our brothers and sisters then Hashem's redemption is sure to follow. We can now understand why Iyov suffered for his silence.

Iyov, was not sure what possible good would come out of him voicing resistance to Pharaoh's evil edict. He reckoned it would not change anything. Even if Pharaoh would not change the edict, he still should have voiced his opinion. When Iyov personally suffered, then he did not remain silent, rather he raised his voice beseeching G-d. Thus, Iyov's punishment stirred him to react in a manner that in turn demonstrated the error of his failure to raise his voice in protest against Pharaoh's heinous plan. I was once in Yerushalayim talking to a Gadol Hador, when an ambulance with its siren wailing whizzed by. The Gadol, stopped in the middle of talking to me, and with his eyes closed started to say a prayer. At first it didn't hit me, but then I realised what had happened. The Rav didn't see the ambulance as a piece of scenery in the background. He saw it as a person in distress, a person who is being rushed to hospital, a person in need of help. This is how we must approach the suffering of our fellow Jews. Just as we share in our nations sorrow, so to may Hashem Bless us to always share in our people's Simcha Bekarov. Amen



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT SHEMOT

This week we start reading the Book of Exodus. ספר שמות The Book of Exodus is also called the Book of Redemption, because it deals with the redemption of Israel under Egyptian bondage.

Although the Book of Redemption is called ספר שמות the Book of names, we find that in this פרשה which describes the birth of the Savior of Israel, all the names have disappeared.

This is how the Torah describes the birth of Moses.

וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי - A certain man of the house of Levi went

וַיִּקַּח אֶת-בֵּת לֵוִי - and married a Levite woman.

וַתֵּהָרַם הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן - The woman conceived and bore a son;

וַתַּצֵּב אֶחָתוֹ מֵרָחֵק - And his sister stationed herself at a distance.

וַתֵּרֶד בֵּת פַּרְעֹה - The daughter of Pharaoh came down

Why did the Torah not say, "and Amram went out and married Yocheved, and she bore a son and named him Moses, and his sister Miriam stationed herself at a distance... and Batya the daughter of Pharaoh came down"?

Why did the Torah erase all the names from this section of the Parasha?

The Torah teaches us an important lesson here.

If it really was written, "And Amram went out and married Yocheved, and she bore a son and named him Moses, and his sister Miriam stationed herself at a distance..." We could think that only a man born to a father who is the greatest of the generation like Amram and a righteous mother like Yocheved, a brother to Miriam who received prophecy at the age of three; only such a person is capable of being a leader, a saviour, a faithful servant. That is why there is no

mention of their names in the Torah. So that we know that this is not what made Moshe the leader; but the care, the concern for the individual and the willingness to do everything in his power to alleviate his brother's suffering is the reason he was chosen by G-d to lead the Jewish nation.

Many times, what stops us from doing the right thing, reaching out to help, saying a comforting word, giving good advice, is the feeling of inadequacy.

'Who am I? What powers do I have? I'm not Moshe! I was not born to parents like Amram and Yocheved. I just do not fit into it!'

G-d tells you, 'It does not matter where you came from. The main thing for me is, where are you willing to go'. The desire, the readiness, the courage to do the right thing, are the ones that give us the power to be an ambassador, a messenger of the Divine. A messenger to spread light, hope and redemption.



RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

WHAT IS FAITH?

As we start the book of Shemot, let us delve into its general message and central theme. The perashah begins with the descent of Yaakov Avinu and his family to Egypt. They were only a small group when they arrived, but in the course of their sojourn there for two hundred and ten years, they became a multitudinous people. During this time, the persecution and slavery that they endured brought out from within them the attributes of faith and trust in G-d, giving them the emotional strength to withstand their oppression.

Our Sages refer to the Jewish People as "believers, the sons of believers". Our faith in G-d is hereditary – inherited from our forefathers. We have emunah – faith in G-d, that He created the world, and is directly involved with all that happens to each Jew individually, and to all of us as a people. He will ultimately reward us for every good action that we do and mete out punishment for any transgression of His word. It is true that we are commanded to constantly have

emunah – faith in G-d, and to put our hope and trust in Him, but what exactly is faith?

Faith is the knowledge that another party has complete reliability. If, for example, we have a faithful friend, that means we can have trust in him. If he gives us his word that he will do a particular action, or that he will be a specific place at a certain time, we know that he will do his utmost to fulfil this, as with him "a word is a word," and we can certainly rely on him. Concerning such a person, whatever the situation and however hard or even seemingly contradictory it may be for him to do what he said, we can nevertheless be confident, rest assured and even relaxed, that he will be true to his word. If, however, we find that he deviates, even slightly, from his given word, then he loses his complete reliability. We cannot rely on him totally, nor have complete confidence in him anymore. Someone once told me that as kids they would play a game, that one of them would be blindfolded and would have to fall backwards, relying on their friend to catch them before they fell to the floor. Although not advisable, this game

portrays complete reliance.

We, as Jews, are commanded to have faith in G-d, that He is always in complete control of everything, and nothing in the world takes place that is not His will. In other words, we must have total reliance on Him. In all situations, whatever may be, whether it seems feasible or not, whether we understand or not, when a person has complete reliance on G-d, and says "I can rely on You (G-d), I know that it is You and only You, and that there isn't and cannot be a safer place to be other than under Your complete protection" – this is faith. Concerning such a person it can be said: "He is living with G-d!"

In the coming weeks, we will address various questions concerning the topic of "living with G-d." When can we depend on "our reliance on Him"? How can we be sure that we are really relying on Him, and not, even subconsciously, on our family or overdraft facility to come to our rescue at the end of the day? How much of our own input is required for the success of any given situation? What is the difference between faith and trust? How can we work on acquiring our reliance on G-d?



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

WHEN DOES SHABBAT END?

Shabbat is over when three medium stars appear in the sky. This is shortly after sunset; however, the exact timing is a big debate among the rabbis. The timing also depends on the location. In Baghdad for example, the Ben Ish Hai (Rabbi Yosef Haim, Baghdad 1833-1869) writes that they would wait until 37 minutes after sunset. In Aleppo, they would wait until 35 minutes after

sunset. These timings were unique to the Middle East where it got dark early. In New York and New Jersey where it gets dark later one should wait till 42 minutes after sunset.

Hacham Obadia Yosef writes that one should try to follow the opinion of Rabbenu Tam (France, 1100-1171) to wait till 72 minutes after sunset. If one can't follow this opinion to refrain from all labour forbidden on Shabbat, he should at least follow this opinion to refrain from labours which are forbidden

biblically. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) writes that in Europe where Rabbenu Tam lived it took longer for it to get dark. Accordingly, Rabbenu Tam's 72 minutes in New York time where it gets darker faster, would be equivalent to 50 minutes.

Rabbi Shelomo Zalman Auerbach (Jerusalem, 1919-1995) writes that if one who follows Rabbenu Tam's opinion heard or said the Haddallah before this time he fulfils his obligation even though it is still Shabbat for him.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Shemot

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shemot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and

arranges for his mother Yocheved to be his nursemaid.

Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mount Sinai), Moshe witnesses the burning bush where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael, the Land promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the

people's eyes: transforming his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker, G-d tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews go.

Rabbi Sinclair, Seasonsofthemoon.com



Why does the verse say "And Yosef was in Egypt?"

1:5 - This verse adds that despite being in Egypt as a ruler, Yosef maintained his righteousness.

2

Why did Pharaoh specifically choose water as the means of killing the Jewish boys? (Two reasons.)

1:10,22 - He hoped to escape Divine retribution, as Hashem promised never to flood the entire world. Also, his astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer's downfall would be through water.

3

"She saw that he was good." What did she see "good" about Moshe that was unique?

2:22 - When he was born, the house was filled with light.

4

What lesson was Moshe to learn from the fact that the burning bush was not consumed?

3:12 - Just as the bush was not consumed, so too Moshe would be protected by Hashem.



5

What did the staff turning into a snake symbolize?

4:3 - It symbolized that Moshe spoke ill of the Jews by saying that they wouldn't listen to him, just as the original snake sinned through speech.

6

"And Hashem was angry with Moshe..." What did Moshe lose as a result of this anger?

4:14 - Moshe lost the privilege of being a kohen.

7

What was special about Moshe's donkey?

4:20 - It was used by Avraham for akedat Yitzchak and will be used in the future by mashiah.

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