



שְׁמוֹת Shmot

אשרינו Ashreinu

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion



Becoming a “Gadol”

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In this week's parsha we are introduced to Moshe Rabbeinu. We see the development of a young child growing up in the palace of Pharaoh, who ultimately becomes the leader of a revolt. At the

beginning of his journey, the pasuk says:

וַיְהִי בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל-אֶחָיו וַיֵּרָא
בְּסִבְלַתָּם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מִכֶּה אִישׁ-עִבְרִי מֵאֶחָיו

And it was in those days, Moshe grew up and went out to his brothers and saw their pain. He saw an Egyptian man hitting an Ivri man, one of his brothers (Shmot 2:11).

What does it mean “he saw **their** pain?” He seemed to

see one incident of an Egyptian hitting an Ivri; it was a singular event, not the pain of the masses. Furthermore, what does it mean וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלַתָּם? Why is there a “ב”? What does it mean he saw **in** their pain?

Perhaps because of these questions, the Midrash (Shmot Rabbah) expounds on the verse and explains that Moshe saw that the workload was not being distributed properly amongst the Jewish slaves and he went into the field and helped them with their loads. Meaning, he saw **their** pain, the workload of all the people. Furthermore, he did not just observe this injustice, but he acted on it and left the palace to help the slaves and lighten their the load. The “ב” - וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלַתָּם - highlights that he joined **in** their pain and helped them.

This is our introduction to grown-up Moshe Rabbeinu. The greatest leader of the Jewish people was one who saw injustice and, more importantly, acted on behalf of the people to try and repair the problem. This is leadership. Caring about other people and acting on their behalf.

Generally, when referring to great rabbis we call them גדולים, greats. I once heard from Rabbi Yissocher Frand, based on this pasuk, that a גדול means someone who sees beyond himself and cares about the larger community. That is the meaning of the words וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה, “and Moshe grew up.” It doesn’t just mean that he aged and matured. It means that Moshe became גדול, great, by seeing beyond himself and caring about others.

Raised from Royalty

Yitzy Lanner ('19)

In this week’s parsha, Parshat Shmot, we are introduced to the savior of the Jewish nation, Moshe Rabbeinu. At a very young age, Moshe was put into the river to be saved from the evil decree of Pharaoh, which was to kill all the Jewish baby boys. As Rashi explains, Pharaoh’s astrologers told Pharaoh that the savior of the Jewish people was born and his ultimate demise would be punishment by water. Therefore, Pharaoh made his terrible decree to throw baby boys in the Nile in order to ensure that there would be no savior of the Jewish people.

However, Moshe was saved and raised by Pharaoh’s daughter, Batya. Ironically, the savior of the Jews was raised in his Pharaoh’s own palace. Why is that? Why did Moshe need to be raised in the palace of Pharaoh before taking Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim?

The Ibn Ezra (2:3) offers a simple, yet meaningful answer. He says that Moshe needed to grow up in Pharaoh’s palace before leading the Jews to freedom, because Moshe needed to be surrounded by a world of leadership and royalty, which he would have missed if he was a slave like the rest of Bnei Yisrael. Moshe needed this royal and free upbringing in order to be prepared to lead millions of slaves into freedom.

We can learn a very important lesson from this. Of course people are born with certain characteristics which can not be changed, however, there are some characteristics that can develop over time. This shows the importance of being nurtured in a proper healthy environment. Only with the correct nurturing, can one reach his full potential.

Talking to God

Sara Deichman ('19)

The Rama (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 81:7) holds that a newborn Jewish child should not nurse from a non-Jewish woman, so that the nature of non-Jewish women does not affect the child’s “spiritual health”. According to the Biur HaGra, this stems from our parsha, Parshat Shmot, in which baby Moshe refuses to nurse from Batya, his adoptive mother and the daughter of Pharaoh. However, Rashi states the reason for this is because Moshe would one day converse with God. Nowadays, we are unable to talk to God in the same way Moshe did, face to face. This brings up a question of relevance. If we as individuals do not speak directly to God, why does this rule remain? One compelling answer is the belief that we actually do speak to God! Although our level of conversation may not be as holy as it once was, through our prayers and belief in God we speak to Him constantly. For that reason, our lips must be pure.

In addition, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky zt”l suggests that we should have high hopes for the future, believing that one day our children will be talking directly to God! We mustn’t give up faith on the idea of conversing with God, for our children or for ourselves.

From the Darkest Nights

Shalom Brauser ('19)

This week’s parsha, Shmot, begins with the pasuk:

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיִם אֶת יַעֲקֹב אִישׁ וּבֵיתוֹ בָּאוּ

These are the names of the sons of Yisrael who came to Egypt with Yaakov, each coming with his household (Shmot 1:1).

The Torah then counts those who came down to Mitzrayim. But Rashi raises an interesting question: Why, if they were already enumerated back in Sefer Bereishit, does the Torah now list them again? Rashi answers that now, after their death, Hashem counts them again to show how precious they are, that they

are compared to the stars who are also counted by Hashem.

Several questions must be asked in order to deepen our understanding of Rashi's answer. First, why even reiterate the preciousness of Yaakov's family, and why especially after their death? What is the message for us? And why specifically say that we're like the stars, and not just that He loves us a lot?

The Shemen Hatov answers all these questions beautifully. He says that now, as Israel prepares to enter oppression and slavery, it is imperative that Hashem reiterates His vast love for them. The galut that Bnei Yisrael was entering was arguably the worst galut of our history. After growing up with and interacting with these tzadikim, with Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov and his children, and being exposed to such clear kedusha, Bnei Yisrael are now entering a period of long darkness, devoid of any connection whatsoever to Hashem. So, to show us that He has not forgotten us, he expresses his abundant love once more. He is telling us that even though we are entering these dark times, he has not cast us away. The slavery in Mitzrayim was for a purpose. So he likens us to stars, because stars shine brightest in the dark. Bnei Yisrael had to fall to the lowest depths in order to rise to the highest heights. We had to endure the galut of Mitzrayim in order to leave in a state of freedom and receive the Torah and become Hashem's chosen nation.

We all experience challenges, struggles, and pain in life. We sometimes find ourselves trampled down by the weight of our responsibilities and challenges. But in order to jump higher, we must first bend our knees low. Without the yeridot, the lows of life, we could never experience true aliyot, high points of life. Hashem is always there to pick us up after our falls. As a nation in galut, and as people with struggles, this message should remind us that behind everything, the good and the bad, Hashem is watching and waiting to lift us to redemption.

Stay the Course

Mordechai Shekhter ('20)

This week's parsha, Parshat Shmot, begins with the mention of all the people who went down to Mitz-

rayim with Yaakov Avinu.

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרָיִם אֶת
יַעֲקֹב, אִישׁ וּבֵיתוֹ בָּאוּ

These are the names of Bnei Yisrael who came to Egypt, with Yaakov, every man came with his household" (Shmot 1:1).

The Torah then begins to list the names of the children who came with Yaakov. After listing the names of Yaakov's twelve sons, the Torah states:

וַיְהִי כֹל-נֶפֶשׁ יֹצֵאת יִרְה-יַעֲקֹב שְׁבַעִים נֶפֶשׁ וַיּוֹסֶף,
הֵיָה בְּמִצְרָיִם

And all the souls that came out of Yaakov were seventy souls, and Yosef was in Mitzrayim (1:5).

What happened to the other 58 people who came down to Mitzrayim with Yaakov? Why were they not mentioned?

According to the Sforno, the people mentioned here are the only ones that deserve to be mentioned. After the twelve sons of Yaakov passed away, the righteous among their children were not as respected in the eyes of man or in the eyes of Hashem.

וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פְּרוּ...וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם

And the children of Yisrael were fruitful....and the land was filled with them (1:7).

Rashi comments on this pasuk saying that, with Hashem's help, Jewish mothers gave birth to six children at one time. Thus, Rashi views favorably the miraculous growth in the number of the Jewish people.

However, according to the logic of Sforno, it was not miraculous that Bnei Yisrael were multiplying so rapidly. After the sons of Yaakov passed away, their children became like insects. According to this viewpoint, Bnei Yisrael were not just populating the land, but rather infesting it. Bnei Yisrael were assimilating into the immoral culture of the Egyptians to the point where they could no longer be recognized as descendants of the righteous Yosef. In fact, they gave Yosef a bad reputation because they were as disgusting as insects.

יִקָּם מֶלֶךְ-חֲדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַע אֶת-יוֹסֵף

And a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Yosef (1:8).

According to the Sforno, this does not mean that the king literally was unaware of Yosef, because Yosef's name was written in the chronicles. Rather, he just could not believe it was possible that Yosef and his descendants were from the same nation.

This week's haftorah presents a very similar idea:

The navi Yishayahu paints a picture of the gathering of exiles that will happen in the end of days. When the time comes and all the Jews of the world return to Israel, Hashem will thrash and attempt to shake out Bnei Yisrael. According to this imagery, Hashem is attempting to see who is clinging tightly to his tree, the Torah.

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל וּבָאוּ הָאֲבָדִים בְּאֶרֶץ אַשּׁוּר
וְהִנְדָּחִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְהִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לֵה' בְּהַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בִּירוּשָׁלַם

And on that day, it will be sounded on a great shofar, and the lost in the land of Ashur, and the expelled in the land of Egypt shall come and worship Hashem on the holy mount, Yerushalayim (Yishayahu 27:13).

Hashem wants to see if the people living in the wealthy land of Ashur will cling to Hashem's Torah and not assimilate into the immorality of Ashur.

Here, living in the United States of America, it is so easy to become distracted by the enticing popular culture that we can lose focus from what is really important. We must focus on clinging to the Torah, so that when Hashem "shakes the tree" at the end of days, we can hold on to our heritage and remain a distinct nation, ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש



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