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ON **SHMOS** 5768

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Rav Soloveitchik ZTL

Notes (Volume 3)

Lecture delivered by Rabbi Soloveitchik on Saturday night, January 12, 1989

"Parsha Shmos" We raised the question about the second book of the Torah last week but not about the name of the book. Most authorities called it "Sifra D'Hafkona" - Exodus. Others called it by a strange name, merely "sefer sheni" - the "second book". This is no so with the other books such as three, four or five (they have specific names as will be shown). Still however this is not universal for as example Ulla did not accept. Also, Rambam (Nachmanides) calls it "Sefer Hageulah" the book of redemption. Apparently, there is something important to "Sheni". We will accept it as "shmos" which literally means 'names'. The names of Chumoshim can be selected merely by accepting the first word (of importance - we naturally wouldn't use the word V'aylah).

The only question is while regards to other Chumoshim we have other names. Vayikra is Sefer Kohanim - the book of the priests. However, Shmos doesn't work that way. For instance, Bamidbar is not merely the first word of the fourth book but it is very typical of the entire 38 years in the desert. Almost as a matter of a sentence, we have a passing of 38 years in sedra Chukas, we have the laws of the "Parah Adumuh" given in the first or second year and then is mentioned the death of Miriam which occurred in the 40th year. So we see that it all took place Bamidbar or in the desert. It is not only semantically, but the most logical name due to the entire stretch of years. Devorim is a repetition of all the "things" previously given in Torah. Why Vayikra? Because there was an appointment between G-d and Moshe in the Ohel Moed. What I am showing is that the names of the Chumoshim are not technical but for good solid reasons. They are not technical but he experiences recorded. What about Shmos? Shmos is characteristic for the second book! I would never imagine that Shmos contains something other than technical.

Rashi, however, betrays the secret. Rashi was motivated to explain that the children of Israel are named during their lifetime in sedra Vayigash and here again -- to announce how G-d was fond of them. What basically does a name indicate? It means individuality! It is singleness, uniqueness. Basically, a name is indicative of being individual, different -- one person from another. It is ego awareness. It differs from individual to individual. I recall that years ago when I was in Eretz, I was taken to a kibbutz, a

socialistic one. My guide showed me a cow which he called, "Rachel". I intuitively stepped aside. "Is that against you rabbis too?" he asked. It is wrong because individuality belongs to a human who cannot be replaced. If someone died and was an ignorant person, without character -- not worthy of respect, it is still a loss. Every individual has been endowed with "Zelem Elokim," no matter who he is. That is why Torah introduced "avaluth" - mourning. There is a loss which cannot be replaced. Therefore, even to the point of M'chalah Shabbos every individual must be preserved. Reuven is not like Shimon. That is why man feels lonely and it is most typified in time of sickness. That is why Torah introduced Bikur Cholim, Hachnosas Orchim, Avalus -- with such great importance. A dog has great friendship for his master but the second one will have the same friendship. Therefore, a dog has no name; it is only a species. Therefore, no "Avalus" for a dog, no matter how devoted. That is why Yehadus was so conscious in recording K'suvos in Hebrew according to the exact name. The name means something. How was Abraham elevated to spiritual greatness? By changing his name. Rambam says that where Jacob is designated as Ya'akov it is typical of one destiny. Where it is Yisroel, it is another destiny.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu has concluded the covenant not with a nation but with an individual. Finally, it developed into a community of seventy people. But the individual covenant was with Abraham. The Ten Commandments was addressed not in the plural but to the individual - to emphasize that G-d is ready to do business with even the individual. Even if the whole community faltered, He is willing to deal with but one person. That is why in Shmos, the names are repeated and emphasized. Thus, it says these are the names, Ish U'vayso - each man and his family. Each man is dear to Hakodosh Boruch Hu and each man is dear to G-d as the entire community and maybe even more. That is why halacha is so concerned with the individual. There is dignity of the Yochid - the individual. The first posek is the motto of the Chumash. G-d took the people out not because they were an "Am" - nation, but because they suffered individually.

Torah tells us that Rabbi Akiva came to Ginzhu, perhaps to gather money to support Kochba's revolution. He told them the story of the "mabul" - the great flood - but no one was emotionally affected. The next day he told them another and all burst out crying. After all, the Flood involved all humanity. The story he told was of a personal tragedy where a house collapsed on a person. What does it show? The tragedy of the Yochid has a greater impact often than the multitudes. Some people may not be as emotionally motivated by the loss of 6 million Jews in Germany as by the individual store of inhuman suffering. Therefore, Torah tells us that in "V'aylah Shmos" - Yetzias Mitzraim - the Exodus would have taken place even if one individual had been there. It did not have to be a multitude. "Ish U'Vayso" - one man and his family. Because of the few families, a relationship was established with G-d.

The Aseres Hadivros - the commandments - was also written in the plural. Where? In sedra Kedoshim. (Actually it is recorded in three places - Yisro, Kedoshim, V'etchanan.) Once numbers are introduced we are then interested in the collective entity. It is now an established entity. But in Shmos, we still have the individual. We cannot say that Yehadus is interested in only an individual or only a community. Both is correct! One individual would have been worthy of liberation but G-d wanted them to become a great nation.

Point II "Hamitzit B'mispar Zvoam" - He that bringeth out the host by number. This is a sentence from Rashi and can best be exemplified as the position of all the stars and constellations in the entire cosmos. Collectively, each one is but part of one universe comprising the entire cosmos. And yet each one is numbered, named and accounted for individually by G-d. Each has its individual function presumably without which the universe cannot function.

Similarly, in Knesses Yisroel, it is a system which is composed of individuals comprising a unique system. Yet each one has its individual worth. Therefore, here in Shmos, G-d was ready to destroy the world (the greatest center of the world, Mitzraim) in order to liberate them.

Later, however, in Bamidbar, when it came to taking the census, we have them counted by families, by clans. In taking a census, we don't count by individuals because it would destroy the individuality of the Jew. Therefore, in the desert, they counted the Shekalim contributed by each. In later times, a census was counted by fingers.

Point III Vayokom Melech Chodosh - A new king arose who didn't know Joseph! In a sense, he didn't know what Joseph did for Egypt. Targum Onkelos says, "Lo M'kayam G'zarus Yosef," - he didn't uphold the edict of Joseph. What G'zara did Joseph implement? It means he was stupid and an ingrate. He didn't recognize what Joseph had done; for with Joseph, Egypt would have been destroyed. Apparently, when Jacob came to Egypt there was a question of supporting the family. It was not just feeding but apparently there was an agreement or a promise that Pharaoh, the government would supply food to Jacob's family, irregardless of circumstances. This is "G'zarus Yosef" - Joseph's decree or edict. In sedra Vaychee, we find "Al Tirov" - do not fear; Pharaoh will implement that which he promised. "And Joseph settled his family as Pharaoh instructed. Pharaoh instructed that the family be fed no matter how long the family remain.

Now we have "melech chodosh" - a new king - who doesn't want to honor the agreement. "Asher Lo Yodah" -- who doesn't recognize, who doesn't appreciate. There are two points of interest! In sedra Vayigash we find: "Bring your father and your household. Take -- bring father -- do not long for your goods; the best of Egypt is before you!" We get the impression that Pharaoh wanted the whole family to come! Why? He appreciated Joseph, recognized him as a genius who foresaw the future and told Pharaoh how to prepare. He had unlimited confidence! "If one is a genius, they may all be!" "If you have to spend money don't worry. The best of Egypt is before you!" It was a strong statement.

Apparently, his successor changed. In sedra Vaychee, we find that a whole multitude of Egyptians went to bury Jacob. It was a great mourning. What is amazing is that the Egyptians mourned Jacob. The place of mourning is called "Ayval Mitzraim" -- Egyptian mourning. Egypt actually was in despair. Zohar asks a question "Why?" The answer is that they already beheld the decline of Egypt as a world power. It commenced to become a secondary power. Chazal says that as long as Jacob was in Egypt the Nile River used to rise to water the land. With his death, it stopped rising. They intuitively felt that Egypt will face money crises which will eventually reduce it as a nation. We almost feel the same here in Russian feelings towards America. We feel that we are declining. "With the passing of that old Jew something radical will happen." Of course, if they hadn't started with the Jews, it wouldn't have brought plagues. With Joseph's death, there was no one to qualify to guide the destinies of the Egyptian nation. Therefore, the statement in Torah, "Hovo Nischarmo Lo" - (Let us act with guile against them) means automatically the decline of Egypt. The same applied to Germany!

Point IV What was actually the plan of G-d regarding Yetzias Mitzraim? G-d told Moshe: "Go to Pharaoh and tell him to let the people go out for three days. They will offer their Korbonos and will come back as usual." Pharaoh refused! "Nirpin Atem" -- You are lazy! If you introspect, you find nothing about liberation of slaves. It merely states a three day festival. Pharaoh refused and so began a drama. But what was the nature? What if Pharaoh had complied? What impression do you get when you read it? What if he had said yes! G-d could have taken them out in 5 seconds if He so desired. Why the engagement of debates, the months of threats? Apparently, they wanted to convince Pharaoh, to get the people out without coercion. He waited a long time so that he, Pharaoh should realize that he is wrong and the people are right. In fact, Pharaoh did realize but a little too late. We find in sedra Bo, "You too will send your cattle along!" What does Moshe mean by this? It means, you will ask us to sacrifice for you and your nation! You'll join us. You, Pharaoh, will become a "gayr" a convert and a "gayr" has to offer a sacrifice. The "Yetzias" was not merely to take out the slaves and not the master. This is why it says "You will give sacrifices

(cattle) too!" Had he done so, Pharaoh would have undergone the process of T'shuvah. In the time of Bais Hamikdosh, the process of "Gayrus" consisted of "milah" (circumcision), "T'vilah" (immersion), and "Korban" (a sacrifice). (Now it only consists of the first two.) Therefore, Moshe says to Pharaoh, "You will entrust to us 'Zvochim' - sacrifices. In other words, what was the objective of 'Yetzias Mitzraim'? It was not merely to take the Jews out but to convert the Egyptians. Had this occurred, "Melech Hamoschiach" would have come along. Since it didn't, the salvation is slow in coming. Therefore, since he refused, he was in essence stupid. Pharaoh is insensitive; he does not understand. At other times, he did see the light. "Perhaps I should convert not only myself but the whole empire."

Therefore, in scripture it is written at times "M'chabad es libo." And at times "m'chazak". When it says "chabad" it means "he is hard headed (stubborn)." When it is "chazak" it is encouraged - strengthened. There are two types of sins. One individual is "chabad" like a stone -- insensitive. The other sinner is "chazak". He sees the truth but he has no courage. This is why Pharaoh's heart is described in two different terms. At times, his heart was hard as a stone; at times, he tried to understand. The mere fact that he didn't lock up "those two old men," Moshe and Aaron, shows that he had sensitivity. Despite his initial outcry, "Who is G-d? I don't know him!", he had an inward feeling that these two men are right. But he didn't have the courage. The same applies to people I have known who have been intelligent, who have come to my shiurim but still were "mchalal mitzvos" - desecrated. When I asked them why, they answered that they lacked the courage to face their families and declare their change.

However, Pharaoh made one mistake. It was when his scouts returned after seven days to say that Israel had not returned, that which he thought would be 3 days. The truth is that had Pharaoh let them go without coercion, it would have been 3 days. But here there was no agreement and hence it was enlarged. The same thing was regarding the 1948 war and the territory. The Arabs never agreed so the territory was enlarged in 1967. Otherwise, if they had agreed to the U.N. mandate, they would be justified.

Point V Poru (terms regarding the Jews) - Fertility. It was a blessing that woman should be fertile. "Vayishr'tzu" No fetus should die. "Vayirbu" means to grow up, to mature. The complaint was "they are not ready for release; not mature." Therefore, Vayirbu. So it was conception, incubation, childhood growth without succumbing to disease. Then "Vayatzmu" - They were courageous. Egypt says, "They are more than us!" Ridiculous. Of course, Egypt had numerical superiority. It means: "They are superior to us intellectually!"

from **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>

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The True Reward For The Midwives

In the first chapter of Shmos, we learn about Pharaoh commanding the Jewish midwives, Shifra and Puah, to kill all newborn Hebrew boys -- and that they disobeyed the King's orders. Chazal [Our Sages] teach that not only did they disobey the orders and not kill the babies but "they caused the boys to live." Even if they found a sickly child, they provided him with water and sustenance and helped nurse him back to health.

Pharaoh chastised the midwives. They offered excuses for their disobedience. Then the Torah says: "G-d benefited the midwives -- and the people increased and became very strong -- and it was because the midwives feared G-d that He made them houses." [Shmos 1:20-21] (Our Sages say this means they were the matriarchs of houses of monarchy and priesthood.)

There is an obvious difficulty in the narration of G-d's reward to the midwives. The phrase "and the people increased and became very strong"

seems totally out of place in these verses [pas ukim]. It appears to interrupt the description of the reward with which "G-d benefited the midwives."

Rav Mordechai Kamenetsky cites an interesting observation in the name of Rav Elya Svei that explains the sequence of the verses. Reb Elya bases his observation on a personal anecdote. A relative of Reb Elya's had a premature child. The baby was in the hospital for a couple of months and came home after several weeks of intensive care in the hospital. The parents were very grateful to the doctors and especially to the nurses in the neo-natal unit. The father of the baby called Reb Elya and asked him how he could show his appreciation to the staff in the hospital.

Reb Elya advised the following: Every year on the child's birthday, he should take the child back to the neo-natal unit and show the nurses and the doctors how much he has grown. "See the actions of your hands. Look who you allowed to live and to grow up."

The greatest reward for the people working in that unit is seeing that their efforts paid off, that their labors resulted in a very significant accomplishment.

Reb Elya said that the same interpretation should be read in these pasukim: "G-d rewarded the midwives." What did He do? "The people became many and very mighty." The greatest reward for the midwives was that Klal Yisrael grew. Pharaoh wanted to kill off all the Jews and destroy the possibility of a future Jewish nation. The "houses" that G-d made for Shifra and Puah were only the peripheral reward. Their main reward was seeing the fruits of their labor: Pharaoh's decree failed. Their work to save the Jewish people succeeded. The people became many and very mighty!

One Mitzvah Leads To Another

In the second chapter of Shmos, we read the sequence of events whereby Moshe must flee Egypt. One day, Moshe saw an Egyptian beating a Jew, and he killed the Egyptian. The next day, he became aware that his action was discovered and he had to flee for his life. [Shmos 2:12-15]

Moshe fled to Midian. He met the seven daughters of the priest of Midian by the well when they were trying to water their father's sheep. Moshe saw the local shepherds come and drive away the seven daughters. Moshe saved them and watered their sheep. They returned to their father who was surprised to see them home so early that day. They explained, "An Egyptian man saved us from the shepherds..." [Shmos 2:16-19].

The simple reading of this comment of Yisro's daughters is that they perceived Moshe to be an Egyptian, and this is how they described him to their father.

There is a Medrash on this pasuk that gives another interpretation. We have cited this Medrash on previous occasions. This year, however, we will give a new insight into this Medrash based on the teaching of Rav Meir Bergman.

The Medrash incredulously asks, "Would Moshe identify himself as an Egyptian?" Rather, Moshe explained to the daughters of Yisro that they were saved by an Egyptian man — namely the Egyptian who was beating up on the Jew who Moshe killed. Had that Egyptian not started the chain reaction of events that caused Moshe to flee Egypt and arrive in Midian, they would have never been rescued by Moshe from the shepherds.

The Medrash supplies a parallel example: A person was bitten by an animal, and ran to the river to wash out the poison from his wound. While at the river, he saw a child drowning. He jumped into the water and rescued the child. When the child thanked him, he responded, "Don't thank me, thank the animal that bit me. It was his bite that sent me to the river in the first place, so that I might be in a position to rescue you."

Rav Bergman rejects a "simple interpretation" of the Medrash. Rav Bergman finds it difficult to say that Moshe was telling Yisro's daughters that they owe thanks to the Egyptian who was beating up on the Jew. Rav Bergman quotes an alternate interpretation of the Medrash, in the name of his father-in-law (Rav Eliezer Shach), in the name of the Brisker Rav (Rav Velvel Soloveitchik).

When the Yeshiva in Lublin was to be built, a certain wealthy Jew, who had been very generous to the Yeshiva, was honored with placing the cornerstone at the dedication of the building. In its heyday, the Lubliner Yeshiva was one of the most elite and prestigious Torah institutions in the world. Thousands of people, representing the leadership of Polish Jewry and beyond, came to the historic event of the cornerstone laying for this Yeshiva's main building.

The Boyaner Rebbe approached the wealthy Jew who was honored with placing the cornerstone and told him: "I am not jealous of the merit you have for laying the cornerstone. But I am jealous of the other action you must have done sometime in your life that brought you the merit of being able to lay the cornerstone." The first "merit," the Rebbe told him, was greater than the "merit" of laying the cornerstone. The "merit" of laying the cornerstone comes with publicity, an ego trip, and all kinds of trappings that take away from the reward of doing a simple mitzvah. But the original mitzvah that was done privately (btznius) without publicity and without crowds — the mitzvah which triggered this second mitzvah (via the principle of mitzvah goreres mitzvah) is indeed something to be jealous of.

Rav Bergman links the message of the Boyaner Rebbe to the Jew in Lublin with the message Moshe Rabbeinu gave the daughters of Yisro. Moshe said, in effect, "What allowed me to have the merit to be able to save you today? It was the merit I achieved by rescuing my Jewish brother from the hand of the Egyptian who was beating him. Today's salvation was in front of many people. It made me look heroic. On what basis did I deserve to gain such honor? It was the fact that when (I thought) no one was looking, I risked my life to save a Jew being beaten up by an Egyptian. My first mitzvah in tzniyus (privacy) provided the opportunity for me to do this second mitzvah b'farhesya [with great fanfare]." This is the interpretation of the words "An Egyptian man saved us", according to the Medrash, according to Rav Bergman.

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Rabbi Michael Rosensweig Yirat Shamayim As An Approach to Life and As A Legacy

"Va-tirenah ha-meyaldot et Ha-Elokim ve-lo asu kaasher diber aleihen melech Mitzrayim, va-techayenah et ha-yeladim" (Shemot 1:17) The heroic behavior of the meyladot (midwives) in defying Paroh's evil decree to murder all Jewish males is attributed to the value of yirat Hashem (fear of

G-d). The Torah again underscores the prominence of yirat Hashem in this episode four verses later when recording the meyaldot's reward- "Va-yehi ki yaru ha-meyaldot et Ha-Elokim va-yaas lachem batim."

This emphasis requires some clarification. The Kli Yakar notes that the meyaldot response was mandated by basic halachic considerations, as murder is one of the three cardinal transgressions for which there can be no justification. The gemara (Sanhedrin 74a-b) does not even require a source to establish that the prohibition against taking another's life is inviolable under all conditions. Why then, were the courageous actions of the meyaldot also expressions of yirat Hashem?

Further examination of the initial verse may provide some direction. The mefarshim note that the Torah records not only that the meyaldot refused to succumb to Paroh's murderous scheme, but that they also risked further incurring his wrath by sustaining and nurturing the children (va-techayenah et hayeladim). Or ha-Chayim explains that this act of defiance and self-sacrifice, which transcends the norms of yehareg ve-al yaavor (inviolable transgressions), was especially impressive. Moreover, he posits that the meyaldot took extraordinary steps to safeguard the infants' health and safety beyond the routine standard of care to preclude any internal misconception that they were cooperating with Paroh. Perhaps the Torah also hints at the spiritual focus of the meyaldot's efforts. The term "va-techayenah" invokes the spiritual renaissance of Yaakov two parshiyot earlier- "va-techi ruach Yaakov". The fact that the meyaldot took these bold steps without reticence or reservation and that they were able to respond to Paroh's challenge with a sense of confidence and conviction truly reflects a posture of yirat Hashem in which religious –national priorities are decisive.

The midrash (Shemot Rabbah 1:15) traces the meyaldot's clarity of vision and action embodied by yirat Hashem to the legacy of Avraham Avinu: "kashtu azman le-maaseh ziknan zeh Avraham kemo she-Hakadosh Baruch Hu meid alav- 'ki atah yadaati ki yerei Elokim atah'". Avraham Avinu's life exemplified the centrality of yirat Hashem as a controlling and coordinating principle in halachic life. He encountered many challenging decisions which tested his dual commitments to chesed and spirituality. An outside observer may have misconstrued some of Avraham's priorities: his initial defense of Sedom, his efforts on behalf of Lot, his pursuit of hachnassat orchim seemingly at the expense of kabbalat penei ha-Shechinah, and his ambivalent attitude regarding Yishmael. The akedah provided definitive evidence that his wide range of interests all stemmed from a single decisive value: yirat Hashem. His sensitivity to the importance of this value motivated his previous conduct as well. Hence, his justification to Avimelech regarding his representation of Sarah as his sister: "rak ein yirat Elokim ba-makom ha-zeh ve-haraguni al devar ishti" (Bereishit 20:11). The value of yirat shamayim serves a crucial function providing perspective and clarity when different forces or impulses compete.

The midrash adds that the meyaldot were inspired to safeguard the infants by Avraham's many acts of chesed. The midrash conflates Avraham's willingness to surrender his only son to Hashem during the akeidah, the ultimate act of yirat Hashem ("for which the place is named yireh...") - Bereishit 22:14) with his equally impressive record of generosity and kindness as the foundation of his yirat Hashem legacy to his descendants, the meyaldot. This conflation reinforces the notion that yirat Hashem is the coordinating principle that ensures appropriate priorities and an ideal balance in the complex halachic lifestyle.

The gemara (Berachot 34a) states that "hakol biyedei shamayim chutz me-yirat Shomayim". Yirat Shomayim is not confined to a particular action, or obligation. It constitutes a holistic approach to avodat Hashem. It is a perspective that is meant to be internalized and therefore is dependent only on man's will. This overriding principle dictates man's response to the many unpredictable and uncontrollable challenges that he encounters.

The book of Kohelet examines a wide range of different philosophies and values in an attempt to penetrate the ultimate meaning and purpose of existence and finds each perspective wanting. King Solomon, the wisest of men, concludes his analysis, articulating the following profound truth: "sof

davar hakol nishma et Ha-Elokim year ve-et mitzvotav shemor ki zeh kol ha-adam". Kohelet provides the elusive perspective by projecting the central role of yirat Hashem as the controlling principle that determines the conditions that justify and even elevate the range of previously delineated values. Thus, "hakol nishma" (all views resonate) is regulated by "et Ha-Elokim yera", fostering a meaningful holistic approach to existence ("kol ha-adam").

Yirat Hashem is a special spiritual legacy bequeathed by the father of the nation, Avraham, to his descendants (See Ruach ha-Chayim, Avot 5:3). It is a comprehensive approach to avodat Hashem that is best imbibed from infancy, and nurtured and fostered pervasively. The Torah reports that by executing this legacy in impressive manner, the meyaldot merited their own "batim" legacy. Chazal explain that the special stature of kehunah, leviyah and malchut stemmed from the meyaldot, as expression of these "batim". The kohen and levi dedicate their lives to the Temple service which is infused with and in turn, inspires yirat Hashem (see, also, Tosafot B.B. 21a). The King is accompanied by a special Torah scroll whose function is to guide his difficult decisions by accentuating the value of yirat Hashem- "leman yilmod leyirah et Hashem" (Devarim 17:19).

The Or HaChayim adds that Moshe and Aharon may already have merited their singular leadership positions due to the yirat Hashem contribution of the meyaldot. The centrality of this value dominates all of halachic life. It is the foundation for Torah study- "reishit chachmah yirat Hashem". We begin pesukei de-zimra by referring to Hashem as the "baruch meshalem sachar tov le-yereiv". We conclude our birkat ha-mazon by declaring "Yiru et Hashem kedoshav ki ein machsor leyereiv" (Tehillim 34). It is the prescription for spiritual success that each of us must strive to cultivate.

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From: **Rabbi Jonathan Schwartz** rjspsyd@comcast.net

Date: Fri, 28 Dec 2007 To: internetchaburah@yahoo.com

Subject: [internetchaburah] Internet Chaburah Parshas Shemos 5768

Prologue: Rav Yitzchok Cohen used to love to speak about the impact of a baby.

You see, according to Rav Cohen, everyone stops to stare at little children. Their innocence and wonderment, curiosity and tenacity make us all stop and watch. He would remind us constantly that we have much to learn from a baby.

But, from this week's Parsha we also learn that we have much to learn from those watching the baby. Indeed, when Bas Pharaoh opens the basket with Moshe inside, the Torah (Shemos 2:6) highlights the fact that she saw the baby and heard his cry, TOOK PITY UPON HIM and then noted his Jewish origins. Rav Aharon of Sanz once asked why the Possuk ceased its discussion of her observations in the middle in order to note that she took pity on Moshe? Would it not have been more correct to note that she opened the basket and noted the Jewish baby and took pity on him?

Rav Nissan Alpert (Limudei Nissan) answered that the Torah is teaching us a critical lesson in Chessed. The proper human attitude must begin and end with Rachmanus – a default of compassion – followed perhaps by the question of whether the person seeking our compassion is worthy of receiving it. All too often we act in the opposite manner – we see if the person's views are similar to ours and only if similar do we agree to show compassion. Bas Pharaoh didn't check Moshe's lineage, she first had compassion, only then, noting his origin, realized the difficulty that saving him entailed and how she was going to proceed.

Rav Nissan ztl. added that for this reason we recognize that Hashem is Rav Chessed and then Emes. For if we started the world with Emes – with the worthiness factor, the world would never get to Chessed. No, Mah Hu Af Anachnu, we must learn to demonstrate compassion and love for fellow humans first. In that light, we present this week's Chaburah entitled:

Showing the Love

The Sefer Agudah (Perek Keitzad Mevarchin, See also Shut Binyamin Ze'ev 163) notes that one is not supposed to demonstrate his affection and kiss his children in Shul. The reason, he notes, is that one is supposed to utilize Shul as a place where one declares his love for Hashem. Since that love is supposed to be matchless, any other demonstration of love would be inappropriate. Rav Yehuda haChassid (Sefer Hachassidim 255) makes a similar point as does the Rema (O.C. 98:1). The Ben Ish Chai (VaYikra, 11) makes a similar comment, forbidding kissing relatives in Shul. And, it seems that this ruling should apply to both kissing one's children in Shul (whether young or old) and to offering other forms of affection to any other Shul-goer (See Orach Mishpat Orach Chaim, 22).

The trouble with the Psak, is that it sounds like the Chachamim of previous generations didn't adhere to it. Indeed, Shimon Hatzaddik (Nedarim 9b) kissed a Nazir on his forehead in the Beis HaMikdash. Certainly this was more serious a place to declare love for a person than that of a mere Shul?

Moreover, The Talmud compares Mora Av (the fear of parents) to Mora Shomayim (fear of G-d – See Bava Metzia 32a). Kissing one's parent is a sign of respect (see Rashi to Avodah Zara 17a), so why not allow it in Shul? The Rashba (Shut HaRashba, V:14) notes that one must demonstrate respect to his parents, even in Shul. Why not allow the kissing of one's parent in the same way?

The difference might be found in a line in the Sefer Rokeach (end of Siman 369) where the author notes that one sitting in Shul reciting Pisukei DiZimra or Kriyas Shema must still rise if his teacher or parent enters. He should not argue that this is Osek B'Mitzva Patur Min Hamitzva (I'm involved in a different Mitzva and am therefore exempt from this one) for one can fulfill both Mitzvos. Similarly, says the Ben Ish Chai (Vayikra, 11), when one is obligated to honor a certain relative, he SHOULD kiss the relative EVEN in Shul. This act is not antithetical to the love he is demonstrating to Hashem but rather part of the demonstration of that very love of Hashem. This is dramatically different from the love shown to another relative or from a parent to a child where the Chiyuv of Mora does not exist.

L'halacha, Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Shut Yichaveh Daas IV:12) and Rav Kook (Orach Mishpat, 22) strongly caution against demonstrations of love between family members in Shul. The author of the Piskei Teshuvos (O.C. 98:1) adds that the fact that kissing an Oleh L'Torah is not universally performed for each Oleh is an indication that when it is done, it is likely to be due to familial ties and love. Thus, he cautions against it.

It should be noted that HaGaon Harav Yitzchak Zilberstein clearly distinguishes between these reasons and demonstrations of love and kissing a child's wound in Shul. While the former raises the issues of demonstrating love to someone other than G-d in Shul, kissing a wound is not a demonstration of pure love but rather of pain reduction.

Shabbat Shalom

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/>

Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago - 5766]

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Shemot

She is one of the most unexpected heroes of the Hebrew Bible. Without her, Moses might not have lived. The whole story of the exodus would have been different. Yet she was not an Israelite. She had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by her courage. Yet she seems to have had no doubt, experienced no misgivings, made no hesitation. If it was Pharaoh who

afflicted the children of Israel, it was another member of his own family who saved the decisive vestige of hope: Pharaoh's daughter.

Recall the context. Pharaoh had decreed death for every male Israelite child. Yocheved, Amram's wife, had a baby boy. For three months she was able to conceal his existence, but no longer. Fearing his certain death if she kept him, she set him afloat on the Nile in a basket, hoping against hope that someone might see him and take pity on him. This is what follows:

Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe in the Nile, while her maids walked along the Nile's edge. She saw the box in the reeds and sent her slave-girl to fetch it. Opening it, she saw the boy. The child began to cry, and she had pity on it. "This is one of the Hebrew boys", she said. Note the sequence. First she sees that it is a child and has pity on it. A natural, human, compassionate reaction. Only then does it dawn on her who the child must be. Who else would abandon a child? She remembers her father's decree against the Hebrews. Instantly the situation has changed. To save the baby would mean disobeying the royal command. That would be serious enough for an ordinary Egyptian; doubly so for a member of the royal family.

Nor is she alone when the event happens. Her maids are with her; her slave-girl is standing beside her. She must face the risk that one of them, in a fit of pique, or even mere gossip, will tell someone about it. Rumours flourish in royal courts. Yet she does not shift her ground. She does not tell one of her servants to take the baby and hide it with a family far away. She has the courage of her compassion. She does not flinch. Now something extraordinary happens:

The [child's] sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a Hebrew woman to nurse the child for you?" "Go", replied Pharaoh's daughter. The young girl went and got the child's own mother. "Take this child and nurse it", said Pharaoh's daughter. "I will pay you a fee." The woman took the child and nursed it. The simplicity with which this is narrated conceals the astonishing nature of this encounter. First, how does a child - not just a child, but a member of a persecuted people - have the audacity to address a princess? There is no elaborate preamble - "Your royal highness" or any other formality of the kind we are familiar with elsewhere in biblical narrative. They seem to speak as equals.

Equally pointed are the words left unsaid. "You know and I know", Moses' sister implies, "who this child is; it is my baby brother." She proposes a plan brilliant in its simplicity. If the real mother is able to nurse the child, we both minimize the danger. You will not have to explain to the court how this child has suddenly appeared. We will be spared the risk of bringing him up: we can say the child is not a Hebrew, and that the mother is not the mother but only a nurse. Miriam's ingenuity is matched by Pharaoh's daughter's instant agreement. She knows; she understands; she gives her consent.

Then comes the final surprise:

When the child matured, [his mother] brought him to Pharaoh's daughter. She adopted him as her own son, and named him Moses. "I bore him from the water", she said. Pharaoh's daughter has not simply had a moment's compassion. She has not forgotten the child. Nor has the passage of time diminished her sense of responsibility. Not only does she remain committed to his welfare; she adopts the riskiest of strategies. She will adopt it and bring him up as her own son. This is courage of a high order.

Yet the single most surprising detail comes in the last sentence. In the Torah, it is parents who give a child its name, and in the case of a special individual, G-d himself. It is G-d who gives the name Isaac to the first Jewish child; G-d's angel who gives Jacob the name Israel; G-d who changes the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah. We have already encountered one adoptive name - Tsafenat Paneakh - the name by which Joseph was known in Egypt; yet Joseph remains Joseph. How surpassingly strange that the hero of the exodus, greatest of all the prophets, should bear not the name Amram and Yocheved have undoubtedly used thus far, but the one given to him by his adoptive mother, an Egyptian princess. A midrash draws our attention to the fact:

This is the reward for those who do kindness. Although Moses had many names, the only one by which he is known in the whole Torah is the one given to him by the daughter of Pharaoh. Even the Holy One, blessed be He, did not call him by any other name. (Shemot Rabbah 1: 26) Indeed Moshe - Meses - is an Egyptian name, meaning "child", as in Ramses.

Who then was Pharaoh's daughter? Nowhere is she explicitly named. However the First Book of Chronicles (4: 18) mentions a daughter of Pharaoh, named Bitya, and it was she the sages identified as the woman who saved Moses. The name Bitya (sometimes rendered as Batya) means "the daughter of G-d". From this, the sages drew one of their most striking lessons:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to her: "Moses was not your son, yet you called him your son. You are not My daughter, but I shall call you My daughter." (Vayikra Rabbah 1: 3). They added that she was one of the few (tradition enumerates nine) who were so righteous that they entered paradise in their lifetime (Derekh Eretz Zuta 1).

Instead of "Pharaoh's daughter" read "Hitler's daughter" or "Stalin's daughter" and we see what is at stake. Tyranny cannot destroy humanity. Moral courage can sometimes be found in the heart of darkness. That the Torah itself tells the story the way it does has enormous implications. It means that when we come to people we must never generalize, stereotype. The Egyptians were not all evil: even from Pharaoh himself a heroine was born. Nothing could signal more powerfully that the Torah is not an ethnocentric text; that we must recognize virtue wherever we find it, even among our enemies; and that the basic core of human values - humanity, compassion, courage - is truly universal. Holiness may not be; goodness is.

Outside Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, is an avenue dedicated to righteous gentiles. Pharaoh's daughter is a supreme symbol of what they did and what they were. I, for one, am profoundly moved by that encounter on the banks of the Nile between an Egyptian princess and a young Israelite child, Moses' sister Miriam. The contrast between them - in terms of age, culture, status and power - could not be greater. Yet their deep humanity bridges all the differences, all the distance. Two heroines. May they inspire us.

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Peninim On The Torah

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

And these are the names of Bnei Yisrael who were coming to Egypt. (1:1) In the preface to his commentary to Sefer Shemos, the Ramban refers to this sefer as the book of galus and geulah, exile and redemption. This seems enigmatic when we take into consideration that the majority of the sefer deals with geulah, while it only addresses galus in the first two parshios. I once heard that in order to understand the depth of the galus and its effect on the people, one should study the redemption, including its various stages and challenges, as well as the reaction of the people. In that way, he will have a more penetrating analysis of the exile. In other words, how people react during redemption is the true barometer of the effect of the exile.

The Jewish People were in Egypt for two hundred and ten years. When they departed, only one fifth of the national population was left. Chazal explain this in their commentary to Shemos 13:18: Va'chamushim alu mei'erezt Mitzrayim, "And they went up armed from the land of Egypt." The word chamushim, which is translated as "armed," is a derivative of the word chamishah, five. This prompts Chazal to suggest that only one-fifth of the nation left, while the other four-fifths died during the three-days of darkness. Regarding the quality of the one-fifth that left, the Torah relates their arguments and complaints, in addition to the sins of the Golden Calf and the spies. It is clear that, although this is the group that left Egypt, these were spiritually deficient individuals, remnants of an exile that had taken a terrible toll on their emotions and spirituality.

By studying how Klal Yisrael behaved during the geulah, one can understand how devastating the galus really was. Thus, Sefer Shemos occupies itself with relating the story of the redemption and the exile, for in every aspect of the redemption, we perceive a deeper understanding of the exile.

We see this in our own time. Those who survived the Holocaust may have remained alive, but they certainly have also remained traumatized - some emotionally and others spiritually. The reaction of each individual survivor during his redemptive

period must be taken in context with the terror and persecution he personally sustained during his exile. We should not judge, because we cannot judge. Clearly, anyone who survived that black era of Jewish history had his own individual experiences that played havoc with his life. For many, liberation was not the end of this torment, but the continuation, as the survivors continue to carry the baggage of their previous exile. We, who were fortunate not to have lived through their dread, can only stand back and look on with reverence and awe at those who continue to survive.

Yosef died, and all his brothers and that entire generation. The Bnei Yisrael were fruitful, teemed, increased and became strong - very, very much so; and the land became filled with them. (1:6, 7)

When we refer to shibud Mitzrayim, the bondage of Egypt, what usually comes to mind is an image of intense physical labor. This is wrong, explains Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita. He cites the Kotzker Rebbe, zl, who interprets the pasuk in Tehillim 128:2: Yegia kapecha ki socheil, ashrecha v'tov lach. "When you eat the labor of your hands, you are praiseworthy, and it is well with you." A person who works with his hands is fortunate and praiseworthy. Rav Galinsky explains that if it is only one's hands that are laboring, regardless of how difficult it may be, he can manage the situation. It is much worse when his head is absorbed with every aspect of his work. Then, he is not as fortunate.

A chasid once came to the Kotzker and complained bitterly that alien thoughts were creeping into his mind during davening. The Rebbe responded, "You call them alien thoughts! They are not alien. They are your real thoughts. It is what you think about all of the time. They represent your priority in life. How can you expect to daven properly to Hashem if your mind is suffused with all of your business deals? On the contrary, your Shemoneh Esrai is what is alien to you."

Let us delve deeper into the Kotzker's interpretation. The great tzarah, trouble, of the Egyptian bondage was not the physical labor. It was not the pain Klal Yisrael suffered at the end of the day. Yes, their hands and feet hurt; in fact, probably every limb in their bodies must have been in agony. That, however, was not the real shibud. The physical labor did not catalyze their descent to the forty-ninth level of ritual impurity. It did not give them the status of ovdei avodah zarah, idol worshippers. No, it had to be something else.

Chazal teach us that as long as one of the brothers was alive the Jews did not become enslaved. The shibud began after no one was left. This seems to be the Midrash's commentary to the parshah: The bondage began as soon as the previous generation had passed on. This is not consistent with the Midrash on the next pasuk that attributes the onset of the shibud to the intermingling of the Jews with Egyptian society. They moved out of the Goshen ghetto and purchased villas in the Egyptian suburbs. After all, they had come of age. They wanted to be like everybody else. How are we to understand these contrasting commentaries?

Rav Galinsky feels that the two interpretations are connected; together, they explain the origin of the slavery. As long as the members of the previous generation were alive, the Jews maintained their sh'toltz, dignity and class. There was a regal bearing, a sort of nobility to their demeanor, which distinguished them from the common Egyptian. Thus, the tumah, spiritual contamination, that was so much a part of the base Egyptian lifestyle, was distant from them. When they no longer had whom to dignify and look up to in reverence, they began to lose their own sense of aristocracy. Klal Yisrael wanted to be like the Egyptians, because they did not retain the sense of pride that had been generated by their forebears. They began to acculturate, and this led to all-out assimilation. It all began with their loss of nobility, resulting from the passing of the original generation that came down to Egypt with Yaakov Avinu. They lost sight of who they were. When one has no positive self-image, he gravitates to wherever and whoever will accept him.

The Jews became Egyptians because they thought that by commingling with the citizens of their host country, they would themselves become citizens and develop a positive self-image. How wrong they were then, and how wrong have we been ever since that first test of assimilation. We have attempted this endeavor of futility in every country that has been our home, and we have always lost. The Jew is supposed to be distinct, his Jewish pride serving as his only self-image. It happened in Egypt; it happened in Spain; it happened in Germany; and it is happening in America. We are the bearers of a royal pedigree with a mission to be "a kingdom of Priests and a holy nation." Is anything more distinguished than this?

The king of Egypt died, and Bnei Yisrael groaned because of the work, and they cried out. Their outcry because of the work went up to G-d. G-d heard their moaning. (2:23, 24)

The second Sefer of the Torah begins with the terrible galus, exile of Egypt. The Jewish People were subjected to the cruelest and diabolical forms of slavery, as the Egyptians thought of every innovation to break the Jews physically, emotionally and spiritually. If we were to peruse the annals of history, we would find that the only dark period during which the Egyptian taskmasters found their parallel was the Holocaust, when Hitler's monsters also devised new ways to deny the Jew his right to life and liberty.

We are told that Pharaoh died and was replaced by a new ruler. The Midrash, quoted by Rashi, claims that Pharaoh did not actually die; rather, he contracted leprosy. His advisers told him the best therapy for this affliction was to bathe himself twice daily in the blood of one hundred and fifty Jewish babies. Pharaoh authorized the slaughter of three hundred Jewish infants every day. When the Jewish People heard of this new decree against them, they began to wail bitterly to Hashem.

When we take into consideration the absolute brutality of this decree, it makes our blood shudder at the callousness and cruelty to which a human being can descend. Furthermore, it was approved by his populace. There is no record of anybody voicing their protest over this despotism. The Jewish People wept, and no one listened. No one but Hashem. One would think that such a harsh decree would have brought about the Jewish redemption. It did not. A careful reading of the text indicates that something other than Pharaoh's cruelty catalyzed the liberation of the Jewish People. It occurred because "Bnei Yisrael groaned because of the work, and they cried out." Hashem heard their outcry.

In other words, it was not Pharaoh's savage behavior that prompted the end of the Egyptian slavery. Rather, the heartfelt and sincere prayer of the Jews, motivated by their intense suffering, elicited Hashem's mercy that brought an end to the reign of terror.

Horav Avrohom Pam, zl, in Noam Avrohom, Rabbi Shalom Smith's latest anthology of the Rosh Hayeshivah's shmuessen, ethical discourses, cites the Zechusa D'Avraham, Horav Avraham Chechanover, zl, who notes this and derives from here a fundamental principle in avodas Hashem, serving the Almighty. David HaMelech says in Sefer Tehillim 102:1, Tefillah l'ani ki yaatof v'lifnei Hashem yishpoch sicho, "A prayer of the afflicted man when he faints, and pours forth his supplication before Hashem." The Zohar HaKadosh interprets this to mean that the prayers of an afflicted person manifest a unique quality. A broken-hearted Jew who is engulfed in suffering, beset by tragedy and persecution, pours out his heart to Hashem with sincerity. The desperate situation, in which he finds himself, compels him to pray as he has never prayed before. Indeed, this sincere prayer has the power to elevate other tefillos that just did not contain this degree of integrity.

The Zohar adds that not every tefillah has the power to pierce through the many spiritual barriers, impediments and kitrugim, indictments, against us. Hashem requires sincerity. For tefillah to be effective, the petitioner must be sincere; he must concentrate and reflect upon before Whom he is standing. The very fact that he has the opportunity to offer his supplication personally to the Almighty King of Kings, and to address Him directly saying, Baruch atah Hashem, "Blessed are You Hashem," is an indicator that he is speaking as a son to a Father. What an awesome privilege we have! Yet, we allow it to slip right through our hands, by failing to fulfill its requirements.

Hashem is known to us as the Shome'a Tefillah, One who listens to prayer. Do we ever contemplate the depth of this appellation? Hashem listens to sincere prayer. Why do we not take advantage of it? Any Jew has the power to address Hashem whenever he pleases. Hashem listens. Yet, we are so pre-occupied with our own lives and our foolish mundane trivialities, that even when we do daven, it is nothing more than lip service. We read the words by rote, usually from memory, because we are too involved to look into a siddur. Plus, the siddur slows us down, because we have to say every word. Yet, we expect Hashem to listen, accept and respond positively to such a prayer.

Now that we have explained why so many of our prayers are not authentic prayers, we understand why a prayer motivated by serious duress, a grave illness, a terrible affliction, or a painful experience has such driving power and effectiveness. It is sincere. It is real. It is expressed with concentration and devotion. We think very carefully about before Whom we are standing and Whom we are addressing. In other words, for once, we are davening the way we should. We cry out to Hashem from the depths of our heart: "Hear us Hashem!" Such a prayer ascends to Heaven unimpeded by the obstacles and detractions that often block our "usual" prayer. As it pierces through the Gates of Mercy, it continues on until it stands before the Heavenly Throne in its pristine nature. Hashem listens, because He is "close to the broken-hearted" (Tehillim 34:19).

The Rosh Hayeshivah adds that such a pure tefillah has the power to vickel arum, envelop or wrap around, yaatof, and elevate the other tefillos, the prayers that he and other people have recited, which-- due to their lack of sincerity-- have been "hanging around," just not strong enough to evoke Hashem's mercy and salvation in order to be accepted in Heaven.

The Zechusa D'Avraham explains that the Jewish People certainly prayed to Hashem for redemption from their bondage, even before Pharaoh issued his terrible decree to slay the three hundred babies every day. However, it was a different tefillah. It was a moan, a groan, in response to their slavery. It was more of a complacent daily krechitz, sigh, from their over-work. However, when they witnessed the daily blood bath, while nobody offered an outcry of protest; when they felt the helplessness of their situation, they finally realized that this was a crisis unlike anything else they had experienced. They had nowhere to turn but upward to

Hashem- the only Source of their salvation. This prayer of sincerity and meaning from the bottom of their hearts was able to "wrap together" all of the other prayers that they had issued earlier, but were not good enough. Hashem listened, and He responded.

Rav Pam derives an important lesson from here. One who has sustained a tragic experience-- and whose heart is now broken-- has the advantage that his tefillos can take on a greatly enhanced significance in Heaven, characterized by the ability to envelop other prayers that had been deficient. A person can rise from the depths of personal tragedy and effect salvation for others. He now has the key that will open the Gates of Mercy. He has the ability and the power. What greater chesed is this for others, and what greater z'chus, merit, it is for him!

Hashem said to Moshe, "Stretch out your hand and grasp its tail." He stretched out his hand and grasped it tightly, and it became a staff in his palm. (4:4)

Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, renders this passage homiletically. He views every Jewish child as a mateh, staff of Hashem, in Moshe Rabbeinu's palm. This mateh can sprout and grow as long as the Moshe Rabbeinu's, the rebbeim of every generation, continue to hold on to their students. Every Jewish child can grow miraculously and develop the powers of the Mateh Elokim, if he is nurtured by his rebbe, given the spiritual sustenance that is essential to becoming a talmid chacham, Torah scholar.

Regrettably, there are awesome students who "fall to the ground," out of the grasp of their rebbe's hand, and become transformed from a Mateh Elokim into its diabolical counterpart. It deteriorates to such an extent that, vayanos Moshe mipanav, "Moshe fled from it" (ibid 4:3). When the rebbe counters, "What can I do now? He is no longer under my purview. I have no hashpaah, influence, over him"; the answer parallels what Hashem told Moshe when his staff turned into a serpent: Echow bi'znav, "Stretch out your hand and grab its tail." Take hold of this student a second time and you will see how effective you can now be. At that time the student will revert to being a Mateh Elokim. It is all up to the rebbe. All too often we give up too quickly. Society demands speed, a quick turn-over. This approach is not effective with students. They must be inspired, and inspiration takes time, effort and love - qualities that cannot be rushed. In his many years as Rosh Yeshivah and Av Beis Din, Horav Yaakov Ades, zl, inspired a generation of Sephardic Torah scholars. He had the following two insights concerning educating Torah students: First, one should always seek to maximize a student's potential and creativity. After teaching a topic in the Talmud, rather than give a standardized test, he would ask the boys complicated questions, requiring each one to write his own personal opinion on paper. He once explained the reason for this innovative approach to testing a student. "Learning Talmud is like baking bread. Each woman may begin with the same dough and same oven, but the loaves do not emerge universal." Every student is unique and his individual understanding of the topic is distinct from that of his neighbor. He must be encouraged to develop his own potential.

Second, at a time when corporeal punishment was accepted as a form of discipline, he would frown on such measures. He would cite the pasuk in Bamidbar 31:23, "And everything that does not come in the fire, you shall pass through the water." This pasuk teaches us that utensils that are not heated, but used only with cold foods, do not require purging as a means of kashering them. Immersion in water suffices to bring them back to purity. Likewise, Rav Yaakov said, "When you want to correct someone, do not cart him through the fire. Instead, escort him through the water. Correct him in a soft, soothing manner, and he will return to his original pristine nature."

Nothing is more inspirational or encouraging than a rebbe intimating to his students that he needs their assistance. This elevates a student's self-esteem, inspiring him to move forward and upward. In a poignant exposition, in his book, "Touched By A Story (4), Rabbi Yechiel Spero relates the shmuess, ethical discourse, the mechinah, high school, students heard from the venerable Rosh Hayeshivah of Telshe, Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl. The Rosh HaYeshivah was already aged and weak, yet he felt it was important to give a special shmuess to the younger students at the beginning of Chodesh Elul. The month of Elul is a serious time for all Jews, but for young high school boys taking their first steps in the vast sea of Torah literature, it is a period of awe and trepidation.

Rav Gifter would speak in a somber tone, as befits the month of introspection and teshuvah, repentance. He would recall his youth growing up in Portsmouth, Virginia and explain how he became inculcated in the culture of mesiras nefesh, dedication and self-sacrifice, for Torah study. What was most memorable, however, was his battle cry for the month of Elul. "I am an old man," he would say. "I can no longer do it on my own." The students would look at each other in wonderment. Here was one of the gedolei ha'dor, pre-eminent Torah giants of the generation, and he could not do it on his own. Certainly, he must be toying with them. He could not be serious. So they thought until the Rosh Hayeshivah called out in a manner that only one who studied in Telshe can remember, "Please! Carry me on your shoulders!"

Rav Gifter surely did not need these young yeshivah students to carry him for his sake. It was for their sake. He was teaching them a lesson in achrayos, responsibility. It was their obligation and also their privilege to carry him - and everyone else. When

a rebbe empowers a student in such a manner, his learning takes on an entirely new focus. It becomes his mission, his lifelong endeavor, his *raison d'être*.

From: webmaster@koltorah.org on behalf of Kol Torah [koltorah@koltorah.org]
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Yerushah - Disinheritance -

by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

(assisted by Martin M. Shenkman, Esq.)

Introduction In several prior articles, we spoke of the need to supplement a secular will to avoid violation of the Halachot of Yerushah. Many people ask why these mechanisms do not offend the spirit of Jewish Law, as the Halachic heirs do not receive all of the money and property that they are entitled to according to Biblical and Talmudic sources. In this essay, we will attempt to answer this and other related questions. Once again I thank attorney Martin Shenkman for his assistance in the preparation of this series. I bear sole responsibility for any errors that might appear in any of these articles.

The Torah Order for Yerushah and Human Nature "If a man will have two wives, one beloved one hated and they bear him sons, the beloved one and the hated one, and the firstborn son is the hated one's. Then it shall be that on the day that he causes his sons to inherit whatever will be his, he cannot give the right of the firstborn to the son of the beloved one ahead of the son of the hated one, the firstborn" (Devarim 12:51-61). The general lesson in these Pesukim is that family members must not permit rivalries or animosities to interfere with their obligations and family relationships. For example, a parent should not permit favoritism of one child over another to influence his following Torah law or his behavior toward his children. Chazal caution us against giving even the smallest degree of advantage to one child over the others so as to avoid causing jealousy, as we discussed in the first part of this series.

Talmudic Background The Mishnah in Bava Batra (8:5) states that if one gives his assets to others and leaves nothing for his sons to inherit, what he has done is Halachically valid but "Ein Ruach Chachamim Nochah Heimenu" (the spirit of the sages is not pleased by him). In other words, his actions violate the spirit of the Jewish Law. However, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says that if one's children were not acting properly, and as a result he transferred all of his assets to others, he should be "remembered for good." The Gemara (Bava Batra 133b) indicates that the Halacha follows the first opinion. The Gemara presents the authoritative words of Shemuel that one should not engage in "Avurei Achsanta" (disinheriting the Halachic heirs) even from a bad son to a good son. This opinion is codified by the Rambam (Hilchot Nachalot 7:11) and Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 282). It should be noted that the term "Ein Ruach Chachamim Nochah Heimenu" is not a mild rebuke. The Rashbam (commenting to Bava Batra 133b s.v. Ein) explains this phrase to mean that Chazal are profoundly disturbed by someone disinheriting their Halachic heirs. The Rashbam's comments are cited by the Sema (C.M. 282:2), one of the premier commentaries to the Choshen Mishpat section of the Shulchan Aruch.

When is Disinheritance Permitted? As we have mentioned, the Gemara specifically mentions that one should not disinherit a "bad" son in favor of a "good" son. The reason given is that one does not know what will become of the "bad" son's descendants. Perhaps they will be righteous and will deserve the financial support of their ancestor. The Sema (282:1) adds that the "bad" son should not be disinherited even if he did not demonstrate proper respect for his father during his lifetime. Nevertheless, Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe C.M. 2:50) rules that if the "bad" son has completely abandoned a Torah lifestyle, he may be disinherited. Rav Moshe explains that in such a situation, it is highly unlikely that a descendant of such an individual will lead a Torah lifestyle (for further discussion of this issue see Teshuvot Maharam Schick C.M. 43 and Teshuvot Doveiv Meisharim 1:97). It should be noted that Rav Moshe penned this responsum in 1965, prior to the emergence of the "Baal Teshuva movement." Today, it is not so unlikely that a descendant of one who has abandoned a Torah lifestyle will return to the proper path. Thus, Rav Moshe's ruling may no longer be applicable. Moreover, Rav Moshe does not absolutely forbid one to leave assets for a child who has abandoned the Torah. Indeed, in many instances a child's alienation from Torah may be deepened if he is disinherited. These matters are complex and vary from case to case. A Rav and competent attorney should both be consulted if one is faced with this problem due to the complexity of both the Halachic and legal issues involved. To disinheriting a child who has abandoned a Torah lifestyle is to establish a trust which, if carefully and properly planned, will reward the child for adhering to Jewish tradition. The trustee may be given the discretion to allocate money for many purposes, so that he may choose to expend funds to pay for Yeshiva education, Orthodox summer camps, and visits to Israel. This must be drafted in a manner which avoids religious dictates

which could be overturned by a secular court if the affected child were to challenge the will. Similarly, a statement in a will that any child or grandchild who intermarries will be disinherited might not be enforced by a secular court, as it is a violation of (secular) public policy. In such cases, leaving assets in a trust with multiple beneficiaries and appointing trustees who understand your concerns and wishes may be a more viable alternative. Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yabia Omer 8: C.M. 10) offers a similar approach. In addition, Rav Ezra Basri (Sefer HaTzavaot p. 6) writes, "One who realizes that his adult children will act irresponsibly with their money and is concerned that they will waste their inheritance on gambling or some other frivolous activity...should appoint trustees over the money he wishes to bequeath these children to insure that it is properly invested. The trustees should be instructed to give the children a limited amount of money each month." Rav Basri cites the Meiri (Bava Batra 134) as a source for this ruling. In all cases, it must be strongly emphasized that a will must not be used as a tool for revenge. The Torah specifically forbids taking revenge (Vayikra 19:18).

Disinheriting Sons in Favor of Daughters The aforementioned Gemara (Bava Batra 133b) teaches that it is highly improper to disinherit sons in favor of daughters. Accordingly, it would appear at first glance that the mechanisms to present daughters with a share in the estate described in the previous articles should not be used. Although they successfully enable one to avoid violating the letter of the Jewish law, they appear to violate the spirit of the law. This question was in fact raised many centuries ago (see Nachalat Tzvi 12:2). There are several possible answers to this problem, two of which will be reviewed here. First, the Gemara (Ketubot 53a) explains that one may divert money to a daughter to improve her marriage prospects. Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg (Techumin 4:345) adds that this reasoning applies to bequeathing money to a married daughter as well, because a woman's marriage prospects are greater if it is possible that she will be willed a share in her father's estate after marriage. Second, the Ketzer HaChoshen (282:2) cites the Tashbetz (3:741), who rules that the negative attitude Chazal maintained against disinheriting Halachic heirs does not apply if the Halachic heirs are provided with a significant share in the estate. Although some authorities disagree with this ruling (see Teshuvot Chatam Sofer C.M. 151, Pitchei Teshuvah C.M. 282:1 and Pitchei Choshen 8:111), Rav Zalman Nechemia writes that the widespread use of the Shtar Chatzi Zachar throughout the past four centuries indicates that the accepted practice is to follow the opinion of the Tashbetz as cited in the Ketzer. Thus, presenting daughters with a share in the estate through the mechanism of a Shtar Chatzi Zachar or a contemporary variation thereof does not constitute a violation of the spirit of Jewish law. For a somewhat different approach to this issue, see Rav Feivel Cohen's Kuntress Midor LeDor (pp. 43-44). We noted last week that the Ketzer mentions the option of leaving a daughter a full share in the Yerushah and that Rav Asher Weiss reported that Rav Akiva Eiger wrote a Shtar Shalem Zachar for his daughter upon her marriage to the Chatam Sofer. Rav Hershel Schachter, in turn, told me that today one should give his daughters a full share in the Yerushah lest there be bitterness and acrimony in the family. Likewise, Rav Yitzchak Herzog (Techukah LeYisrael Al Pi HaTorah 2:110) records that the famed author Shemuel Yosef Agnon told him that in pre-war Galicia, a great Chassidic Rebbe died and his sons asserted their Halachic right to the entire Yerushah, to the stern disapproval of the entire Jewish community in the region. Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky (cited in Emet LeYaakov 455) expresses a similar sentiment stating, "In today's times, it is proper for the daughters to receive an appropriate share of the estate, and it is not considered Avurei Achsanta. However, the sons should also receive an appropriate share of the estate." Rav Yechiel Michal Tukachinsky (Geshar HaChaim 1:41-42) espouses a similar approach. Rav Binyamin Rabinowitz-Teumim (in an essay published in Rav Herzog's Techukah LeYisrael Al Pi HaTorah 2:224-226) explains that in an age when women are expected to contribute to the financial well-being of their families, daughters also need a share in the Yerushah. This is not the ideal, as the Torah would prefer that the women not be burdened with financial responsibilities. Interestingly, Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yabia Omer 8 C.M. 9) permits giving a son who studies Torah full-time most of the Yerushah, provided he leaves a significant sum to his other sons.

Disinheritance in Favor of Charity The Rama and later authorities differ regarding how much of a person's estate may be designated for charity as opposed to the Halachic heirs. The Rama (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 942:1) seems to permit one to donate his entire estate to charity. Rav Akiva Eiger (ad locum s.v. Kol), however, cites the view of the She'iltot that one should not divert more than one-third of his estate to charity. The Aruch HaShulchan (Y.D. 249:1) rules that one may leave up to half of his estate to charity. It is possible that if the estate is unusually large one may leave a much larger percentage of his estate to charity, as the Halachic heirs will nevertheless receive a sufficient amount of money (following the example set by Warren Buffet – see Kiddushin 31a that Jews should draw a Kal VaChomer from the actions of Dama ben Netina). Rav Feivel Cohen, though, wrote to me that even a very wealthy person should follow the Aruch HaShulchan and not give more than half of his estate to Tzedakah following the reasoning presented in the Aruch

HaShulchan. One should consult his Rav regarding about this issue. Generous charitable bequests are encouraged to address the needs of the Neshamah of the testator. The Gemara (Ketubot 67b) records that Mar Ukva had donated a considerable amount of money during his lifetime. However, prior to his death, he donated (according to the standard version of the text) half of his estate to Tzedakah. He explained, "I have prepared few provisions for the long trip that I am about to embark on." Mar Ukva was concerned that he would not have sufficient merit, as he was about to enter the world to come. This idea is developed at length in the Chafetz Chaim's work *Ahavat Chessed Inyanei Gemilut Chassadim* in the footnotes. Accordingly, Rav Feivel Cohen wrote to me that it is appropriate for Rabbanim and financial advisors to urge people to leave considerable gifts to Tzedakah in their will. Rav Hershel Schachter (Tradition 29:4 p.90) cautions, though, that, "It should be emphasized that it is prohibited to pressure older people, weak in mind and in body, to bequeath their monies to charities against their wishes." Rav Elazar Meir Teitz told this author that his father Rav Pinchas Teitz zt"l strongly urged his congregants to leave at least ten percent of their estates to charity. Rav Elazar Meir added that his father did so in his own will. It also should be noted that a trust can be established that will motivate children to give charity throughout their lives. One should consult his Rav and attorney about this issue.

Conclusion Whatever mechanism one uses to comply with the Torah requirements of Yerushah, it should be handled with care and sensitivity for all people involved, with consideration of fundamental Torah values and recognition of the importance, if not obligation, of bequeathing something to Tzedakah. Next week (IY"Y and B"N), we will discuss the issue of living wills and other health care matters.

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SHEMOS 5757

A. Summary

1. A New Pharaoh Oppresses The Israelites. Yaakov's descendants were now all in Egypt, where they flourished in numbers. A new Pharaoh, fearful that the Israelites would join his enemies in overthrowing him, instituted a policy of oppression to reduce the Israelites to slaves. Supervised by cruel taskmasters, the Israelites were forced to build the fortresses and storage cities of Pithom and Rameses. Despite Pharaoh's efforts to reduce the Jewish birth rate, it steadily increased, leading Pharaoh to order the Hebrew midwives to kill male infants at birth. However, fearing Hashem, the midwives disobeyed Pharaoh, leading him to decree that every newborn Jewish male be drowned in the Nile.

2. Moshe is born; Moshe is adopted By Pharaoh's Daughter. Amram and Yocheved, members of the tribe of Levi, gave birth to Moshe soon after Pharaoh's death edict. (They had two prior children, Miriam and Aharon.) After Yocheved could no longer keep Moshe's birth a secret, she placed him into an ark in the Nile (under Miriam's supervision). Pharaoh's daughter came to bath in the Nile, saw the ark and sent one of her maidens to fetch it. She realized that it was a Hebrew child and, moved by pity, decided to adopt him. Miriam came forward and was allowed to find him a nurse, whereupon she returned with Yocheved, who would raise Moshe and teach him the traditions of his ancestors. Moshe was taken to the palace, at which time he was named "Moshe" ("drawn out of the water").

3. Moshe Kills An Egyptian Overseer. After he had matured, Moshe went to be among his fellow Israelites and observed their suffering. One day, he noticed an Egyptian overseer savagely beating an Israelite and, seeing no one else around, killed and buried the overseer. The next day, Moshe intervened in a quarrel between two Israelites, during which one of them asked him who he was to judge them and whether he intended to kill them as he had killed the overseer. It now being clear that his act was known and he was in grave danger, Moshe fled to Midian (in the Sinai's southeastern region). He came to a well where he protected the seven daughters of Yisro (Midian's spiritual leader) from unfriendly shepherds, following which he was welcomed by Yisro and tended his sheep. Moshe soon married one of the daughters, Zipporah, and they had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.

4. Moshe Sees The Burning Bush. While Moshe was in Midian, Pharaoh died. Pharaoh's successor intensified the Israelites' oppression and the Israelites cried out to Hashem for help. While tending Yisro's sheep, Moshe saw an amazing sight -- a thornbush which burned but wasn't consumed. As he gazed in wonder, Hashem spoke to him for the first time, commanded him to remove his shoes (since it was holy ground) and informed him that he was to be Hashem's messenger to take the Israelites from Egypt into Israel.

5. Hashem Assures Moshe That He Is Worthy To Lead The Israelites. Moshe told Hashem that he was unworthy of this awesome task, but Hashem assured him that He would assist him. Moshe asked what reply he should give when the Israelites would ask for G-d's name. Hashem replied that He could be revealed by the declaration, "Eyeh Asher Eyeh" ("I will be what I will be"). Moshe was then told to tell the Elders of Israel of Hashem's appearance and that they were to demand that Pharaoh allow the Israelites to offer sacrifices to Hashem in the wilderness. Pharaoh would refuse, but Pharaoh would thereafter be smitten by Hashem's plagues and forced to relent, and the Israelites would leave Egypt laden with riches. Moshe protested that the Israelites would not believe him, whereupon he was given the power to perform three miracles to convince them (i.e., his rod would turn into a snake and vice versa; his hand would contract leprosy and then be cured; and he would turn water from the Nile into blood). Moshe, still hesitant, protested that he did not have the requisite speaking ability, but was assured that his brother Aharon would be his spokesman.

6. Moshe Meets With The Israelites. Moshe met Aharon at Mt. Chorev and told him what had happened. Upon reaching Egypt, they assembled the Elders of Israel and told them Hashem's words. After Moshe performed the miracles, the Israelites affirmed their belief that Hashem was answering their cries for help and bowed down to worship Hashem.

7. Moshe and Aharon Meet With Pharaoh. Moshe and Aharon appeared before Pharaoh and asked him to let the Israelites go and deliver offerings to Hashem in the wilderness. Not only did Pharaoh reject their request, but he imposed even harsher decrees against the Israelites -- they now had to deliver the same amount of bricks, but would not be given straw to help them build the bricks. The overseers flogged the Hebrew foremen because they were unable to perform this impossible task. The Israelites' appeal to Pharaoh for mercy was rejected and they blamed Moshe and Aharon for worsening their situation. In response to Moshe's expressions of frustration, Hashem assured him that Pharaoh would eventually be compelled by Him to let the Israelites go.

B. Divrei Torah

1. Lilmode U'lilamed (Rabbi Mordechai Katz)

a. The Israelites' Suffering In Egypt. Among the explanations for the Jews' suffering in Egypt are the following: (a) the Jews' travails were a means of refining and purifying the new Jewish nation. (Sefer Yalkut Meam Loez.) In this view, Egypt was the "iron furnace" which helped mold the Jews into a holy and cohesive people. Their impurities were removed and the experience gave them the common bond making them ready for "Matan Torah" (receiving the Torah). In this way, they were like iron, which must go through fire before it loses its dross and becomes hardened; and (b) the oppression in Egypt helped the Jews better appreciate Hashem's bountiful gifts. The harder it is to attain something, the more welcome it is when attained. After suffering in Egypt, the Jews were in a position to fully value their freedom as a nation under Hashem's guidance and eagerly accept the spiritual nourishment of the Torah.

b. Moshe as Leader. Why was Moshe chosen to lead to Jews? Among other reasons, Moshe directed his heart and mind the share the experiences of his fellow Jews. Although he enjoyed the privileges of a palace upbringing, he empathized with the plight of those Jews who were enslaved. This quality of concern for others helped make Moshe an outstanding leader.

c. The Burning Bush. In Shemos Rabah, Chazal offer several explanations for why Hashem appeared to Moshe in a burning thornbush: (a) the thornbush is a seemingly insignificant creation, small and apt to cause pain with its prickles; Hashem wanted to point out that even the "lowest" of creations can miraculously become inflamed if filled with the Divine spirit (a lesson that even the humblest person can make history if filled with Hashem's holy spirit), and to show His empathy for the "lowly"; (b) one only encounters pain taking one's hands out, not putting them into, a thornbush; similarly, the Israelites were first welcomed in Egypt, but were later prevented from leaving; and (c) just as the bush was not consumed, the Jews of Egypt (and in subsequent generations) would not be destroyed.

2. Growth Through Torah (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

a. Try to help others even if think you won't succeed; frequently, you'll accomplish more than you imagined. The Torah says that Pharaoh's daughter "stretched out her arm" and took the ark containing Moshe. Rashi explains that she stretched out very

far and was able to miraculously save Moshe. The Kotzer Rebbe said that this teaches us that we must do everything in our power to save someone, even if we think we can't succeed. We can, with Hashem's help, often accomplish much more than we imagined.

b. Learn to see others' suffering. In discussing the statement that "Moshe saw their [his fellow Israelites'] suffering", Rashi notes that he made a special effort that his eyes should see, and his heart should feel, their suffering. Rabbi Aryeh Levin stared at each of his students as they entered the school so that he could assess and address their individual aspirations/needs -- e.g., who was anxious to learn, who was preoccupied; who was hungry, who lacked adequate clothing.

c. You ultimately help yourself when you help others. Moshe saved Zipporah at the well; she later saved his life. The Chofetz Chaim teaches that, while it shouldn't be our motivation for doing kindness, all acts of kindness we do for others are eventually repaid. One can never know how Hashem will send aid, and therefore, one must always practice good deeds for they may someday prove directly beneficial. Rav Yechezkel Landau once noticed a gentile boy shivering and crying in the winter cold. Rav Landau tried to calm him and asked him what was the matter. The boy replied that he had been sent by his parents to sell some wares, but thugs had stolen all the money he made. He was afraid to face his parents penniless. Taking pity, Rav Landau gave the boy some of his own money which the boy accepted most gratefully. Many years later, on Erev Pesach, Rav Landau was preparing the Seder when he heard a knock at the door. He opened the door to find a tall gentile youth. The youth said, "Don't you remember me, Rabbi? I am the boy you once comforted by giving me money in the street. And now I have come to return the favor which I have never forgotten. I overheard the non-Jewish bakers talking about how Jews always buy bread from them right after Pesach when they have none of their own. I heard the baker say that this year they are planning to poison the bread and in this way kill all the Jews and I thought you should know this." Rav Landau thanked the youth and told his fellow Jews that because of a mistake in the calendar they should refrain from eating bread an additional day. When the bakers complained to the king that the Jews were not buying bread from them as they always did, Rav Landau said that he would buy bread, provided the bakers took a bite from it first. When they refused to do so, their evil plot was revealed and the Jews of the town were saved, thanks to Hashem's help and Rav Landau's kindness to the boy!

d. Serve Hashem by acting in an elevated manner in difficult situations. Hashem told Moshe "the place upon which you are standing is sacred land". The Chofetz Chaim teaches that this means that the exact situation in which you find yourself is sacred; if your life situation is difficult, it is exactly in that situation that Hashem wants you to serve Him. (As Chazal teach "according to the difficulty is the reward"; the Chofetz Chaim said "a fool makes mud out of gold, but a wise person makes gold out of mud".)

3. The Chassidic Dimension (the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M.

Schneerson, z'tl) (the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, z'tl)
a. Counting By Names. The Parsha begins "And these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt . . .". Rashi notes that "Although He counted them by name while they were alive, He counted them again after their passing in order to make known (and demonstrate) His love for them; for they are likened to the stars, which He takes out and brings in by their numbers and names". Why by both numbers and names? Counting emphasizes commonalities; names emphasizes individuality. Each Jew is counted among (and part of) the Jewish community and Hashem, but has his/her own name and unique qualities. Hashem's love recognizes this duality of each Jew.

b. Defying Pharaoh. When Moshe and Aharon relayed Hashem's message to pharaoh, he responded: "why are you distracting the people from their work? Get back to "your own business". Chazal teach that Moshe, Aharon and the Levites weren't subject to slave labor. As Ramban explains, Pharaoh permitted the Jews, as was customary in every nation, to have their wise persons and teachers and this was the Levite's task. However, the idea that they should disregard their brethren's plight and "mind their own business" was Pharaoh's, not a Jewish, attitude. We must improve our own physical and spiritual lot, but must also look out the physical and spiritual betterment of others.

4. Majesty Of Man (Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz)

Trust Through Torah. Moshe's hesitancy to assume leadership wasn't based upon his concerns about taking the Israelites out of Egypt (after all, what enslaved people would refuse his offer to lead them out of slavery?); rather, the Ramban explains that he feared that they wouldn't follow him into Israel where they would be confronted in battle by seven powerful nations since he was not sure how he could assure them that he could guide them safely to inherit the promised land? Hashem responded that, after receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai, the Jewish people would have absolute trust in Moshe. It was the Torah -- not the ten plagues, splitting of the Red Sea, giving of

manna, etc. -- that would lead to their complete and everlasting faith in Moshe and Hashem.

5. Love Thy Neighbor (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

a. We must feel the suffering of others, even when it means a loss of our own personal pleasure. Moshe went out from the luxury of the royal palace to see his fellow Israelites' suffering; we, too, must "go out" to see and respond to others' suffering.

b. We must be happy for others' good fortune. "And when he [Aharon] sees you, he will be glad in his heart". The Midrash states that Aharon merited wearing the breastplate (which was worn by the High Priest when he served in the Holy Temple) as a reward for his unreserved happiness upon greeting Moshe (he wasn't jealous of Moshe's leadership position).

6. Wellsprings of Torah (Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman)

The Attribute of Modesty. And Moshe said to Hashem: "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh . . ." Moshe, as humble as he was, did not consider himself worthy of being the deliverer of the Jewish people. Thereupon, Hashem answered him that his very question was proof of his fitness for the task. Hashem calls only on those who do not think overly highly of themselves. Thus, of all the mountains, Hashem chose lowly Mt. Sinai as the place upon which to give the Torah, for while the higher mountains boasted of their heights, Mt. Sinai remained little in its own eyes. Similarly, since Moshe remained little in his own eyes, he was worth of leading the Jewish people. (Avnei Ezel)

7. Living Each Day (Rabbi Abraham Twerski)

The Meaning of Empathy. Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz learns out from this Parsha the meaning of true empathy. He draws upon a comment from the Midrash which Rashi quotes in this week's Parsha: "And it was in those days that Moshe grew up and went out amongst his brethren and saw their travails." Rashi comments that Moshe put his "eyes and heart into suffering with them." Moshe did not merely observe their distress; rather, he threw his entire being into understanding the depth of their distress, to know every tiny detail of it. But, it does not stop here. The Midrash goes on to say that Moshe put his shoulder under their load and shared the burden with all his brethren. This was no so much to help them, says Rabbi Levovitz, since Moshe could only provide a limited amount of help to such a multitude. Rather, he shared in their hard labor so that he could truly share in their pain, exhaustion and crushed spirit. Then, and only then, could he be truly empathetic. As Pirke Avos teaches, sharing in another's burden is an essential for the acquisition of Torah. It is fundamental not only for mitzvos between man and man, but between man and G-d as well. Since true empathy is essential for Torah, one can't be truly Torah observant if one is derelict in this trait. Ritual piety without sharing in others' burdens is not Torah observance. The natural feelings people have cause them to isolate themselves from others who are suffering. For example, we do not want our meals disturbed by the thought that there are people who are starving. But, Torah observance is not designed to provide one with maximum comfort; the Torah requires us to investigate the depth of other peoples' distress and, as Moshe did, feel along with those who suffer. This is true empathy.

8. Ve-She-Non-Tom (Rabbi Elias Schwartz)

"Achdus" (Unity). One of Pharaoh's harshest decrees was when he said "Do not continue to give them straw with which to make bricks, but let them gather their own straw. Yet, they must produce the same amounts of bricks as previously. Reb David, the Rebbe from Luluv notes that Hebrew words for "do not continue" are spelled without an "aleph". Yet, in the sentence quoted, it is spelled with an aleph. This changes the meaning of the meaning, for it derived from the root letters meaning "to gather together". This was also part of Pharaoh's decree; not only were they not given straw, but they were commanded not to gather together in groups. Pharaoh wanted to destroy the unity of the Jewish people. He knew that as long as the Jewish people were together, they could withstand any harsh decree and would eventually triumph over their troubles.