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The Profundity of "Names"

Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger

Not only is the sefer we are opening this week called "Shemos - names" but it also enjoys several appellations itself. Of the lesser known labels, Ramban elucidates the title, "Sefer Geula - the book of redemption." Ramban in his introductory comments to Sefer Shemos explains that the sefer does not merely tell a story that includes redemption rather the volume is entirely dedicated to redemption and its antecedents. In other words, redemption is not complete with the miraculous splitting of the sea even though our masters remain vanquished; nor is redemption satisfied with the receiving of the Torah, despite the fact that it entirely transformed our anonymous and meaningless existence into a deliberate, elevated and missionized life. Jewish redemption is about coming back, regaining the ground of the Patriarchs, the coexistence with the spiritual, with all of its profound meaning and awesome responsibilities. That return only became real with the construction of the Mishkan, welcoming Jews to feel the closeness of Shechina. Thus the entire book describes redemption, with the last chapter describing Hashem residing in the Mishkan as the climactic completion to geula.

A not altogether different angle is offered by the Beha"g[1] who simply calls this sefer "volume two." This is noteworthy because he does not refer to any of the other five volumes by their numerical position. To them he accedes their more descriptive labels with which we are familiar. That is why the Netziv[2] in his introductory comments to Shemos dwells on this otherwise unremarkable title. He suggests that the Beha"g wants us to realize that at its core, Sefer Shemos is the inseparable sequel to Breishis in more ways than one. Shemos is not only the actualization of many of the patterns of Breishis but it gives purpose to all that has been recorded. Of course, the sequence of events from famine to displacement to a plagued Pharaoh to wealthy

redemption comes to fruition. Of far more lasting significance is the choosing of our people, the revelation of Hashem's plans and practices, and the centrality of His place in this world, all of which are intimated in the medrashic comments on the word "Breishis[3]", and all of which give purpose to creation. Consequently, it is the Book Two that in fact makes Bereishis into Book Number One.

Yet isn't the most intriguing designation of this second book the name that we are most accustomed to, i.e. "Shemos"? Why should we refer to the entire narrative of the formation of our people as the "record of names"? Moreover, a correct translation of our pronunciation has us calling the sefer, "names of", a rather dangling title. Furthermore, the title becomes a reference to the list of Yaakov's children, a list whose seeming redundancy needs to be justified by our commentaries.

Rav Mordechai Druk, who for decades darshaned in five Yerushalmi shuls every Shabbos, intimates that Rashi is not only justifying the repetition of the names of Yaakov's family when he explains that this communicates Hashem's affection for us. Rather, Rashi also wants us to be continuously cognizant of that affection throughout our study of the trials and triumphs of exile and redemption. Hence, the name "Shemos" comes as a reminder or a guide to the study of volume two.

I believe that we can gain insight through another comment of the Netziv. With his typical sensitivity to the text, the Netziv points out that the list of names is not referring to Yaakov's sons, but rather to the tribes of which they are also symbols. More precisely, each name refers to an aspect of the Jewish people, each of which Yaakov had begun to describe in Parshas Vayechi, that the members of each shevet would inject into our people repeatedly. The pasuk reads, "These are the names of Bnei Yisroel that came to Egypt with Yaakov..." The Netziv reasons that were this a list of Yaakov's children, the Torah would call them the children of Yaakov and simply refer to him in the balance of the pasuk. By explicitly mentioning Yaakov in the end of the pasuk, the "Bnei Yisrael" in the opening phrase must refer to us as a people. It follows that we have come to refer to this sefer as, "names of [our 12 distinct parts]". It therefore, seems to me that the name of the sefer, "Shemos", is one of the mandates of the galus therein described. Perhaps we are being instructed to be ever mindful throughout our diaspora wanderings that we are sorely missing so much of the vibrant colors of our people and the tapestry that can only come through the togetherness of all twelve stripes. That dangling unfinished title, "names of", refers to our avoda of galus, of maintaining the breadth of opportunities to do Hashem's will even as the strategies of survival will wisely focus us on one path at a time. Perhaps this title of the galus and redemption experience also refers to the avoda of doing our utmost to hold our brethren close to the missions and mesora of our roots, of keeping the family intact to the best of our efforts.

Finally, the opening "vov" of the sefer[4] indicates its inseparability from the forgoing narrative, and starts the galus journey at the bedside of Yaakov where each son learns of his strengths and that of his brothers. Each son understands the contribution that they are being asked to make and how incomplete it will be if it is not supported by the blessings of all those in attendance. That journey finally came full circle when each shevet took up its position around the mishkan. It will circle around again when we each return to our tribal section of the Land of Israel, in which we will all find a well-suited home.

[1] Rabbi Shimon Kayyara, the author of the *Halachos Gedolos*, is referred to as the Beha"g, which is an acronym for "Ba'al Halachos Gedolos - author of the *Halachos Gedolos*"

[2] Rav Naftoli Zvi Yehuda Berlin, nineteenth century Rosh Yeshiva of the Volozhin yeshiva and author of (among other works) a commentary on the chumash entitled *Ha'amek Davar*

[3] See Rashi's commentary to Breishis 1:1

[4] "V'ayle Shemos...", *Shemos 1:1*

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subject: Rav Frand - The Secret to Surviving Galus / You Never Know!

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Rabbi Yissochar Frand - Parshas Shemos

The Secret to Surviving Galus

The Secret to Surviving Galus is Hidden in the Opening Pesukim of Sefer Shemos

Sefer Shemos begins with the pasuk, “And these are the names of the Children of Israel who came down to Egypt with Yaakov, each man and his household came.” [Shemos 1:1] The Tolner Rebbe shlit”a asks three interesting questions on this pasuk:

First, the five opening pesukim of Sefer Shemos appear to be redundant. The Torah lists the names of the twelve tribes; it says that the population of Yaakov’s family totaled seventy; and that Yosef was already in Egypt. We knew all this already from the end of Sefer Bereshis! Parshas Vayigash contains an enumeration not only of Yaakov’s children, but of all his grandchildren as well. The Torah says that the total population of Yaakov’s descendants in Egypt was seventy. We know the Torah is very judicious in its use of words, so why was this census information repeated here?

Second, it would seem that the more precise way to introduce the sefer would be to say “And these are the Children of Israel who came down to Egypt...” Why is emphasis placed on the names of the Children of Israel? Third, why does the Torah use the term “ha’baim Mitzrayema” to express the idea “who came down to Egypt,” when grammatically speaking, the word “ha’baim” is present tense, and the expression would usually be translated “who are coming (down to Egypt)?” Why does the Torah not say “she’ba-oo Mitzrayema,” which is past tense?

These are the three questions the Tolner Rebbe shlit”a asks. He gives the following analysis, which answers these questions:

A famous saying of Chazal teaches that in the merit of the fact that the Jews did not change their names, their language, and their mode of dress, they were redeemed from Egypt.

These first five pesukim of Sefer Shemos are not here to tell us history. They are not written to inform us who came down to Egypt. As we mentioned before, we know that already. This opening section of the second book of Chumash is trying to teach us that this is the secret of how to exist in Galus [exile]. As Chazal say, the exile in Egypt and the redemption from that exile are the paradigms for all future exiles and redemptions of the Jewish people. As we have mentioned many times, Galus is a function of the history of the Jewish people. We have been in Galus more years than we have been in Eretz Yisrael. The two batei mikdash [Temples] lasted approximately 400 years each; the period of the Judges was roughly another 400 years. Other than those approximately 1200 years, we have been in exile most of the time of our collective existence. We need a blueprint, a survival kit, with which to survive Galus.

That is why the opening pasuk of the sefer reiterates, “And these are the names of the Children of Israel.” It is not to inform us who came down. The pasuk is telling us the secret of survival in Galus. The secret of maintaining our national identity in exile involves not changing our names. Yaakov’s children did not adopt secular names or the names of the land. They were called by their Hebrew names, the names they were given at birth, not by the Egyptian equivalent of those names.

As we read in the Hagaddah, “... this teaches that they were distinct there” (melamed she’hayu metzuyananim sham). The only way a few dozen people can survive amongst a population of millions is by maintaining their unique identity. In those days, maintaining a nation’s national identity meant not changing their names, not changing their language, and not changing their clothes.

Currently, we have 613 mitzvos which allow us to maintain our unique Jewish identity. But this was before matan Torah. They did not have a set of hundreds of unique commandments. What, then, made them “Jewish?” Today we are “Jewish” because we keep Shabbos, we keep Kashrus, we have Tallis, we have Tefillin — we have all these things. But what made us “Jewish” in Egypt? The answer is that they had to “hang on by their fingernails” to whatever Jewish identity they had. A critical part of that Jewish identity was their names. Therefore, “These were the NAMES of the Children of Israel...” This is part of the secret.

Regarding the term “ha’Baim Mitzrayema” (in present tense), the Tolner Rebbe says: Of course, based on the rules of grammar, it should read “she’Ba’oo Mitzrayema” (past tense), but here too, the pasuk is not telling us history. It is teaching us a message. The Jews did not just come to Egypt and settle in. They were always in a state of flux. They knew, and kept reminding themselves, that they were “strangers in a land that did not belong to them.” We are always “still in the process of just coming here.” We are “greenhorns.” We are going to remain “greenhorns,” and we are proud that we are “greenhorns.” We are always in the state of “ha’baim” — just now coming to Egypt. We are here merely as travelers — this is not our permanent country.

These are the “secrets” the Torah is revealing to us in the opening pesukim of Sefer Shemos. A person must not identify himself by saying, “I am an Egyptian Jew.” He must say, “I am a Jew” (period!). If not, he is going to be swallowed up by the host culture.

There is one other secret mentioned in this opening pasuk. That is alluded to by the words “ish u’beiso ba-oo” (each man and his household came).” In situations when a nation is in turmoil — they were after all in exile; they were foreigners in a strange land — in such situations, it is the Jewish home that must become the bastion of serenity and protection in order that their national integrity be maintained.

When the outside environment is hostile, the sanctity of the Jewish home (bayis ha’Yehudi) becomes critical to the maintenance of Jewish identity. Our fortress is dependent upon the bayis ha’Yehudi. This is primarily based on how a woman maintains her home. Throughout our exile, it has been the “Yiddishe shtub” [the Jewish home] which has been the key to our survival. These three things – Shemos (maintain your Jewish identity), ha’baim (always be in a state of being a stranger in the land, not a sojourner), and beiso (the Jewish home) — are the secrets of our survival in exile.

Four of the five books of the Torah end in a similar fashion — ending either with reference to “Bnei Yisrael” or “Kol Yisrael”. For instance, the Book of Vayikra ends “These are the commandments that Hashem commanded to the Children of Israel on Mount Sinai.” [Vayikra 27:34] The Book of Bamidbar ends “These are the commandments and laws that Hashem commanded through Moshe to the Children of Israel in the Wilderness of Moab by the Jordan (near) Yericho [Bamidbar 36:13]. The Book of Devorim ends with the words “...before the eyes of all Israel. [Devorim 34:12]”

Sefer Shemos is unique in that it concludes with neither the expression “Bnei Yisrael” (as we find at the end of Bereshis, Vayikra, and Bamidbar) nor “kol Yisrael” (as we find at the end of Devorim). Sefer Shemos ends with the expression: “before the eyes of all the House of Israel...” (kol Beis Yisrael).

This is the only one of the Chamisha Chumshei Torah that ends like that, and in fact, this is exactly how Sefer Shemos began — ish u’Beiso ba’oo (every man and his household came). The secret of their survival in exile was beis Yisrael — the Jewish household. That was the island of tranquility in a sea of turmoil.

Other than Moshe Rabbeinu, You Never Know!

After Moshe sees an Egyptian beating a Jew, the pasuk says, “and he looked this way and that, and he saw that there was no man, and he smote the Egyptian and he buried him in the sand.” [Shemos: 2:12] Moshe Rabbeinu killed the Egyptian who was beating the Jew. Rashi elaborates on the words “and he looked this way and that, and saw that there was no man”: Moshe

(prophetically) peered into the future and determined that no righteous person was destined to descend from this Egyptian. The Brisker Rav (Rav Velvel — Yitzchak Zev — Soloveitchik [1886-1959]) asks the following question: What difference does it make if a righteous person was destined to descend from this Egyptian? If the Egyptian was deserving of the death penalty for striking a Jew, then who cares if he will have righteous descendants? A Jewish court does not pardon the sins of ancestors based on the merits of future offspring. And if he was not deserving of the death penalty for his actions, we certainly would not execute him merely because he was not going to have a righteous descendant! The Brisker Rav answers by citing the Rashi on pasuk 14: When Moshe Rabbeinu killed this Egyptian he executed him by using the Shem HaMeforash (the Ineffable Name of the Almighty). A person is normally prohibited from pronouncing this Name, but if he has those powers, he can literally kill someone by invoking the Shem HaMeforash against him. Why did Moshe utilize this method of execution?

The Brisker Rav explains by quoting a Rambam: “An idolater who smites an Israelite, even though he is deserving of death, is not executed.” [Hilchos Milachim 10:6] This is a ruling we find in Tractate Sanhedrin [58b]: “Rav Chanina says, an idolater who strikes an Israelite is deserving of death, as it is written, ‘and he turned this way and that and saw that there was no man and he smote the Egyptian.’” However, the Rambam rules that although he is deserving of death, we do not execute him. The Kesef Mishna there explains that the Rambam means that the idolater receives the death penalty “at the Hand of Heaven.” We do not prosecute him, but Hashem will take care of him.

Based on this Kesef Mishna, the Brisker Rav says that is why Moshe killed the Egyptian with the Shem haMeforash. Utilizing the Name of G-d to kill the Egyptian was a form of “execution by the Hand of Heaven.”

The Brisker Rav explains that now we understand what Rashi means when he says that Moshe looked and saw that a righteous person would not descend from this person. In earthly courts, we certainly do not take into account who the future descendants of a person are when determining whether or not to punish him for a given crime. In “death at the Hand of Heaven,” however, these are exactly the type of calculations the Almighty takes into account when determining if and when to carry out the punishment of “death at the Hand of Heaven.”

In connection with this insight of the Brisker Rav, I would like to relate an interesting incident:

There was a brilliant young Yeshiva student in Lakewood who got married. The Roshei Yeshiva and many of the distinguished students of the Yeshiva came to his Sheva Brochos. The chosson said a nice dvar Torah during the meal. It was now the end of the Sheva Brochos meal, and the grandfather of the chosson asked for permission to speak.

The grandfather of the chosson was an am ha'aretz (opposite of a talmid chochom). He knew nothing. The chosson began squirming in his chair. “What is my grandfather going to say? The Rosh Yeshivas are all here. I am going to be so embarrassed!” But after all, he was the Zeida. It is not possible to tell a Zeida that he cannot speak at his grandson’s Sheva Brochos.

The Zeida (who was from Europe) got up and spoke to the gathering: I would like to relate an incident that happened in Europe. There was a young boy in Europe who attended cheder. He was a chevremant [a mischief maker]. One Monday morning, before anyone was in shul, this boy took a goat and put it into the aron kodesh. When it came time for krias haTorah, the gabbai opened the aron kodesh to take out a Sefer Torah. Lo and behold, a goat jumped out! The people in shul were outraged. They traced the criminal act back to this mischievous boy.

The principal of the cheder came to the boy’s parents and said, “This is the last straw! This time your son has gone too far. We are throwing him out of the school.” The boy then went to the town Rav and told him, “I want to take the principal to a din Torah and demand that he accepts me back into

school.” The principal came to the din Torah. The Rav turned to the boy and asked, “What is your claim?” The boy responded, “There is only one cheder in this town. If I get thrown out of this cheder, what will become of me? Either I will go to the gymnasium (secular educational institution) and lose all connection to Judaism, or I will wander the streets and lose all connection to Judaism, and then my children will not have any connection to Judaism. My grandchildren will not have any connection to Judaism! True, maybe I deserve to be thrown out of school. However, can you say that you have “looked this way and that way and saw that in the future no person will descend from me”? What is going to be with my descendants? What is going to be with my children and my grandchildren? This principal is sentencing them that they should all be irreligious Jews. That is not right! How can you sentence my children and grandchildren to a life without Torah?”

The principal said, “You are right,” and he accepted the boy back into school.

The Zeida concluded, “Ani Yosef! I am that boy! I am that mischievous boy who put the goat in the aron kodesh. Now, look at my ainekel [grandson]. Look at this illui [brilliant prodigy]! See what happens! You never know who might come out from someone.”

Moshe Rabbeinu had ruach haKodesh. He could say, “and he saw that there was no man (destined to emerge from him).” But the average person can never know. I have been in the Rebbe business long enough to know that this is indeed true. A prime rule of chinuch that teachers and educators must always bear in mind: “A person never knows!” A person never knows with his children, one never knows with his talmidim [students], one never knows with his classmates and peers. That is why it is essential to always proceed with caution in all matters of discipline, and certainly in “life and death matters” such as expulsion.

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From nesulman@aol.com [Rabbi Nisson E. Shulman]

Shabbat Shuva, **Shlichut by Rav Soloveitchik zt"l**

A Shabbat Shuva Derasha, **part of Rav Soloveitchik zt"l's 1964 Yahrtzeit Shiur** for his father, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, zt"l. Subject, Shlichus.

SHABBAT SHUVA SHIUR: HaRav Soloveitchik ZTL on Shlichus

[Summarized by Rabbi Nisson E. Shulman]

This shiur was delivered by the Rav as part of his 1964 Yahrtzeit Shiur for his father, Rav Moshe ZT"l. The following summary is based on a tape, available from M. Nordlicht, and supplemented with the Hebrew summary of the shiur printed in Ymay Zikaron.)

The concept of Kavod Habriyos, respect for a fellow human being, is a fundamental principle in Judaism upon which many Halachos are based. For example, the laws dealing with the entire burial process, Kavod Hames and Kvurah, laws of mourning, embarrassing someone publicly are based on Kavod Habriyos. Indeed one can go so far as to say that all commandments Bayn Adam Lchavayro, between man and his fellow man, are based on Kavod Habriyos. The Ramban goes even further and classifies the obligation of the 7 Noachide laws under the heading of an even more fundamental principle, Tzelem Elokim, the creation of man in the image of God. The Ramban notes that the verse in Psalms (8:6) of Kavod Vhadar Teatrayhu,

you shall crown him with honor and splendor, expresses a similar concept of man created in Tzelem Elokim. The Kavod here refers to Kavod Elokim and as Chazal called it Kavod Habriyos.

One can ask the following fundamental question: does Judaism view this longing for Kavod Elokim as a positive or negative aspiration? Chazal stated often that man should distance himself from the pursuit of Kavod. Chazal warn us that jealousy, desire and (pursuit of) honor remove man from the world (Avos 4:21). Gedulah, grandeur, eludes those that seek it (Eruvin 13b). One may ask: if the Torah wanted man to distance himself from the pursuit of Kavod, why was he "adorned in Kavod" as noted in Psalms? Because Kavod is an attribute of Hashem, the Melech Hakavod. We are commanded to walk in the ways of Hashem, Vhalachta Bdrachav. If Hashem is Melech Hakavod we must strive to emulate Him and aspire to Kavod. Based on the obligation to emulate Hashem, we can begin to glimpse why the concept of Kavod plays such a central role in Judaic thought and why Judaism stressed the equation of Tzelem Elokim and Kavod Vhadar.

To understand Judaism's different, apparently contradictory approaches to Kavod we must analyze the following passage (Nidah 30b): "Upon the birth of the child the angel strikes the child on the mouth, and he does not leave from there prior to the administration of an oath, as it says Ki Lcha Tichra Kol Berech Tishava Kol Lashon (Isaiah 45:23). Kil Lcha Tichra Kol Berech connotes the day of death. Tishava Kol Lashon connotes the day of birth. What is this oath? That the child should be righteous and not wicked and no matter how much people may speak of you as a righteous person, always perceive yourself as wicked. And you should know, that Hashem is pure and his servants are pure and the soul that was implanted in you is pure. Your mission is to maintain its purity. Success is appreciated, Mutav. Failure to maintain the purity of your soul will result in Hashem removing it from you." Note that this oath does not interfere with the concept of free will. Man retains the ability to serve God if he so desires.

The above statements from the Gemara provide the framework for understanding the metaphysical/philosophical role of man in this world and how Chazal viewed the proper pursuit of Kavod. These principles were revealed to *Moshe Rabbeinu* in Egypt. Indeed it is impossible to fully appreciate the role played by *Moshe* in Jewish legacy from the infancy of our nation in Egypt to the present day without a full understanding of this passage.

Parshas Shemos introduces a brand new fundamental concept in Judaism that offers a completely new perspective on the role of man relative to creation. This concept was first revealed to *Moshe* in Egypt. The verse that introduces this concept is often overlooked, and quickly read without appreciating the significance of the idea that it conveys, in terms of its relevance to *Moshe* and the entire Jewish Nation. The words are "V'ata L'cha V'eshlachacha El Pharoh", and now go and I will send you to Pharo. This represents a brand new relationship between Hashem and man.

For the first time, Hashem, the Master of all, appoints a frail human being as His emissary, His Sholiach. How is this possible? We have a principle that Shelucho Shel Adam K'moso, the emissary represents the one who charged him with the task. How is it possible for a human being of flesh and blood, here today and gone tomorrow, to act as the representative of Hashem? There is no intellectually satisfactory answer to this question, yet the fact is that *Moshe* was sent as the emissary of Hashem. This notion of *Moshe* as emissary of Hashem is reinforced by the verse "And he sent an emissary (Malach) and took us out of Egypt" (Bamidbar 20:16). Rashi interprets Malach as referring to *Moshe*. Apparently, the fact that man was created in the image of God, B'tzelem Elokim, allows man to assume the role of emissary from God to the rest of creation. Instead of saying that the relationship between Hashem and man is one of Shelucho Shel Adam K'moso, we should view it Shelucho Shel Makon Nivra B'tzalmo, the emissary of Hashem was created in His image. If it was possible for *Moshe* to be the emissary of Hashem, it is possible for every person to do the same. If one were to ask: what is the purpose of man in this world? The answer

would be that man was sent to be the emissary of Hashem. The obligation to function as His emissary is implicit in the birth of man. Man accepts this responsibility by "taking" an oath, a Shevua, as it says Ki L'cha Tichra Kol Berech Tishava Kol Lashon. The coupling of an oath with Shlichus is found in Tanach. Abraham made his servant, Eliezer, take an oath that he would fulfill his mission to find a wife for Isaac from his family in Charan. Also, Jacob had Joseph swear an oath that he would bury him in Mearas Hamachpelah. Usually, Shlichus does not require the reinforcement of an oath, however in situations where the Shlichus is a complicated one and difficult to fulfill, it is reinforced through an oath. Jacob knew that Joseph would have difficulty in fulfilling his promise, hence the need to reinforce it and prevent Joseph from retreating from his obligation.

When man sins, he transgresses in two respects. The first is the act of sin itself and its associated blemish. In addition, the act of sin desecrates the Shlichus that each of us has been charged with, Moel B'shlichus. The Midrash supports this concept beautifully: "And you should know that Hashem is holy and His emissaries are holy, and the soul that Hashem gave you is holy". You are up to the task of being the emissary of Hashem.

According to Judaic philosophy, man exists as long as Hashem has a mission for him to perform, and as long as man does not desecrate this Shlichus. If either of these is no longer valid, the Mshaleach, Hashem, cancels the Shlichus at His discretion. This is the meaning of Ki L'cha Tichra Kol Berech, referring to the death of the individual. This concept is echoed in the verse (Job 15:5-6) that man's existence is likened to that of a hired worker. Once his task is completed, he is sent away.

Judaism goes further still with the concept of Shlichus. The fact that an individual lives in a specific time and place is no accident. It is all part of the will of Hashem to place man in a situation that will provide him the optimal opportunity to fulfill his Shlichus. Questions like why we were placed in this specific time period and not in a previous or future generation can only be answered through the framework of Shlichus. The Hashgacha knows what period is most appropriate for each person to fulfill his Shlichus. Each person is given the abilities required to fulfill the Shlichus, because a Shlichus that can't be performed, Shlichus Sheiy Efschar L'kaymo, is not considered a valid Shlichus, similar to a stipulation, a Tnuy that is impossible to meet is not a valid stipulation. That is why each person is created in his specific generation with his specific abilities.

The Rav extended an idea from Rav Kook ZT"L on the blessing of Elokay Ad Shelo Notzarti (that we recite at the conclusion of the Amidah on Yom Kippur and brought down in the Talmud in Berachos 17a) as follows. My God, in the countless generations that preceded me and that will succeed me You did not see fit to create me because You knew that I was not worthy, Keday, to be sent out as Your emissary in those generations. And even though You have sent me as emissary in this generation, I have accomplished so little of my mission, I have been so ineffective, as if I would have existed in a different, sub-optimal generation relative to my ability to fulfill my Shlichus.

The concept of Shlichus applies to man and angel alike. The difference between them is that man has free will and can choose whether or not to fulfill his mission, while the angel does not have free will and has no choice but to comply with the will of Hashem. When the angels visited Abraham after his circumcision, the Torah refers to them as Anashim, People. When the same angels visited Lot in Sodom, they were called Malachim, angels. The Midrash, quoted by Rashi, says that the angels were called people, because next to Abraham who was regularly visited by angels, they appeared as ordinary people. Next to Lot who was not used to seeing angels, they appeared truly as angels, and are referred to as such. The Rav added that Abraham, who was exemplary in his kindness and was unflagging in his drive to make known the name of Hashem to all, was the most exemplary Malach possible, a human being who does the will of Hashem. All he needed to do to see an angel was to look in the mirror. An angel in the house of Abraham did not add anything since Abraham was always ready to act in the

role of emissary of Hashem. Relative to Abraham, an angel was as unremarkable as the addition of straw to Ophrayim, or magic to Egypt (Menachos 85a).

However, in Sodom, where the entire concept of Shlichus Hashem was forgotten, the arrival of these angels created a major sensation. Everyone asked: "have you heard that 2 strangers have arrived who do not live as we do, but rather they are following the orders of Hashem?" The people of Sodom refused to acknowledge their Creator and anyone who would follow Him.

Lot, the rejecter of the values of Abraham, was not worthy to see angels while he traveled with his uncle. When he finally did see the angels that were sent to him, they appeared to him as real angels, and impressed him as such. On the other hand, Abraham had only to look in the mirror to behold the most beautiful angel, himself. In comparison to Abraham, the angels were no better than Anashim, people, which is the greatest title one can earn. Abraham attained that title.

There are 4 areas in which the Shelichus of God to man differs from Shelichus between man and man.

The first relates to the scope of the Shelichus. Shelichus as defined by the Choshen Mishpat is limited to a specific task through the process of appointment, Minuy. For example a Sholiach is appointed Lholacha, to carry the Get (divorce document) from the man to the woman, or vice versa a Sholiach L'kabbala sent to accept the Get on behalf of the woman. The Shelichus must be definable and exact. One cannot appoint someone as his Sholiach for everything, and not specify the tasks. Just as someone may not obligate himself to pay an unspecified amount one may not accept an unlimited Shlichus.

However, the Shlichus from God to man is exactly the opposite: it is open ended and unspecified to the emissary. From time to time man is assigned new tasks and missions. It is a life long responsibility that starts with birth and ends with the death of the individual. Man may be given different tasks to perform, but he does not have the right to accept some and reject others. Man can never know the true purpose for his creation, what mission was his to fulfill.

The Yerushalmi (Peah 3b) bears out this principle. The Gemara relates the story of the mother of Rabbi Tarfon who took a stroll in the courtyard. She broke her shoelace and was unable to walk any further. Rabbi Tarfon placed his hands under her feet to allow her to walk on his hands until she reached her bed. Once, Rabbi Tarfon became seriously ill and the Rabbis came to visit him. When they arrived, his mother begged them to pray for her son, Rabbi Tarfon, who has the merit of honoring his mother, Kibbud Aym, fulfilling this Mitzva above and beyond what is required of him. She related the story to them of how he allowed her to walk on his hands till she reached her bed. After hearing the story, the Rabbis declared, that even if he had done so 1 million times, he still would not have achieved half the respect the Torah demands from a child to a parent.

Why did the Rabbis belittle and condemn Rabbi Tarfon's performance of the Mitzvah of Kibbud Aym? After all, where was their compassion for an old woman who begs them to pray for her son, a son that was the great Rabbi Tarfon? Kibbud Aym is one of the Mitzvos that extend the life of the one who performs it, so what was wrong with the way he performed the Mitzvah or with his mother mentioning it as a merit and Zchus?

The answer is that the Rabbis were thinking about Rabbi Tarfon's true mission in life. Logically, one would assume that his mission was to be one of the elders of Yavneh, to be the Talmudic partner of Rabbi Akiva, to teach Torah and be a critical link in the Massorah, tradition, to the succeeding generations. Apparently Chazal were not so certain of this. Maybe his true mission in life was not to be a great scholar, but rather he was sent to perform the Mitzvah of Kibbud Aym for an elderly mother. Perhaps for the task of perpetuating the Massorah alone, Hashem might have sent someone else, and there would have been no need for Rabbi Tarfon to become the great scholar he was. So apparently he had another mission as well, but

perhaps that mission was secondary to the one of Kibbud Aym. When the Rabbis heard from his mother that he had fulfilled the obligation of Kibbud Aym completely, they realized that once his mission is complete, the messenger is no longer needed. They said that Rabbi Tarfon had not even begun to approach the fulfillment of Kibbud Aym, which perhaps might have been his life mission. Therefore he needed to regain his health in order to continue his pursuit of this mission. Heaven forbid that he should be considered to have completed his mission!

Chazal said (Taanis 9b) that sometimes Hashem makes it rain over an entire continent in order that one blade of grass may grow. Similarly, a great person, as great as Rabbi Tarfon, can be sent down to this world to fulfill a seemingly insignificant mission, to serve an elderly mother, or to help a fellow Jew. This is a tremendous lesson that we all should learn, never to say that such a task is beneath me, or others can do it better than me. This would be in opposition to Judaic thought. That is why Chazal emphasized that man should be as careful in the performance of a Mitzvah Kallah, an ostensibly simple Mitzvah to fulfill, as he would be in the performance of a Mitzvah Chamurah, a complicated and difficult Mitzvah. For just like no one knows the true reward for a Mitzvah, one does not know for what purpose he was created and sent out as a Shliach Hashem.

The second difference between the Shlichus of the Chosen Mishpat and that of Hashem, is in the former the Shliach is sent as representative of the Mshaleach, the principal, because the Mshaleach does not choose to perform the act on his own. If the Mshaleach was to accompany the Shliach, there would be no need to send a Shliach. For example, if a husband and wife are both in the same city, the Halacha says that one should not appoint a Shliach to carry away the Get.

In the Shlichus of Hashem, Hashem assigns a mission to man, yet He accompanies man in performance of the mission. For without the help of Hashem, man would not be able to accomplish anything. As it says (Psalms 127:1), If Hashem will not watch over the city, the efforts of the watchman are for naught, and if Hashem will not build the city, the artisans have worked in vain. If Hashem will not accompany them, they will be powerless to accomplish anything.

This aspect of Shlichus Hashem is paradoxical. In the case of 2 people who contribute to an act, and where the participation of one of them does not aid significantly in the completion of the task, the Halacha obligates the major contributor and exonerates the minor one. This is the principle of Mesaya'ah Ayn Bo Mamash, one who helps along has added nothing. In reality Hashem is the one who is performing the mission, all man has to do is go along and simply lend a hand. Jacob said that the stone that he has erected will be a foundation for the ultimate building of the Bais Hamikdash. Ultimately Hashem completed the building, yet Jacob was considered a partner because he set the first stone.

This paradox of Shlichus was revealed to *Moshe* by Hashem when He sent him to Pharaoh. *Moshe* questioned: who was he to approach Pharaoh and to free the people from Egypt? Aaron is better suited to this task. Hashem explained to *Moshe* that he was making a fundamental mistake. *Moshe* thought that he would be responsible for freeing the people and Hashem will remain hidden in His heavenly abode and be a non-participant in the exodus process. Hashem said that He will accompany *Moshe* every step of the way, for without the help of Hashem, no one, not even Aaron, could accomplish a thing. Not only will Hashem accompany *Moshe*, but He will accompany Aaron as well and guide his tongue to say what Hashem wants him to say. *Moshe*, you will realize the full magnitude of this in a short time, when you will worship Hashem and receive the Torah on this mountain after the exodus. And you will wonder how is it possible for a group of slaves to turn themselves around so quickly to become the chosen nation of Hashem and to proclaim Naaseh V'nishma, we will do and will listen, at Mount Sinai. The answer is that I will accompany you and make it possible. The lesson is that the Shlichus of Hashem can never be too difficult to perform, because the

Mshaleach, Hashem, accompanies every person in the performance of his mission.

The third difference is in the ability to complete the Shlichus

In the Shlichus of man to man, the assumption is that the emissary who wants to fulfill his mission, will indeed complete it fully (Eruvin 31b). In the Shlichus from Hashem to man, the opposite is true. Man can never complete his assigned tasks. Man must always break off his pursuit of fulfilling his mission in the middle. Chazal expressed this concept in Pirkei Avos in the statement that the time is short, the required work is vast, the workers are lazy and the Master of the house is pushing them to perform their tasks. They may try to complete it, but they never can.

The fourth difference is not a Halachic distinction, but rather a practical one. No matter how great a person may be, he should never think that his mission is more important than the mission of another person. Each person has been charged with a mission by the Master of the universe, and been given the abilities to perform his mission. The perceived importance of the Shlichus, or the degree of completion of the mission, are not important. Rather, the sincerity and self-sacrifice endured in the completion of the mission is the most critical aspect of fulfilling it.

The following Gemara (Berachos 17a) underscores this point:

I am a creation of Hashem and so is my friend. My work is in the city and his is in the fields. Just as I do not aggrandize myself in his work (an alternate reading is "in my work") so to he does not aggrandize himself in my work (alternate reading "in his work"). And if you will say that I have accomplished more, we have a rule that the quantity is not important, but rather what is important is that one act for the sake of heaven.

Rashi explains this statement as follows: I and my friend, a simple worker in the Galilee, are both creations of Hashem. My job is to study Torah in the Beis Midrash while his calling is an agricultural one. You might ask how can we possibly compare the peasant farmer to the great Rosh Yeshiva? We know what the Rabbis of Yavne accomplished. It was through their efforts that Torah and Judaism survived through the ages, through all the horrible tragedies that befell our people. It is their names, Rabbi Akiva, Rabban Gamliel, Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakai, that shine through whenever we discuss a Talmudic or Midrashic text. What did the Galilean farmer contribute to Jewish History? How did he sacrifice to perpetuate it? Does anyone recall his name, his residence, his contribution? The Rabbis of Yavne affirmed constantly a most important lesson: one may not exult in the Shlichus that they have been given relative to the Shlichus of another person. The legacy of remembrance is not important. What is important is the devotion with which one carries out their appointed task, their Shlichus. The level of sanctity is not measured by the attribution achieved, but through the Misiras Nefesh a person exhibits in carrying out his task. Judaic thought stresses that no man should place himself above his neighbor and think that through his merit and his accomplishments others exist. Shlichus is measured through the commitment and self sacrifice, hence no one can claim superiority over their fellow man.

The Torah tells us that Joseph related his dreams to his father and his brothers. According to some opinions, Joseph related both dreams to Jacob, while others are of the opinion that Jacob was only told about the second dream. If we accept the opinion that Jacob knew about both dreams, why did Jacob wait to scold Joseph until after hearing about the second dream? We also know that Jacob believed that the dream(s) would come true, as it says Vaviv Shamar Es Hadavar. If so, why did he scold him at all? Rashi explains that Jacob sought to diffuse the brothers' hatred towards Joseph by displaying anger on his part as well.

The Rav suggested the following explanation of Jacobs's actions. Even though Jacob believed in the ultimate fulfillment of the dreams, he felt that Joseph saw the dreams through a one-sided view, that the brothers would be subservient to Joseph. Jacob felt that the dreams portended a dual outcome. As mentioned above, Jacob did not react to the first dream. One might have expected that Jacob would have taken greater exception to Joseph's first

dream, which implied economic and political domination over his brothers. The second dream revolved around spiritual matters, that Joseph believed that he was greater than the other brothers. On the surface it does not seem so terrible that Joseph believed that he would be the spiritual leader of Bnai Yisrael. Economic and political domination seemed more ominous. Yet Jacob saw a fundamental difference between the dreams. Jacob realized that both dreams would be fulfilled, but in a completely different manner than Joseph foresaw them. There would be a time in Jewish History in Egypt when Joseph would be the Viceroy of Egypt and the brothers, represented by the bundles of wheat, would have to bow to his economic and political will. This came true when the brothers descended to Egypt to purchase food during the famine. Political and economic might over others is a reality. Such is the way that Hashem created the world, that those granted the ability to help others should not squander their opportunity to accomplish great things and it is also normal for the poor to be jealous of the wealthy. Jacob realized that the second dream did not revolve around political strength, but rather around spiritual superiority, whose Shlichus was greater, Joseph's or his brothers? Who possessed the greater intrinsic level of Kdusha? Jacob obviously felt that the dreams would be fulfilled; otherwise he would not have anticipated their fulfillment (Shamar es Hadavar). Since one can never assume that their mission is greater than the next person, one must be prepared to see the fulfillment of a mission or a dream from both ends, from the dominator and subservient roles. Joseph's brothers would have to bow down to him at some point, that was his mission, his Shlichus. However Jacob did not want Joseph to belittle his brothers for they had a sacred mission as well, one which he would have to acknowledge and for which he would have to bow to them as well.

The first dream, which revolved around economic and political clout, did not cause the major rift that divided the brothers. As the Beis Halevi says, requesting charity does not in and of itself result in a denigration of the requestor. The fact that the brothers would depend on Joseph economically would not diminish the roles of the brothers. Hence the Torah does not use the term Kinah regarding the first dream. However the brothers were jealous of the second dream. That dream revolved around Joseph's interpretation of whose Shlichus was more important and critical for the survival and continuity of the Jewish nation. In the end, both missions were important, hence Joseph and the brothers were forced to bow to each other and recognize the significance of each other's mission.

Where do we find that the dream came true according to both points of view, Joseph bowing to and acknowledging his brothers and the brothers doing the same for Joseph? Before Joseph died the Torah tells us that he asked his brothers and their families to promise to transport his remains together with theirs to Eretz Yisrael when they leave Egypt in the years to come. On further examination this was a most amazing request. Here was Joseph, the Viceroy of Egypt, who is capable of incarcerating and judging his brothers with a simple gesture, asking them to show him favor and transport his remains from Egypt! These are the same brothers who earlier were ready to accept the fate of being slaves to Joseph in retribution for how they treated him as a child, and Joseph must ask them for a favor? Why didn't Joseph ask his own children, Menashe and Efrayim, princes in Egypt, to carry out his wishes? Why didn't he ask that his own tribe take responsibility for his remains at the exodus? Because the mighty Joseph realized that he is incapable of accomplishing on his own a most important goal: he cannot ensure his place in Jewish History without the help of his brothers. They had been distant and divided for so long. As long as his brothers would not accept him he would not be included in the Shivtay Kah. Hence his request of them to include his remains with theirs at the exodus. In order for his name to be inscribed on the breastplate worn by the Kohen Gadol, he had to accept the significance and role of the other brothers in the legacy of the Jewish nation. His greatness in Egypt would have been an insignificant footnote in history if he would not be included with his brothers among Shivtay Kah. Only his brothers could guarantee that. Joseph

administers an oath to his brothers that they will include him, that they will elevate (Vhaalisyem) his status to that of Shvity Kah by elevating his remains together with theirs from Egypt. To ensure this, Joseph bows and acknowledges his brothers.

When was the other perspective of the dream fulfilled? When did the brothers bow before Joseph and acknowledge his contribution to Jewish History and the Jewish Nation? It was fulfilled many years later, on the night of the Exodus. The Torah describes the scene in Egypt, how the rest of the Jewish nation was accumulating gold and silver and fine articles in compliance with the request of Hashem to fulfill the promise of the Bris Bayn Habesarim of "And afterwards they shall leave with great riches". Chazal tell us that *Moshe* was nowhere to be found. Where was he? *Moshe* was searching for the remains of Joseph. *Moshe* took it upon himself to fulfill the promise the brothers made to Joseph many years before. Now, who was *Moshe*? *Moshe* was the grandson of Levi, Levi the enemy of Joseph, the co-conspirator with Shimon to kill Joseph that fateful day many years before. Yet it was none other than his grandson, the great *Moshe*, leader of all the Jews, who personally searched for Joseph's remains and who delayed their departure from Egypt until they were accounted for. At this moment when *Moshe* and the people refused to leave until they had retrieved Joseph's remains they bowed to his legacy and affirmed his significance and the role he played in the preservation of the Jewish nation. *Moshe* would not leave without the remains of the great individual who was immersed in Egyptian culture the longest yet blazed a trail to teach all Jews throughout our history how to survive in a long, dark and seemingly endless Diaspora, how to live as a Jew through wealth and poverty. Indeed *Moshe* honored Joseph by personally caring for the remains throughout the 40 years wandering in the desert. Through his grandson, Levi admitted his mistake and acknowledged Joseph's important role and mission. Could there possibly be a more fitting fulfillment of the dream of 11 stars and the sun and the moon bowing down to Joseph than *Moshe* and the entire Jewish People honoring Joseph on the night of the exodus? In the end, Joseph and the brothers honored each other, and recognized that each side had an equally important mission to fulfill.

If we view these 4 foundations of Shlichus we can answer the basic questions regarding the concept of Kavod, honor. Is Kavod a divine attribute that we should strive to emulate? We have seen statements from Chazal that affirm and refute this. Ultimately what is Kavod? It results when man understands his self-importance. When man realizes that he is the emissary of Hashem, he is treated with the honor and dignity accorded a royal ambassador. Man's Kavod is directly attributable to his fulfilling the Shlichus entrusted to him through his Tzelem Elokim, his creation in image of Hashem. One who desecrates his own honor cannot serve as a Shaliach. Hence the Rambam (Hilchos Eidus 11) notes that one who is scorned because of his own actions is unacceptable as a witness because one who will not elevate himself and recognize his Tzelem Elokim is lacking Ne'emanus (is not trustworthy). Recognition of one's Shlichus and Tzelem Elokim is the most divine affirmation of Kavod as a divine attribute. However when one believes that his mission is more important than that of his fellow man, when he belittles another human being, then Kavod becomes a disgusting attribute. Since no one can ultimately know what his main Shlichus is in this world, he may never claim superiority over another human being. Since the efficacy of the Shlichus is determined by the self-sacrifice brought to the task, a man may not demand Kavod in return for his actions. Indeed, Kavod becomes a disgusting attribute when it is confused with the word Gedulah (greatness). What differentiates these words? When Achashveirosh seeks to honor Mordechai for saving the king's life, he asks: what greatness (Yekar U'Gedulah) was granted to Mordechai for saving the king from the palace plotters? Chazal say that anyone who runs after grandeur, Gedulah, the Gedulah runs away from him. Gedulah implies a notion of superiority over another human being. Haman extols his greatness, bestowed upon him by the king (Ays Asher Gidlo Hamelech Vasher Nis'ol al Hasarim Vavday Hamelech). ...

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SHMOT

The Torah reading of this week introduces us to the figure and person that will dominate all of Jewish life – and perhaps world civilization as well – for eternity. Though the Torah tells us of *Moshe's* birth, salvation from the crocodile infested Nile River, and his early life as the adopted son of the daughter of the Pharaoh, including the incident of his smiting of the Egyptian taskmaster, which causes him to flee Egypt, it then tells us almost nothing of the ensuing decades of his life.

Where did he flee? How did he occupy himself for over half of his life? How did he arrive at the well in the land of Midyan? Probably the greatest question of all is why did the Lord choose him to be the redeemer of Israel and the greatest lawgiver of all time.

The Torah itself is silent on all of these matters, even though one could think that this knowledge would be vital to understanding the biblical narrative itself. Nevertheless, Midrash attempts to answer some, if not all, of these questions in its holy and many times allegorical methodology.

It makes *Moshe* a king over tribes in Africa, it grants him years of study and holy meditation and it attempts to give us a picture of the great prophet-in-waiting until the moment of his calling arrives. I have always wondered why the Torah itself makes no mention or description of these crucial years in a lifetime and development of *Moshe*. It allows him to emerge full-blown as the great prophet and leader of Israel without any preparatory background as to why he was chosen.

The Torah does however tell us of an incident where *Moshe* physically intervenes to protect the daughters of Yitro from the discrimination and persecution of the male shepherds at the well in Midyan. *Moshe* stands up for the rights of strangers whom he does not know at the time. *Moshe*, among his all other Godly characteristics, has an extreme sense of right and wrong, of protecting the downtrodden and reigning in the powerful. It is this sense that drove him to smite the Egyptian taskmaster who was unmercifully beating the Jewish slave.

No matter what happened to *Moshe* in the intervening years of his life, from that incident to the time that we see him in Midyan, it is obvious that that overpowering sense of justice and rectitude never waned. This is what will allow him later in his mission to constantly defend the Jewish people even from the Lord's judgment. He realizes that the redemption from slavery is a wrenching and difficult experience.

That is the reason why the Torah emphasizes to us that *Moshe* was a shepherd immediately prior to becoming the leader and savior of Israel. A shepherd by nature must be a compassionate, patient and forgiving person. Otherwise the sheep would never survive his shepherding. The Torah wants to emphasize to us that the true spiritual leader of Israel is humble, self-effacing, patient and possessed of a burning desire to replace wrong with right and evil with goodness.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

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God Loves Those Who Argue Shemot 5778

I have become increasingly concerned about the assault on free speech taking place throughout the West, particularly in university campuses.[1]

This is being done in the name of “safe space,” that is, space in which you are protected against hearing views which might cause you distress, “trigger warnings”[2] and “micro-aggressions,” that is, any remark that someone might find offensive even if no offence is meant.

So far has this gone that at the beginning of the 2017 academic year, students at an Oxford College banned the presence of a representative of the Christian Union on the grounds that some might find their presence alienating and offensive.[3] Increasingly, speakers with controversial views are being disinvited: the number of such incidents on American college campuses rose from 6 in 2000 to 44 in 2016.[4]

Undoubtedly this entire movement was undertaken for the highest of motives, to protect the feelings of the vulnerable. That is a legitimate ethical concern. Jewish law goes to extremes in condemning lashon hara, hurtful or derogatory speech, and the sages were careful to use what they called lashon sagi nahor, euphemism, to avoid language that people might find offensive. But a safe space is not one in which you silence dissenting views. To the contrary: it is one in which you give a respectful hearing to views opposed to your own, knowing that your views too will be listened to respectfully. That is academic freedom, and it is essential to a free society.[5] As George Orwell said, “If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.”

John Stuart Mill likewise wrote that one of the worst offences against freedom is “to stigmatise those who hold the contrary opinion as bad and immoral men.” That is happening today in institutions that are supposed to be the guardians of academic freedom. We are coming perilously close to what Julian Benda called, in 1927, “The treason of the intellectuals,” in which he said that academic life had been degraded to the extent that it had allowed itself to become an arena for “the intellectual organisation of political hatreds.”[6]

What is striking about Judaism, and we see this starkly in this week’s parsha, is that argument and the hearing of contrary views is of the essence of the religious life. Moses argues with God. That is one of the most striking things about him. He argues with Him on their first encounter at the burning bush. Four times he resists God’s call to lead the Israelites to freedom, until God finally gets angry with him (Ex. 3:1–4:7). More significantly, at the end of the parsha he says to God:

“Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Why did You send me? Since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and You have not rescued Your people at all.” (Ex. 5:22-23). This is extraordinary language for a human being to use to God. But Moses was not the first to do so. The first was Abraham, who said, on hearing of God’s plan to destroy the cities of the plain, “Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?” (Gen. 18:25).

Similarly, Jeremiah, posing the age-old question of why bad things happen to good people and good things to bad people, asked: “Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?” (Jer. 12:1). In the same vein, Habakkuk challenged God: “Why do You tolerate the treacherous? Why are You silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?” (Hab. 1:13). Job who challenges God’s justice is vindicated in the book that bears his name, while his friends who defended Divine justice are said not to have spoken correctly (Job 42:7-8). Heaven, in short, is not a safe space in the current meaning of the phrase. To the contrary: God loves those who argue with Him – so it seems from Tanakh. Equally striking is the fact that the sages continued the tradition and gave it a name: argument for the sake of heaven,[7] defined as debate for the sake of truth as opposed to victory.[8] The result is that Judaism is, perhaps uniquely, a civilisation all of whose canonical texts are anthologies of arguments. Midrash operates on the principle that there are “seventy faces” to Torah and thus that every verse is open to multiple interpretations. The Mishnah is full of paragraphs of the form, “Rabbi X says this while Rabbi Y says that.” The Talmud says in the name of God himself, about the

conflicting views of the schools of Hillel and Shammai, that “These and those are the words of the living God.”[9]

A standard edition of Mikraot Gedolot consists of the biblical text surrounded by multiple commentaries and even commentaries on the commentaries. The standard edition of the Babylonian Talmud has the text surrounded by the often conflicting views of Rashi and the Tosafists. Moses Maimonides, writing his masterpiece of Jewish law, the Mishneh Torah, took the almost unprecedented step of presenting only the halakhic conclusion without the accompanying arguments. The ironic but predictable result was that the Mishneh Torah was eventually surrounded by an endless array of commentaries and arguments. In Judaism there is something holy about argument.

Why so? First, because only God can see the totality of truth. For us, mere mortals who can see only fragments of the truth at any one time, there is an irreducible multiplicity of perspectives. We see reality now one way, now another. The Torah provides us with a dramatic example in its first two chapters, which give us two creation accounts, both true, from different vantage points. The different voices of priest and prophet, Hillel and Shammai, philosopher and mystic, historian and poet, each capture something essential about the spiritual life. Even within a single genre, the sages noted that “No two prophets prophesy in the same style.”[10] Torah is a conversation scored for many voices.

Second, because justice presupposes the principle that in Roman law is called *audi alteram partem*, “hear the other side.” That is why God wants an Abraham, a Moses, a Jeremiah and a Job to challenge Him, sometimes to plead for mercy or, as in the case of Moses at the end of this week’s parsha, to urge Him to act swiftly in defence of His people.[11] Both the case for the prosecution and the defence must be heard if justice is to be done and seen to be done.

The pursuit of truth and justice require the freedom to disagree. The Netziv argued that it was the prohibition of disagreement that was the sin of the builders of Babel.[12] What we need, therefore, is not “safe spaces” but rather, civility, that is to say, giving a respectful hearing to views with which we disagree. In one of its loveliest passages the Talmud tells us that the views of the school of Hillel became law “because they were pleasant and did not take offence, and because they taught the views of their opponents as well as their own, indeed they taught the views of their opponents before their own.”[13]

And where do we learn this from? From God Himself, who chose as His prophets people who were prepared to argue with Heaven for the sake of Heaven in the name of justice and truth.

When you learn to listen to views different from your own, realising that they are not threatening but enlarging, then you have discovered the life-changing idea of argument for the sake of heaven.

Shabbat Shalom,
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Shemot: "I Will Be Who I Will Be"

Rav Kook Torah

Moses was not happy that he had been given the task of leading the Jewish people out of Egypt. He foresaw many of the challenges involved, including the difficulty in gaining the trust of the Hebrew slaves.

“So I will go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers sent me to you.’ They will ask what His name is - what should I tell them?”

God replied to Moses:

“‘I Will Be Who I Will Be.’ This is what you should tell the Israelites: ‘I Will Be’ sent me to you.” (Ex. 3:13-14)

What do these peculiar names - "I Will Be Who I Will Be" and "I Will Be" - mean? Also, it appears that God gave Moses two different answers. Which name was Moses to use in identifying God to the people?

I Will Be With You

The Talmud in Berachot 9b explains God's response as follows:

"Go tell the Israelites, 'I Will Be Who I Will Be.' 'I Will Be' with you in this exile, and 'I Will Be' with you in future exiles."

Moses exclaimed,

"Master of the Universe, we have enough problems already! Why mention future suffering?"

God agreed. "Go tell them 'I Will Be' sent me to you."

This explanation, however, creates new difficulties. Did God need Moses to explain human psychology to Him? Did Moses understand the people better than their Creator?

A Guide for All Times

God's message to the Jewish people was that the Torah and its mitzvot would enable them to attain their highest state of being. The Torah would guide them throughout history, in all situations, whether they were a subjugated people in exile or a free people in their own land.

God wanted the people to know that the redemption from slavery in Egypt was not a one-time rescue mission. They were leaving Egypt in order to receive the Torah at Sinai. The Divine name "I Will Be Who I Will Be" was meant to convey a fundamental message: the Torah is a guide for all times, a path that would sustain the people even during future exiles and troubled times.

God never intended, however, that Moses would use this name. Moses was not supposed to explicitly mention future exiles and further dishearten a downtrodden people. Rather, Moses was to tell them the shorter name, "I Will Be." The subjugated nation would be informed that God is with them now - "I Will Be" with you in this exile, and I will redeem you. And they would understand that the Torah will also guide their lives when they will live as an independent nation in their own land.

Implicitly, however, the name "I Will Be" contains a deeper message. As a free people in the Land of Israel, the Torah would prepare them to be an eternal nation, overcoming the challenges of future exiles. "I Will Be" with them in this exile; and "I Will Be" with them in future exiles."

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, pp. 45-46)

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Treating Hashem's Name Respectfully

By Rabbi Avraham Rosenthal

In honor of the parsha's reference to Hashem's name as "eh'yeh...", I am providing an article by my good friend, Rabbi Avraham Rosenthal.

There are many halachos relating to proper usage of Hashem's Name: When is it prohibited to say Hashem's Name? May it be erased? Can one place Hashem's Name in a place where it will become degraded? What is the halacha in respect to all of these questions when it comes to Hashem's Name in other languages?

The Inerasable Names

When we speak about the names of Hashem, we must differentiate between two main categories: Sheimos she'einan nimchakim – the names that may not be erased, and the sheimos hanimchakim, those that may. What are these inerasable names? The following list is compiled from the rulings of the Gemara (Shevuos 35a), the Rambam (Hilchos Yesodei Torah 6:2; Kesef Mishnah ad loc.) and the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 276:9):

1) The Shem Havayah, spelled yud-hey-vav-hey. This is also referred to as the Shem Hameforash, the Explicit Name.

2) The Shem Adnus, spelled alef-dalit-nun-yud.

3) Eil, spelled aleph-lamed

4) Elo'ah, spelled aleph-lamed-vav-hey.

5) Elohim, spelled aleph-lamed-hey-yud-mem.

6-7) Elohecha and Elokeichem. These names are the name Elo'ah with added suffixes that indicate your-singular and your-plural.

8) Elohei (long "A" - tzeirei under the hey) or Elohai (long "I" - patach under the hey), spelled aleph-lamed-hey-yud, is pronounced as Elohei when it means "God of" or as "Elohai" when referring to "my God."

9) The name Shaddai, shin-dalit-yud, also has kedushah and may not be erased.

10) Eh'yeh asher Eh'yeh is the name that Hashem transmitted to Moshe at the Burning Bush, when the latter asked Him what to respond when Bnei Yisroel ask what God's name is.

11) Tzeva'os – tzadi-beis-alef-vav-sav. This name, unlike the other names of Hashem, does not appear at all in Chumash but only in Nach. Another unusual fact about this name is that it never appears by itself, but only in conjunction with either "Elohey" or with the Shem Hameforash.

Seven Names

It is interesting to note that while the Gemara lists nine, many of the Rishonim only list seven inerasable names (Rambam, Yesodei HaTorah 6:2; Chinuch #437; Orchos Chaim [Kolbo], Ahavas Hashem #6). This is because they had a tradition from Chazal that names of Hashem were organized into seven groups (Biar Shaimos Kodesh LeRambam, pg. 194-5). It is beyond the scope of this article to explain the various opinions of which names are the main categories and why certain names are included with others. There are no practical ramifications to this dispute. The special halachos governing these names apply to any name included in any of the lists found in the Gemara, Rishonim and Shulchan Aruch.

Other Names

As we mentioned, there is another group of Hashem's names: those that may be erased. In halachic parlance, these names are known as "kinuyim," or "descriptions." This refers to names of Hashem that describe His characteristics, such as: chanun, rachum, gadol, and nora – gracious, compassionate, great and awesome. Although these names are used in reference to Hashem, they do not have the same level of kedusha as the inerasable names.

The reason why these names do not have the same level of holiness is that they are not unique to Hashem; they can be used to describe other things as well. The sheimos she'einan nimchakim, however, are names that are intrinsic to Hashem (Ohr Samayach, Avodah Zarah 2:7).

Not Mentioning Unnecessarily

It is forbidden to mention Hashem's Name unnecessarily. The Gemara (Temurah 4a) derives this from the pasuk, "You shall fear Hashem, your G-d" (Devarim 6:13). The Rambam (Sefer Hamitzvos, Asei #4; Hilchos Shevuos 12:11) writes that one of the aspects of fearing Hashem is not saying His Name unnecessarily. Others derive this law from the pasuk, "You shall not mention Hashem's Name in vain" (Shemos 20:7) [She'iltos, Yisro #53; Ha'ameik She'eilah ad loc. #2].

The prohibition of mentioning Hashem's Name unnecessarily includes all of the inerasable names (Shu"t Rabbi Akiva Eiger #25; Ha'ameik She'eilah, Yisro 55:2).

Therefore, if one mistakenly says one of Hashem's inerasable names unnecessarily, he can rectify the situation by immediately praising Him. For example, if he says one of the names, he should add "baruch hu le'olam va'ed" – "He is blessed forever"

(Rambam, Hilchos Shevuos 12:11).

Included in the prohibition of saying Hashem's name unnecessarily is the halachah that one is not allowed to recite unnecessary brachos. Although the topic of unnecessary brachos requires an article of its own, one example would be if someone were to recite a bracha prior to eating the main course served during a meal in which he already made the bracha of hamotzi and ate bread. Since most of the courses in such a meal are exempted by the bracha of hamotzi, reciting a bracha over the exempted foods is unnecessary (Mishnah Berurah 215:17).

Regarding the kinuyim, the descriptions of Hashem's characteristics, there is no prohibition against saying them unnecessarily (Shu"t Rabbi Akiva Eiger #25; see Minchas Chinuch #69).

Unclean Places

At this point, I will discuss a different sub-topic germane to the Holy Names.

The Gemara (Brachos 24b) states: "If someone was walking in an unclean alleyway, he is not allowed to recite kerias Shema. Furthermore, if he is reciting it and arrived (at an unclean area), he is required to stop reciting it. If he does not cease, concerning him the pasuk states, 'He has despised the word of Hashem' (Bamidbar 15:31). If he does stop, what is his reward? Concerning such a person, the pasuk states, 'And for this matter, your days will be lengthened' (Devarim 32:47)."

This Gemara is codified by the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 85:1) as practical halacha. The poskim explain that for the purposes of this halachah, "unclean" places are areas containing human body waste (ibid. 85:2).

Not only is it forbidden to recite Shema in such a place, it is similarly prohibited to think Torah thoughts while in the toilet, bathroom or mikveh. In addition to the

prohibition against reciting or thinking words of Torah, one is also not allowed to say any of the sheimos she'einan nimchakim (the names that may not be erased) in these places, as it is considered disrespectful to Hashem's holy Name (ibid.).

Concerning whether one may recite the kinuyim of Hashem in these places, there is a disagreement among the Rishonim. The question revolves around those kinuyim which are used solely to describe Hashem, such as "rachum" – the compassionate One. The Rambam (Hilchos Keri'as Shema 3:5) categorizes all of the kinuyim as one and writes that one may recite them in the beis hakisay and beis hamerchatz. This is also the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 85:2). The Raavad, however, disagrees, writing that since "rachum" always refers solely to Hashem, it should not be mentioned in those places. The Bach (end of Orach Chayim 84) cites the view of the Raavad and writes that one should act according to his view.

Not Erasing

The inerasable names are considered to be holy and there are a great deal of halachos concerning how they are to be treated. For example, as the name of the category implies, it is forbidden to erase these names, and one who does so transgresses a Torah prohibition. Not only is it forbidden to erase the entire name, one may not erase any part of it (Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 6:2; Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 276:9). What is meant by "erasing"? Erasing includes any of the following (Ginzei Hakodesh 7:2):

- 1) Scraping off the letters
- 2) Rubbing out with an eraser
- 3) Writing over it
- 4) Drawing a line through the word
- 5) Covering the word with whiteout or a sticker

Genizah Required

Depending on how and where one of the inerasable names of Hashem is written will determine what type of genizah it requires. If it is written with ink on parchment in Ksav Ashuris (the font used when writing a Sefer Torah) in a Sefer Torah, Nevi'im, Kesuvim, tefillin, or mezuzos, it requires genizah in an earthenware vessel, like a worn-out Sefer Torah. However, when these Names are written or printed in other locations, although they require genizah, an earthenware vessel is not needed (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 154:5 and Mishnah Berurah #22; Mikdash Me'at 276:105; Ginzei Hakodesh 7:4 and 15:1). Two articles containing details of these laws are available on the website RabbiKaganoff.com. You should be able to find them with the search engine word "Sheimos."

Erasing and Genizah of Kinuyim

As we mentioned earlier, kinuyim are descriptions of Hashem's characteristics and they have less sanctity than the inerasable Name. Therefore, one is allowed to erase these names (Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah 6:5; Aruch Hashulchan, Yoreh Deah 276:23).

However, this is true only concerning erasing. Concerning the requirement of putting the kinuyim in genizah, it will depend. If it is evident that the written description is referring specifically to Hashem, then it indeed requires genizah. This is based on the same idea mentioned earlier in connection to reciting the kinuyim of Hashem in an unclean place. Since it is evident that this word is describing Hashem, we are not allowed to degrade it either by saying it in an unclean place or by throwing it into the trash (Ginzei Hakodesh 7:7).

On the other hand, if it is clear that the word is not referring to Hashem, it can be thrown out (and likewise uttered in an unclean place). An example of this is to write or say about a particular person, "he is a ne'eman" – "he is trustworthy." Although the word "ne'eman" is often used to refer to one of Hashem's attributes, as, for example, in the brocha we recite after the haftarah, in this case, it is clear that the reference is to a mortal being (ibid.).

Shalom

According to the Gemara (Shabbos 10b), the word "Shalom" is also one of Hashem's names. This is based on the incident when Gideon referred to Hashem as "Hashem Shalom" (Shoftim 6:24). There is a disagreement among the Rishonim whether this name may be erased. Some maintain that since Gideon addressed Hashem with the name "Shalom," it is intrinsic to Hashem, as opposed to rachum and chanun, which are merely descriptive (Tosafos, Sotah 10a). Others contend that it is not intrinsic to Hashem and it is no different from rachum and chanun, and it may be erased (Shu"t HaRosh 3:15).

The Gemara states that since "Shalom" is one of Hashem's names, one is not allowed to greet someone with this word in an unclean place such as a bathhouse or the like (Sotah 10b). There is a major discussion among the poskim regarding whether or not one should write the word "Shalom" in a letter, when there is concern it will be thrown in the garbage. Many recommend leaving out the vav or writing an apostrophe after the vav in place of the mem (Mishnah Berurah 84:6).

The Mishnah Berurah (84:6) discusses whether one may address a friend whose name is Shalom by name in an unclean place. He writes that the minhag is to be lenient, since, in that situation, the intent is not to refer to Hashem but to a person. However, the Mishnah Berurah concludes that a yarei shamayim, one who has fear of Heaven, should be stringent, because there are many Acharonim who forbid this. He suggests either to omit the mem at the end of the word or to say "Shalon", with a nun.

Other Languages

Until this point, we have discussed halachos germane to Hashem's names in Lashon Hakodesh. We will now provide a synopsis of the halachos as they relate to the names in other languages.

When we discuss Hashem's names in other languages, we are referring to words that are generally accepted as referring to Hashem as the Supreme Being. Examples of this are gimmel-aleph-tes (Gott) in Yiddish and God in English. Of course, every language has similar words, but these are the names that we are most familiar with.

Virtually all poskim agree that these names as they are written have no sanctity and can be erased. In this sense, they are similar to the kinuyim of Hashem (Shach, Yoreh Deah 179:11; Shu"t Achiezer, vol. III, #32; Mishnah Berurah 85:10).

The Acharonim disagree whether there is a prohibition against saying "God" needlessly. Some maintain that names of Hashem in other languages have no sanctity and there is no prohibition against saying them (Shu"t Achiezer, vol. III, #32). However, many are of the opinion that this prohibition applies even to Hashem's name in other languages (Shulchan Aruch Harav 85:3; Mishnah Berurah 85:10). Rav Moshe Feinstein (Shu"t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim vol. IV, #40.27) writes that common practice follows the stringent opinion.

Based on this, it is evident that one should accustom himself not to use the word "God" in his speech. Exclamations such as "Oh, my God," and "God Almighty" should not be used. Similarly, if one inquires after his friend's health, he may respond, "I am well, thank God," as this praises Hashem and he is not saying His name needlessly. One should not rely on this for a definitive ruling and he should consult with a halachic authority.

Forbidden to Degrade

Although the versions of Hashem's name in foreign languages do not have sanctity, it is nevertheless forbidden to degrade them. Included in this is saying these names in unclean places (Mishnah Berurah 85:10). Therefore, using the example we gave earlier, although it is permissible to praise Hashem using the name "God," nevertheless, one should not do so in a mikveh. It should be noted that this applies to all areas of the mikveh where people are generally undressed.

Another example of not degrading Hashem's names in other languages is that it is forbidden to throw these names into the garbage. Therefore, it is proper to place texts containing these names into genizah. For this reason, when writing a text that does not contain any divrei Torah (and would therefore normally be thrown out), one should not write the word "God," but rather "G-d" in order to prevent it from being degraded (Ginzei Hakodesh 7:12).

The Dollar in the Bathroom

There is much discussion among contemporary poskim whether one is allowed to take dollars into the bathroom, as the word "God" is printed on them. I found three schools of thought on this matter (see Ginzei Hakodesh, chapter 4, footnote 6):

- 1) According to Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, one is allowed to enter the bathroom with a dollar bill, even if it is uncovered. Since there was no intent for Hashem when printing the money, the name has no sanctity whatsoever. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach also ruled leniently, albeit for a different reason.
- 2) Rav Moishe Sternbuch cites the practice of Rav Chayim Soleveitchik, who refused to bring coins embossed with Hashem's name in another language into the bathroom (Shu"t Teshuvos Vehanagos, vol. II, #266).
- 3) Rav Nisim Karelitz maintains that one may enter the bathroom, provided the coin or paper money is in one's pocket.

Conclusion

Studying these halachos should cause us to realize the immense responsibility that we have. By considering all of the limitations placed on using Hashem's name and how it is to be treated, we can come to recognize how much kedusha these names contain. This should be a wake-up call for us. We are commanded to daven on a daily basis. How many times a day do we have the great merit to recite Hashem's name? How careful we must be when doing so. Along with this great responsibility, we also must realize how fortunate we are. We are given the daily opportunity to have a private audience with Creator of all that exists and to pour out our hearts to Him in prayer. Let us take our responsibility seriously and take advantage of our lofty opportunity.

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva

Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"א

Rav Shlomo Aviner

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:

Birthday of Convert

Q: On which day should I celebrate my birthday: the day I was physically born on the day I converted?

A: It is preferable to celebrate it on the day you converted (As our Sages say: A person who converts is like a new-born child. Yevamot 22a).

Mezuzah on Bus

Q: Why doesn't a bus require a Mezuzah?

A: It is not designed to be lived in. Shut Minchat Yitzchak (2:82).

Music During Davening

Q: I am invited to a Bar Mitzvah which includes musical accompaniment. Can I Daven there?

A: No. Davening is Davening, and not a musical experience.

Mezuzah for a Lefty

Q: I am a lefty. Should I place the Mezuzah on the left-hand side of the door?

A: No. The Mezuzah is an obligation related to the house and not to the individual (Chovat Ha-Dar 8:1).

Netilat Yadayim for a Cohain When Leaving a Cemetery

Q: When a Cohain leaves a cemetery after the funeral of a close relative for whom he is permissible to become impure, does he wash Netilat Yadayim? And what if he enters the cemetery on the special path designed for Cohanim?

A: If the Cohain enters the cemetery he washes Netilat Yadayim like all others. But it is only permissible for him to become impure for his close relative and not for others. Therefore, he may enter the area for eulogies where his relative is located, but not within the grave site where others are buried. If he enters the cemetery on the special path designed for Cohanim, he has not truly entered the cemetery and thus does not need to wash Netilat Yadayim (I saw this myself with Rav Aviner. I once accompanied him to visit his father's grave on his Yahrzeit. Ha-Rav only walked on the Cohain's path [since he is a Cohain] and he did not wash Netilat Yadayim. And at his mother's funeral, he did wash Netilat Yadayim since he was in the eulogy area with her, and helped carry her coffin. He did not, however, approach her grave since there were other graves around her - M. T.).

Tefilat Ha-Derech for One who is Sleeping

Q: If I say Tefilat Ha-Derech and my friend is sleeping, should I wake him up?

A: It depends on what he would prefer.

Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel

Q: What is Ha-Rav's opinion about Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel?

A: It is complex. On the one hand, he has writings which are full of fear of Hashem, such as his book on Shabbat. On the other hand, he has writings which are problematic, such as those concerning the Oral Torah. One must judge each thing on its own merit. How did the Students of Rabbi Akiva Fall?

Q: How did the students of Rabbi Akiva not treat each other with respect when Rabbi Akiva himself taught that the great principle of the Torah is "Love your fellow as yourself"?

A: In Rabbi Akiva's merit, they only failed in not giving respect but he saved them from baseless hatred to the point of murder.

Mezuzah on Elevator Door

Q: Does an elevator door require a Mezuzah?

A: It is a dispute. Shut Ha-Levi requires one, while Be-Tzel Ha-Chochma does not (And see Chovat Ha-Dar 5:11 who also requires one).

Rabanit

Q: Should I call the wife of my Rav "Rabanit"?

A: Yes. The wife of a Torah scholar is like a Torah scholar.

Anniversary of Aliyah

Q: Is the anniversary of the day I made Aliyah considered a holiday for me? What should I do on that day?

A: Yes. Thanksgiving to Hashem, Tzedakah, Teshuvah.

Picture of Beit Ha-Mikdash

Q: Does a picture of the Beit Ha-Mikdash or the Temple Mount have to be placed in a Genizah?

A: No.

Learning Book of Eichah (Lamentations)

Q: Is it permissible to learn the book of Eichah on Shabbat?

A: Yes. It is Torah. It is also permissible to learn the laws of mourning.

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Parshat Shemot (Exodus 1:1-6:1)

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel — "And Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" [Ex. 3:11]

It is "received wisdom" that successful leaders must possess a certain level of ego and degree of narcissism in order to survive the rigors of leadership.

After all, who in their right mind could believe he or she has the capacity or competence to run a country? And who could possibly withstand non-stop criticism and attacks from adversaries while contending with ongoing backbiting by purported allies?

Perhaps it is because the role is so difficult and the challenges so daunting that many people like to see in their leaders the trait of exceptionalism that makes it possible to survive and thrive under such harsh conditions. They want their leaders to be strong, confident and effective in pursuing their nation's interests, and if that necessitates an inflated ego, so be it.

But what if a nation's leader was quite the opposite, fleeing the limelight instead of chasing after it? What if repeated attempts to recruit him were met with compelling reasons why he was, in fact, the wrong person for the job? Could such a person lacking in ego and narcissism possibly command the confidence of those he is meant to lead?

This is the situation in which we find ourselves in Parshat Shemot, as Moses repeatedly demurs when God turns to him to lead the Jewish People out of Egypt. Moses is clearly the best choice, from the Divine perspective: did he not sacrifice a life as prince of Egypt in order to avenge the life of a Hebrew slave? [ibid., 2:11-12]

Unfortunately, Moses derives the very opposite message from that same incident. When, shortly afterwards, he attempts to stop two Hebrews from fighting, his previous involvement is scorned by the Hebrews themselves: "Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Will you kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" [ibid., v. 13-14].

Moses understandably concludes that being the leader of the Jewish People will bring much heartache, so he lets God know that he is not on the market. Presaging U.S. General William Tecumseh Sherman (1820-1891), Moses feels as the Civil War hero did when asked about any presidential ambitions: "If drafted, I will not run; if nominated, I will not accept; if elected, I will not serve."

Eventually, Moses's insistence on his own lack of fitness for leadership reaches its limits, resulting in an extreme Divine reaction: "...the anger of God was kindled against Moses..." [ibid., 4:14].

The Midrash even deduces that the Almighty punishes Moses for his reluctance by removing the priesthood from his shoulders and transferring it to Aaron. "Aaron was initially slated to be the Levite and you [Moses], the Kohen, but I shall now switch the honors. I shall elevate Aaron to priest and demote Moses to Levite" [Talmud, Zevachim 102b, cited by Rashi]. But are the hesitations of Moses not expressions of great humility?

After citing several legitimate reasons for refusing the call to serve, perhaps Moses should have raised the white flag of surrender, accepting the wisdom of God's choice. But no, he continues his protest: the people might well accept God, but they will not necessarily accept him as God's messenger [Ex. 4:1].

The Almighty gives Moses a sign: "What is that in your hand?" Moses answers, "A staff." God then instructs Moses to throw the staff on the ground, and it miraculously turns into a snake. "Grab it," orders God, and as Moses does, it miraculously becomes a staff again.

I would like to suggest that in addition to its dramatic presence, this sign reflects what is at the heart of leadership. God is telling Moses: if you want the people to believe in you, the first criterion is that you must believe in yourself. Know that in your hand, Moses, is the staff of leadership, a mastery you earned when you smote the Egyptian taskmaster.

Remove the staff of leadership from yourself and it will turn into the serpent, symbol of Egyptian tyranny and hedonism. In this world, you either lead or you will be led. Now, grasp on to the tail of the serpent, and you will once again be grasping the staff of leadership. It depends on you!

Moses's subsequent life in leadership teaches that leadership has nothing to do with ego and narcissism; rather, it has to do with demonstrating the quintessential traits of leadership, to act proactively and decisively. He does not always succeed, to be sure. But as long as he believes in himself, then God will be with him. Hopefully, the people will believe in him, as well, and indeed, one of Moses's crowning achievements is piloting the great exodus of the Jewish People out of Egypt.

Shabbat Shalom

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Weekly Wisdom - "The Missing Years in the Life of Moses"

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

In this week's parasha, parashat Shemot, we read of the enslavement of the Jewish people and the birth of Moses—the great leader whom G-d chooses to lead the people out of the slavery of Egypt.

As we have previously noted (Shemot 5765-2004), although Moses is a gifted leader, and is regarded as the greatest prophet and leader ever to arise in Israel, the so-called, "Savior of Israel," is not the "son of G-d," but a mere mortal, born to, Amram and Jochebed, human parents of flesh and blood. When his mother has to hide the newborn child, who is doomed to die along with all the Israelite male children, Moses is saved by Pharaoh's daughter and is raised in Pharaoh's palace. The Bible reports, that even though Moses grew up as a prince of Egypt in Pharaoh's court, when he went out, he acknowledged the Jews as his brethren, and felt their burdens.

The Bible in Exodus 2:11 states, וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרַיִם מִכָּה אִישׁ עִבְרִי מֵאֶתְיוּ, Moses, the prince of Egypt, saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man, one of his brethren. When he [Moses] looked this way and that and saw that no one was coming to the Hebrew's aid, he struck the Egyptian, killing him, and buried his body in the sand.

The Bible reports, that the very next day, Moses went out and saw two Hebrews fighting with one another. Moses, who has an extremely high sense of morality, reproves the wicked person who is striking his fellow, saying, Exodus, 2:13-14, לָמָּה תִכְּהוּ רֹעֵה, "Why do you strike your fellow?" The wicked Jew responds, מִי שָׂמָךְ לְאִישׁ שֶׁר וְשֹׁפֵט עָלֵינוּ, הֲלֹהֵרִגְנִי אֶתְהָ אִמְר, פֶּאֶשֶׁר הִרְגֵת, "Who appointed you [Moses] as an officer and judge over us? Do you propose to murder me, as you murdered the Egyptian?"

When Moses realized that the matter of his killing the Egyptian had become publicly known, he was frightened. Sure enough, when Pharaoh heard about this matter, he sought to kill Moses, causing Moses to flee before Pharaoh to the land of Midian. There Moses eventually met his wife, Zipporah, Jethro's daughter, at the well.

According to many calculations, Moses was twenty years old when he fled to Midian. The Bible tells us that after beholding the manifestation of G-d in the Burning Bush, Moses returns to Egypt to meet with Aaron. He is 80 years old when he speaks to Pharaoh (Exodus 7:7). However, there is no account in the Bible for the sixty years between fleeing Egypt and returning to Egypt.

The great historian, Flavius Josephus, cites two aggadic traditions. The first maintains that Moses lived for twenty years in Pharaoh's house and fled to

Midian, where he remained for sixty years. When he sees the vision of the Burning Bush, he undertakes the mission of liberating the people of Israel. The second account is that Moses lived for forty years in Pharaoh's house before going to Midian, where he stayed for forty years until G-d called him to redeem Israel.

The problem with these Midrashic traditions is that they do not explain how Moses, a prince in the palace of Pharaoh, was transformed into the charismatic military and spiritual leader that he eventually became. If he remained in Egypt until he was forty, he could have possibly learned the skills of the monarchy from all that he experienced while living in the court of Pharaoh. But, that assumes that Moses did not become a playboy and spend time gambling at the casinos near the great pyramids of Ghiza.

An alternate Midrashic source provides an entirely different account of what happened to Moses from age twenty to age eighty.

Moses did not go directly to Midian, but fled first to Ethiopia, where he joined the army of the Ethiopian King Kikanos. King Kikanos and his generals took a liking to Moses because he was courageous like a lion and his face gleamed like the sun.

According to the source of this Midrash, the capital city of Ethiopia had been captured by Balaam and his sons, through acts of sorcery and treachery. Using his unique talents while the king of Ethiopia and his troops were out of the city, Balaam raised up the walls of the capital and filled the ditches with water that was infested with snakes and scorpions, rendering them impassable. Try as he may, King Kikanos and his Ethiopian troops could not defeat Balaam, and had no luck penetrating the city fortifications.

Nine years after Moses' arrival in Ethiopia, King Kikanos died, and the people chose Moses the Hebrew as their new leader. Fighting sorcery with sorcery, Moses instructed the Ethiopian army to go into the wilderness to capture the native storks and their chicks. He instructed them how to teach the baby chicks to fly and to jump in response to the commands of their trainers.

When the chicks matured, Moses ordered their owners to withhold food from them for three days. He told the soldiers to prepare for battle and to take the young storks in their hands. When they approached the moat that was filled with snakes, he instructed the Ethiopian hosts to release the storks, who immediately devoured all the snakes. Sounding their horns, the Ethiopian soldiers proceeded to sack the city, killing over a thousand compatriots of Balaam. Together with his sons and other sorcerers, Balaam fled to Egypt, where they soon became advisors to Pharaoh.

The Ethiopians hailed Moses as a hero, anointed him as their king and gave him the wife of the late King Kikanos to serve as his queen. Moses, however, refused to cohabit with the woman who was a Canaanite.

During his time as the king of Ethiopia, Moses assembled a powerful army of 30,000 soldiers bringing security and tranquility to Ethiopia and to the entire region.

After serving, with much success, as king of Ethiopia for forty years, the wife of the deceased king of Ethiopia approached the senior members of Ethiopia nobility and revealed to them that during all this time Moses had refused to cohabit with her. She argued that since Moses was not a believer in the Ethiopian gods and is not loyal to the Ethiopian traditions, he is not fit to rule Ethiopia. Now that the son of King Kikanos had matured, she demanded that he should be made king instead of Moses. Even though the Ethiopian people loved Moses, they replaced him with the young Ethiopian prince. Showering Moses with gifts and praises, they bid Moses farewell as he left Ethiopia and went to Midian.

Although this Midrash is but a legend, it fills in many unknowns in the story of Moses. It explains how Moses became a great warrior and military strategist, matured into a wise and beloved king, learning how to manipulate the masses of people, to run the military and the economy of a great country. This is not something that Moses could have learned while he was shepherding the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro, in Midian. As a shepherd in Midian, Moses could have been drawn close to G-d and could have grown

in his spirituality as he meditated in the beautiful pastures of Midian, but it would not explain how a young, freshly-minted, prince of Egypt, developed the wisdom and courage to confront the greatest contemporary king of all, Pharaoh of Egypt, and to eventually defeat him.

It is during this period that Moses, the young prince of Egypt, becomes “*Moshe Rabbeinu*,” Moses, our Master; Moses, our teacher; Moses, our leader.

May you be blessed.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha - Parshas Shemos

Burning Interests

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

In Jewish history, there is a hardly an object more expounded upon than the burning bush. Its symbolism is analyzed, its significance expounded upon, and its impact is noted for generations. This week, rather than discuss the actual burning bush and its meaning, I'd like to view the event from a totally different approach — Moshe's.

The Torah tells us in Exodus 3:1- 4 that Moshe was shepherding the sheep of Yisro, his father-in-law, when, “an angel of G-d appeared to him in a blaze of fire from amidst the bush. Moshe saw the event and behold, the bush was burning in fire and yet the bush was not consumed. Moshe said, ‘I will turn from my course and see the marvelous sight — why does the bush not burn?’ Hashem saw that Moshe turned from his path to see the sight and He called out to him from amidst the bush and said, ‘Moshe Moshe...’” The conversation ultimately leads to our exodus from Egypt.

However, the entire narrative, from the moment that Moshe notices the burning bush until Hashem speaks to him from its midst, seems overstated. After Moshe sees the amazing sight, why does the Torah mention that Moshe says “I will go look at the amazing sight?” Further, why does the Torah preface Hashem's charge to Moshe with the words, “Hashem saw that Moshe turned from his path to see the sight, and He called out to him from amidst the bush?” It seems that only after Hashem openly acknowledges Moshe's interest in the spectacle does he call out, “Moshe, Moshe,” thus beginning the process of redemption.

The Torah, which never uses needless words, could have simply stated, “Moshe saw that the bush was burning and yet the bush was not consumed. Moshe turned to marvelous sight, and Hashem called out to him from amidst the bush and said, ‘Moshe Moshe...’”

The Midrash Tanchuma expounds upon the verse, “Moshe turned from his path to see the sight.” There is an argument whether he took three steps or just craned his neck. The Midrash continues. Hashem said, “you pained yourself to look, I swear you are worthy that I reveal myself to you.” The Medrash was definitely bothered by the extra wording regarding Moshe's decision to look and Hashem's open commendation of that decision. But it is still very difficult to understand. Moshe sees a spectacle of miraculous proportions and looks. Why is that such a meritorious act? Doesn't everyone run to a fire? Aren't there hoards that gather to witness amazing events?

In the early 1920's, Silas Hardoon, a Sephardic Jewish millionaire, made his fortune living in China. Childless, he began to give his money away to Chinese charities. One night his father appeared in a dream and implored him to do something for his own people. Silas shrugged it off. After all, there were hardly any of his people in China. But the dreams persisted, and Silas decided to act. The next day he spoke to Chacham Abraham, a Sephardic Rabbi who led the tiny Chinese Jewish community. The Chacham's advice sounded stranger than the dreams. He told Silas to build a beautiful synagogue in the center of Shanghai. It should contain more than 400 seats, a kitchen, and a dining room. Mr. Hardoon followed the charge to the letter.

He named the shul “Bais Aharon” in memory of his father. A few years later Mr. Hardoon died leaving barely a minyan to enjoy a magnificent edifice, leaving a community to question the necessity of the tremendous undertaking.

In 1940, Japanese counsel to Lithuania Sempo Sugihara issued thousands of visas for Kovno Jews to take refuge in Curaçao via Japan. Included in that group was the Mirrer Yeshiva. They arrived in Kobe but were transported to Shanghai where they remained for the entire war. The Mirrer Yeshiva had a perfect home with a kitchen, study hall and dining room — Bais Aharon! The building had exactly enough seats to house all the students for five solid years of Torah study during the ravages of World War II. The dream of decades earlier combined with action, became a thriving reality.

Moshe our Teacher knew from the moment he spotted that bush that something very extraordinary was occurring. He had two choices: approach the spectacle or walk on. If he nears the bush he knew he would face an experience that would alter his life forever. Hashem knew that Moshe had this very difficult conflict. His approach would require commitment and self sacrifice. He took three steps that changed the course of history. Hashem understood the very difficult decision Moshe had made and declared that such fortitude is worthy of the redeemer of my children.

In many aspects of our lives we encounter situations that may commit us to change. It may be a new charity we decide to let through our doors, or a new patient we decide to see, or even a new worthy cause we decide to entertain. They all require us to take three steps and look. If we walk away, we may not just be ignoring a burning issue. We may be ignoring another burning bush

Good Shabbos!

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from: Torah in Action /Shema Yisrael <parsha@torahinaction.com>

subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas שמות

ויאמר אל עמו הנה עם בני ישראל רב ועצם ממנו

He said to the people, “Behold! The people, Bnei Yisrael are more numerous and stronger than we. (1:9)

Wherein lies our strength? What are the characteristics of Judaism and its people that catalyzed fear in Pharaoh? We are: united with Hashem; united with family; united in ourselves; secure in our beliefs and in our distinctiveness. When Haman sought to eradicate the Jews of Persia, he told Achashveirosh, *V'daseihem shonos mikol am*; ‘Their laws are different from every other people’ (*Megillas Esther* 3:8). *Horav Bunim, zl, m'Peshicha* interprets this to mean: “Their ‘law’ is to be different/to be distinct from all peoples.” Our distinctiveness is what has preserved us as Jews throughout the millennia. Those who assimilated did not fare well – neither spiritually nor physically.

In *Sefer Devarim* 26:5, the Torah describes the Jewish people in Egypt as “a nation – great, strong and numerous.” The *Pesikta* (*Devarim* 46a) adds *Melamed*, this teaches, “*She'hayu Yisrael metzuyanim sham*; the Jews were distinct there.” How did they stand out? The Jews were distinct from the Egyptians in their clothing, food and language. Other commentators add that they also maintained their Jewish names. The only way to survive in an (spiritually) alien culture is to remain alien! The secret of the spiritual survival of our ancestors was their distinctiveness. They maintained their qualitative greatness by preserving the quality of their spiritual attachment to their tradition. They distinguished themselves from the Egyptians in the areas most often given to assimilation: language; name; clothing and food. We could not “go out” with them. We looked different and spoke differently and had different names. All total – we were different. Thus, they wanted nothing to do with us. As long as we retain our “foreign” status, we preserve our spiritual and moral superiority.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates the story of his 95-year-old Jewish neighbor, who, whenever he found the *Rav* at home, would approach him and say, “You should know that during the Holocaust, there were many Jews like you with beards, *payos*, and dressed in Jewish garb. The Nazis forced them to wear a Jewish star on

their clothing – and then they slaughtered them!” The man was filled with questions, primarily: Why specifically were the Jews forced to wear the yellow star which brought about a clear demarcation between Jew and gentile? After a while, the *Rav* shared the following story with the unfortunate Jew:

In the *Sefer Meshivas Nefesh, Horav Yochanan Luria, zl* (who was one of the *Chachmei Ashkenaz*, circa 17th century), relates that at that time, the government also decreed that the Jewish population wear a yellow star, in order to call attention to them. The purpose was to deride and humiliate the Jew, making him the laughing-stock of the country. He wrote, “When I was commanded by the local officer in Strasbourg to wear the yellow star, the local priest (who had respect for the *Rav*) asked me what this symbol on my garment represents. I was afraid to tell the truth: that the local officer who sought to humiliate me was behind this. If the officer would discover that I had reported him, I would be punished. Worse, the entire Jewish community would become victim to his anger. I therefore replied, ‘I do not know why. It is the decree of the king.’”

“The priest, however, was no fool. The priest said, ‘You might not know, but I know the reason that there is such a decree against the Jews. Hashem chose you from among all of the other nations, because He wanted you to distinguish yourselves. He gave you specific *mitzvos* which would safeguard and underscore your distinctiveness. Such *mitzvos* as *Bris Milah, Tzitzis, Tefillin, and Mezuzah* serve as clear signs that you are different – that you are clearly a member of the Jewish religion.”

“Hashem did this so that, when a gentile meets a Jew and sees him wearing *Tzitzis*, he will inquire. The Jew will respond that *Tzitzis* are to serve as a reminder of Hashem’s *mitzvos*. Since the Jew is so embarrassed to be different that he shuns these *mitzvos*, Your G-d declared that you wear a Jewish star – for no rhyme or reason. It is a sign that fools and simpletons wear on their clothing, so that everyone will know that they are fools!”

Rav Zilberstein now turned to the elderly Jew and said, “The answer to all of your questions can be found in the words of the priest, ‘Do not blame the Torah observant crowd for the yellow star.’ We are proud of our distinction. We wear *Tzitzis* with pride. Judaism is our greatest source of pride. Blame, instead, those who have distanced themselves from Hashem and His Torah. They have caused the gentiles to separate us from them.”

Being distinct is a badge of honor – not shame.

**ויצו פרעה לכל עמו לאמר כל בן הילוד היארה תשליכוו וכל הבת תחיון
Pharaoh commanded his entire people, saying, “Every son that will be born – into the river you shall throw him! And every daughter shall you keep alive.” (1:22)**

While Pharaoh had originally issued an edict for the Jewish midwives to kill the male Jewish babies and allow the females to live, he now wanted all of the boys – even Egyptians – drowned. This decree was the result of Pharaoh’s astrologers pinpointing the day that the Jewish savior would be born. They also foretold that his downfall would come through water. Thus, Pharaoh had all of the male children born on that day put to death through water. How small-minded they all were in thinking they could foil Hashem’s plan. Moshe *Rabbeinu* was raised in Pharaoh’s palace by none other than the princess. Water, in the guise of the rock which Moshe struck, did actually play a role in his downfall in his not being allowed to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.

In the *Haggadah*, this *pasuk* is used to represent *amaleinu*, our toil, a reference to Hashem’s seeing our suffering in Egypt. *Amaleinu* is defined as *Eilu ha’banim*; “these are the children (sons) which Pharaoh had killed.” *Rabbeinu Chaim m’Lunil* writes that the *banim*, sons, were considered *amaleinu*, our toil, because, *Ha’yageia la’rik mikra amal*, “One who works for naught; his work goes to waste, thus, it is considered *amal*.” The *Malbim (Yair Ohr 3 shoresht amal)* writes: *Amal hu libli tachlis b’maasav*; “to work without purpose in one’s activities.” The obvious challenge to this definition comes from the Torah’s words, *Im bechukosai teileichu*; “if you will follow in My decrees” (*Vayikra 26:3*) upon which *Rashi* writes: *Shetiheyu ameilim baTorah*; “That you will toil in Torah.” In other words, following Hashem’s decrees means that one toils in Torah.

This idea of *ameilus baTorah* seems to be inconsistent with our earlier explanation of the term *amal*. Certainly, one who toils in Torah is doing so for a purpose. He does not consider his learning Torah an activity which has no *tachlis*. It would be absurd to say that Torah study is an endeavor that is for naught.

Horav Baruch Mordechai Eizrachi, Shlita, explains that the primary lesson imparted by the *amal* (as explained by *Rabbeinu Chaim m’Lunil* and the *Malbim*) is that when any activity does not have a purpose that activity is transformed into *amal*, pure toil. *Ameilus* is an activity which one performs without ambition, for no purpose, with no consequence. Thus, bearing children so that they could be immediately drowned by Pharaoh was *amal*, since having these children had no overt purpose.

Ameilus baTorah, toiling in the field of Torah erudition, certainly brings with it great results. It bears fruit like no other endeavor and engenders reward that is unparalleled in its infinite value. Also, Torah molds a person’s character, both ethically

and morally. We must, therefore, assume that *ameilus* with regard to the Torah has nothing to do with the context of the endeavor; rather, it defines the attitude of the actual endeavor. One who learns Torah does so purely because it is Hashem’s command. He does not study for the sake of reward, for *siyata diShmaya*, Divine assistance, or for the fruits of his achievement. He studies Torah because it is the *dvar Hashem*, word of G-d. The fact that Torah learning engenders many rewards – such as Heavenly assistance and character refinement -- does not change the fact that the endeavor is performed solely for the purpose of the activity – not the fringe benefits.

Alternatively, *v’es amaleinu eilu ha’banim*, raising children to achieve each one’s individual potential can be difficult – if a person does not understand that Hashem does not just drop off a *neshamah*, such that some “make it” and some do not. A parent who gives up on his/her child due to his/her perception of the child’s deficiency of character is guilty of heresy (*Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*). If Hashem has entrusted you with a child, it is clear that only you are able to raise that child properly, as Hashem does not give a person a *nisayon*, challenge, that he cannot handle. Since it is impossible to know the potential of each child, one may not prematurely give up on any child. Anyone who has been in *chinuch*, or any perceptive parent, can attest to this verity.

Some students might be considered wild; other students might even be considered uncontrollable; and then there is the young boy whose behavior is what I would term so incorrigible that it is beyond words. Not a day passed that he was not involved in some shocking experience. The boy was not a “bad boy”; he simply had no concept of self-discipline. The *rebbeim* in the school felt that unless drastic action was taken, this boy would have a negative influence on his class – even on the general student body.

Matters came to a head when, one day, one of the *rebbeim* entered the school’s *bais hamedrash* and heard noises emanating from the *Aron Kodesh*. He opened the *Aron* and found – to his shock – a goat! He knew that only one person could have had the audacity to perpetrate such an unspeakable act. Our wayward student was brought to the *menahel*, principal, who said, “Enough is enough!” The student was to be expelled. At that moment, the strangest thing happened: the boy refused to move from his seat. Even when the *menahel* pointed to the door and said “get out,” the boy sat motionless, refusing to move. “What do you want?” asked the *menahel*. “Take me to the *rav* and head of the *Bais Din* of our city.”

The administration knew with whom they were dealing. This boy would not budge until he got what he wanted. He was that type of personality. They decided to grant his request and brought him before the *Av Bais Din*, head of the city’s court. The boy was prepared to speak in his own behalf and asked to be heard, “What you are about to do to me by ejecting me from the school will affect not only myself, but also my children who will be born to me after I marry and establish my home. (Obviously, with a deficient Jewish education, his future appeared bleak and that of his children even bleaker.) Did you discuss this with my ‘children’ before you made the decision to expel me from school?”

Everyone assembled at the *bais din* stood dumbfounded. They had never heard such a question posed by an adult before, let alone a young boy. Since they did not know how to answer the child, the *Av Bais Din paskened*, decided, that the boy should remain in school. (I do not know if the boy’s behavior changed drastically or at all. He remained in school and completed his studies.)

A number of years ago an outstanding young man, a Torah scholar of note, who was one of the top students in one of *Eretz Yisrael*’s premier *yeshivos*, became engaged to a special girl from a wonderful family. The *chassan*’s father, who was a noted *mechanech*, educator, stood up before the crowd and related the above story – underscoring the disastrous impact that negative *chinuch*, deficient education, could have had on this boy’s future children. He stopped for a moment and said, “I am the grandson of the one who at the last moment saved himself from being ejected from the school. Look at who has descended from that boy!”

We never know to what heights each individual will rise. So many factors and circumstances can alter the trajectory of a child’s growth. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each *mechanech* (and, of course, the parents) never give up hope and to put all of their strength into seeing that the potential of each child is realized.

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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*