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From: [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com)

BS"D

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from: Shabbat Shalom <[shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org](mailto:shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org)> date: Jan 16, 2020,  
8:01 PM

### **The Decision**

#### **Rabbi Moshe Taragin**

January 15, 2020 The birth of Moshe represents a turning point of the Jewish saga in Egypt. This would-be savior arrives as the Jewish slaves are being mercilessly crushed by Egyptian oppression. Pharaoh had legislated that all Jewish infants be flung into the Nile river and delivered to their inevitable death; Egyptian discrimination had begotten slavery and slavery had morphed into genocide. It appeared as if the entire Jewish nation was slated for annihilation. At this dark moment the greatest man to ever inhabit our planet is born.

The epic birth of Moshe is preceded by verses describing the "marriage" of his parents- Amram and Yocheved. Stunningly, these verses conceal the true identity of Moshe's parents. The Torah merely narrates about a "man" from the house of Levi who married a "woman" from the house of Levi, subsequently giving birth to Moshe. Why is Moshe's birth introduced with the story of his parent's marriage which had occurred decades earlier? After all, Moshe was the third child and this couple had already produced two older siblings- Aharon and Miriam. Why is the birth of this future 'savior', who transformed Jewish history, framed with this mysterious marriage of people whose identities are disguised?

The Midrash fills in the blanks and provides an interesting "backstory." Facing devastating Egyptian cruelty, Amram, Moshe's father, separated from his wife Yocheved. Whether he formally divorced her is unclear, but he certainly discontinued normal marital relations. Expanding their family under these circumstances would be pointless and even pathetic – as it would

just provide more fodder for the crocodiles of the Nile. Without any horizons of hope, continued family life seemed futile and ridiculous and Amram, at least initially, chose the only practical option- surrender.

His daughter Miiam- Moshe's older sister- intervened, pleading with her father to reconsider his fateful decision. As Amram was a high-profile leader, his decision would inevitably trigger "copycat behavior" leading to wide-scale divorces and the complete unraveling of Jewish family life in Egypt. Heeding his daughter's warning, Amram reunites with his wife Yocheved, reinforcing the value of Jewish family despite the unbearable pressure of Egyptian torture. For this reason, Amram's "decision" is presented anonymously: his "personal" decision to reunite with Yocheved had ripple effects for countless "other" marriages and therefore his decision is described in collective or generic terms.

This private decision ultimately reshapes human history. Amram faces a nightmarish world in which newborn babies are fed to voracious beasts. He sees no purpose in further expanding his family so he "folds his tent." However, he soon discovers that, although we can't always control the broader calculus of our "broken world, we can author our own personal decisions in response the surrounding chaos. We never abdicate the ability to maintain the "moral line" and make decisions of "conscience" even if the surrounding world doesn't accommodate those decisions. For reasons which often lie beyond human comprehension, G-d sometimes allows evil to flourish. It is difficult to decipher this mystery and we often struggle to understand Divine logic in a bleak world of rampaging evil. Despite these 'unknowns' and the frustration it sometimes causes we are empowered to maintain our own religious and moral convictions even if we can't calculate how these values will impact an uninviting world. Like Amram we often must act with moral courage and rely upon G-d to 'solve' the broader calculus.

I often ponder Holocaust survivors who quickly remarried and rebuilt their families while bringing new babies into their world. What were they thinking and how could they introduce new life into such a bleak and nightmarish world? Little did they know that the children born in the immediate aftermath of WWII would, one day, march in the fields of redemption and pioneer a new era of history. Little did they know that children born in refugee camps, or in temporary havens across the globe, would one day resettle the Jewish homeland on behalf of Jewish history.

They couldn't have foreseen this outcome and yet they labored on under unimaginable conditions, maintaining their moral courage. Human beings often must take the initiative, exhibiting fortitude and defiance even if the arch of history is confusing and the ultimate trajectory of their actions unclear. Our inability to decipher the broader equation doesn't acquit us from responsibility to sustain our religious and moral duties.

Chazal mention that after this reunion Yocheved – aged 130- experienced a physical rejuvenation, enabling her to become pregnant with a little boy named Moshe. Had Amram not heeded Miriam's call, this miraculous rejuvenation may not have occurred. Even if it did, it may not have mattered, as Yocheved would have remained unmarried. G-d often awaits human initiative and provides supernatural intervention only after humans have defied their conditions and launched their own redemptive cycles.

The Amram saga also reminds us that moral energy, and not headline-grabbing events, drive human history. Amram's "epic" decision, hatched privately and without fanfare or public notice, changed history. It was a quiet decision to continue building family life under crushing conditions of persecution that turned the tide. In a modern world of fanfare and self-promotion, it is ever more crucial to remind ourselves that it is the daily 'unnoticed' moral decisions which alter history. Politics come and go and policies and decisions of one generation are quickly swept away by the sands of time or erased by future generations. Even military confrontations, which appear to deeply impact the shape of human experience, leave only temporary impressions upon history. More often it is the quiet moral decisions taken day after day – which go largely unnoticed- that shape our

own lives and deeply impact the lives of our families and communities. The impact of these decisions can ricochet for generations—long after political and military influences have faded. With all of Pharaoh's decrees and public posturing, it was a quiet decision of a husband and would-be father that turned the tide of history.

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from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org  
date: Jan 16, 2020, 7:32 PM

By **Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya  
Parshas Shemos

### **The Anonymity of Moshe Rabbeinu's Parents**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1102 – Dressing Jewishly: Is There Such A Thing? Good Shabbos! The Lesson of the Anonymity of Moshe Rabbeinu's Parents

The pasuk (verse) in this week's parsha says, "And a man went from the House of Levi and he married the daughter of Levi." [Shemos 2:1]. This begins what is arguably the most illustrious career in all of Jewish history—the career of Moshe Rabbeinu. This is where it all started.

However, it begins in a very anonymous and inauspicious fashion. The Torah does not even initially identify Moshe's father and mother. The Ramban writes that the reason the Torah does not identify over here the name of "the man of the House of Levi" or the name of the woman he married is for reasons of stylistic brevity. It would not help to mention the names of Amram and Yocheved here without tracing their respective genealogies back to Yaakov's son Levi, which would have been a distraction from the main flow of the narrative. Therefore, this information is omitted at this point, and presented only later (in Parshas Vaera), after the birth of the redeemer. This is a very practical answer to the question.

The Oznayim L'Torah from Rav Zalman Sorotzkin gives a somewhat more elaborate interpretation. He suggests that the Torah is sending us a message. The message is that "anybody can have a 'Moshe Rabbeinu.'" Certainly, Moshe Rabbeinu was the master of all prophets. The Torah says that there will never be a prophet comparable to him. But the idea is that there can be people who will reach tremendous stature in spite of the identity of their parents. The Oznayim L'Torah says that the reason the Torah anonymously describes Moshe's parents as "a man from the house of Levy" and a "daughter of Levy" is to convey the idea that they did not have to be anybody special to bring a very special child into the world.

It is not a requirement for the "Savior of Israel" to have a father who was the Gadol HaDor (greatest man of his generation). If truth be told, Amram was the Gadol HaDor; but if in fact the Torah would have written "And Amram went and married..." the message would be "Yeah! What do you expect? His father was the Gadol HaDor so now he will be the Gadol HaDor!" It is all in the family! The Torah therefore says "No!" It was not crucial; it was not vital; it was not necessary for Moshe Rabbeinu's father to have been Amram. He could have been anybody. The lesson is that the greatest of people can come from the plainest of parents.

It is true that there are great Rabbis, Roshei Yeshivas, and Chassidic leaders who belong to dynasties that exist in Klal Yisrael. We have the Gerer Dynasty, which began with the Chidushei HaRim and subsequently went to his grandson the Sefas Emes, etc., etc. We have this in the Litvishe world as well—we have the Soloveitchik Dynasty. There are dynasties like that—but it does not need to be so! We see in Yeshivos all the time people who are clearly outstanding in their capabilities, and yet they come from very simple stalk.

The reason the Torah writes "And a man went from the House of Levi..." was to teach us that Moshe Rabbeinu did not necessarily become who he became by virtue of the fact that his parents happened to be Amram and Yocheved! He became who he was because he was born with a special

neshama. That neshama could have been placed in anyone, regardless of the identity of his parents. This is one lesson from this pasuk.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky says there is another very important lesson over here as well: The Torah wants to emphasize and make clear that Moshe Rabbeinu was a person who was born of a man and a woman. There was nothing magical or mystical about his genesis and how he came into the world. A man married a woman and they had a baby. That baby happened to turn out to be the savior of Israel.

Rav Yaakov writes that this is a foundational belief in the Jewish faith. This is unlike the prevalent belief in the non-Jewish world. They had to create a savior for themselves. They had to invent the idea that he was supernaturally conceived through a holy spirit and things of that nature. They had to hypothesize the concept of Immaculate Conception—someone who was not a son of man, but a "son of G-d".

This, Rav Yaakov says, points to one of the fundamental differences between Judaism and Christianity. In Judaism, there is no contradiction between spirituality and materialism. We have a physical body, but it is permeated by a soul, a spiritual component integrated with the body's physical component. The soul has the capacity to spiritually elevate the physical body.

Rav Yaakov writes that although they also believe in a soul, it is as if it is in a closed compartment. The body is intrinsically unholy, while the soul is in its own compartment, and never the twain shall meet.

That is not the Torah's theology. Therefore, the Torah is making a specific point here in telling us that a man and a woman bore Moshe Rabbeinu. In Judaism, this synthesis between body and soul allows for a theology in which a holy union between man and woman takes place, through which another potentially holy body and soul is conceived.

In his commentary on this pasuk in Shemos, Rav Yaakov cross-references a comment he made in Chapter 2 of Sefer Bereshis. There he cites a Medrashic dispute between Rav Eliezer and Rav Yehoshua. Rav Eliezer says, "All that is in the heavens was created in the heavens; all that is in the earth (i.e., on land) was created from the earth." Rav Yehoshua disagrees and says, "All that is created both in heaven and on earth was created in the heavens." Rav Yaakov sees this very same theological dispute as to how we look at the physical and the spiritual in this dispute between Tannaim. The physical, down here—according to Rav Eliezer—had to be created down here. It could not have been created in Heaven because, "the Heaven belongs (exclusively) to Hashem and the earth He gave to mankind" [Tehillim 115:16]. Rav Yehoshua argues and says, "No. Everything came from Heaven. It is no contradiction."

Rav Yaakov makes an interesting correlation between another Talmudic dispute between these same two authorities [Beitzah 15b]. Rav Eliezer says a person must spend his Yom Tov either (all) eating and drinking or (all) sitting (in shul davening) and learning. Rav Yehoshua says Yom Tov should be split – half devoted to Hashem (e.g., sitting and learning) and half devoted to oneself (e.g., eating and drinking).

Rav Yaakov finds consistency between the respective opinions of each Tanna in these two disputes. Rav Eliezer sees a dichotomy between the physical and spiritual, and therefore says the Yom Tov celebration is an "either/or" proposition. The Torah makes us choose one way or the other for celebrating our holiday and we must be consistent with that form of enjoyment throughout the day. Physical and spiritual enjoyment cannot be melded together; there can be no synthesis. This correlates with his view of how the world was created.

Rav Yehoshua disagrees. There is no contradiction between spiritual enjoyment and physical enjoyment. One can enjoy "Half for Hashem, and Half for yourselves."

It is interesting to note that on Shavuos—the holiday which represents the giving of the Torah—there is no dispute. There even Rav Eliezer admits that the enjoyment on Shavuos needs to include a dimension of "Lachem" (personal physical enjoyment).

Rav Yaakov further points out that people from other nations can bring a Korban (Sacrifice) but only a Korban Olah (the one sacrificial offering which is entirely burnt on the Mizbayach). By all other sacrifices, either the Kohanim and/or the owner (Ba'alim) of the offering also consume the meat of the animal. Here again, Rav Yaakov explains, the issue is that they cannot relate to the synthesis between spirituality and physicality. They can only relate to a Sacrifice which is 100% spiritual—one in which all the fats and meat of the offering are burnt on the Mizbayach.

Jews can relate to this synthesis. We can handle the belief that we have a savior who was born to a man and a woman. We believe that our eating can be for the sake of Heaven; our drinking can be for the sake of Heaven; our business can be for the sake of Heaven; and our intimate activities can all be for the sake of Heaven. This is the spiritual challenge of a Jew. The Torah began the narration of the story of the birth of the savior of Israel by telling us that “A man went from the House of Levi and married the daughter of Levi...” and they had a child who became the savior of Israel—in order to emphasize this point.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com  
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD  
dhoffman@torah.org This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. ...A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2019 by Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org> (410) 602-1350

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From: **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein** <ravadlerstein@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: targumim@torah.org date: Jan 16, 2020, 6:57 PM subject: Meshivas Nafesh - Origins of the Yellow Badge Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya Parshas Shemos

**Based on Meshivas Nafesh by R. Yochanan Luria** (15th century) Origins of the Yellow Badge They replied, “An Egyptian man saved from the shepherds.”[2]

Chazal[3] are critical of Moshe for not protesting when he was described as an Egyptian. Because he failed to identify with the Land, he was not buried in Israel. He was denied entry to the Land even in death. Yosef, on the other hand, explicitly identified his origins in the Land.[4] Because of this, his remains were carried out of Egypt, and were brought to rest within the Land. What, however, can this mean? Moshe could not have heard Tzipora and her sisters report to their father. How could he have protested?

Here is the explanation. Members of different nations can be distinguished from each other only through their beliefs or their speech or their garb. Now, when the Bnei Yisrael lived in Egypt, they were not in possession of a set of mitzvos and distinctive practices. Nothing distinguished them from their neighbors other than holding on to Jewish language and Jewish dress. When Tzipora first encountered Moshe, he was dressed in an Egyptian manner, and spoke the Egyptian language. This should be obvious; how else would she know to call him an Egyptian?

I know about this from personal experience. I once appeared before the ruler in Strasbourg. We were instructed to attach yellow badges to our clothes. A priest approached me, and said, “Jew, what is that yellow marking that you wear? What does it signify?”

I responded, “I do not know. What am I to do? The authorities demand it of us, and I am compelled to obey. If the law required me to walk about carrying a heavy burden, I would do that as well. As far as I am concerned, it is one of those senseless laws that you place upon us.”

“Well, if you don't know, I will tell you,” said the priest. “The ruler's demand of you is just, and derives from the Ruler of the universe. He commanded you, ‘I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine.’[5] Don't think that your practice of the mitzvos accomplishes that separation. After all, you are not occupied with mitzvos all the time. Because of that, He gave you marks and signs to distinguish you as Jews. Your houses are marked as Jewish by the mezuzah. Bris milah serves that purpose upon your bodies, but that only works when you are naked. Tzitzis do the job on your clothing. Should anyone ask you what those strings are, you can respond, ‘So commanded the Master of all – and for good reason! They remind me of all His commandments.’ But for some time you have been embarrassed by that sign. Moreover, not only do they not differentiate you with pride from us, but you have been imitating our styles in dress. When you rejected His badge of honor, He decreed that you would instead have to wear a badge of shame and contempt, similar to that which we place on imbeciles so that people can stay away from them.”

I protested. BH, I was wearing my talis katan, and could point to our observance of the tzitzis requirement!

He would not accept this. “That won't do it. You should be wearing them on top of your other clothing where they are visible, with pride.”

“No,” I replied. “Remember the words of David, ‘May they be cursed before Hashem, for they have driven me away this day from attaching myself to the heritage of Hashem, as if to say: Go worship the gods of others.’[6] David prophetically revealed that when we live under the authority of the other nations, we are unable to practice the Torah the way it ought to be observed. “Now, you have it partially correct. The purpose of tzitzis is to remind us of who we are – specifically, of the 613 mitzvos that are alluded to between the number of strings and knots, and the gematria of ‘tzitzis.’ We are therefore concerned about the integrity of the tzitzis. Should we lose a single strand, the allusion would be incomplete, and our sign would become counterfeit. Falsifying the mark of the King is a capital crime; for this reason, we check our tzitzis throughout the day to ensure that they stay intact.

“You are the greatest threat to the integrity of our sign of allegiance to G-d. On a whim, you can maliciously decide to attack any one of us, and snip off part of a string, invalidating them as a sign. For this reason, we are compelled to wear our tzitzis under our top garments, so that at least they remain intact when we are safely inside a shul or beis medrash. Additionally, those who do not have to mix with you non-Jews wear their tzitzis proudly on the outside at all times.”

The priest was forced to accept this as true – and all who listened to our dialogue agreed as well.

2.Shemos 2:19 3.Devarim Rabbah 2:5 4.Bereishis 40:15 5.Vayikra 20:26 6.ShmuelI 26:19

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from: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com> via em.secureserver.net date: Jan 15, 2020, 4:34 PM subject: Advanced Parsha - Shmot

### **Faith in the Future** **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

Some measure of the radicalism that is introduced into the world by the story of the Exodus can be seen in the sustained mistranslation of the three keywords with which God identified Himself to Moses at the Burning Bush. At first, He described Himself as follows: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” But then, after Moses heard the mission he was to be sent on, he said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” That was when God replied, cryptically, Ehyeh asher ehyeh (Ex. 3:14). This was translated into Greek as ego eimi ho on, and into Latin as ego sum qui sum, meaning ‘I am who I am’, or ‘I am He who is’. The early and medieval Christian theologians all understood the phrase to be speaking about ontology, the metaphysical nature of God's existence as the ground of

all being. It meant that He was 'Being-itself, timeless, immutable, incorporeal, understood as the subsisting act of all existing'. Augustine defines God as that which does not change and cannot change. Aquinas, continuing the same tradition, reads the Exodus formula as saying that God is 'true being, that is, being that is eternal, immutable, simple, self-sufficient, and the cause and principal of every creature'.[1]

But this is the God of Aristotle and the philosophers, not the God of Abraham and the Prophets. Ehyeh asher ehyeh means none of these things. It means 'I will be what, where, or how I will be'. The essential element of the phrase is the dimension omitted by all the early Christian translations, namely the future tense. God is defining Himself as the Lord of history who is about to intervene in an unprecedented way, to liberate a group of slaves from the mightiest empire of the ancient world and lead them on a journey towards liberty. Already in the eleventh century, reacting against the neo-Aristotelianism that he saw creeping into Judaism, Judah Halevi made the point that God introduces Himself at the beginning of the Ten Commandments not by saying, "I am the Lord your God who created heaven and earth," but rather, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." [2]

Far from being timeless and immutable, God in the Hebrew Bible is active, engaged, in constant dialogue with His people, calling, urging, warning, challenging and forgiving. When Malachi says in the name of God, 'I the Lord do not change' (Malachi 3:6), he is not speaking about His essence as pure being, the unmoved mover, but about His moral commitments. God keeps His promises even when His children break theirs. What does not change about God are the covenants He makes with Noah, Abraham and the Israelites at Sinai.

So remote is the God of pure being – the legacy of Plato and Aristotle – that the distance is bridged in Christianity by a figure that has no counterpart in Judaism, the son of God, one person who is both human and Divine. In Judaism we are all both human and Divine, dust of the earth yet breathing God's breath and bearing God's image. These are profoundly different theologies.

"I will be what I will be" means that I will enter history and transform it. God was telling Moses that there was no way he or anyone else could know in advance what God was about to do. He told him in general terms that He was about to rescue the Israelites from the hands of the Egyptians and bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey. But as for specifics, Moses and the people would know God not through His essence but through His acts. Therefore, the future tense is key here. They could not know Him until he acted.

He would be a God of surprises. He would do things never seen before, create signs and wonders that would be spoken about for thousands of years. They would set in motion wave after wave of repercussions. People would learn that slavery is not an inevitable condition, that might is not right, that empires are not impregnable, and that a tiny people like the Israelites could do great things if they attached their destiny to heaven. But none of this could be predicted in advance. God was saying to Moses and to the people, You will have to trust Me. The destination to which I am calling you is just beyond the visible horizon.

It is very hard to understand how revolutionary this was. Ancient religions were deeply conservative, designed to show that the existing social hierarchy was inevitable, part of the deep structure of reality, timeless and unchangeable. Just as there was a hierarchy in the heavens, and another within the animal kingdom, so there was a hierarchy in human society. That was order. Anything that challenged it represented chaos. Until Israel appeared on the scene, religion was a way of consecrating the status quo. That is what the story of Israel would overturn. The greatest empire on earth was about to be overthrown. The most powerless of people – foreigners, slaves – were going to go free. This was not simply a blow to Egypt. Although it would take thousands of years, it was a deadly blow to the very concept of a hierarchical society, or of time as what Plato called it, "a

moving image of eternity," a series of passing shadows on a wall of reality that never changes.

Instead, history became an arena of change. Time became something understood as a narrative, a journey or a quest. All this is hinted at in those three words, "I will be what I will be." I am the God of the future tense. So Judaism, in the concept of a Messianic age, became the only civilisation whose golden age is in the future. And throughout the Torah, the promised land lies in the future. Abraham does not acquire it. Nor does Isaac. Nor does Jacob. Even Moses, who spends forty years leading the people there, does not get to enter it. It is always just beyond. Soon but not yet.

I think this is one of the most important ideas of Judaism. I wrote a book about it, called Future Tense.[3] I remember one evening when Elaine and I had the privilege of discussing this with the founder of positive psychology, Martin Seligman, in his home in Philadelphia. He was toying with a similar idea. After years of practising psychology he had come to the conclusion that the people with a positive psychology tended to be future-oriented, whereas those with a negative mindset – he called this, in a brilliant phrase, "learned helplessness" – were often fixated on the past.

A few years later, he and three other scholars published a book on the subject called Homo Prospectus.[4] What is it, he asked, that makes Homo sapiens different from other species? Answer, we have an unrivalled ability "to be guided by imagining alternatives stretching into the future – prospection." We are the future-oriented animal.

I wish this were more deeply understood, because it is fundamental. I have long argued that a fallacy dominates the scientific study of humankind. Science searches for causes; a cause always precedes its effect; therefore science will always seek to explain a phenomenon in the present by reference to something that happened in the past – anything from the genome to early childhood experiences to brain chemistry to recent stimuli. It will follow that science will inevitably deny the existence of human freewill. The denial may be soft or hard, gentle or brutal, but it will come. Freedom will be seen as an illusion. The best we can hope for is Karl Marx's definition of freedom as "consciousness of necessity."

But this is a fallacy. Human action is always oriented to the future. I put the kettle on because I want a cup of coffee. I work hard because I want to pass the exam. I act to bring about a future that is not yet. Science cannot account for the future because something that hasn't happened yet cannot be a cause. Therefore there will always be something about intentional human action that science cannot fully explain.

When God said, "I will be what I will be," He was telling us something not only about God but about us when we are open to God and have faith in His faith in us.

We can be what we will be if we choose the right and the good. And if we fail and fall, we can change because God lifts us and gives us strength. And if we can change ourselves, then together we can change the world. We cannot end evil and suffering but we can diminish it. We cannot eliminate injustice, but we can fight it. We cannot abolish sickness but we can treat it and search for cures.

Whenever I visit Israel, I find myself awestruck by the way this ancient people in its history-saturated land is one of the most future-oriented nations on earth, constantly searching for new advances in medical, informational, and nano-technology. Israel writes its story in the future tense.

And the future is the sphere of human freedom, because I cannot change yesterday but I can change tomorrow by what I do today. Therefore, because Judaism is a religion of the future it is a religion of human freedom, and because Israel is a future-oriented nation, it remains, in the Middle East, an oasis of freedom in a desert of oppression. Tragically, most of Israel's enemies are fixated on the past, and as long as they remain so, their people will never find freedom and Israel will never find peace.

I believe that we must honour the past but not live in it. Faith is a revolutionary force. God is calling to us as once He called to Moses, asking us to have faith in the future and then, with His help, to build it.

[1] See the insightful study by Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2001, pp. 20–38, from which these references are drawn.

[2] Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari (Kitab Al Khazari): An Argument for the Faith of Israel*, New York, Schocken, 1964, Book I, p. 25.

[3] Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense*, Hodder and Stoughton, 2009, especially the last chapter, 231–52.

[4] Martin Seligman, et al., *Homo Prospectus*, Oxford University Press, 2017.  
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks or to subscribe to his mailing list, pleas... Show more

from: Naaleh Torah Online <contact@naaleh.com> via naaleh.ccsend.com  
date: Jan 16, 2020, 10:05 AM subject: Parshat Shemot: Persecution and Slavery

### **Names of Nobility: Parshat Shemot**

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by **Mrs. Shira Smiles**

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

The second book of the Torah is commonly referred to as "Shemot/Names," as it begins with listing all the names of Bnei Yisroel that descended to Egypt, repeating the list from Sefer Bereishit, and ending with, "And Yoseph was in Egypt." Why was it necessary to repeat the names and why does the Torah tell us that Yoseph was in Egypt, which we already know?

The Mesillot Bilvovom notes that there must be some connection between the names they went down with and the redemption, explaining on one level that one of the main reasons we were redeemed from Egypt was because we did not change our names which maintained our Jewish identity. Similarly, these names must also somehow be harbingers of redemption. The Ohr Gedalyahu reminds us that the name reflects the essence of a being, its potential, and the purpose of his existence. The Gemara interprets the verse in Tehillim, "... Ki sam shamot ba'aretz - He put destruction in the land," and says shamot/destruction, with different vocalization, can easily be read as sheimot/names. If you do not live up to your name and your potential, you will bring destruction to the land. What was it that Hashem loved so much in Avram that He named him Avraham? He found Avraham faithful to his name. One must be loyal to the attributes inherent in the name one is given.

Names, thus, have two interconnected components writes the Dorash Dovid. The first is the definition of the name, while the second is the mental, psychological and emotional intention of the parents when they gave the child this name for, just as a child inherits physical attributes from his parents, so too does he inherit these other attributes from his parents. One's name includes both a legacy and a mindset. Our Matriarchs articulated the reasons they gave their children their particular names. These names were a sacred legacy in the land of Israel, and included the essence of each individual. By renaming these souls when they descended to Egypt, they invested themselves with the ability to retain their innate holy essence even as they had to adapt to the immoral society of Egypt, says Rabbi Gifter. This ability to adapt and actualize our innate holy potential wherever we find ourselves exists in each one of us whatever challenges we face and wherever we are. When the Torah then records that Yoseph was in Egypt, adds Rabbi Weinberger, it is telling us that Yoseph retained the holy essence of his name the whole time he was in Egypt, just as his brothers would do when they descended to Egypt. Rabbi Y. Eisenberger notes that names not only include the essence but also imply permanence. Therefore, the angel Yaakov fought could not give his name because his mission changed daily. On the other hand, when Moshe asked Hashem what Name he should tell Bnei Yisroel, Hashem readily told him a permanent name: I will be that which I will be- that which I am now supporting you through the challenge of Egypt, so will I be with you through every challenge and diaspora in your future history. Hashem's message to Bnei Yisroel through Moshe was that the relationship between Hashem and Bnei Yisroel was permanent; Hashem would never abandon His people. In Kohelet it says, "A good name is better

than oil, and the day of death than the day of birth." Oil always alludes to wisdom which is unchangeable and constant. Just as wisdom is constant and continuous, so too is a person's name. What allowed Klal Yisroel to retain their names was that they let their chochma control their emotions. He who can maintain clarity of focus and purpose through exercising wisdom has maintained the integrity of his name from birth to death. The wish of the parents, wisdom represented by the father and understanding represented by the mother, is that the child they are now naming should accomplish his mission. The Shla"h Hakodosh introduced a custom to recite a verse representative of one's name towards the end of the Amidah. This verse should serve as a mantra to keep one focused on his mission in life. At death, you will be asked your name, you will be asked if you lived up to the essence your name signified. Yoseph never changed his name and never forgot his mission, even though Pharaoh gave him an Egyptian name in keeping with his status. He made sure his head ruled his heart and his passions. Our names reveal to us our potential, challenge us to work to fulfill that potential so that we will be ready for redemption. When Bnei Yisroel retained their names, they not only held on to their past but also kept the vision of the future before them, writes the Ohr Gedaliah. They kept the revealed essence of their names and the hidden essence that connected each of them to Hashem, just as each person is represented by a letter in the Sefer Torah, a letter that is connected to a specific attribute of Hashem. By keeping their names, they kept that connection alive and were able to focus on bringing their potential to fruition, the fruition that would speed the redemption. The book is called Shemot, Names, precisely because the names provided the hope for and were the harbingers of salvation, precisely because it provided them with the focus they would need to survive the enslavement and to hasten that salvation.

from: Mordechai Tzion <toratravaviner@gmail.com> via gmail.mcsv.net  
reply-to: toratravaviner@gmail.com to: date: Jan 14, 2020, 11:08 AM  
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### **Rav Shlomo Aviner**

Text Message Q&A #319 Ask Rav Aviner: toratravaviner@yahoo.com

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion Visit our blog:

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

Q: What is the source that Etrog jam helps a woman to have an easy delivery?

A: There is no ancient source.

Minhag of Divorced Woman

Q: I am divorced. Should I continue the customs of my former husband or return to the customs of my father?

A: If you do not have older children, return to your father's customs. If you have older children and they are used to your former husband's customs, you should continue to perform them so there is uniformity in your house.

Dispute over Wig

Q: I cover my hair with a wig but my husband does not like it. What should I do?

A: He should wear what he wants, and you should not give him orders about his dress, and you should dress the way you want, and he should not give you orders about your dress.

A: But he claims that I do not understand him?

A: Indeed, and he does not understand you. Perhaps you two should go to marriage counseling, and we hope that he will be able to understand what every 10 year old child understands, i.e. to be objective.

Siyum Ha-Shas

Q: We are planning to attend the Siyum Ha-Shas at Binyanei Ha-Uma in Yerushalayim, and then go and eat in a restaurant. Is that considered a Seudat Mitzvah?

A: Yes. It is possible to have a Seudah for a Siyum in another place. Shut Maharam Brisk 1:133.

Cohanim's Shoes

Q: When Cohanim take off their shoes for Birkat Cohanim, should they put them under their chairs or leave them outside the sanctuary?

A: Most important is that they are not seen.

Calling from Different Phone Number

Q: I keep calling someone but they do not pick up for me. Can I call them from a different number?

A: Genivat Da'at (deception).

Praising Student in Front of the Class

Q: Is it permissible for me to praise a student in front of the class for learning well?

A: One needs to be very careful, since it can cause the weaker students to feel frustrated.

Non-Hebrew Words in Rashi

Q: Do the non-Hebrew words in Rashi have the same holiness as the Hebrew words?

A: They have similar holiness as the Aramaic translation of Onkelos but a little less since Onkelos was given at Mt. Sinai (Ha-Rav Chaneh Halberstan, Av Beit Din Kalashitz, said that his holy grandfather, the Shinova Rav, was very particular to pronounce the non-Hebrew words when learning Rashi, since they have the same level of holiness as the rest of Rashi. And if he heard someone skip over those words, he would tell them to go back and pronounce them. In the book "Divrei Chaneh Ha-Shalem" p. 453. And see the book "Otzar Lazei Rashi" which explains all of the non-Hebrew words in Rashi).

Shul in Bomb Shelter

Q: If we have a Shul in the bomb shelter of our building, does it have the holiness of a Shul?

A: No. It is still a bomb shelter.

Special thank you to Orly Tzion for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parashah Sheet

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from: Torah Wellsprings <mail@torahwellsprings.com> bcc:

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Collected thoughts of

**RABBI ELIMELECH BIDERMAN SHLITA**

Compiled by Rabbi BORUCH TWERSKY

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Parshat Shemos Parshat Shemos Reviewing the Parashah

Torah Wellsprings Parshat Shemos Reviewing the Parashah

**Yiras Shamayim**

Miriam and Yocheved worked as midwives, and Pharaoh commanded them (1:16) יִאֵם יֵאֵם "if the child born is a male, kill him." They didn't obey. In fact, they gave water and food to the children (see Rashi). Pharaoh summoned for them and asked, "Why did you do this? Why do you sustain the children?" They explained that the Jewish women have children on their own, without a midwife, and Pharaoh accepted their response.

In their merit (1:20), "The nation increased and became very great," but they weren't rewarded for that. They were rewarded for their yiras Shamayim. As it states, "and it was when the midwives feared Hashem, Hashem made for them houses [of kehunah, leviyah, and malchus – Rashi]." They were rewarded that cohanim, levi'im, and kings came from them, because they feared Hashem. It doesn't state they were rewarded for increasing the numbers of Klal Yisrael.

Imagine you are at a ceremony celebrating a hero who saved the lives of many people during the war. Saving even just one person's life is like saving

an entire world (as Chazal tell us). Certainly then, someone who saved many lives deserves immense respect. You are expecting to hear many stories of his bravery, and to hear about the lives he saved. But as you listen to speaker after speaker, you become upset, because no one is speaking about his heroic acts and about the lives he saved. They are discussing his yiras shamayim! You don't understand. Why are they discussing his yiras shamayim? There is so much more to honor him for! You feel they are insulting him, because they are discussing a secondary factor, and they aren't discussing his primary praise.

But in this week's parashah we learn that the primary praise is for fearing Hashem. Miriam and Yocheved were rewarded for their yiras Shamayim, it doesn't state that they were rewarded for saving lives.

Indeed, yiras Shamayim isn't easy to come by. It is a great undertaking. The Shem MiShmuel (Hoshana Rabba ) writes, "My grandfather, the Rebbe of Kotzk zt'l said, 'It's easier for a human being to accept on himself any type of affliction, than to accept the burden of Heaven. There is nothing harder for a human body than to be under the Kingship of Heaven and to do all his deeds according to the Torah.'"

Reb Shmuel Wosner zt'l (Rachmei HaRav, Gevurah) writes, "Yocheved and Miryam were extremely righteous women. They came from a holy lineage, they were prophets, and they feared Hashem since their youth. Nevertheless, this is the first time it states that they feared Hashem. This is because a person's yiras shamayim isn't proven until he overcomes his fear of humans to do Hashem's will, or until he overcomes his temptations to serve Hashem. Only then does he earn the title 'yiras Hashem.'"<sup>1</sup>

In Baruch She'amar we say Baruch Mishalem Sachar Tov Liyereiav, "Bless the One who gives a good reward to those who fear Him." To explain the significance of this phrase, we give an analogy about a yeshiva that wants to attract very good magidei shiurim (teachers). They advertised that they are paying double the average wage, to encourage the good teachers to join their yeshiva. Similarly, we are told that there is a great Sachar Tov - reward for fearing Hashem, so the wise will take advantage of the offer.<sup>2</sup>

Fearing Hashem is not easy. We must overcome our fear of people and our desires for the pleasures of this world, to do Hashem's will. But consider the reward, consider the good you will enjoy, and that will give you strength to follow the path of yiras Hashem.

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l said that Yiras Shomayim means you are afraid to sin, so the bounty of heaven won't be withheld from coming down.<sup>3</sup> Yiras Hashem is when one thinks about Hashem's greatness until he fears Hashem. And Yiras Chet means to fear doing something that isn't befitting for him.<sup>4</sup> Approximately one hundred bachurim were learning in Tzanz, listening to the Tzanz Rav's (Rebbe Chaim of Tzanz, zy'a) shiurim, but it wasn't an official yeshiva.

Someone asked the Divrei Chaim, "The bachurim are learning here anyway. Why shouldn't we make it official, and open a yeshiva for them?"

The Divrei Chaim answered, "Running a yeshiva is a great responsibility. It means accepting accountability for the bachurim's spiritual growth. It means being liable if a bachur falls into the yetzer hara's clutches. I don't want to carry this responsibility."

The man asked, "But hasn't the Chasam Sofer opened a large yeshiva in Pressburg?"

The Divrei Chaim explained, "How can you compare me to the Chasam Sofer? Because of the Chasam Sofer's holiness, if he merely looks at a bachur when he gives his daily shiur, that bachur will not be able to sin, even in private. By merely looking at a bachur, he fills him up with yiras Shamayim. I'm not on that level, and therefore I'm afraid to take the responsibility."

Serve Hashem in Concealment

A sign that you fear Hashem is if you serve Hashem when nobody sees.

The Gemara (Brachos 5:) tells that Reb Eliezer was ill and Reb Yochanan came to visit him. It was dark in the room, so Reb Eliezer rolled up his

sleeves, and the room became illuminated by his brilliant beauty. The question is, his face was already revealed. Why didn't the shine of his face illuminate the room? (Bederech tzachus) it's because it is specifically the concealed deeds that shine the most.

A craftsman was fixing a couch for the Husiataner Rebbe zt'l. The Rebbe showed him that he forgot to mend a tear on the back of the couch. "No one looks there" the tailor replied.

The Rebbe said, "We were taught that where no one sees, that's where it must be the most perfect." The Shaar Bas Rabim (from Reb Chaim Aryeh Leib zt'l of Yadvamba) writes, "It states in Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (ch.51), LiOlam Yiheh Adam Yireh Shomayim Biseser Ubigalui, "A person should always fear Hashem, in public and in concealment...'" Because even when one is concealed in a room within a room, and no one is there but Hashem Himself, he should fear Hashem over there... As Chazal (Avos 2:5) say Bimakom She'ein Anashim if you are in a place where nobody is around try to be an Ish, a tzaddik (a rasha isn't an Ish, rather he's a beheima). Also it states (Avos 2:13), Al Tihi Rasha Befnei Atzmecha, even when you are alone, all by yourself, don't be a rasha, because Hashem's honor fills the world, and He sees the revealed and the concealed. As it states (Yirmiyahu 23:24), 'If a person hides in a concealed place, won't I see him?'" A true yirei Shamayim serves Hashem in public and in private. There are people who fear Hashem in their homes but they aren't so righteous when traveling. For example, there are those who are embarrassed to wear talis and tefillin on a plane among many goyim. There are also people who serve Hashem solely outdoors, so people will praise them, but in the privacy of their home, they don't serve Hashem. Therefore, it states in Shir HaShirim (4:1) Hinach Yefa Rayosi Hinach Yafa, "You are beautiful, my friend. You are beautiful..." What is the double expression of "beautiful" implying? The Midrash (Tanchuma) explains, "You are beautiful in your homes; you are beautiful outdoors."5 Because we are beautiful when our fear of Hashem permeates all our deeds.

There is a mezuzah on the outside door of our homes. Whenever we go outdoors, we put our hand on the mezuzah, kiss it, and remind ourselves that we should be loyal to Hashem outdoors. There are mezuzos on the doors inside the home, too. Even if someone has a hundred rooms, one after the next, the last room will also have a mezuzah. This is to remind us that Hashem is in the privacy of our homes, too, and we should serve Hashem there, too.

The Targum Yonoson translates the words (2:25), Vayeida Elo-kim as follows: "Hashem saw the teshuvah they were doing when no one else knew about their teshuvah..." Teshuvah done in concealment is precious before Hashem. This teshuvah brought about the salvation. Therefore, immediately after it states, Vayeida Elo-kim the Torah tells the story of the burning bush, and that Hashem told Moshe to redeem Bnei Yisrael. ....

**Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <ravkooklist@gmail.com> reply-to: rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com to: Rav Kook List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date: Jan 15, 2020, 1:00 AM subject: [**Rav Kook Torah**] Shemot: Moses' Love for Israel  
Shemot: Moses' Love for Israel  
Moses

Were Moses' accusatory words appropriate?

When his initial efforts to free the Jewish slaves only resulted in Pharaoh issuing even harsher decrees, Moses complained bitterly to God: "God, why do You mistreat Your people? Why did You send me? From when I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he made things even worse for these people. You have not rescued Your people!" (Exod. 5:22-23) The Midrash says that Middat haDin, the Attribute of Justice, sought to punish Moses for his harsh words. But God saw that Moses only spoke for the sake of the Jewish people, and he was not punished (Shemot Rabbah 5:27). What exactly was Moses' sin that he deserved to be punished? And what did God 'see' that determined Moses was not in the wrong?

The Sick Friend

Rav Kook explained the incident with the following parable: Once there were two good friends, but one friend was seriously ill. His doctor determined that he could only save his life by performing a very painful operation.

During surgery, the doctor did not hold it against the patient when he moaned and wept. The poor man was in great pain, and his response was to be expected.

But when his healthy friend also wailed and cried out - the doctor ordered him to quiet down. The doctor interpreted his cries as a lack of faith in his medical skill, and even questioning the need for the painful procedure.

Feeling Their Pain

The Hebrew slaves, Rav Kook explained, were like the ill patient. Divine providence decreed that the Jewish people needed to undergo Pharaoh's harsh decrees in order to be redeemed, like a painful operation necessary to save the patient's life. When the Israelites cried out under the oppression and persecution of Egypt, that was understandable.

But Moses - why was he complaining? Did he not have faith in God's ability to redeem Israel? The Attribute of Strict Justice objected to Moses' complaints; this lack of faith should be rebuked and punished.

But the One who "searches the heart and examines the mind" saw into the depths of Moses' heart. Moses was like a dear friend who cannot help but share in his friend's pain. When the doctor operated on his friend, he felt as if the knife was slicing his own flesh.

"Moses is speaking for the Jewish people," God pronounced. He did not deserve to be punished. The "faithful shepherd" cried out spontaneously, in his great love for his people.

This is the model for a true leader. The people are not a stepping stone to attain high office. They are the goal of public service.

As chief rabbi, Rav Kook was keenly aware of his duty to serve the people. Often he would sign his letters, - "servant to a holy nation."

(Adapted from Mo'adei HaRe'iyah, pp. 233-234)

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Torah Studies: Shemot

**Adapted by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks; From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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In this Sidra, when G-d asks Moses to undertake the mission of redeeming the Israelites from Egypt, Moses replies, "Send, I pray You, by the hand of whom You will send." The Midrash interprets this to be a plea for the Messiah to be sent in his place. What is the connection between Moses and the Messiah—the past and future redeemers? And what is the difference between them, that each was given a separate mission? The Rebbe answers these questions, and explains their significance in the life of the individual Jew.

1. The Two Redeemers

After G-d has repeatedly asked Moses to return to Egypt and lead the Jewish people out of their captivity, Moses finally says,1 "Send, I pray You, by the hand of whom You will send." The Midrash2 says on this verse, "(Moses) said before Him, 'Master of the Universe, send, I pray You, by the hand of whom You will send'—by the hand of the Messiah who will be the future redeemer." But this request of Moses was not granted, for it was he, specifically, whom G-d wanted to deliver Israel from Egypt.

It can be inferred from the Midrash that there is a special connection between Moses and the Messiah, and it was because of this that Moses wanted the Messiah himself to be sent to Egypt. Nonetheless, the redemption from Egypt was the task of Moses; the mission of the Messiah belongs to the final exile.

The similarity which they share (in virtue of which they have been given similar tasks—redemption from exile) is indicated in the Rabbinic saying:3 "Moses was the first and he will be the last redeemer." This does not mean



that Moses in person will be the Messiah (since he was a Levite, and the Messiah, who will be a descendant of David,<sup>4</sup> will be from the tribe of Judah); but rather that the redemptive power of the Messiah will be drawn from Moses.

The reason is that the first and major virtue of the Messiah will be Torah (according to Rambam,<sup>5</sup> he will be steeped in it); from this, his redemptive strength will be drawn; and the Torah is called “the Torah of Moses.”<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the power of Israel to bring the Messiah derives from the service articulated in the Torah.

This inner connection between Moses and the Messiah is alluded to in the verse<sup>7</sup> “And the scepter shall not depart from Judah... until Shiloh come (ad ki-yavo Shilo).” This is taken to refer to the Messiah, because the words “yavo Shiloh” and “Mashiach” (“Shiloh come” and “Messiah”) are numerically equivalent.<sup>8</sup> The same equivalence also applies to the words “Shiloh” and “Moses” so that the coming of the Messiah is related to Moses. In addition, “yavo” (“come”) has the same numerical value as “echad” (“one”). Thus we can state the equivalence: “Messiah = Moses + One,” and its meaning is that the Messiah will be brought by service which has the attribute of “Oneness”; and the power to achieve this is transmitted through Moses.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Descent For the Sake of Ascent

How are we to understand this?

The Rabbis said: When the world was created, everything was in a state of perfection.<sup>10</sup> But after the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, when the serpent infected Eve with impurity,<sup>11</sup> man and the world fell from perfection until the Giving of the Torah; for when Israel were at Mt. Sinai the “spirit of impurity” departed.<sup>12</sup> But it returned with the sin of the Golden Calf,<sup>13</sup> and it remains in the world until the Messianic Age when the promise will be fulfilled to remove (utterly destroy) impurity;<sup>14</sup> and the world will be ultimately purified and cleansed.

It is a general principle in Judaism that every fall is for the sake of some ascent;<sup>15</sup> and subsequent ascent is higher than the state before the fall. Hence the state ushered in by the Giving of the Torah was higher than that which preceded Eve’s sin. And by implication the Messianic Age will be superior to the time of the Giving of the Torah.

A twofold movement creates this achievement of hitherto unreached heights: A descent of light (revelation, spiritual power) from its source in the infinite; and a corresponding ascent of Israel and the world.

We find this in the Giving of the Torah. Even though the strength to fulfill Divine commandments preceded it (Adam had 6 commandments, Noah 7, extra ones were given to each of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,<sup>16</sup> and the Fathers kept the whole Torah before it was given<sup>17</sup>), not only was greater strength given at the time of the Giving of the Torah, but a new power, different in kind from all that had existed before, was given to Israel when the relation of chosenness between them and G-d began (“and You have chosen us”<sup>18</sup>). This was a revelation of G-d’s essence; something that had not been disclosed in revelation before.

Likewise, the elevation of Israel and the world was unprecedented—in the inwardness and intensity of their purification. Hence their subsequent degradation, in committing the sin of the Golden Calf, was not so great. Thus, although its effects (the presence of impurity) remain visible today, still, the effects of the Giving of the Torah are evident.

## 3. The Messianic Age

In a similar way, the elevation that will belong to the Messianic Age—when the Messiah will teach his Torah to all Israel<sup>19</sup>—will be correspondingly greater than that of the Giving of the Torah;<sup>20</sup> and this in two ways:

(i) In the Divine revelation. For though at Sinai it was so intense that they could see it with their physical senses, it was only like the Messianic revelation<sup>21</sup> (when “the Glory of the L-rd will be revealed”)<sup>22</sup> and not equal to it.

(ii) In the elevation of Israel. Whereas at Sinai the spirit of impurity departed, it remained in potential and reappeared with the sin of the Golden

Calf. But in the Messianic time it will be destroyed and consumed forever. The whole essential nature of the world itself will be changed; not temporarily altered by specific Divine intervention from Above.

## 4. The Task of Exile

Since every elevation must be preceded by a fall, the fall is a necessary preparation for it. It is the service in the time of the fall (while its effects persist) which brings about the elevation. The service of the Fathers, and the catharsis of the “iron furnace”<sup>23</sup> of Egypt, brought the Giving of the Torah. And likewise, the Messiah will be brought by our continual service in exile to purify the whole essence of the world.<sup>24</sup>

## 5. The Meaning of “One”

This can be understood by first understanding a well-known difficulty<sup>25</sup> about the Shema. Why does it say, “the L-rd is One” and not “the L-rd is unique?” For “one” is an attribute of a countable thing; it is compatible with a second. But “unique” rules out the possibility of another.

The explanation is this: The true Oneness of G-d is not perceived merely by denying at the outset the existence of anything besides Him (“uniqueness”—world-denying attitude); but rather by perceiving in the midst of the physical world that it has no existence in itself, by feeling in the context of a worldly existence that it is in one with (united with) G-d.

The word “one” itself suggests this. Its letters in Hebrew (echad: alef, chet, daled) have the numerical values, 1, 8, 4. 8 symbolizes, as it were, the seven heavens and the earth, and 4, the four directions. All these are emanations from 1 (alef) the Source and Master (aluf) of the world.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the perception of Oneness must not be a spiritual one alone, but one which permeates one’s whole view of the physical world and is realized in it.

## 6. Torah and the Transformation of the World

But how can it be that this world whose nature is (and whose name in Hebrew means) the “concealment”<sup>27</sup> of G-dliness, should be receptive to a revelation within it of the Aluf (Master, One) of the universe?

For this purpose, to make the world a fit dwelling-place for G-d, Israel was given the Torah and the commandments.

At Sinai, it was not merely that they were given so that through them the world should be purified and refined; but also the accompanying revelation transmitted the power by which this could be done.

At the moment when the Torah was given, the whole world was entirely nullified in the face of the revelation—even “the birds did not sing and the earth was silent”<sup>28</sup>—but this was a force from above rather than from within (and hence it was not a permanent state).

But from this was derived the world’s power to become refined itself, and hence become a fitting receptacle for a yet higher revelation.

## 7. Moses and the Messiah

Now we can understand why the Messiah = Moses + One. For the Messiah will be brought by the service which makes the Oneness manifest, and the power to do this was given through the hand of Moses.

Hence the inner connection between Moses and the Messiah: The latter will be brought by powers transmitted through the former. And hence also their difference: The exile to and liberation from Egypt was for the sake of the Giving of the Torah,<sup>29</sup> and this was to give Israel the power to purify themselves and the world. The task of the Messiah is to complete this process, and to innovate the subsequent service, when the purity of the world is complete.

## 8. “Oneness” and the Individual

Man is a microcosm of the world.<sup>30</sup> And this cosmic process finds its echo in every man at all times: When he works and performs his service until evening; and entrusts his soul to G-d at night; and next day is made new again,<sup>31</sup> and begins a new service.

The service of the day begins with prayer and Torah. Through them a man receives the strength to serve (the G-dly spirit is diffused through his whole being by prayer) and to overcome the inclination to evil (through Torah which instructs him in the right course of action). Then he is able to enact this service in the practical world (to the extent that, as Rambam says,<sup>32</sup> “his



wisdom is manifest in his eating and drinking"). His worldly existence (the chet and daled of echad) is subordinated to his Divine wisdom (alef); a recognition of Oneness permeates his physical actions. Then, when his day of service is over, he makes a spiritual reckoning of his day's actions and rededicates his task to G-d. He says, "Into Your hands I entrust my soul... G-d of Truth," and Truth itself is Oneness. For the Hebrew word for truth is emet—the first, middle and last letters of the alef bet,<sup>33</sup> reminding us that G-d is He who has said, "I am the First and I am the Last, and besides Me there is no god."<sup>34</sup> There is no reality which does not emanate from Him, for when the alef (the One) is removed from emet, the word becomes met, "death," the absence of life.<sup>35</sup>

Just as the Torah (through the hand of Moses) gives the world the power to bring the Messiah, so it gives each and every individual the power to refine his own life and environment, and so hasten the Messianic Age.<sup>36</sup>

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. XI pp. 8-13)

FOOTNOTES 1. Shemot 4:13. 2. Lekach Tov. 3. Cf. Shemot Rabbah, 2:4. Zohar, Part I, 253a. 4. Rambam, Hilchos Melachim, end of ch. 11. 5. Ibid. 6. Malachi 3:22. Cf. Shabbat, 89a. 7. Bereishit 49:10. 8. Baal Haturim on Bereishit, Ibid. Cf. supra, p. 2 and note 5. 9. Cf. Tanya, Part I, beg. of ch. 42. 10. Cf. Bereishit Rabbah, 14:7; 3:3. 11. Shabbat, 146a. 12. Ibid. Zohar, Part I, 52b; Part II, 193b. 13. Zohar, Ibid. Cf. Tanya, Part I, end of ch. 36. 14. Zechariah 13:2. 15. Cf. supra, pp. 11 ff. 16. Rambam, Hilchos Melachim, 9:1. 17. Yoma, 28b; Kiddushin, 82a. 18. Cf. Shulchan Aruch Harav, Orach Chaim, 60:4. 19. Likkutei Torah, Tzav, 17a. Shaar Hoemunah, ch. 56. 20. Cf. Kohelet Rabbah, end of ch. 11 and beg. of ch. 2. 21. Tanya, Part I, ch. 36. 22. Isaiah 40:5. 23. I Kings 8:51. 24. Tanya, Part I, beg. of ch. 37. 25. Cf. Torah Or, Vaera, 55b. 26. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, ch. 61. Cf. Berachot, 13b. 27. Olam—he-elam. 28. Shemot Rabbah, end of ch. 29. 29. Shemot 3:12. 30. Tanchuma, Pekudei, 3. 31. Yalkut Shimoni, Remez, 702. 32. Hilchos Deot, 5:1. 33. Jerusalem Talmud, Sanhedrin, 1:1. Cf. Devarim Rabbah, 1:10. 34. Isaiah 44:6. 35. Maharsha, Sanhedrin, 97a. 36. Cf. Tanya, Part IV, 4.

Adapted by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks; From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

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from: **Rabbi Berel Wein** / The Destiny Foundation

<info@jewishdestiny.com> via auth.ccsend.com

date: Jan 15, 2020, 12:00 AM

subject: Parshat Shemot 5780 Newsletter - Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha SHEMOT

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The Torah, Jewish history and tradition indicate to us that Heaven oftentimes chooses unusual people for roles that are essential and pivotal in Jewish leadership. King David is a clear example of this historical phenomenon. But I think that we can agree that the choice of Moshe to be the redeemer and eternal teacher of the Jewish people, if not of all civilization, is, at first blush, a strange one.

Moshe has been separated from the Jewish people for decades. Egyptian law had previously slated him for the death penalty for striking an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a Jewish slave. Moshe is a shepherd in Midian, far removed from his brethren suffering in Egyptian bondage. And when presented by Heaven with the offer of Jewish leadership, Moshe declines it very forcefully. But the will of Heaven prevails, as is always the case.

Moshe must now embark on his new role of leadership, albeit seemingly reluctantly. He himself wonders why he is begin chosen, when, logically, his brother Aaron would seem to be a better fit for the mission. And, perhaps just as amazing as the choice of Moshe for this position of leadership, is the willingness of the Jewish people to instantly accept him as being entitled and fit for that role.

To most of the Jewish people he is a stranger, an outsider who has a speech impediment and is, at most, a Johnny-come-lately to their troubles and

situation. Yet, again we see that it is the will of Heaven that prevails, and it is only through Moshe that the story of the Exodus from Egypt will unfold.

Moshe, however, has outstanding qualities and traits of character that make him the greatest leader in Jewish and world history. Foremost among these attributes is his trait of humility. All leaders must have an appreciation of their talents and possess strong self-worth. However, most leaders are eventually undone by the growth of their egos and the resulting arrogance. Not so Moshe. For even after forty years of leading his people, the Torah still describes Moshe as being the most humble of all human beings on the face of the earth.

It is this trait that makes him the greatest of all past and future prophets. Moshe also has within himself an unquenchable love for his people. His love for them is sorely tested many times during his forty-year career as their leader, but in spite of all of their backsliding, sins, rebellions and mutterings, it is Moshe's love of the people that remains omnipresent and steadfast. As King Solomon wrote: "Love obliterates all transgressions."

Finally, Moshe's path to complete the mission that Heaven thrust upon him never wavers, no matter what the events and circumstances may be. These noble traits and characteristics are apparently what the Almighty searches for in assigning leaders to our people. Moshe is the model for future Jewish leaders in all generations that will follow him.

Shabbat shalom  
Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: torahweb@torahweb.org

to: weeklydt@torahweb.org

date: Jan 15, 2020, 1:24 PM

subject: Rabbi Yakov Haber - The First and Last Redeemers: Proofs and Mission

**Rabbi Yakov Haber**

**The First and Last Redeemers: Proofs and Mission**

"Moshe answered and said, 'Behold they will not believe me, and they will not heed my voice, but they will say, "The Lord has not appeared to you.'"" (Shemos 4:1).[1] In response to these words of Moshe Rabbeinu - presenting the argument before Hashem that the Jewish people will not accept Moshe's role as the redeemer without proof, Hashem instructs Moshe to perform three signs before the nation: changing his staff into a snake, causing tzara'as on his own hand, and converting water into blood. The midrashim and commentaries present diametrically opposed interpretations as to the validity of Moshe's claim. They also offer different approaches both concerning the need for three signs and the symbolism behind them.[2]

Moshe was the first redeemer, the first mashiach if you will; even if not formally anointed with shemen hamishcha, he was appointed as such by Hashem Yisborach. Rambam (Hilchos Melachim 12:3 quoted further on) defines the messianic mission as leading the Jewish people out of exile, teaching them Torah and bringing them closer to observing mitzvos, successfully warring against the enemies of Israel, and building the Beis HaMikdash. Moshe's role certainly consisted of all of these. (He built the mishkan and originally was supposed to lead the Jews into Eretz Yisrael and build the mikdash.) In the language of Chazal (see Koheles Rabba 1:1 and other places), he is dubbed the "go'eil rishon", and the "go'eil acharon", Mashiach ben Dovid, will share common characteristics with Moshe Rabbeinu. (Also see Rambam, Hilchos Teshuva 9:2.) Since Jewish history has seen its fair share of false messiahs, one can certainly understand Moshe's concern. Indeed, Rashba (Responsa, 1:548) writes the following about the identification of the redeemer:

[The nation of] Israel, the inheritors of the true religion...[are] more willing to suffer exile...than believe in something until they investigate thoroughly that which is told to them even concerning that which appears to be an os and mofeis...Even the Jews [in Egypt] who were subject to back breaking, harsh labor [with] Moshe having been commanded to inform them [of the imminent redemption], with all that, [Moshe] said "They will not believe

me!" and he needed several miracles [to prove himself]. This is a true indicator to our people, the people of G-d, not to be convinced of something, until they investigate it thoroughly.

Rashi (4:2,3,6,8), by contrast, quotes Chazal as criticizing Moshe for questioning the belief of the people concerning his appointment as the redeemer. Moshe is viewed as having spoken lashon hara about them, and the first two signs were meant to indicate his sin by showing him a snake, the first creature to speak lashon hara about its Creator, and by making his hand leprous, tzara'as being a punishment for lashon hara. Rashi quotes the midrash which even explains that by Moshe performing these signs before the people, this would demonstrate to the Jewish people how much Hashem had confidence in their belief such that Moshe who dared express lack of confidence in it was immediately smitten by tzara'as.

Chazal's view, at first glance, is difficult. Are the Jewish people expected to believe in any person who claims that he is the redeemer?! This objection was exactly the thrust of Rav Sasportas' (Tzitz Noveil Tzvi, p. 66) blistering attack against those - even Rabbinic personalities - who believed, at least initially, in the messiahship of Shabbetai Tzvi. In his words: "Have you seen in any book that we are obligated to believe in anyone who states, 'I am the messiah'?! [Without proof] anyone who wishes to be crowned with the title of mashiach will do so if his piety is evident, and in accordance with the number of pious people will be the number of messiahs!"

The commentaries on Rashi rally to defend this view of Chazal asserting that there was proof of Moshe's appointment even without the need for signs. Rashi earlier (3:18) quotes the midrash that the Jewish people had a tradition from Ya'akov Avinu and Yosef that the redeemer will present himself with the language of "pakod pakad'ti - I have surely remembered you". Hashem revealed this language to Moshe (3:16) who told it to the elders of Israel (4:31). Ramban (3:18) questions the value of this presentation as a proof since it would have been possible that Moshe learned it while he was in Egypt just as the elders knew it. He suggests that the elders of Israel had a tradition from Ya'akov Avinu that the first person to present these words would, in fact, be the redeemer, thus eliminating the possibility of impostors. Alternatively, Ramban answers based on a midrash which asserts that Moshe left Egypt at the age of 12 before the age of bar mitzvah when this sign would have been given over to the children. Maharal (Gur Aryeh ibid.) challenges both answers, the first one based on the fact the Hashem would certainly allow human free choice enabling an impostor to misappropriate the phrase. Consequently, he suggests that the key phrase "pakod pakad'ti" would merely serve as a means of piquing the B'nei Yisrael's interest so that they would listen to Moshe but would not conclusively prove his appointment; he would then prove himself through the subsequent miracles performed before them.[3]

The Torah states concerning the miracle of k'rias Yam Suf, "ויאמינו ב'ד' ובמשה (עבדך) 14:31). Since the Torah states that they then believed in Moshe, it would appear that the former confirmation of Moshe as the redeemer was not fully settled in the minds of Israel until his mission had been completed by the utter destruction of the Egyptian pursuers. In other words, Moshe proved his messiahship conclusively by doing no less than doing what the redeemer is supposed to do - redeem the Jewish people. What emerges then are two different models of the redeemer proving his authenticity: performing miracles or stating some kind of "password" on the one hand versus actually causing the redemption on the other.

These same two models are at the root of a Rishonic debate as to how the final redeemer will prove himself. Famously, the Talmud (Sanhedrin 93b) comments that when Bar Kochba claimed that he was mashiach, the Sages asked him to rule on a halachic matter through smell based on the verse in Yeshayahu "והריחו בריאת ד'". After he failed the test, they killed him. Ra'avad quotes this as the normative condition necessary for mashiach. Similarly, Rambam in his Iggeres Teiman states: "A previously unknown man will arise. The signs and miracles which will be performed by him are the proofs of the truth of his lineage." But this assertion is contradicted by no less an

authority than Rambam himself! In Hilchos Melachim (11:3) Rambam writes:

One should not presume that the Messianic king must work miracles and wonders, bring about new phenomena in the world, resurrect the dead, or perform other similar deeds. This is definitely not true.[4]

Rambam then proceeds to prove his point from Bar Kochba since R' Akiva and the other sages did not ask him to perform miracles to prove his messiahship! Kesef Mishne notes that Rambam relied on other midrashim which differ from the aforementioned Gemara Sanhedrin quoted by Ra'avad. Rambam (11:4) then proceeds to state his view of how mashiach proves himself:

If a king will arise from the House of David who diligently studies the Torah and observes its commandments according to the Written and Oral Torah as David, his ancestor [did], will compel all of Israel to walk in its ways and rectify the breaches in its observance, and fight the wars of God, he is the presumed mashiach. If he succeeds in the above, builds the Temple in its place, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, he is the certain mashiach.

Several recent commentaries[5] suggest a resolution of these seemingly contradictory sources. As explored elsewhere,[6] the Gemara in Sanhedrin (98a) presents the statement of R. Yehoshua ben Leivi that there are two tracks of redemption: an on-time, natural track and a rushed, supernatural track. The latter depends on merit; the former does not. If the redemption is natural, then mashiach will prove his credentials by performing messianic activities as mentioned by Rambam in Hilchos Melachim. If we merit a rushed redemption, he will prove his role through miracles. A recent, prominent Jewish thinker added that each model is a foretaste of what era he will usher in. If the redemption is on time and will usher in a natural messianic era, then it is logical that he will prove himself naturally. If, on the other hand, the redemption is based on merit and hence, begins a supernatural era, the mashiach will introduce this era with miracles. This resolution helps explain why Moshe had to perform miracles to prove himself. The redemption from Egypt was "rushed" since the original exile was supposed to be for 400 years, and instead, only lasted 210 years. Indeed, the redemption from Egypt was followed by a forty-year supernatural period of the Jewish people's sojourn in the desert, and perhaps that is why this period was introduced by Moshe's initial miracles. If Moshe had led the Jewish people into Eretz Yisrael, it is reasonable to assume that the miraculous era would have continued.

Rambam (ibid. 11:1) writes: "Anyone who does not believe in him or does not await his coming, denies not only the words of the prophets but the Torah itself and Moshe Rabbeinu". In our spiritually confused and geopolitically troubled world, it is our fervent wish that this brief summary and comparison of the revelation of the first and last redeemers should contribute to the longing for the blessed day when the true Go'el and Master of history, Hashem Yisborach, will speedily send the true mashiach to redeem his beloved people.

[1] Translation courtesy of [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org).

[2] See Sha'arei Aharon for a summary of the approaches. Also see Abarbanel (4) and Gevuros Hashem (26-27).

[3] Maharal does not explain why, then, was Moshe accused of questioning the Jewish people's belief in his appointment and punished according to the midrash quoted by Rashi later. וצריך עיון .

[4] Translation courtesy of Rav Eliyahu Touger available at [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org).

[5] See Otzros Acharis HaYamim by Rav Yehuda Chayun (1:7 fn. 4) and others. It is from this informative compilation that many of the sources in this presentation were culled.

[6] See Beit HaMikdash: Built by Whom? and Parallels Between the Exodus from Egypt and the Final Redemption

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