

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet

SHMOS 5783

Sabbath :: SHEMOT

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The Torah leaves us basically unprepared for its description of the events that are recorded for us in this week's parsha. When we last left the family of Israel at the conclusion of last week's parsha of Vayechi, the Jews found themselves comfortable, affluent, protected and settled well in the land of Goshen.

The Torah does not describe to us the process by which this situation so radically changed into becoming a slave state for the Jews. It only tells us of a new king who didn't know Yosef and, for reasons not explicitly mentioned in the Torah, became a hater and persecutor of the Jews.

The Torah seems to indicate that this is almost a natural state of affairs – to be expected. The Egyptian exile begins on a high note, deteriorates into abject sorrow and attempted genocide and ends with miraculous redemption. The Torah does not dwell upon any motives for the occurrence of this pattern of events. What did the Jews do wrong? Why was the Pharaoh such a hater? What were the economic or social factors of the time that allowed for such a dramatic worsening of the Jewish position in Egypt?

The Torah addresses none of these issues. It is almost as if the Torah wishes us to understand that these things happen blindly in human history. And, particularly in Jewish history, that the attempts of historians and sociologists to explain these irrational events and behavior patterns are really useless.

As has been often pointed out, all subsequent Jewish exiles – Babylonia, Spain, France, Germany, Eastern Europe, the Moslem Middle East – all seem to eerily conform to this original Egyptian template. As usual the Torah leaves us with more questions than it provides answers for. In effect, that is why the Torah is called the book of human life.

We are also unprepared to recognize the savior of Israel in the person of Moses. We are told how he was miraculously saved from the crocodiles of the Nile by the daughter of the Pharaoh and raised in the royal court. He sympathizes with the brutalized Jewish slaves, defends them, and is forced to flee from Egypt.

We hear nothing regarding Moses for the next sixty years until he reemerges as a shepherd in Midian, married to the daughter of Yitro, the local religious chief who, at this time, is still a pagan. Hardly the resume' that one would expect for the leader of Israel, the greatest of all prophets and the teacher of all human kind.

Where did his holiness and greatness stem from, how was it developed, who were his mentors and what were his experiences over those long decades of separation from his people? The Torah gives us no clue or answer to these questions. It effectively points out that greatness oftentimes comes from unexpected sources and from people and

leaders who operate outside of the usual establishment circles.

All of life is a mystery and certainly the Jewish story remains in its base an inexplicable one. This sets the stage for everything else that will now follow in the Torah. It is why the Jewish people, when accepting the Torah pledge to God that "we will do and then perhaps try to understand," if we wish to understand first we will never come to do. The Divine hand guides us but it is never subject to our rational thoughts and explanations.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks :: SHEMOT

Turning Curses into Blessings

Genesis ends on an almost serene note. Jacob has found his long lost son. The family has been reunited. Joseph has forgiven his brothers. Under his protection and influence the family has settled in Goshen, one of the most prosperous regions of Egypt. They now have homes, property, food, the protection of Joseph and the favour of Pharaoh. It must have seemed one of the golden moments of Abraham's family's history.

Then, as has happened so often since, "There arose a new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph." There was a political climate change. The family fell out of favour. Pharaoh told his advisers: "Look, the Israelite people are becoming too numerous and strong for us"^[1] – the first time the word "people" is used in the Torah with reference to the children of Israel. "Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase." And so the whole mechanism of oppression moves into operation: forced labour that turns into slavery that becomes attempted genocide.

The story is engraved in our memory. We tell it every year, and in summary-form in our prayers, every day. It is part of what it is to be a Jew. Yet there is one phrase that shines out from the narrative: "But the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and the more they spread." That, no less than oppression itself, is part of what it means to be a Jew.

The worse things get, the stronger we become. Jews are the people who not only survive but thrive in adversity.

Jewish history is not merely a story of Jews enduring catastrophes that might have spelled the end to less tenacious groups. It is that after every disaster, Jews renewed themselves. They discovered some hitherto hidden reservoir of spirit that fuelled new forms of collective self-expression as the carriers of God's message to the world.

Every tragedy begat new creativity. After the division of the kingdom following the death of Solomon came the great literary prophets, Amos and Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Out of the destruction of the First Temple and

the Babylonian exile came the renewal of Torah in the life of the nation, beginning with Ezekiel and culminating in the vast educational programme brought back to Israel by Ezra and Nehemiah. From the destruction of the Second Temple came the immense literature of rabbinic Judaism, until then preserved mostly in the form of an oral tradition: Mishnah, Midrash and Gemara.

From the Crusades came the Hassidei Ashkenaz, the North European school of piety and spirituality. Following the Spanish expulsion came the mystic circle of Tzefat: Lurianic Kabbalah and all it inspired by way of poetry and prayer. From East European persecution and poverty came the Hassidic movement and its revival of grass-roots Judaism through a seemingly endless flow of story and song. And from the worst tragedy of all in human terms, the Holocaust, came the rebirth of the state of Israel, the greatest collective Jewish affirmation of life in more than two thousand years.

It is well known that the Chinese ideogram for “crisis” also means “opportunity”. Any civilisation that can see the blessing within the curse, the fragment of light within the heart of darkness, has within it the capacity to endure. Hebrew goes one better. The word for crisis, mashber, also means “a child-birth chair.” Written into the semantics of Jewish consciousness is the idea that the pain of hard times is a collective form of the contractions of a woman giving birth. Something new is being born. That is the mindset of a people of whom it can be said that “the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and the more they spread.”

Where did it come from, this Jewish ability to turn weakness into strength, adversity into advantage, darkness into light? It goes back to the moment in which our people received its name, Israel. It was then, as Jacob wrestled alone at night with an angel, that as dawn broke his adversary begged him to let him go. “I will not let you go until you bless me”, said Jacob. (Bereishit 32:27) That is the source of our peculiar, distinctive obstinacy. We may have fought all night. We may be tired and on the brink of exhaustion. We may find ourselves limping, as did Jacob. Yet we will not let our adversary go until we have extracted a blessing from the encounter. This turned out to be not a minor and temporary concession. It became the basis of his new name and our identity. Israel, the people who “wrestled with God and man and prevailed”, is the nation that grows stronger with each conflict and catastrophe.

I was reminded of this unusual national characteristic by an article that appeared in the British press in October 2015. Israel at the time was suffering from a wave of terrorist attacks that saw Palestinians murdering innocent civilians in streets and bus stations throughout the country. It began with these words: “Israel is an astonishing country, buzzing with energy and confidence, a magnet for talent and investment – a cauldron of innovation.” It spoke of its

world-class excellence in aerospace, clean-tech, irrigation systems, software, cyber-security, pharmaceuticals and defence systems. [2]

“All this”, the writer went on to say, “derives from brainpower, for Israel has no natural resources and is surrounded by hostile neighbours.” The country is living proof of “the power of technical education, immigration and the benefits of the right sort of military service.” Yet this cannot be all, since Jews have consistently overachieved, wherever they were and whenever they were given the chance. He goes through the various suggested explanations: the strength of Jewish families, their passion for education, a desire for self-employment, risk-taking as a way of life, and even ancient history. The Levant was home to the world’s first agricultural societies and earliest traders. Perhaps, then, the disposition to enterprise was written, thousands of years ago, into Jewish DNA. Ultimately, though, he concludes that it has to do with “culture and communities”.

A key element of that culture has to do with the Jewish response to crisis. To every adverse circumstance, those who have inherited Jacob’s sensibilities insist: “I will not let you go until you bless me.” (Bereishit 32:27) That is how Jews, encountering the Negev, found ways of making the desert bloom. Seeing a barren, neglected landscape elsewhere, they planted trees and forests. Faced with hostile armies on all their borders, they developed military technologies they then turned to peaceful use. War and terror forced them to develop medical expertise and world-leading skills in dealing with the aftermath of trauma. They found ways of turning every curse into a blessing. The historian Paul Johnson, as always, put it eloquently: Over 4,000 years the Jews proved themselves not only great survivors but extraordinarily skilful in adapting to the societies among which fate had thrust them, and in gathering whatever human comforts they had to offer. No people has been more fertile in enriching poverty or humanising wealth, or in turning misfortune to creative account.[3]

There is something profoundly spiritual as well as robustly practical about this ability to transform the bad moments of life into a spur to creativity. It is as if, deep within us were a voice saying, “You are in this situation, bad though it is, because there is a task to perform, a skill to acquire, a strength to develop, a lesson to learn, an evil to redeem, a shard of light to be rescued, a blessing to be uncovered, for I have chosen you to give testimony to humankind that out of suffering can come great blessings if you wrestle with it for long enough and with unshakeable faith.”

In an age in which people of violence are committing acts of brutality in the name of the God of compassion, the people of Israel are proving daily that this is not the way of the God of Abraham, the God of life and the sanctity of life. And whenever we who are a part of that people lose heart, and wonder when it will ever end, we should recall

the words: “The more they were oppressed, the more they increased and the more they spread.” A people of whom that can be said can be injured, but can never be defeated. God’s way is the way of life.

[1] Ex. 1:9. This is the first intimation in history of what in modern times took the form of the Russian forgery, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. In the Diaspora, Jews – powerless – were often seen as all-powerful. What this usually means, when translated, is: How is it that Jews manage to evade the pariah status we have assigned to them?

[2] Luke Johnson, ‘Animal Spirits: Israel and its tribe of risk-taking entrepreneurs,’ Sunday Times, 4 October 2015.

[3] Paul Johnson, The History of the Jews, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987, p. 58

commitment to strike out against injustice – in addition to whatever stories about Abraham he may have heard from his biological mother, Jochebed – was the example of his adoptive mother. This Egyptian princess flouted the cruel law of her father Pharaoh, risking her life, to save the Hebrew baby floating in an ark on the Nile River.

It is precisely this message of universality which the Bible expresses in the very first of Moses’s acts against injustice, when he slays the Egyptian taskmaster beating the Hebrew: “...And he [Moses] saw an Egyptian personage [ish] beating a Hebrew personage [ish] from amongst his [Moses’s] brothers. And he looked at that one [the oppressor] and at the other one [the victim], and when he realized that there was no [real] personage [ish], he slew the Egyptian and buried him in the sand” (Ex. 2:11,12).

Rav Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, famed dean of the Volozhin Yeshiva, explains that the Hebrew word “ish” is the highest category of the various Hebrew terms for “man.” And, used to refer to both the Egyptian and the Hebrew, the word certainly conveys universal application. Moses was familiar with both Egyptian and Hebrew societies and recognized both the oppressor and the oppressed as having been important personages in their respective environments and communities.

But now that they had been thrust together as oppressor and victim, when Moses looked at each of them, he realized that each had lost his elevated status of “persona”; the very act of oppression demeans and demotes both perpetrator and sufferer, robs each of his status as having been created in the image of the Divine; there was longer an “ish” amongst them. And this would seem to be irrespective of who is the Egyptian and who is the Hebrew. Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

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

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph” (Exodus 1:8).

Why is Joseph, the towering personality of the last four portions of the Book of Genesis, not considered the fourth patriarch of Israel? After all, he receives a double share of the inheritance through Manasseh and Ephraim, the two tribes who emanate from his loins – and it is he who saves his family, and thus the Jewish people, from starvation and oblivion.

Moreover, why does Moses emerge as the savior and redeemer of the Book of Exodus? What catapults this prince of Egypt to such an exalted position of Jewish leadership when he was raised in Pharaoh’s palace, sports an Egyptian name (Moses means “son” in Egyptian) and seems totally disconnected from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

Let us begin with Moses. I believe it was the great Professor Nechama Leibowitz, of blessed memory, who pointed out that Moses is the great fighter against injustice, whether it is perpetrated by Egyptian (gentile) against Hebrew (Exodus 2:11), by Hebrew against Hebrew, or by Midianite (gentile) against Midianite (gentile).

When we remember how God declares that He chose and loved Abraham because he would teach later generations to “keep God’s way by doing acts of compassionate righteousness and moral justice,” and how in this manner, “all the nations of the world will be blessed through him” (Genesis 18:18,19), we realize that by fighting injustice in all three of these spheres Moses is expressing a direct line of continuity with Abraham, the first Hebrew and the recipient of God’s covenant.

However, there is one category that is absent from Moses’s list: an injustice performed by a Jew against a gentile. Clearly, the Bible understands the necessity of acting against injustice no matter what the ethnic profile of either oppressor or victim, since the source of Moses’s

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week’s Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Yosef ben Salim.

Growing Pains

It happened in those days that Moshe grew up and went out to his brethren and saw their burdens [...] (2:11).

This week’s parsha introduces Pharaoh’s scheme and implementation of the Jewish enslavement. The Torah also discusses Moshe’s birth and development, and how he came to be the greatest prophet and leader of the Jewish people.

It is well known that Moshe grew up in Pharaoh’s house. Rashi (ad loc) explains that not only did Moshe grow into adulthood, but he grew in stature as well. As Rashi explains, “Pharaoh appointed him over his household (‘beis Pharaoh’).” Rashi, by the Aseres Hadibros (20:2), explains that the Jewish slaves were owned directly by Pharaoh and were part of ‘beis Pharaoh.’ Thus, Pharaoh took the innovative step of appointing Moshe over his fellow Jews.

This was no accident. Many tyrants and despots appoint members of the victim class over the other victims. In fact, in Egypt the “shotrim” were Jewish officers appointed over the other slaves in Egypt to violently enforce quotas (which the shotrim refused to do). Similarly, cruel kapos were the method used by the Nazis to control prisoners in the concentration camps.

Theoretically, this is brilliant. It naturally pits members of the oppressed class against one another and breeds mistrust and deception; thereby destroying the unity of the group – exactly what it is supposed to achieve. Pharaoh also added an insidious twist: By appointing Moshe over them. Pharaoh was showcasing what a Jew can aspire to if he abandons his culture and becomes fully Egyptian.

But Pharaoh underestimated Moshe. He expected Moshe to sympathize with them and, at most, perhaps even advocate for better treatment. Yet Rashi makes a remarkable comment on the words “and he saw their burdens” (2:11); “He focused his eyes and heart to be distressed over them.” Moshe didn’t merely sympathize and feel pity for them; Moshe empathized with them. Sympathy is merely seeing someone’s pain and feeling bad for him, however, empathy is a vicarious experience of what another is going through. Rashi is telling us that Moshe focused his eyes and heart to see what the slaves saw and feel what the slaves felt; he was seeing their situation from their perspective. In fact, Moshe later uses this understanding in his conversations with Hashem. This is probably one of the reasons Moshe was asked by Hashem to fill the role he did.

This is also why Moshe is sentenced to death for killing the Egyptian. On the face of it, this seems a little strange. A prince growing up in the house of a king would rarely be subject to such justice. But once Moshe kills the Egyptian because of what he did to a “lowly” Jew he undermines Pharaoh’s vision for his position in the palace – therefore he must flee for his life.

A Calling for Service

The anger of Hashem burned against Moshe and he said, “Is not your brother Aharon the Levi? I know that he will speak, behold he is coming out to meet and when he sees you he will rejoice in his heart” (4:14).

After a full week of trying to persuade Moshe to accept the position of redeemer of Bnei Yisroel, Hashem displays anger toward Moshe. This follows the last of Moshe’s objections as to why he should not be the one charged with this responsibility. Rashi (ad loc) explains that Hashem’s anger at Moshe’s final argument resulted in him losing the position of Kohen and being “demoted” to the position of Levi.

Additionally, Rashi (ad loc) explains that Moshe was concerned that Aharon would be jealous of his new leadership position. Hashem therefore reassured him that Aharon would actually be happy for him. Rashi also points out that it was for this reason that Aharon merited to become Kohen.

This seems a little hard to understand. Certainly Moshe wouldn’t accuse Aharon of being a lesser man than he, so this means that, had the roles been reversed and he had been in Aharon’s sandals, Moshe himself would have been jealous. Why would Moshe be jealous and, if in fact it was natural to be jealous of this appointment, why wasn’t Aharon himself jealous?

Interestingly enough, we do find an instance in the Torah where Moshe feels a twinge of jealousy. The Yalkut Shimoni (Devarim 31:941) points out that Moshe experienced jealousy when he saw Yehoshua, his very own student, supplant him as leader of Bnei Yisroel and receive a communication from Hashem that he himself wasn’t privy to. Moshe said, “It is better to experience one thousand deaths than to experience one instance of jealousy.”

Clearly Moshe felt jealous because he saw his student taking his place and the pain of seeing the loss of one’s own position can be overwhelming. So why didn’t Aharon feel jealous? After all, his younger brother was being given a position of leadership that rightfully belonged to him.

Aharon recognized that while it’s true that redeeming Bnei Yisroel and becoming their leader was a position of greatness, it was not an appointment. In other words, when Hashem asks you to take this role, it’s one primarily of service to Bnei Yisroel and Hashem’s plan for the world. This job isn’t about the stature that comes with the responsibility, but rather it’s about being a servant to that responsibility.

Moshe was bothered by the stature associated with the job. He spends a week explaining why he isn’t the right person for this job. When at the end of the week he still feels that Aharon would be jealous of his new position, Hashem gets angry and explains to him that Aharon understands that this is about responsibility to serve – not the associated stature. It is for this reason that Moshe loses the right to be a Kohen and this role is given to Aharon. Kohanim are “Meshorsei Hamelech – Ministers of the King.” There is no sense of stature in this leadership role; only responsibility to serve Hashem. Aharon understood that when called to the responsibility of serving Hashem you have to accept and that stature plays no role in the decision.

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*Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair -
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Parshat Shemot :: Supersized Sacrifice

“And these are the names...” (1:1)

This is a true story.

‘David’ was the owner and CEO of ‘The Supersized Kitchen,’ a company that sold commercial kitchen supplies. At great personal expense, he decided to attend a trade show in Las Vegas to boost his client base. He took

out a \$50,000 loan to buy expensive radio ads in the Las Vegas area and rented a billboard to advertise his products. A day before his trip, he went to consult with his rabbi about the logistics of spending Shabbat in Vegas. "David," said his Rabbi, "I wish you'd come to me earlier because I would have advised you not to go. But if I understand correctly, you already have tickets and a reservation at the show." "More than that, Rabbi," David stammered. "I took out a loan on my house to pay for advertising in the Las Vegas area. I put up a billboard with my business name and phone number. If I don't go, I will lose a small fortune."

"That makes things more difficult. However, I think this trip could be spiritually harmful for you." David knew exactly what the rabbi was talking about. During more difficult years, David had gone through a spiritual challenge, but he had worked through it with the help of mussar sefarim (books of ethical improvement), lots of prayers, the help of his rabbi and a large dollop of help from Heaven. But by spending time in Las Vegas, a place not known for its elevated morals, he knew he was putting himself in harm's way.

"Think it over," said the rabbi. "You're stronger than you were a few years ago and I'm not telling you what to do. Sometimes when we make a great sacrifice for holiness, we are rewarded many times over from Above."

David canceled his trip. The radio ads, however, were still running, and the large billboard was suspended over one of the major highways near the show. But with no physical presence in Las Vegas, it was a colossal waste of money.

Or so he thought. Two days passed. Here and there, a potential client called David, having seen the billboard in Las Vegas, but as soon as they heard he was not in Vegas at the show, they lost interest.

Then one morning, the phone rang. "Hello? Is this the Supersized Kitchen?" asked a polished voice. "It is," David replied reluctantly, awaiting another disappointment. "This is Susan from NBC news, and we're working on a project, highlighting small businesses across the United States. We would like to highlight your niche and speak about where the business is heading, and how our team of experts can help you grow. In addition to our financial incentives, this will give your small business exposure and free advertising throughout the country. I have researched your business online and like what I saw. Your products are unique and well-made, and your prices are very competitive."

David paused, thinking that this seemed too good to be true. "If I may ask, how did you get my number?" Susan replied, "Actually, it was just a coincidence. I was in Vegas on an assignment, and driving back to the airport, I noticed your billboard with its splashy logo. A few seconds later, I turned on the radio to hear the traffic and I heard a jingle, 'Supersized Kitchen is the only way ...' I thought, this is a really strange coincidence. Maybe it's a sign which business to choose!"

Susan profiled the Supersized Kitchen on the show, highlighting the superior quality of their products. The effect was immediate. David hired two new office employees, who were busy with new clients around the clock. Before long, his fledgling business doubled, both in size and profits.

In this week's Torah portion, we begin reading of the exile in Egypt. Egypt was the most profligate immoral place in the ancient world at that time. The Jewish People were redeemed because through supersized sacrifice they held themselves aloof from the Egyptians and resisted the overwhelming impurity of the atmosphere of Egypt.

Sometimes, one of the most difficult tests we face regarding holiness involves situations to which we must expose ourselves in our pursuit of a livelihood. But we should ask ourselves every time: Do I really need to do this, do I really need to be there? Maybe there's a different way? Maybe I could 'zoom' the meeting instead, and as effectively?

And if you have to go, say to yourself, "As I head out to work, I will be on guard and vigilant to the maximum to protect myself." Give charity, say a Psalm, and Hashem will guard your way.

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah Shemot: Why is this book different from all other books?

11 January 2023

Why is this book different from all other books?

This shabbat we'll be commencing the reading of the book of Shemot, which some people call the book of Exodus. Interestingly, the Rambam calls the book Sefer HaGeula, the Book of Redemption, for obvious reasons.

Second

But I find most fascinating the fact that the Bal Halachot Gedolot, (the BH'G), calls Shemot by the name 'Chumash Sheini', the second of the chumashim.

We know that there are 'chamisha chumshei Torah,' five chumashim – the five books of the Torah. But why doesn't the BH'G call Bereishit 'Chumash Rishon' – the first chumash? Why doesn't he call Bamidbar, 'Chumash Revi'i', the fourth of the chumashim? Why is it only Shemot which is called the second?

Incomplete

The Netziv, in his masterful work HaAmek Davar, gives a beautiful explanation. The Netziv says as follows. The BH'G wants us to know that Sefer Bereishit is incomplete without Sefer Shemot. Sefer Shemot is the continuation of Bereishit, and the reason is because Bereishit is all about the creation and the first generations on earth, while Shemot is about the prelude to the giving of the Torah, the

actual giving of it, and the housing of the Torah in the Tabernacle. The message for us therefore is that that the creation was incomplete without the existence of the Torah. So here, we are reminded yet again about the centrality of Torah in our lives. Without Torah, we are nothing. That's both at an individual level and also as far as our nation is concerned. In addition, we have a responsibility in all of our deeds and in our teachings to always reflect the values of Torah and ultimately, in this way, we will enhance our environment because we also recognise that the entire world is incomplete without Torah values.

Shabbat shalom.

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

Drasha Parshas Shemos - Simply Qualified

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

As the book of Exodus begins, it is important to ponder what catapulted Moshe (Moses) from the position of valiant citizen to national leader. The story of Moshe's youth in Egypt is hardly expounded upon in the Torah. Yes, it tells the story of his birth and his escape in the Nile River. The Torah even mentions his great vigilance in smiting an Egyptian who struck a Hebrew. But in relating those stories, it does not leave us feeling that those acts, merited Divine ordination. It tells the tale of Moshe stopping a fight between two Hebrew fellows, and how he was forced to flee from Egypt to the wilderness of Midian because of his strong stand in chastising those Jews who quarreled. All those stories show perseverance, courage, and fortitude. Yet not one of those incidents is juxtaposed with the Divine revelation that catapults Moshe into the great spiritual and prophetic leader whom we know.

Even after the event in which he saves Yisro's (Jethro) seven daughters from evil shepherds G-d is silent, there is no pronouncement of Moses' glory or appointment of a Divine role. Hashem declares Moshe's greatness in the context of a very simple serene story.

"Moses was shepherding the sheep of Jethro his father-in-law, he guided them into the wilderness, and he arrived at the mountain of G-d toward Horeb. An angel of G-d appeared to him in a blaze of fire from amidst the bush, and he saw that the bush was burning, and the bush was not consumed. Moshe looked and analyzed the sight and he questioned, "why is the bush not being burned?" (Exodus 3:1-3). It is only in that serene setting that G-d called out "Moshe, Moshe," to which Moshe replied "Here I am." The end of that story is the beginning of the Jewish nation. Why is the act of shepherding sheep the setting for such majestic and Divine revelation? What amazing incident occurred during the shepherding? Why didn't G-d appear to Moses after his courageous act of smiting the Egyptian or after he reproached two Hebrews who were fighting?

Wouldn't that setting be the ripe moment for induction into the halls of prophecy and leadership?

James Humes, a speechwriter for President Reagan, tells the story about a young recruit who was drafted into the army. During the interview, the sergeant asked him the following question, "Did you have six years of grade school education?"

"Sure thing, Sir", snapped the recruit. "I also graduated with honors from high school. I went to Yale where I received my college degree and then I did my graduate work at Columbia University, and," he added, "I received my doctorate in political science at Harvard."

The sergeant turned toward to the stenographer, smiled, and said, "Put a check in the space marked literate."

The Midrash tells us that during Moshe's tenure as a shepherd, one of the sheep ran away. He chased the sheep, he brought it back to the rest of the flock, and he carried it home. G-d looked upon him and said, "A man who cares for his sheep, will care for his people." That act catapulted Moshe to the position we know.

Acts that are bold and courageous may personify leadership, character, and commitment. People think that they that only those gallant and daring acts that will catapult them into greatness and glory. The Torah tells us that it is not so.

The Torah links Moshe's selection to Divine leadership with the simple task of shepherding. The qualifications that G-d wants are not necessarily what humans perceive. We often look for honors, accolades, achievements, and accomplishments that are almost superhuman. Hashem, on the other hand, cherishes simple shepherding. He loves care and concern for simple Jews. We may come to Him with rismis of brilliance, of courage, of valor, but He does not need that. He wants consistency, love, compassion, and, perhaps most of all, humble simplicity.

Moshe had those qualities too. It was those qualities of compassion, not the forceful qualities of attacking the Egyptian taskmaster, nor fending off evil shepherds, nor chastising combative Hebrews, that were chosen to cast Moshe into the light of leadership. We may be bold and courageous, but without compassion for the little things, without the humility to find lost sheep, we may be simply overqualified.

Drasha is sponsored this week in memory of Joseph Fertig by Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Fertig

Good Shabbos!

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Rabbi M. Kamenetzky is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

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Shmot :: Excellent Self-Doubt

Ben-Tzion Spitz

Great doubts deep wisdom. Small doubts little wisdom. - Chinese Proverb

God appears to Moses at the Burning Bush and instructs him to confront Pharaoh and get him to allow the enslaved Jewish people to travel to the desert to worship God. Moses is reluctant and declines the request, citing his unsuitability. After some back-and-forth, God is insistent but tells Moses that his brother Aaron will assist.

Moses and Aaron meet with Pharaoh, however, that first meeting is counterproductive. Not only does Pharaoh not permit his Jewish slaves the respite that is asked for, but he makes their servitude even more grueling. Moses, despondent, complains to God and says, “not only have You not helped, You’ve made matters worse!”

The Bat Ayin on Exodus 5:22 questions how Moses, the father of all prophets, could address God this way. How could Moses have the gall to accuse God of anything, let alone of making anything worse? He answers that if one reads the context of Moses’ seeming accusation, Moses states that “ever since I came to Pharaoh,” things have gotten worse. In essence, Moses is saying that it’s his fault. He’s saying that God couldn’t affect the miraculous liberation of the Jews because Moses was a faulty and unworthy messenger. Moses was filled with self-doubt.

The Bat Ayin explains that it was exactly Moses’ self-doubt that eventually made him an ideal messenger for God. God was not looking for a brash, confident, self-assured intermediary. He was looking for a quiet, humble, bashful messenger. He specifically wanted someone who didn’t think they were worthy. Moses’ outstanding self-doubt is what made him the ideal candidate to speak for God.

Moses thought of himself as lowly and unworthy, and as a result, God bestowed the spirit of prophecy and knowledge of God upon Moses as with no other mortal before or after. May we use our self-doubts as foundations of humility to ascend to greater knowledge of God.

Dedication -

To the 146 new species of animals and plants that were added to our planet in 2022.

Shabbat Shalom

Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.

suffering. Pharaoh, the Egyptian king, worries about the growth of the Jewish nation in Egypt and decides to enslave them. He forces the Hebrews, as the Jews were called then, to build the cities of Pithom and Raamses. But the Hebrews continue to multiply and Pharaoh decides on a very cruel solution. He issues the command to throw into the Nile all male babies born to Hebrew women.

One of the babies at risk of murder was Moses, the son of Yocheved and Amram. The fate of Moses, who would grow up to become the leader who took the nation out of Egypt, was supposed to be like that of all other male Hebrews born at that time. His mother, Yocheved, hid him for three months. But when she could no longer do so, in despair, she placed him in a tiny basket and put it among the reeds on the edge of the Nile hoping that whoever finds the baby won’t realize he was a Hebrew baby and his life would be saved.

And who was it who found the baby? No less than Pharaoh’s daughter. The Egyptian princess had gone down to the river with her maidservants and suddenly came upon the little basket floating in the water. She adopted the baby and raised him, despite understanding that the baby was a Hebrew baby who should legally have been killed. And thus, Moses – who was to be the redeemer of the Jewish nation – was raised in the palace of the Egyptian king.

But we would like to focus on an innocent verse that describes those first moments when Pharaoh’s daughter saw the basket holding three-month-old Moses:

Pharaoh’s daughter went down to bathe, to the Nile, and her maidens were walking along the Nile, and she saw the basket in the midst of the marsh, and she sent her maid servant ('amata'), and she took it. (Exodus 2, 5)

The phrase “she sent her maid servant ('amata')” is interpreted by Chazal in two ways.

Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Nehemya disagree (about the definition of the word amata). One says it means her arm and one says it means her maid servant. (Babylonian Talmud, Sota 12)

Later, it is explained that according to the opinion that it was her arm, a miracle occurred and her arm extended until it reached the basket and she was able to pull it toward her. Let us look at the root of this disagreement. One opinion states that pulling Moses’ basket in from the Nile was done miraculously, while the other opinion states it was done naturally by sending one of the maidservants. In reality, both come to convey important messages and they are both equally correct.

On the one hand, a person must act even when he feels alone, without help from G-d. When a person is sure his choice is moral and correct, he must do everything to implement that choice and do the right thing. Therefore, we must present Pharaoh’s daughter as someone who acted naturally. She sent her maid servant to pull in the basket.

On the other hand, a person can be sure that when he acts properly, he will merit “siyata deshmaya” – help from

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

The Most Courageous Woman in Pharaoh’s Palace

Parashat Shemot 5783

Parashat Shemot, the first portion in the book of Exodus, turns from the story of our patriarchs and their families to the story of the nation. This story begins with hardship and

Heaven. We may not get a miracle like Pharaoh's daughter whose arm extended to reach the basket. But help from Heaven is not necessarily miracles that deviate from the laws of nature. We must believe that when we do not despair, when we do our utmost to reach the right goals, we will merit help we didn't expect.

Pharaoh's daughter is one of the courageous women we meet in Parashat Shemot, alongside the Hebrew midwives Shifra and Pu'a, Yocheved and Miriam. The Torah presents her as a role model whose compassion led her to raising Moses in opposition to her father's cruel decrees. Pharaoh's daughter glows in the sky of heroes alongside thousands of women and men who courageously chose to follow their conscience and stand up to wicked laws. There have been such people throughout history, many also during the years of the Second World War in Europe. We call them "The Righteous Among the Nations" and the Jewish nation is forever grateful to them and learns from their altruistic acts.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

Rav Kook Torah

Shemot: Moses' Mistake

Rabbi Chanan Morrison

Appearing in a burning bush, God charged Moses with the task of leading the Jewish people out of Egypt. Moses, however, had doubts about the feasibility of the mission:

"They will not believe me and they will not listen to me, because they will say, 'God did not appear to you.'" (Ex. 4:1)

In fact, Moses was wrong. The Hebrew slaves did believe him. Why did Moses doubt God's plan? How could the "master of all prophets" so gravely misjudge his own people?

Another curiosity is the nature of the miraculous signs God provided Moses to prove his authenticity - a staff that transforms into a snake, a hand that becomes leprous, and fresh water that turns into blood. None of these are particularly auspicious omens!

Hidden Treasure of the Soul

What is faith? The wonderful trait of emunah (faith), in its purest form, is a hidden quality of the soul. It is unlike any other wisdom or intellectual awareness. It is an integral part of the inner soul, forming the very basis for life, its light and splendor.

However, this source of happiness and eternal life is not always discernible to the outside world. We are not even fully aware of the magnitude of our own resources of faith. Certainly, its true dimensions are concealed from others.

The Israelites in Egypt had sunk to the lowest levels of corruption and idolatry. Outwardly, they were indistinguishable from their Egyptian masters. The two nations were so similar that the Torah describes the Exodus from Egypt as "taking a nation from the midst of a nation"

(Deut. 4:34). It was like removing a fetus encapsulated in its mother's womb.

In such a state of affairs, even the penetrating eye of Moses failed to detect the people's inner reserve of faith. Too many masks and covers concealed the holy light of their inner faith. This hidden treasure of the Jewish people, their eternal heritage, was only revealed to God. The Sages taught in Shabbat 97a,

"God knew that Israel would believe. He told Moses, 'They are believers, the children of believers. But you will lack faith in the future!' As it says (Num. 20:12) [regarding the incident at Mei Merivah, the Waters of Dispute], 'You did not believe in Me, to sanctify Me in the presence of the Israelites.'"

Unquestionably, the inner fire of faith always burns in the soul. It is an intrinsic aspect of the Jewish soul, regardless of choices made and paths taken. If we judge only according to external actions, however, there may not be any outward expression of this inner spark. This was God's message to Moses: if you measure faith only by what occurs in the outer realm of deed, then even the greatest and most perfected individuals - even spiritual giants like Moses - can stumble, and fail to act upon their inner faith.

The Message of the Signs

The Sages explained that the various signs were a punishment for being unjustly suspicious of the people. The sign of leprosy was particularly appropriate for the message that God wanted to impart to Moses. Leprosy afflicts the skin, the outer layer of the body. This sign hinted to Moses: there may occur imperfections on the exterior, and the external expression may not match the inner holiness, but the holy light of divine faith is always safeguarded within the inner soul.

One cannot claim that the Jewish people will not believe the word of God, even when their lives appear dark and tarnished. This discoloration is only superficial, as it is written, "Do not look upon me [disdainfully] because I am black; for [it is only] the sun that has darkened me" (Song of Songs 1:6).

Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 103-105. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, pp. 241-242.

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Shemos

פרק שמונה תשפ"ג

הבה נתחכמה לו פן ירבה

Come, let us outsmart it lest it become numerous. (1:10)

Pharaoh no longer remembered how Yosef had brilliantly led the nation through a major economic crisis. He looked around and saw that the immigrant family of seventy Jews that had originally come from Canaan had now become a nation of thousands, growing exponentially.

They had become too numerous and too strong. Something had to be done about them. He foolishly thought that he could contend with Hashem and control the destiny of *Klal Yisrael*. He was clearly wrong.

When our nation received the Torah at *Har Sinai*, the Torah records the event. *Va'yehi kol ha'shofar holeich v'chazeik me'od*, “The sound of the *shofar* grew continually much stronger” (*Shemos* 19:19). In his commentary, *Harchein Davar*, the *Netziv*, zl, derives a powerful and critical lesson which serves as a beacon for understanding the inordinate power of *Torah She'Ba'al Peh*, the Oral Law/*Mishnah* and *Talmud*. He writes: “The sound of the *shofar* grew continually much stronger. The sound of the *shofar* at Sinai was different than the ordinary sound of the *shofar*, which becomes weaker as the sound continues. (It starts off strong and diminishes.) The sound of the *shofar* (at Sinai) was strong initially, and its sound became stronger as it continued. This was to teach *Am Yisrael* that the sound of *Torah She'Ba'al Peh* will become stronger and more pronounced with time. This sound emerged from the dark, awesome smoke (that encompassed the mountain). This alludes (a portent for the future) to the idea that smoke is a metaphor for darkness, adversity, troubles, in which a person does not see his way out. He has no idea what will happen. So, too, will the sound (commensurately) become stronger (as occurred during the period of *Bayis Rishon*, the First *Bais Hamikdash*). It was only when Yoshiyahu *Hamelech* saw the bitter *galus*, exile, did he turn to the *Leviim*, the tribe most identified with Torah study, to raise the banner of *Torah She'Ba'al Peh*. This pattern has continued throughout our exile, whereby the greater the adversity that we encounter, the greater the response of *Torah She'Ba'al Peh*.”

Horav Chizkiyahu Mishkovsky, Shlita, observes that the farther (in time) that we move away from *Har Sinai*, the stronger and more proficient the sound of the *shofar/Torah* study. We have only to look around at the multitude of *sefarim*, volumes of analytical commentary on the *Talmud* and *halachah*, that have emerged in the last few decades. The *Netziv* teaches us, *V'kaasher yaanu oso, kein yirbeh v'kein yifrotz*; “But as much as they would afflict it, so it would increase and so it would spread out” (*Ibid*. 1:12). The more that is piled on us, the greater the challenge and adversity, the greater is our response with Torah.

The *Talmud Bavli*, Babylonian *Talmud*, which is the staple upon which *halachah* is based, was redacted when the Romans issued vicious decrees against us. The *Talmud Yerushalmi*, on the other hand, was not compiled during a period of misfortune. Thus, it is not studied as much.

The author of the *Shaagas Aryeh*, *Horav Aryeh Leib Gunzberg*, zl, also authored two other volumes of commentary: *Turei Even* and *Gevuros Arye*. Noticeably, the second two volumes did not achieve as much reader

attention as his magnum opus, *Shaagas Aryeh*, which is a staple in the *yeshivah* world. *Horav Chaim Brisker*, zl, attributed this phenomenon to the fact that the author wrote the *Shaagas Aryeh* while he was suffering from abject poverty, when he could not even afford paper, so that he wrote on the walls of his decrepit house. He wrote the other two *sefarim* when he was the distinguished *Rav* of Metz, with a decent salary and a home which was suited for an individual of such prominence. The more arduous the adversity, the more robust the response.

**כִּי לَا נָשָׁמִים כְּמַצְרִירֹת הָעֲבָרִות ... בְּטֻרֶם תִּבְאֹ אֲלֵיכֶן הַמִּילְתָּה וַיָּלֹדוּ
Because the Hebrew women are unlike the Egyptian women ... before the midwife comes to them, they have given birth. (1:19)**

Pharaoh had instructed Shifrah and Puah, the Jewish midwives, to murder the male infants. They, of course, did not listen to the evil despot, claiming that by the time they arrived at the homes of the Jewish women, the children had been born. *Horav Shabsi Frankel*, zl, quotes an original thought from his father-in-law, *Horav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer*, zl, which presents us with a deeper meaning to the dialogue that ensued between Pharaoh and the *me'yaldos*, midwives.

Understandably, these holy women were not prepared to commit the unthinkable. Their task was to bring on life, not to shorten it. They had a logical response to Pharaoh’s accusation. He cites the *Echad Mi Yodea*, “Who Knows One?” a song which is recited at the end of the *Seder*. This song culminates (with *Chad Gadya*, which follows it) the *Seder* ritual. After spending hours intensely transmitting the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, our exodus from Egypt, we involve ourselves in a most important examination: Why were we, the Jewish people, privileged to experience the liberation from Egypt? Furthermore, will we once again be worthy of experiencing redemption at the End of Days? The song intimates our singularity, our distinctiveness, for the past and for the future.

It begins, “Who Knows One?” Of course, Hashem is our answer. Our belief in the Almighty elevates us above the rest of the world. This litany continues with each number representing our uniqueness in ancestry, commitment to Torah study and *mitzvos*. One entry, however, begs elucidation: *Tishah mi yodea*, “Who knows nine?” *Tishah yarchei leidah*, “Nine months of birth” (*leidah* means birth, although, in this context, it is translated as pregnancy). The question is obvious: What is so special about our people that we specify that we have nine months of pregnancy? This is a period of time that applies to all women across the board. Furthermore, why does the *paytan*, ritual poet, author of the *Haggadah*, use the word *leidah*, which means birth, as opposed to *ibur*, which means pregnancy?

The *Rav* cites *Ramban* (*Shemos* 1:10) who explains that while Pharaoh personally had no problem with wholesale genocide of the male infants, he knew that it

would engender a negative reaction from his populace. They would not buy into it. They were, after all, a cultured nation who would never resort to such violence and bigotry. He commenced his plan by conscripting the “immigrants” as workers. This was part of the acceptance policy levied against foreigners to a country. Obviously, in short time, the Jews discovered that Pharaoh was acting as a despot whose true intentions were to eliminate the Jewish people.

Pharaoh presented the midwives with a cunning rationale (according to *Rav Yosef Nechemiah*). He said, “The Jews do not really want more children. Why would they choose to bring them into a life of servitude? The women became pregnant as a result of passion. If a woman’s fetus were to be stillborn, she would not be distressed. In other words, Pharaoh alluded to the idea that these were unwanted pregnancies. They would actually be performing a service to the parents by “limiting” their families. (Pharaoh’s diabolical intention has, unfortunately, found purchase in today’s irreverent society.)

The midwives replied with a lesson concerning Jewish marriage and family life. In the Jewish tradition, marriage is a means to fulfill Hashem’s command that we propagate in order to establish the foundation for future generations. [This concept applies to any form of propagation, including programs such as spiritual outreach. By helping a Jew return to the fold, we participate in his spiritual rebirth.] Jewish women are unlike Egyptian women, whose desire is purely physical and selfishly motivated. The Jewish woman marries for a purpose, to give, to produce, to participate in structuring the Jewish nation. She lives for her children. The love Jewish women have for their children begins at conception, because they sense the seeds of the future *Klal Yisrael* implanted within them. They pine for the moment when they can devote themselves wholly to their children. Thus, every child is of unique significance, even if it means bringing him/her into a life of servitude. They are carrying out Hashem’s Will. That is all that matters.

This concept is alluded to with the words, *tishah yarchei leidah*. For the Jewish people, the nine months of pregnancy are nine months of birth. The love they have for their child begins at conception, as if the baby had already been born.

וימת מלך מצרים ויאנהו בני ישראל מן העבודה ויזעקו
It happened that the king of Egypt died, and *Bnei Yisrael* groaned because of the work, and they cried out.
(2:23)

What about the Egyptian king’s death provoked *Bnei Yisrael*’s pain and initiated their crying out? *Horav Yitzchak, zl, m’Volozhin* explains that as long as Pharaoh was alive, the Jews attributed all of their *tzaros*, troubles, to his wicked leadership. They hoped that when he would hopefully leave this world, the evil decrees would end. When he died, however, and the evil continued unabated,

they realized that they could only turn to Hashem. The nature of man is to attribute everything that occurs in his life to natural causes and place their hopes on its positive conclusion. The believing Jew, however, places his trust in Hashem and seeks to find His guiding hand. One should live his life in such a manner that he understands that everything comes from Hashem, thus, He is the One to whom we should turn.

Horav Asher Weiss, Shlita, relates that a woman suffering from extreme poverty came before the *Divrei Chaim (Sanzer Rav, zl)* weeping bitterly. She pleaded with the holy *Rebbe* to intercede on behalf of her gravely ill son. The *Divrei Chaim* told her, “If you give me one thousand *reinis* (the currency of the day), I guarantee you that your son will merit a *refuah sheleimah*, complete recovery.”

The woman was incredulous and expressed her displeasure: “How can I pay so much money? I am lucky to have some coins to live and support my family. The sum the *Rebbe* is demanding from me is not within my reach. Please forgo the exorbitant sum. I have nothing.” The *Rebbe* refused to reconsider, “I must have the complete sum, or I cannot promise you that your son will survive.”

When the woman heard this final response and saw that the *Rebbe* was immovable, she raised her hands in desperation and exclaimed, “If the *Rebbe* will not help me, then I have no recourse but to turn to Hashem.” The *Rebbe* countered, “This is what I wanted to hear. I cannot help you. Only Hashem has the power to heal your son. Unless you acknowledge this verity, you are assured of nothing. Now that you have accepted Hashem as the only resort, I will give you my blessing for a *refuah sheleimah*.”

All too often, we exhaust all avenues of salvation, while ignoring the only One who has the means for effecting a positive response to our needs.

ויאמר ד' ראה רأיתי את עני עמי אשר במצרים
Hashem said, “I have, indeed, seen the affliction of My people that is in Egypt.” (3:7)

Chazal (Midrash Rabbah Shemos 3:2) note the double usage of the word *ra’oh*, see (*ra’oh ra’isi*). They explain that Hashem told Moshe *Rabbeinu*, “Moshe, you see a *re’iyah achas*, one sight, but I see two *reiyos*, two sights. You see the nation coming to *Har Sinai* and receiving the Torah. I, too, see them coming to *Sinai* and receiving My Torah. (This is the meaning of the first *ra’oh*.) However, I also see the sight of the incident of the *eigel*, Golden Calf.” Hashem’s message to Moshe is intriguing and surely laden with profound meaning. Simply, Hashem intimated to Moshe that he (like all human beings) does not see the whole picture. The rest of the story, which is played out over time, might not have the same happy ending as we might expect based upon the beginning of the story. Alternatively, Hashem told Moshe, “You look at the positive (accepting the Torah), which is critical for a leader to see. However, I must take in the after effects of the positive. Will it remain this way, or will their

later actions indicate that the “positive” was not as laudatory as it appeared?

Horav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, zl, offers a novel understanding of Hashem’s words. Moshe was reluctant to accept the reign of leadership over the future nation of *Klal Yisrael*. His response to Hashem was, *Shelach na b’yad tishlach*; “Send whomever You will send” (*Shemos* 4:13), which meant, “Send my brother, Aharon (*HaKohen*). He already functions as Your prophet; he has the respect of the people, and they will accept and listen to him.” Moshe was contending that he was clearly not Hashem’s first choice, since other individuals were better suited for the leadership role. Furthermore, since he was not destined to enter *Eretz Yisrael*, the leader who would accompany them out of Egypt should be the same one that would escort them into the Promised Land.

“The words, *shelach na b’yad tishlach*, ‘Send whomever you will send,’” explains the Rav, “are a reference to Eliyahu *HaNavi*, regarding whom it is written, *Hinei anochi sholeiach lachem es Eliyahu HaNavi lifnei bo yom Hashem ha’gadol v’ha’norah*; ‘Behold, I send you Eliyahu *HaNavi* before the coming of the great and awesome day’ (*Malachi* 3:23).” Eliyahu will ultimately be sent to lead the people during the Final Redemption. Why should he not commence the Redemption by leading *Klal Yisrael* out of Egypt?

Hashem replied that Eliyahu is a *kanai*, zealot, which he demonstrated against the *nevievei ha’baal*, false prophets of the *baal* idol. *Klal Yisrael* are going to sin egregiously with their creation of a molten idol. It is critical that the individual who is their leader be one who will stand up and plead and even fight for Divine forgiveness for them. A *kanai* will not be as tolerant.

ועתה הנה צעקת בני ישראל באה אלֵי

And now, behold! The outcry of *Bnei Yisrael* has come to Me. (3:9)

There is *tefillah*, prayer, and there is *tze’akah*, crying out, yelling or effusive prayer laden with emotion and expression. *Tze’akah* is the prayer one offers when he is literally up against the wall with nowhere to go. He sees no way out, no form of salvation. Imagine one is walking in a forest when he suddenly chances upon a bear. He screams. Will the scream make a difference? Bears are really not moved by the screams of a human being. Nonetheless, when one realizes that this is it, he has no way out – he screams. *Klal Yisrael* was in Egypt suffering from every form of persecution the diabolical Egyptians could devise. The Jews were certainly not on an appropriate spiritual plane, having sunken to the forty-ninth level of *tumah*, ritual defilement. They thought that assimilation would garner further acceptance for them within Egyptian society. They were wrong. As far as the morally bankrupt Egyptians were concerned, they were still Jews. They cried; they screamed. They had come to the end of the road.

Chazal (Bava Metzia 85a) relate that Rebbe, Rabbi Yehudah *HaNasi*, suffered terribly during the last years of his life. He had everything: money, glory, Torah erudition and achievement, and he was in debilitating pain. The ironic part was that this was Heavenly decreed due to an incident that had occurred. A calf being brought to the slaughter broke away and attempted to find refuge with Rebbe. The venerable redactor of the Mishnah, who made *Torah She’Baal Peh* accessible to us, replied, *Leich, ki l’kach notzarta*, “Go, because this is for what you were created.” Since he showed no compassion for the calf, he was stricken with pain for the rest of his life.

Horav Nossen Wachtfogel, zl, asks: What did Rebbe do wrong? He responded with the truth. The calf was created to serve as food for human consumption. He explains that if someone relies on you, if someone comes to you and pleads for help, you may not just send him away to his death. You must find some way to help him. So, too, does Hashem respond to us when we are *tzoeik*, cry out with extraordinary emotion. “Hashem, we can turn to no one but to You! Please help us! Without You, we are gone!” Surely, if we express ourselves with genuine sincerity, He will listen.

Horav Yechiel Meir Tzuker, Shlita, relates a powerful incident that occurred in Yeshivas Knesses Chizkiyah in K’far Chassidim. It was right before *Tekias Shofar*. The *Mashgiach* of the *Yeshivah*, the saintly Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, was ascending to the lectern to address the *yeshivah*, to arouse and inspire them before the *tekios*. Suddenly, out of the blue, *Rebbetzin Renah Mishkovsky* came running in to the *bais hamedrash*; with a tear-stricken face, she ran over to the *Aron Kodesh*. Horav Dovid and Renah Mishkovsky lived in the dormitory with their very young son, Itzele (named for his grandfather, Horav Itzele Peterberger, zl). Itzele was very ill, and the doctors, who despaired for his life, had sadly sent him home to leave this world in his own bed.

Rebbetzin Renah saw that the end was near. She galvanized what little strength she had and opened the doors of the *Aron HaKodesh*. In front of the *Mashgiach* and the entire *yeshivah*, she cried out with bitter tears, pleading with Hashem to grant her young son a reprieve. She finished weeping, closed the doors, and respectfully backed away from the *Aron HaKodesh*.

The *Mashgiach*’s *shmuess*, ethical discourse, was no longer necessary. The *yeshivah* had its most powerful inspiration. He banged on the lectern and called out: *Tekios!* The cries of a Jewish mother were all the inspiration they needed.

Va’ani Tefillah

יענך ד’ ביום צרה ישגבך שם אלקי יעקב – Yaancha Hashem b’yon tzarah, yisagevcha shem Eloki Yaakov. May Hashem answer you on the day of distress; may the name of Yaakov’s G-d make you impregnable.

On the day of distress? The *Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 2:17)* teaches, “Hashem answers some prayer after forty days (of prayer). He answers some prayer after twenty days. He answers other prayer after one day. He answers yet other prayer after twelve hours.” In any event, to ask/demand that the response be on the day of distress skips over the various levels of prayer. Furthermore, it seems that the response we ask for transcends even prayer.

The *Maggid, zl m'Dubno* explains that personal prayer requires personal merit; thus, it can take some time to effect a positive response. In this prayer, we supplicate Hashem in the merit of Yaakov *Avinu*. He erected a *Mizbayach*, altar, to the G-d “that answers me on my day of distress (*Bereishis 35:3*).” Thus, Hashem answers immediately on the *yom tzarah*, because we are relying on the *tefillos* of our Patriarch, Yaakov, whose *tefillos* preceded ours. *Yaancha Hashem b'yom tzarah*. Why? Because *yisagevcha Shem Eloki Yaakov*. He responds due to Yaakov’s merit.

לע' נ האשה החשובה רבקה טובא דבורה בת ל חיים יוסף מאיר ע' נפ
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The Birth of Greatness

The Psychological Burning Bush

Rabbi YY Jacobson

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Moses’ Story

Unlike his brethren suffering in slavery, Moses had been raised in the palace of the Pharaoh, and by the king’s own daughter, Batya. A favorite of the king, as a child, he was not spared luxury. Moses could have easily chosen to isolate himself in the aristocratic life of a prince, oblivious to the hardship and suffering of the Hebrews, targeted for abuse and annihilation. But Moses did not.

Moses leaves the palace, choosing to spend his time comforting and bringing relief to the Jewish slaves. Quickly, he finds himself unable to stand idly in the face of injustice. To protect an innocent man being beaten senselessly by his Egyptian taskmaster, Moses kills the tormenting master, and then, to escape capital punishment, flees to the quiet land of Midyan. There, he meets his wife, Tziporah, the daughter of one of the wealthiest and most influential men in town, Jethro, and Moses settles down into the favorite biblical occupation, shepherding.

It seems that life has worked out for Moses. The horrors of Egypt are a thing of the past. True, Egypt is a place of unspeakable crimes against humanity, but what can Moses, or for that matter what can anyone, do about that? Moses’

life in Midyan, hundreds of miles away from Egypt, is now secure, domesticated, and peaceful. He builds a family and grows old.

Moses is now eighty years of age. By all calculations, a good time to retire.

But then everything changes. And it has something to do with a burning bush.

A Burning Bush

One day, Moses is shepherding his father-in-law’s sheep, when suddenly, he witnesses a bush, “burning with a heart of fire,” yet the bush is not being consumed, it is not being transformed to ash. Moses says, “Let me turn aside, and see this great vision! Why is the bush not being consumed?”

The Torah describes the following scene:[1]

“G-d saw that Moses turned to see, so He called out to him from amidst the bush. ‘Moses! Moses!’ And he said: Here I am.”

G-d tells Moses that “I have heard the pain and screams of the children of Israel in Egypt, and I have decided to save them.” Now it is you, Moses, who I will send to Pharaoh, and you will take my nation out of Egypt. Moses becomes the greatest leader of all times, liberating a people from oppression and giving the world the Torah, paving a road in the jungle of history.

A Turn of the Head

The Rabbis in the Midrash, always sensitive to nuance, focus our attention on the enigmatic words: “G-d saw that Moses turned to see, so He called out to him from amidst the bush.” Clearly, G-d called out to Moses only because Moses turned to see the sight of the burning bush. But what exactly did Moses do? What does it mean that he “turned to see?”

On this there is a Midrashic argument:[2] Rabbi Yochanan says that Moses walked five steps[3] approaching the burning bush. Reish Lakish says that Moses did not take any steps at all; he simply turned his head to gaze at the bush, and when G-d saw that he turned his head in that direction, he called out to him.

What is the motif behind this strange argument?

The Light Bulb Moment

All biblical tales are not merely historical tales of the past, but contemporary lessons for our own lives. The story of Moses, the most important biblical figure, is no different.[4] It is a timeless blueprint for our own inner journey.

Just like Moses, whose life at this point was slow and tranquil, far away from Pharaoh and the enslaved Israelites, and then suddenly is confronted with his burning bush and a new mission to change the destiny of mankind, we too often find ourselves far away from our destiny. We are living in our own orbit, “shepherding our own flock,” minding our own business, in our inner psychological wilderness.

But then, suddenly, we experience a “burning bush,” or a “light bulb moment.” A fire is ignited in our hearts, a light

bulb goes off in our minds. Our G-d within speaks to us about a larger mission in life.

Mark Twain said, "The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why." It is the day when you suddenly see your full potential and hence your full responsibility to both yourself and those around you. It is a moment of clarity when you know exactly what you are capable of, and what you were created for. It is when you shoulder full responsibility for your destiny.

But how can I know that the voice calling me is real? How do I know that it is not a fantasy created by an imagined ego, a childish dream, divorced from reality? How do I know that this is not the hallucination of a lunatic, or trauma protecting itself, but my personal call to greatness? Maybe I need to go to a psychiatrist or a therapist instead of returning to Egypt and confronting my Pharaoh.

The answer is when the fire burns and burns, yet never consumes your bush. The light bulb never dims. The voice inside me never falls silent. Then I know that this is not a fantasy, but a mission. My inner fire and secret passion, my 'heart of fire,' can never be extinguished, can never be placated by any alternatives. I can run, but I cannot hide, because the fire will continue to burn inside me.

Running From Your Burning Bush

And yet, many of us do not turn to see as the bush burns with a never-ending flame. We don't want to get disturbed. We have appointments to catch, emails to answer, bills to pay, goals to complete. Who has time and energy for a bush which refuses to stop burning?

We are tempted to look away, run away, to pretend we never saw what we saw. We don't like entertaining ideas that might severely shake up the status quo.

The greatness of Moses was that he turned to see the bush. According to one sage, Rabbi Yochanan, he actually walked five steps toward the flames—corresponding to the five layers of human consciousness: Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chayah, Yechidah—the biological, emotional, intellectual, transcendental, and undefined quintessence ("quint" in Greek means five[5]) of the soul, beyond form or description. According to Rabbi Yochanan, Moses approached the burning bush with every fiber of his being, with every aspect of his identity.[6]

But Reish Lakish argues. Moses did not even take a single step. There is no need to even take one step toward the bush. All G-d wants is for you to turn your head and notice the bush ablaze. Just be attentive enough in life that when the light bulb moment occurs, you will at least notice it; you will not repress it with a glass of alcohol, a TV show or a rib steak.

That is for some the most difficult and therefore most rewarding step: to turn their heads and see the moment.[7] And when you do turn your head, when you do tune in to the moment, you will be able to hear the call. Your inner Divine consciousness, your inner soul, will summon you:

Moses! Moses! Declare "Hinani!" I am here. And listen, with your soul's ear, to your mission, the mission of your life.

Three Excuses

But Moses is not easy to convince. He begins arguing with G-d[8]: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh? Who am I that I should take the Jews out of Egypt?" And when G-d does not desist, Moses tries a different approach: "But the people, they won't believe me; they will ask me 'who is this G-d in whose name you speak!'" But G-d insists. Moses then speaks of the fact that he is not a man of words; his communication skills are compromised. Finally, Moses begs, "Please G-d, send in the hand of the right person." G-d gets upset at Moses and promises him that He will be with him throughout the mission. Only then does Moses finally accept his calling. Once he accepted it, he never looks back again. The march toward redemption begins.

This is true in our lives too. There are three major handicaps that prevent people from finding themselves and living their lives to the fullest; there are three rationalizations for why we shirk our greatest responsibilities; three forms of paralysis.

Moses first says "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh? Who am I that I should redeem the Jews?" In our vocabulary this is the response of insecurity. We are afraid, we feel inadequate to meet the challenges of life. We blame ourselves or our mothers: I am helpless, I am incompetent, I am a victim, I stutter, I can't communicate, nobody likes me, I am a small guy, a nobody. But G-d does not accept: To shy from responsibility due to feelings of inadequacy is not an act of humility, but one of cowardice, because it excuses inaction, avoids accountability, and most importantly it allows you to remain mediocre and for a people to remain enslaved. How can you allow your mediocrity to allow suffering of innocent people?

Another approach is not to blame ourselves, but to blame everyone else. In the words of Moses, "But the people won't believe me! They will say who is this G-d in whose name you speak; what will I respond to them?" We often claim that we are ready, but what can we do, the world is not ready for us! We blame our spouses, our in-laws, our family, our community, the media, the government, the masses—for being unresponsive. We blame our families for being unappreciative and our communities for not respecting us. We blame everyone but ourselves.

Finally, there is a third excuse: Perfectionism. If I can't be perfect, then I don't want to be anything at all. This is encapsulated by Moses' last argument: "G-d! Send in the hand of the right person." Moses, says the Midrash,[9] was referring to Moshiach, the one intended to redeem us conclusively, permanently, and for all of eternity. Here Moses is saying, "I know that I am capable of fulfilling this mission to the fullest, and I know that the people will be responsive and will heed my call, but if my redemption is

to be temporary, then I don't want to bother with it at all! It is either all or nothing!"

But G-d, once again, disagrees. Perfectionism, when misused, is not a strength, but a weakness. It is the enemy of progress.

Your Struggles

How do I know where my unique mission lies?

The answer, again, is in the thorn bush. The call to Moses did not come from any bush; it came from a thorn bush. Thorns represent pain, where I was pricked, where I was hurt, where I have been left scarred. Many times it is specifically that area where I have been hurt deeply but have persevered, where I struggle the most, where the inner battle rages most intense, that can become my unique strength and contribution. My 'heart of fire' rages within and grows out of my own inner thorn bushes.

You, and only you, are equipped with your unique mission to open hearts, to move people to action, to keep people from losing hope, to help people forgive themselves and others, to help people laugh at their humanity, to save a soul, kindle a heart, to inspire a nation, to touch a community, to spread goodness and kindness, to share the light of Torah and Mitzvos with people around you, to reveal the energy of redemption in your part of the world.

Can we see the burning bush? Will we turn around? That is the question I must answer in my life; and you must answer in yours.[10]

[1] Exodus 3:4.

[2] Midrash Rabah Shemos 2:6.

[3] In Midrash Tanchuma here the version is "three steps," not five steps. The midrashic commentators discuss this discrepancy, suggesting various explanations. Cf. footnote #6.

[4] The Chassidic masters teach that there is a spark of Moses in each of us (Tanya chapter 42.) Hence, all of Moses' experiences apply on some level to us.

[5] Quintessence means the fifth essence. The ancient Greeks taught that there were four elements, or forms, in which matter could exist: fire, air, water, and earth. Then there was the fifth element known as the fifth essence (quintessence) ether, more subtle and pure than fire. Now the word stands for the essential principle or the most subtle extract, the pure, undiluted essence of an existence that can be obtained. These five dimensions are discussed in many works of Midrash and Kabbalah.

[6] This also explains why according to one version in Midrash, Moses took three steps, since in many sources, the five levels of the souls are generally divided into the three levels of "naran," Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah.

[7] This is similar to the idea the Lubavitcher Rebbe once expressed about prayer. Prayer is a ladder of many rungs. There are many different levels and layers we explore during prayer. But the foundation of all of them is "shtelen zeich davenen," the person tearing himself away from

everything and tuning-in to the mental state of communicating with the Divine. That in a way is deeper than all of the high levels following during the actual prayer (Likkutei Sichos vol. 2 Parshas Matos Massei.) [8] Exodus 3:11.

[9] Midrash Lekach Tov. Pirkei Derabi Eliezer ch. 40.

[10] My thanks to Rabbi Avraham David Shlomo (Cape Town, South Africa) for his help in preparing this essay.

Ohr Somayach Insights into Halacha

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Understanding Shnayim Mikra V'Echad Targum

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

There is a well known Gemara in Brachos[1] that states "A person should always complete his [study of the] parasha with the congregation[2] - [by studying] shnayim mikra v'echad targum. Anyone who does this will have extended days and years." Learning the text of the weekly parasha twice along with the targum once (keep reading for explanation) is a segulah for long life.[3]

What many do not know is that this statement of Chazal is actually codified in halacha.[4]

The Baal HaTurim[5] famously comments that this halacha can be gleaned from the first verse in Parashas Shemos: The parasha begins "V'aileh shemos Bnei Yisrael" - "And these are the names of Bnei Yisrael". The Baal HaTurim remarks that this passage stands for (roshei teivos) - "V'adam asher lomed haseder shnayim mikra v'echad targum b'kol naim yashir, yichyeh shanim rabos aruchim l'olam" or "And the person who learns (or sings) the weekly parasha shnayim mikra v'echad targum in a sweet straight voice, will live many long years (have an extremely long life).

Translating 'Targum'

Now that we have seen that such a great reward[6] awaits those who strictly adhere this, there is only one thing left to ascertain: What precisely is the Mitzvah? Obviously, it means to recite the weekly Torah portion twice, plus targum once; but what exactly does targum refer to, and what is its purpose?

This is actually a dispute among the Rishonim. Several are of the opinion that the purpose of targum is that it is not just a simple translation, but also adds layers of explanation to every word.[7] Consequently, according to this opinion, the purpose of reading the parasha with targum is to learn the Torah in a way that allows us to understand it better. Practically, according to the Tur and Shulchan Aruch, this means that targum here would mean learning the parasha with Rashi's commentary, as it is the best commentary to unlock the pshat of the Chumash.[8]

Others maintain that the halacha is referring to the targum as we know it: Targum Onkelus, as the Gemara in Megillah[9] states that this translation of the Torah was actually given to us by Moshe Rabbeinu.[10] The

Rema[11] held that therefore reading Targum Onkelus is like reading from the Torah itself, and hence is preferable for performing this Mitzvah. Accordingly, by reading the parasha with its original targum, we are re-presenting the Torah weekly in the same manner as it was given at Har Sinai.

Some opine that this is Rashi's own shittah when it comes to shnayim mikra v'echad targum. The result of this machlokes is that Rashi would maintain that Targum Onkelus is preferable while the Rosh was of the opinion that Rashi's commentary is preferable. That means according to Rashi, ironically, it's possible that one might not even fulfill his obligation of targum if he learns Rashi's own commentary![12]

The Shulchan Aruch[13] cites both opinions and rules that one can fulfill his obligation with either one, Targum Onkelus or Rashi. However he concludes that it is preferable to do both, as that way one can satisfy both interpretations.[14]

The Taz explains that if someone does not understand either one, he can read the original Tzennah U'Rennah in German (presumably Yiddish) to enable his understanding, and with this he fulfills his targum obligation. The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and Mishnah Berurah rule this way as well. In this vein, several contemporary authorities, including Rav Moshe Feinstein and Rav Moshe Sternbuch, ruled that nowadays one may perform his targum obligation by reading an English translation of Rashi's commentary, if that is the way one best understands it.[15]

Shnayim Mikra before the Seudah

The Shulchan Aruch[16] rules that the proper time to fulfill this Mitzvah is from the Sunday of the week when a given parasha is read (although some, including the Mishnah Berurah, maintain that one may already start on Shabbos afternoon after Mincha),[17] over the course of the whole week and preferably finishing before the Shabbos day meal.[18] However, it is important to note that this is only Mitzva Min Hamuvchar. The Mishnah Berurah rules that one should not push off his Seudas Shabbos past Chatzos HaYom just to finish shnayim mikra before the seudah.[19] Likewise, if one is having guests over for the seudah, he should not make them wait just so he can finish shnayim mikra before the seudah.[20]

However, there are many authorities who hold that optimally, it is preferable to complete shnayim mikra on, or at least finish, by Erev Shabbos.[21]

What time is Mincha?

The Shulchan Aruch adds that if one has not yet finished shnayim mikra before the seudah, then he has "until Mincha" to finish, and if not, the Wednesday of the next week, and concluding that b'dieved one has until Shmini Atzeres / Simchas Torah to catch up for the whole year.[22]

The Shulchan Aruch's enigmatic choice of words led to an interesting dispute among authorities: What did the

Shulchan Aruch mean by "until Mincha"? Some posit that he was referring to a personal Mincha, meaning that a person can finish this Mitzvah up until he himself actually davens Mincha.[23] Others maintain that his intent was until the time of Mincha, meaning Mincha Gedolah, the earliest time that one may daven Mincha.[24] A third approach is that it refers to the time when Mincha is davened in the local shul.[25] A fourth opinion is that it is referring to Mincha Ketana,[26] two and a half halachic hours before shkiyah, the optimal time for davening Mincha.[27] Interestingly, there does not seem to be any clear cut consensus on this issue.[28]

One Small Step For Man...

Another issue that raises much debate among the halachic decisors is what the proper order and way to fulfill shnayim mikra v'echad targum is, and at which points one may stop; whether pasuk by pasuk, section by section, parasha by parasha, or all at once. There does not seem to be a clear consensus on this either.[29] Although for many, to clear a time block to do shnayim mikra at once may be difficult, it might be a good idea to follow the Mishnah Berurah's[30] advice and employ the Vilna Gaon's method of immediately after one's daily Shacharis, doing a small part every day (i.e. on Sunday do up to Sheini; on Monday up to Shlishi, etc.). By following this technique one will have finished this Mitzvah by Shabbos, every week.

Just Do It!

Many contemporary authorities are at a loss to explain the perceived lackadaisicalness that many have concerning this Mitzvah. These Gedolim, including Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner, and Rav Ovadia Yosef, zichronam l'vracha, as well as did yblch't Rav Moshe Sternbuch, and, stressed its significance,[31] and decried the fact that it seems to have fallen into disuse, with several averring that there is even a Mitzvah of chinuch for a parent to teach shnayim mikra's importance to his children![32] So, although there is halachic discussion as to what constitutes the proper order and way to fulfill this Mitzvah, nonetheless, one shouldn't lose sight of the forest for the trees; the most essential point is that one should actually make the effort to do it. Who would willingly want to turn down a promise by the Gemara for an extremely long life?!

[1] Brachos 8a - 8b, in the statement by Rav Huna ben Rabbi Yehuda in the name of Rabbi Ami.

[2] The Sha'arim Metzuyanim B'Halacha (vol. 2, 72, 25), citing Sefer HaPardes L'Rashi (99) and Rav Yosef Engel's Gilyonei HaShas (Brachos 8a), explains that the reason the Gemara adds to complete shnayim mikra 'im haTzibbur', is that the minhag in the times of the Rishonim, and possibly dating back to the Amoraim, was that after davening, the entire congregation would stay in shul and recite shnayim mikra v'echad targum.

[3] Interestingly, and although it is not the actual halacha [see Shulchan Aruch and Rema (Orach Chaim 285, 7) who

conclude that even so there are those who are noheg to do so; citing the Mordechai on Brachos (Halachos Ketanos 968), and Terumas HaDeshen (vol. 1, 23 and vol. 2, 170), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 13), Taamei HaMinhagim (pg. 180, 346), Shu”t Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim vol. 3, 40), and Orchos Rabbeinu (new print vol. 1, pg. 233 - 234, 35 and 38; citing the Chazon Ish who did not read the haftara shnayim mikra, and the Steipler Gaon who did)], nonetheless, there are decisors who extend the obligation of shnayim mikra to include the weekly haftarah [see Magen Avraham (ad loc. 12; citing the Knesses HaGedolah), Shlah (Maseches Shabbos, Perek Torah Ohr, 22; cited in Pischei Teshuva ad loc. 9), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (72, 11), and Ben Ish Chai (Year 2, Parashas Lech Lecha 11)] and the special maftrir of the Shabbos, for example the Arbah Parshiyos - Shekalim, Zachor, Parah, and Hachodesh [Magen Avraham (ibid.), Ben Ish Chai (ibid.); see also Shu”t Divrei Moshe (Orach Chaim 12), quoting several earlier authorities; this was known to be the Terumas Hadeshen’s personal minhag as well - see Yalkut Yosef (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 685, par. Parashas Hachodesh 9)]. However, [as per Magen Avraham ibid. and Mishnah Berurah ad loc. 19] as the reason for reciting the haftarah shnayim mikra is so each individual should be at least somewhat familiar with that week’s haftarah in case he gets called up to read it, it seems that if the shul has an appointed Baal Koreh to read the haftarah, then it is not necessary for each individual to perform shnayim mikra on the haftarah. On the other hand, as mentioned before, the Steipler Gaon was makpid to do so, even though in his shul (the famous Lederman Shul in Bnei Brak) there was a set Baal Koreh who read the haftarah from a Navi (klaf).

[4] Rambam (Hilchos Tefilla Ch. 13, 25), Tur & Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 285, 1). The Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 2) posits that this is a takkanah from Moshe Rabbeinu. See Shu”t Maharsham (vol. 1, 213 s.v. ulam) who states that although it is not technically a “chiyuv gamur” like reading the Torah, it has since been equated to the status of “chiyuv”. The Maharal M’Prague (Nesivos Olam, Nesiv HaAvodah Ch. 13; see also Pri Megadim, Orach Chaim 285, Mishbetzos Zahav 2, citing the Matteh Moshe), expounding the significance of shnayim mikra, explains that it is meant as a weekly commemoration of the giving of the Torah, which was first given over to Klal Yisrael at Har Sinai, repeated over at the Ohel Moed, and a third time at Arvos Moav. At Arvos Moav the Torah was explained in 70 languages to ensure that each person understood the Torah in his own language. At the time, the language most of Klal Yisrael spoke then was Targum. Therefore, the enactment of shnayim mikra v’echad targum, as the targum is meant to serve as a ‘Biur HaTorah’.

[5] Ba’al HaTurim in his commentary to Shemos (Ch. 1, 1). Interestingly, this comment is only found in certain versions of the Baal HaTurim’s commentary, such as those printed in most five-volume Mikraos Gedolos Chumashim

(including Hamo’or, Oz VeHadar etc.), as they use the full text of the Baal HaTurim’s ‘Pirush Al HaTorah’ (also known as ‘Baal HaTurim Hashalem’), first published in 5566, as opposed to his more commonly used but much shorter and less comprehensive ‘Pirush HaTorah’ which was published much earlier, in 5274. [See the introduction to the recent Oz VeHadar Mikraos Gedolos Chumash, par. Baal HaTurim. Thanks are due to Stephen Posen for pointing this out.] The Levush (Orach Chaim 285, 1) and Pri Megadim (ad loc Mishbetzos Zahav 1) write similarly (with slight variations) that this passage alludes to this Mitzvah, “V’chayev Adam likros (or lehashleem) haparasha shnayim mikra v’echad targum”, and conclude “v’zeh chayavim kol Bnei Yisrael”. See also the Chida’s Chomas Anoch (beginning of Parashas Shemos, brought in Toras HaChida to Parashas Shemos, 8) who credits this allusion to Rabbeinu Efraim, and gives a Kabbalistic explanation to its meaning, and its relevance to Parashas Shemos. [Thanks are due to Rabbi Yitzchak Botton for pointing out this invaluable source.] It is also cited by Rav Chaim Palaji in his Kaf Hachaim (27). See also Rabbi Elchanan Shoff’s recent sefer Birchasa V’Shirasa (on Maseches Brachos pg. 73, s.v. shnayim) who cites a variation of this statement found in Midrash Rabbi David HaNaggid (a grandson of the Rambam).

[6] See Kaf Hachaim (Orach Chaim 285, 32), who cites many other rewards for those who perform shnayim mikra v’echad targum faithfully.

[7] See commentaries of Rashi, Tosafos, Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah, and the Rosh on this Gemara, as well as the Beis Yosef (Orach Chaim 285, 2). See also Magen Avraham (ad loc. 2) and Taz (ad loc. 1).

[8] Tur, Beis Yosef, Shulchan Aruch, Taz (Orach Chaim 285, 2), Shlah (Maseches Shabbos, Ner Mitzva 15); see also the Chafetz Chaim’s Likutei Ma’amrim (Ch. 5). The Chasam Sofer (Shu”t vol. 6, 61) also stressed the importance of additionally learning the parasha with the Ramban’s commentary

[9] Gemara Megillah 3a. See there further on the importance of Targum Onkelus and Targum Yonason. Tosafos (Brachos 8a-b s.v. shnayim and v’afilu; see also Tamidei Rabbeinu Yonah ad loc. and Maharshal) is very makpid that ‘targum’ is referring to actual Targum and not any other language; citing proof from the Gemara’s stating “V’afilu Ataros V’Divon [need shnayim mikra],” even though (according to Tosafos’ understanding) these words only have an obscure Targum Yerushalmi translation. However, other commentaries [i.e., Maharsha, Rav Elazar Landau, and Rav Elazar Moshe Halevi Horowitz, et al. ad loc.] do give alternate interpretations to this statement, which accordingly would not prove that this means exclusively Targum. See Rosh (Brachos Ch. 1, 8) and Tur (Orach Chaim 285) and later commentaries, who cite both sides of this debate. The Bach (ad loc.) maintains that this machlokes may actually be based on two different versions

of Rashi's commentary. An additional fascinating approach is given by Rabbeinu Bachaye (Mattos Ch. 32:3), who explains that Ataros and Divon were places of Emori Avodah Zarah. As such, one may think that he should not recite Targum on this passuk, as it alludes to Avodah Zarah. Therefore Chazal stressed these words to teach us that even so, one still needs to fulfill his shnayim mikra v'echad targum obligation, even on these type of pesukim. [10] Beis Yosef (*ibid*), quoting the SMaG in the name of Rav Nitranoi Gaon. See also *Biur HaGr'a* (ad loc. 2), *Pri Megadim* (ad loc. Mishbetzos Zahav 1 s.v. *hataam*, who explains this based on the words *Ba'er Heitiv*), and *Biur Halacha* (ad loc s.v. *targum*).

[11] *Shu't Rema* (126 - 130), based on *Tosafos* in *Bava Kamma* (83a s.v. *lashon*). This is a famous dispute the Rema had with his cousin, Rav Shmuel Yehuda Katzenellenbogen, as to *Tosafos*'s intent with his statement that 'The Torah spoke in Aramaic', as well as other related issues regarding how to classify Aramaic. Accordingly, the Rema preferred Targum to Rashi, since it was given at Har Sinai. This debate and its ramifications are discussed at length in Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein's recent excellent book, "Lashon HaKodesh: History, Holiness, and Hebrew" (Ch. 8, pg. 175 - 186).

[12] See Rabbi Yosef Meir Radner's recent *sefer Nachlas Mayim* (vol. 3, *Al Sugyos HaShas B'Inyanei HaMoadim*, Ch. 34) at length.

[13] *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 285, 2), as does the *Tur* (ad loc.). Explained at length in *Biur Halacha* (ad loc. s.v. *targum*).

[14] Regarding whether one can fulfill his Targum obligation with Targum Yonason, Rav Asher Weiss (*Shu't Minchas Asher* vol. 1, 13, 4) maintains that indeed one does (even though it is probable that Targum Yonason al haTorah is not really the one referred to in the Gemara - see the Chida's *Sheim Gedolim*, *Maareches HaSeforim* 96), as it would be considered similar to reading Rashi's *pshat*, as it explains the pesukim as well as adds chiddushim. Nevertheless, he concludes that is still preferable to stick to Targum Onkelus, as Chazal intended. However, others, including Rav Chaim Kanievsky, are quoted (see Rabbi Yaakov Skoczylas's recent *Kuntress Ohel Yaakov on Shnayim Mikra* pg. 17 - 18, footnote 36) as holding that one is not *yotzei* shnayim mikra with Targum Yonason.

[15] *Taz* (*Orach Chaim* 285, 2), *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (72, 11), *Mishnah Berurah* (285, 5). Rav Moshe Feinstein's opinion is cited in *sefer Yagel Yaakov* (*Dardak*; pg. 208, quoting his son Rav Dovid Feinstein); Rav Moshe Sternbuch's is found in *Shu't Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* (vol. 1, 261, s.v. *v'hiskamti*). Interestingly, the *Beis Lechem Yehuda* on *Hilchos Aveilus* (*Yoreh Deah* 400, 1) writes that although an *avel* is allowed to perform his *chiyuv* of shnayim mikra v'echad targum on Shabbos itself [as per Rashal (*Hagahos* on the *Tur* ad loc.), as cited in the

Derishah (ad loc. 1), *Shach* (ad loc. 4), and *Ba'er Heitiv* (ad loc. 3)], nevertheless, in his opinion, this is only referring to reading either *Targum* or a translation that aids understanding basic *pshat*, such as the *Tzennah U'Renna*. Yet, he posits, it would be assur for an *avel* to fulfill his obligation (that *Shabbos*) with learning Rashi's commentary, as since it includes *drush*, would also constitute *Talmud Torah*, which is prohibited for a mourner. Thanks are due to R' Dovid Shapiro for pointing out this invaluable source.

[16] *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 285, 3 and 4), based on *Tosafos* and the *Rosh* (*ibid*).

[17] Although the *Rema* in *Darchei Moshe* (*ibid*, based on the *Kol Bo* 37) mentions that this truly means Sunday [see also *Pri Megadim* (ad loc *Eshel Avraham* 5)], nevertheless, the *Mishnah Berurah* (ad loc 7, and *Shaar Hatziyun* 12) and *Kaf Hachaim* (ad loc 24), citing many *Rishonim*, rule that this really means the preceding *Shabbos* after *Mincha*, when the next week's *parasha* is already read. However, the *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* (*Orach Chaim* 285, 5) and *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (72, 11) rule that optimally one should wait until Sunday to start the next week's shnayim mikra. Additionally, the *Biur Halacha* (*Orach Chaim* 285, 25) cites many other *Rishonim* who hold that one may not start until Sunday. See also *Shu't Minchas Chein* (vol. 2, *Orach Chaim* 17), who concludes that *lechatchila* one should wait until Sunday to start shnayim mikra, however, *b'dieved* if one already started on *Shabbos* after *Mincha*, he would certainly be *yotzei*. On the other hand, Rav Israel Yaakov Fischer *zt'l* (*Halichos Even Yisrael*, *Shabbos* vol. 1, pg. 13, 1) maintains that one may *lechatchila* start the next week's *Shnayim Mikra* after *Mincha Gedolah* on *Shabbos*, regardless of whether or not he davened *Mincha* and actually heard the next week's *kriyah*.

[18] Indeed, *Tosafos* (*Brachos* 8b s.v. *yashleem*) and the *Rosh* (ad loc. 8) quote a *Midrash* (*Mechilta*, *Parashas Bo*; *Chupas Eliyahu Rabba*, *Shaar* 6), that on his deathbed *Rabbeinu Hakadosh* (*Rebbi*) commanded his children "not to eat bread on *Shabbos* until they finish the whole *parasha*." *Tosafos* concludes that this is a *Mitzvah Min Hamuvchar*, and one still fulfills his obligation if he completes the *parasha* after he eats on *Shabbos*. See also *Ohr Zarua* (vol. 1, *Hilchos Krias Shema* 12) and *Biur Halacha* (*Orach Chaim* 285 s.v. *yashlim*). Most authorities understand this to mean the *Shabbos Lunch meal* (*Chaye Adam*, vol. 2, 7, 9; *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, *Orach Chaim* 285, 5; *Aruch Hashulchan* ad loc. 8; *Mishnah Berurah*, ad loc. 9 and *Biur Halacha* s.v. *yashlim*); however the *Chazon Ish* (cited in *Orchos Rabbeinu* vol. 3, pg. 234; new print vol. 1, pg. 234, 39) held that this was referring to *Seudas Shlishis*.

[19] *Mishnah Berurah* (285, 9). This is because one may not fast on *Shabbos* past *Chatzos* (see *Orach Chaim* 288, 1). On the other hand, he cites the *Ohr Zarua* (vol. 2, *Shabbos* 42) and *Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah* (*Brachos* 4b in

the Rif's pagination s.v. l'olam) as maintaining that optimally, if one did not complete shnayim mikra before going to sleep on Friday night, it would behoove him to wake up early and recite it before davening.

[20] Shaar Hatziyun (ad loc. 14).

[21] See Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 285, 5 and 6; quoting the Shlah), Shaarei Teshuva (ad loc. 1; quoting the Arizal and Rav Chaim Vital), Maggid Meisharim (Mishlei Ch. 23, 6, end s.v. achar kach), Machzik Bracha (ad loc. Kuntress Acharon 2), Ben Ish Chai (Year 2, Parashas Lech Lecha 11), Mishnah Berurah (ibid. 8 and 9 and Biur Halacha s.v. kodem), and Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 24; citing "minhag Chassidim V'Anshei Maaseh" to recite shnayim mikra on Friday, right after Shacharis, while still wearing their Tallis and Tefillin).

[22] Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 285, 4). Interestingly, the Abudraham (Hilchos Hoshana Rabba s.v. b'leil; cited by the Rema in his Darchei Moshe ad loc. 3) writes that it is commendable to finish one's shnayim mikra for the year during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, in order to be an additional zechus before Yom Kippur. He cites and explains the Gemara's story (Brachos 8b) regarding Rav Bibi bar Abaye of wanting to finish all of shnayim mikra on Erev Yom Kippur, as meaning accomplishing this – making sure to finish the year's shnayim mikra obligation prior to Yom Kippur.

[23] Including Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Halichos Shlomo, Tefilla Ch. 12, 35) and Rav Chaim Kanievsky (cited in Halichos Chaim vol. 1, pg. 95, 278).

[24] Including the Shmiras Shabbos K'Hilchasa (vol. 2, 42, footnote 218) and possibly Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (see Shgiyos Mi Yavin vol. 2, 40, footnote 9; although some report his opinion as Mincha Ketana). This is also the mashma'os of the Mishnah Berurah (ibid. 10).

[25] This is the opinion of Rav Chaim Na'eh (Ketzos Hashulchan 72, Badei Hashulchan 7).

[26] Halichos Even Yisrael (Shabbos vol. 1, pg. 13, 2).

[27] See Gemara Brachos (26) and Pesachim (58) and Tur, Beis Yosef, Shulchan Aruch, and Mishnah Berurah (Orach Chaim 233, 1).

[28] See Mv'R Rav Yosef Yitzchak Lerner's award-winning sefer Shgiyos Mi Yavin (vol. 2, 40, 2& 3).

[29] See the major commentaries to the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 285), including the Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Aruch Hashulchan, Mishnah Berurah (who concludes that 'd'avid k'mar avid u'd'avid k'mar avid') and Kaf Hachaim(3, 6, and 15), as well as Emes L'Yaakov on Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 285), and his introduction to Emes L'Yaakov al HaTorah. See also Shu't Tzitz Eliezer (vol. 16, 18), Shu't Ba'er Moshe (vol. 8, 3), Shu't Rivevos Efraim (vol. 5, 216), Shu't Shevet Halevi (vol. 7, 33, 1), Chut Shani (Shabbos vol. 4, pg. 115, 2), Orchos Rabbeinu (vol. 1, pg. 123; new print vol. 1, pg. 233 - 234, 35 - 37), and Halichos Even Yisrael (Shabbos vol. 1, pg. 14, 4). Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach is quoted

(Maadanei Shlomo on Dalet Chelkei Shulchan Aruch, pg. 78:14) as maintaining that although Rav Chaim Na'eh (Ketzos Hashulchan 72, Badei Hashulchan 1) seems unsure of this, nevertheless, practically, the order one fulfills his shnayim mikra obligation is irrelevant, as it cannot be any more stringent than Birchos Krias Shma, where "ain sidran me'akev" (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 60, 3).

[30] Mishnah Berurah (ad loc 8), citing Maaseh Rav (59). Although the Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc 4) writes that there is no reason to separate shnayim mikra by aliyyos, nonetheless, see Derech Sicha (from Rav Chaim Kanievsky, page 2) who commends this mehalech. It is well known that Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt'l would use this method of performing shnayim mikra, daily prior to the 6:30 A.M. Shacharis in his shul (see Gadol HaDor [Hebrew] pg. 48).

[31] Rav Moshe Feinstein (Shu't Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim 5, 17), Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Halichos Shlomo on Tefillah Ch. 12, 36 7 footnote 106), Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner (Shu't Shevet HaLevi vol. 8, 46) and Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Shu't Teshuvos V'Hanhagos vol. 1, 261). See also Shu't Kinyan Torah B'Halacha (vol. 6, 22). Rav Ovadia Yosef zt'l, aside for what he wrote in Shu't Yechaveh Daas (vol. 2, 37), dedicated his broadcasted weekly shiur several years ago to exhort the masses to perform this weekly Mitzvah. See also Rav Chaim Palaji's Kaf Hachaim (27, 3) and Shmiras Shabbos K'Hilchasa (Ch. 42, 57). In fact, around a century ago, the Minchas Elazar (Shu't vol. 1, 26, in the footnote), in a quite telling comment addressing the Rema's statement (Yoreh Deah 361, 1) that generally speaking everyone nowadays is in the category of someone who 'reads and learns (Torah)', remarked that in his day this was certainly true; as 'who doesn't sit in shul over Shabbos and recite shnayim mikra v'echad targum?!"

[32] Including Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner (Shu't Shevet HaLevi ibid, s.v. pshita), Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Shu't Teshuvos V'Hanhagos ibid, s.v. ulinyan), and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Halichos Shlomo, Tefilla Ch. 12, 36). Conversely, Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer (Halichos Even Yisrael ibid. pg. 15, 6) maintains that there is no outright Chinuch obligation regarding Shnayim Mikra, yet, nevertheless stresses its importance, concluding 'tov lechancham k'dei sheyisraglu b'davar'. Rav Ovadia Yosef (Shu't Yechaveh Daas ibid, s.v. u'v'siyum) exhorts schools to teach children the Taamei HaMikra (trop); that way when they do the Mitzvah of shnayim mikra they will be able to fulfill it in the optimal manner. Chinuch for shnayim mikra would not include a daughter, as a woman is technically exempt from the Mitzvah of Torah study, and therefore also from this Mitzvah [see Shu't Ba'er Sarim (vol. 7, 52, 10), Shu't Mishnah Halachos (vol. 6, 60), Shu't Rivevos Efraim (vol. 6, 115, 35), Shu't Mishnas Yosef (vol. 6, 15), Chut Shani on Hilchos Shabbos (vol. 4, pg. 215), Shmiras Shabbos K'Hilchasa (Ch. 42, 60), and

Yalkut Yosef (Otzar Dinim L'Isha U'lvav Ch. 5, 3)]. On the topic of women being exempt from targum in general, see Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 282, 11). However, since shnayim mikra is part of the Mitzvah of Torah study, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (Emes L'Yaakov on Tur and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 285, footnote 308) ruled that a boy who becomes Bar Mitzvah in the middle of the year does not have to repeat the Parshiyos that he read shnayim mikra as a kattan, as even a kattan still has a Mitzvah of Talmud Torah (as explained in his Emes L'Yaakov on Kiddushin 29b - 30a).

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shrager, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda

This article was written L'Iluy Nishmas R' Yaakov Eliezer ben Avrohom Yitzchok, Malka Rivka bas Yaakov, Moshe

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For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, author of M'Shulchan Yehuda on Inyanei Halacha, serves as the Sho'el U'Meishiv and Rosh Chabura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim.

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לע"ג

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