

Weekly Parsha SHEMOT
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

It should be obvious to all that Moshe is a very unlikely choice to head the Jewish people, to redeem them from Egyptian bondage, and to bring the Torah down from Heaven to the Jewish people and eventually to all of humankind. It is also clear that Moshe would not be the likely one to guide them through the vicissitudes of war, thirst and forty years sojourn in the desert of Sinai.

Rambam writes that Moshe was of short temper. The Torah records for us that he was raised in the palace of the Egyptian Pharaoh. He kills an Egyptian and covers up his deed. He is a shepherd for a pagan priest of Midyan and marries one of his daughters. He is separated from his people for sixty years before returning to them and proclaiming himself as their leader. Not really too impressive a resume for the greatest of all humans and of the Jewish people! But there it is for all to see and study. So, what is the message that the Torah is sending to us with this narrative?

Who needs to know of his previous life before becoming the Moshe we revere? After all, the Torah does not explicitly tell us about the youth experiences of Noach, Avraham and other great men of Israel and the world. So, why all the detail – much of it not too pleasant – about the early life of Moshe? The question almost begs itself of any student of Torah. The Torah is always concise and chary of words, so this concentration of facts and stories about Moshe's early life is somewhat puzzling.

What is clear from biblical narrative and Jewish and world history generally is that Heaven does not play by our rules nor does it conduct itself by our preconceived norms and notions. We never would have chosen David as our king, Amos as our prophet or Esther as our savior from destruction. Jewish history in a great measure has been formed by unlikely heroes, unexpected champions and surprising personalities.

It is almost as if Heaven wishes to mock our pretensions and upset our conventional wisdom. Oftentimes it is our stubborn nature, our haughtiness to think that we are always privy to God's plans and methods that has led us to stray far from truth and reality. The greatness of the generation that left Egypt was that it not only believed in the God of Israel but believed in His servant Moshe as well. Throughout his career as leader of Israel, according to Midrash, the rebels would always hold Moshe's past against him. They could not come to terms with Moshe as being their leader for he did not fit the paradigm that they had constructed for themselves. Eventually this disbelief in Moshe translated itself into a disbelief in God as well and doomed that generation to perish in the desert of Sinai. God's plans, actions and choices, so to speak, are inscrutable. The prophet taught us that God stated: "For

My thoughts are not your thoughts and My ways are not your ways." Moshe's life story is a striking example of this truism.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

The Challenge of Jewish Leadership
SHEMOT

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

I used to say, only half in jest, that the proof that Moses was the greatest of the prophets was that when God asked him to lead the Jewish people, he refused four times: Who am I to lead? They will not believe in me. I am not a man of words. Please send someone else.

It is as if Moses knew with uncanny precision what he would be letting himself in for. Somehow he sensed in advance that it may be hard to be a Jew, but to be a leader of Jews is almost impossible.

How did Moses know this? The answer lies many years back in his youth. It was then when, having grown up, he went out to see his people for the first time. He saw them enslaved, being forced into heavy labour.

He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He intervened and saved his life. The next day he saw two Hebrews fighting, and again he intervened. This time the man he stopped said to him, "Who appointed you as our leader and judge?"

Note that Moses had not yet even thought of being a leader and already his leadership was being challenged. And these are the first recorded words spoken to Moses by a fellow Jew. That was his reward for saving the life of an Israelite the day before.

And though God persuaded Moses, or ordered him, to lead, it never ceased to be difficult, and often demoralising. In Devarim, he recalls the time when he said: "How can I myself bear Your problems, Your burdens and Your disputes all by myself" (Deut. 1:12). And in Beha'alotecha, he suffers what can only be called a breakdown:

He asked the Lord, "Why have You brought this trouble on Your servant? What have I done to displease You that You put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do You tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land You promised on oath to their ancestors? . . . I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how You are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favour in Your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin."

Num. 11:11-15

And this was said, don't forget, by the greatest Jewish leader of all time. Why are Jews almost impossible to lead?

The answer was given by the greatest rebel against Moses' leadership, Korach. Listen carefully to what he and his associates say:

They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord assembly?"

Num. 16:3

Korach's motives were wrong. He spoke like a democrat but what he wanted was to be an autocrat. He wanted to be a leader himself. But there is a hint in his words of what is at stake.

Jews are a nation of strong individuals. "The whole community is holy, every one of them." They always were. They still are. That is their strength and their weakness. There were times when they found it difficult to serve God. But they certainly would not serve anyone less. They were the "stiff-necked" people, and people with stiff necks find it hard to bow down.

The Prophets would not bow down to Kings. Mordechai would not bow down to Haman. The Maccabees would not bow down to the Greeks. Their successors would not bow down to the Romans. Jews are fiercely individualistic. At times this makes them unconquerable. It also makes them almost ungovernable, almost impossible to lead.

That is what Moses discovered in his youth when, trying to help his people, their first response was to say, "Who appointed you as our leader and judge?" That is why he was so hesitant to take on the challenge of leadership, and why he refused four times.

There has been much debate in British and American Jewry recently[1] about whether there should be an agreed collective stance of unconditional support for the state and government of Israel, or whether our public position should reflect the deep differences that exist among Jews today, within Israel or outside.

My view is that Israel needs our support at this critical time. But the debate that has taken place is superfluous. Jews are a nation of strong individuals who, with rare historic exceptions, never agreed about anything. That makes them unleadable; it also makes them unconquerable. The good news and the bad go hand in hand. And if, as we believe, God loved and still loves this people despite all its faults, may we do less?

[1] It should be noted for context that this essay was written by Rabbi Sacks in November 2010, amidst a widespread communal debate regarding Israel.

Parshat Shemot: From Genesis to Exodus – From Joseph the "Insider" to Moses the "Outsider"

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"Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, and God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob..." [The Opening Blessing of the "Amida"]

The opening of the Amida prayer stops with Jacob's name. But why should the patriarchal line be limited to three – why not four patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph? After all, Joseph's role in the Genesis narrative is unquestionably central to the entire book of Genesis. A case could be made for showing that he shares a similar fate to those of all three patriarchs. Like Abraham, he lives among idolaters and must maintain his faith and traditions within a hostile environment. Like Isaac, he suffers a personal akedah, about to be slain not by his father but by his brothers, saved not by a ram but by Midianite traders. And like Jacob, who set the foundation for the twelve tribes of Israel, Joseph provided Jacob's descendants with life and sustenance as the Grand Vizier of Egypt. Moreover, in resisting the seductive perfumes of his master Potiphar's wife, Joseph merits the unique accolade haTzadik (literally, 'the righteous one') appended to his name. As a result, he has come to represent for all of his descendants the mastery of the spiritual over the physical. If indeed Joseph is known to us forever as Joseph the Tzadik, and being that he is the son of Jacob, why is he not considered the fourth patriarch? After all, there are four parallel patriarchs!

To understand why, we must compare and contrast him not with the patriarchs who precede him, but with the personality who, from the moment of his appearance in the book of Exodus, stands at center stage for the rest of the Torah and all of subsequent Jewish religious history: Moshe Rabbenu, Moses our Teacher.

The idea of linking Moses and Joseph comes from the Midrash. Moses, the giant liberator of Israel, never enters the Land of Israel himself, and is even buried on Mount Nevo at the outskirts of the Promised Land – exactly where, nobody knows. Joseph, on the other hand, is buried in the heartland of Samaria – Shechem – which lives as a national shrine to this very day. Why does Joseph merit such preferred treatment?

The midrashic explanation is based on two verses that highlight contrasting aspects of their respective biographies. When Joseph was imprisoned and he spoke to the wine steward for the sake of interpreting his dream, he asked to be remembered to Pharaoh: "For indeed I was stolen away from out of the land of the Hebrews" (Gen. 40:15). Joseph does not hesitate to reveal his Jewish background.

Moses, on the other hand, after having rescued the Midianite shepherdesses, hears the women reporting to their father how "...an Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and drew water for us, and watered the flock" (Ex. 2:19). He does not correct them, saying "I am not an Egyptian but a Hebrew!" This silence, explains the Midrash, is why not even his bones may be brought

back to the Land of Israel (See Midrash Devarim Raba, 2:8).

In justifying the burial of Joseph's bones in Israel, testifying to his unflinching recognition of his roots, the Midrash may be adding a notch of pride to Joseph's belt. But in truth, I believe that our sages are merely attempting to temper the indisputable fact that Moses is a far more "Jewish Jew" than Joseph in the most profound sense of the term.

In many ways, Joseph and Moses are contrasting personalities, mirror images of each other, with Moses rectifying the problematic steps taken by Joseph. Joseph was born in Israel, but became professionally successful in Egypt; Moses was born in Egypt, but established his place in history by taking the Jews on their way to Israel. Joseph was the insider who chose to move outside (he dreamt of Egyptian agriculture, as well as the cosmic universe). Moses was the outsider (Prince of Egypt), who insisted on coming inside (by slaying the Egyptian taskmaster). Joseph brought his family to Egypt, Moses took his people out of Egypt. Moses saw Egypt as a foreign country, and names his son Gershom "for he said I have been a stranger in a strange land" (Ex. 2:22). Joseph has at best ambiguous feelings about his early years in Canaan, naming his firstborn in Egypt Manasseh "since God has made me [allowed me to] forget completely my hardship and my parental home" (Gen. 41:51). Joseph, through his economic policies, enslaves the Egyptian farmers to Pharaoh; Moses frees the Jews from their enslavement to Pharaoh. And Joseph's dreams are realized, whereas Moses' dream – the vision of Israel's redemption in Israel – remained tragically unfulfilled at the end of his life.

The truth is that for the majority of Joseph's professional life he functions as an Egyptian, the Grand Vizier of Egypt. He may have grown up in the old home of the patriarch Jacob, heir to the traditions of Abraham and Isaac, but from the practical point of view, his time and energies are devoted to putting Exxon, Xerox and MGM on the map. Ultimately his professional activities enable him to preserve his people, the children of Israel; but day to day, hour to hour, he is involved in strengthening and aggrandizing Egypt.

A good case could easily be made in praise of Joseph. He never loses sight of God or morality, despite the blandishments of Egyptian society. And God would even testify that He had a special task for Joseph, personally chosen to save the descendants of Jacob and the world from a relentless famine. Nevertheless, he must pay a price for being Grand Vizier of Egypt: The gold chain around his neck is Egyptian, his garments are Egyptian, his limousine is Egyptian, and even his language is Egyptian. Indeed, when his brothers come to ask for bread, an interpreter's presence is required for the interviews because his very language of discourse is Egyptian, with his countrymen totally unaware of his knowledge of Hebrew!

The difference between Moses and Joseph takes on its sharpest hue when seen against the shadow of Pharaoh. Joseph's life work consists of glorifying and exalting Pharaoh, in effect bestowing upon the Egyptian King-God the blessings of a prosperous and powerful kingdom, whose subjects are enslaved to him; Moses flees Pharaoh's court with a traitorous act against him, ultimately humiliating and degrading him by unleashing the ten plagues.

A shepherd and the son of shepherds, Joseph becomes the first Jewish prince in history, while Moses, a genuine prince of Egypt, begins his mature years as a shepherd on the run, risking his life for his commitment to free the Israelites. Jealousy and destiny force Joseph to live out his life away from his brothers, estranging himself from them. But Moses, despite his foreign, Egyptian background, nevertheless cares for his Hebrew brothers and identifies with them. As the Torah most poignantly records:

"And it happened in those days [after the baby Moses was taken to the home of Pharaoh's daughter] that Moses grew up and he went out to his brothers and he saw [attempting to alleviate] their suffering." [Exodus 2:11]

Even though Joseph and Moses both change the world and preserve the Jewish people through the divine will that flows through them, their energies get channeled into different directions: Pharaoh and Egypt on the one hand, the Jewish people and Torah on the other.

This may be the significant factor in explaining why our sages stop short at calling Joseph a patriarch. He may be a tzadik, two of his sons may become the heads of tribes, and he may even deserve burial in Israel; but ultimately a hero who spends so much of his energies on behalf of Egypt cannot be called a patriarch of the Jewish nation.

It is recorded that the first chief rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, was tended to in his final years by an internationally known physician. His last words to the doctor were: "I yearn for the day when Jews who are great will also be great Jews." It was Moses who was undoubtedly the greatest Jew who ever lived.

Shabbat Shalom

A Rishon Letzion Named Rapaport

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Fragrances on Motza'ei Yom Tov

May I include fragrances as part of havdalah when Yom Tov ends?

Question #2: Late Asher Yatzar

How long do I have to recite Asher Yatzar?

Question #3: Davening Outdoors

Is it permitted to daven in the courtyard outside a shul?

Question #4: A Rishon Letzion Named Rapaport

What do any of these questions have to do with parshas Shemos?

Foreword:

Rishon Letziyon is an old traditional title for the Sefardi rav of Yerushalayim. How did someone named Rapaport, which is a classic Ashkenazi family name, become Rishon Letziyon?

Introduction:

Parshas Shemos teaches that, for disobeying Pharaoh's murderous commands, the Jewish midwives merited the "building of houses." This is explained by the Midrash, quoted by Rashi, to mean that they were granted batei kehunah and batei malchus. Miriam was rewarded with batei malchus, that the royal house of Dovid Hamelech descended from her, and Yocheved merited batei kehunah - all kohanim are descended from her. The words batei kehunah mean "houses of kehunah," which is a bit strange: why don't Chazal simply call it beis kehunah, "the house of kehunah?" Although we will not answer this question, it became the source of the title of an important halachic work.

Batei Kehunah

A gadol beYisroel who lived three hundred years ago was descended from kohanim on both his father's and his mother's sides. Based on his lineage, he named his Torah works Batei Kehunah. This gadol, who is hardly known in the Ashkenazi world, carried the name Rav Yitzchak HaKohen Rapaport. He was the chacham bashi -- a title for chief rabbi of a large city -- in the Ottoman Empire, first of Izmir, Turkey, and subsequently became both the chacham bashi and the Rishon Letziyon of Yerushalayim. In numerous places, the Chida refers to the Batei Kehunah as the mofeis hador, or as mofeis doroseinu, "the wonder of our generation." Considering that this was the same era in which lived such luminaries as the Gra, the Pnei Yehoshua, the Sha'agas Aryeh, the Noda Biyehudah, the Maharit Algazi and the Chida himself, this is a rather impressive accolade.

Rav Yitzchak Hakohen Rapaport

Rav Yitzchak Hakohen Rapaport was born in Jerusalem in 5445 (1685) to Rabbi Yehudah Rapaport. Rav Yitzchak's father was born in Lublin, Poland, made aliyah to Eretz Yisrael, and there married the daughter of a family of major Torah scholars, who were kohanim and Sefardim. Thus, although Rav Yitzchak's father had been born in Poland, hence the family name Rapaport, he was raised in a completely Sefardi environment. There was no Ashkenazi community in Eretz Yisrael at the time, and therefore Rav Yitzchak treated himself completely as a Sefardi. This explains how a Rishon Letzion could have such an Ashkenazi last name.

In his youth, Rav Yitzchak studied in the yeshiva of the Pri Chodosh, Rav Chizkiyah Di Silva. In his introduction to Batei Kehunah, Rav Yitzchak explains that he never left the beis medrash for fear that he would miss some of his rebbe's Torah or that of the other great men who studied there. After the Pri Chodosh's premature passing (according to various versions, he was somewhere between

the ages of 39 and 46 when he passed away), Rav Yitzchak studied under the new rosh yeshiva, Rav Avraham Yitzchak, the author of the work Zera Avraham, another work well known in Sefardi circles, but that receives reactions of "what is that" among Ashkenazim.

Although Rav Yitzchak Rapaport always viewed himself as a resident of Yerushalayim, he served as the rav of Izmer for forty years, after which he returned to Yerushalayim, and was then appointed chacham bashi of the Holy City and Rishon Letzion. Among the Batei Kehunah's many brilliant students, both from his period in Turkey and in Yerushalayim, we find an entire generation of gedolei Yisroel: the Maharit Algazi, the Chida, the Shaar Hamelech, the Ma'aseh Rokeach and Rav Mordechai Rebbiyo, the rav and rosh yeshiva of Hevron, author of the teshuvos Shemen Hamor.

Since this is a halachic column, I will discuss some of the interesting halachic positions of the Batei Kehunah, most of which we know because they are quoted by the Chida, who perused the private library of the Batei Kehunah after the latter's passing in 5515 (1755). The library included notes written in the margins of his seforim, unpublished teshuvos and other private writings and manuscripts that the Chida quoted, predominantly in his Birkei Yosef commentary to the Shulchan Aruch, most of which would otherwise have become lost to future generations.

Fragrances on Motza'ei Yom Tov

Our opening question was: "May I include fragrances as part of havdalah when Yom Tov ends?" Let me explain the background to this question. The Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 29:28) writes that when Yom Tov falls out midweek, at its end we are not required to recite the berachos on fragrances and on a lamp, unlike what we do every motza'ei Shabbos. The Rambam explains that we recite the beracha on fragrances on motza'ei Shabbos because our souls ache when Shabbos ends, and we provide them with some consolation with the pleasant fragrance. The Magid Mishnah raises the following questions about the Rambam's statement:

- (1) Indeed, why is the custom that we not smell fragrances when Yom Tov ends, just as we do when Shabbos ends?
- (2) Why does the Rambam write that "we are not required to recite the beracha on fragrances?" Shouldn't he write that we do not recite the beracha on fragrances?

The Magid Mishnah answers that the soul aches only when Shabbos ends, because the sanctity of Shabbos is greater, as evidenced by the fact that we are not permitted to perform any melacha. Since cooking food and similar melachos are permitted on Yom Tov, the soul does not ache when Yom Tov ends.

If this is so, the Magid Mishnah asks, why do we not recite the beracha on fragrances as part of the kiddush/havdalah combination when Yom Tov is on motza'ei Shabbos, since the soul aches that Shabbos has ended? The Magid Mishnah answers that the festive celebration of Yom Tov

consoles the aching soul the same way that fragrances would, thus rendering the use of besamim unnecessary. The Magid Mishnah then notes that the Rambam writes, “we are not required to recite the berachos on fragrances” when Yom Tov ends, because one can always take fragrances and recite a beracha before smelling them.

The Yad Aharon questions the wording of the Magid Mishnah that the custom is to not recite the beracha over fragrances as part of havdalah on Yom Tov. Would this not be an interruption in the havdalah, since it is not required?

The Chida (Birkei Yosef 491:3) quotes his rebbe, the Batei Kehunah, who wrote in the margin of his own personal copy of the Rambam that the Magid Mishneh wrote his comments very precisely. There would be no problem were someone to include besamim in his havdalah after Yom Tov. And the reason why the minhag is to forgo the besamim is because the soul does not ache when Yom Tov ends to the same extent that it does when Shabbos ends.

Late Asher Yatzar

At this point, let us analyze the second of our opening questions: How long do I have to recite Asher Yatzar?

The Levush discusses whether someone who does not have a need to relieve himself upon awaking recites Asher Yatzar anyway. He rules that he recites Asher Yatzar, because he undoubtedly relieved himself during the night without reciting Asher Yatzar – thus, he has an outstanding requirement to recite Asher Yatzar. The Adei Zahav, an early commentary on the Levush by Rav Menachem de Lunzani, disagrees with the Levush, contending that, even if the Levush’s technical assumptions are correct – that we should assume that most people relieved themselves during the night without reciting Asher Yatzar – a person should still not recite Asher Yatzar upon awaking, because the time within which Asher Yatzar must be recited has expired by morning. The Adei Zahav rules that Asher Yatzar must be recited no more than six hours after relieving himself, and during the long winter nights, someone presumably has slept longer than that since he last relieved himself.

What is the source for the Adei Zahav’s ruling that Asher Yatzar must be recited within six hours? The Mishnah (Berachos 51b) states that you can recite an after blessing until the food that was eaten has been digested. The Gemara (Berachos 53b) discusses how long a time this is, Rabbi Yochanan ruling that it is until you are hungry again, whereas Reish Lakish seems to hold that it is the time it takes to walk four mil, which most authorities understand to be 72 minutes. (Some hold that it is a bit longer.) The Adei Zahav assumes that, according to Rabbi Yochanan, it takes six hours for someone to be hungry again after eating a full meal. The Adei Zahav explains that the time for Asher Yatzar, which is a rabbinic requirement, cannot be longer than it is for bensching, which is required min haTorah. Therefore, he concludes that the longest time

within which someone can recite Asher Yatzar is six hours after relieving himself.

Never too late

The Yad Aharon disagrees with the Adei Zahav, contending that although an after beracha is associated with the food or beverage that was consumed and, therefore, can be recited only as long as one is still satiated from what he ate, Asher Yatzar is a general beracha of thanks to Hashem and never becomes too late to recite. This approach would explain the position of the Levush that someone can recite Asher Yatzar in the morning, notwithstanding that it might be far more than six hours since he relieved himself.

The Chida, after quoting the above literature, states, “The mofeis of our generation, our master and rebbe, wrote in the margin of his personal copy that the Yad Aharon’s understanding is inaccurate. The rishonim explain that berachos after eating are appreciation... Asher Yatzar is a beracha for the salvation and also for the relief of the discomfort” (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 6:3). Later in his comments, the Chida explains that the Batei Kehunah held that Asher Yatzar has an expiration time, although he never shared with us how long he holds that would be.

There are other reasons to support the Levush’s position that someone should recite Asher Yatzar upon waking in the morning, even if he has no need to relieve himself. The Bach explains that Asher Yatzar should be treated like any other of the morning daily berachos, birkos hashachar, which most authorities assume are recited even if someone did not have a specific reason to recite them – such as, he is not wearing shoes or he is unable to rise from bed. Thus, even if someone had no need to use the facilities upon arising, he still should recite Asher Yatzar in the morning. This position is held by many other poskim, particularly the Rema (Orach Chayim 4:1), although he does not explain why he holds this way (see Magen Avraham 4:2; Elyah Rabbah 4:1; Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chayim 6:1; Mishnah Berurah 4:3). However, the Levush appears to disagree with this opinion of his rebbe, the Rema, and the Bach, implying that only someone who relieves himself recites the beracha Asher Yatzar, a position held by many other authorities (Arizal; Adei Zahav; Birkei Yosef).

The Levush himself (Orach Chayim 7:3) notes that the laws of Asher Yatzar should not be compared to the laws of berachos on food, since reciting Asher Yatzar is part of nature (we refer in English to a “call of nature”), whereas when and what we eat is an individual’s choice. The Levush and the Elyah Zuta (4: 1) both contend that this last distinction means that there is no time limit for reciting Asher Yatzar; however, the Chida questions whether this distinction makes any difference. In yet a third place (Orach Chayim 47:6 in his sidenote), the Levush again alludes to this topic, contending that, like the berachos prior to studying Torah, Asher Yatzar is not dependent on the time it takes to digest food.

Other acharonim add another idea. The beracha of Asher Yatzar includes an acknowledgement that there are apertures in the body that must remain open. Since this is something that we must acknowledge always, it is always appropriate to recite this beracha. Furthermore, the beracha of Asher Yatzar includes acknowledgement of the removal of ruach ra, which happens when we wash our hands upon awakening and when washing our hands after using the facilities. As such, Asher Yatzar is always appropriate upon awaking in the morning (Bach; Elyah Rabbah).

Among the many opinions explaining the Levush, many differences in halacha result. If the time for reciting Asher Yatzar never expires, someone who forgot to recite Asher Yatzar after relieving himself, when he remembers he should recite Asher Yatzar, regardless of how much time has transpired. According to the Adei Zahav, he should recite Asher Yatzar only within six hours of relieving himself.

Davening Outdoors

At this point, let us discuss the third of our opening questions: “Is it permitted to daven in the courtyard outside a shul?”

Based on a verse in Daniel (6:11), the Gemara (Berachos 34b) rules that a person should daven in a building that has windows. Rashi explains that looking at the sky humbles a person, causing him to daven with greater kavanah. The Gemara then quotes Rav Kahana that davening in an open field is considered an act of chutzpah. Rashi explains that davening in a place that is relatively notexposed, rather than an open field, creates greater fear of the King, and the individual’s stubborn heart is broken.

The poskim explain that this refers to a situation where the person has an alternative. However, someone traveling, and the best place to daven is an open field, may daven there, and it is not a chutzpah (Magen Avraham; Mishnah Berurah).

Tosafos asks: According to the Gemara, when Yitzchak went lasuach basadeh (Bereishis 24:63), he went to pray (Berachos 26b), so how could Rav Kahana call this an act of chutzpah?

Tosafos provides two answers to his question.

(1) Yitzchak went to Har Hamoriyah to daven, which is where the Beis Hamikdash would be built, implying that this is certainly a place that will create greater fear of Heaven and more humility.

(2) Rav Kahana is discouraging davening in an open place, where his prayer may be disturbed by passersby, whereas Yitzchak was in an area where there was no one to disturb him.

According to the second answer of Tosafos, there is nothing wrong with davening in a place that is completely exposed, as long as he is comfortable that no one will disturb his prayers. According to his first answer, this is not true. We should note that Rashi’s reason disagrees with

Tosafos’s second answer, and Rashi may accept Tosafos’s first reason (see next paragraph).

The Beis Yosef questions Tosafos’s second answer: why did Rav Kahana say that davening outdoors is a chutzpah? The concern is not of chutzpah, but because he will get distracted. For this reason, he follows the first reason of Tosafos in his Shulchan Aruch, and quotes Rashi’s reasoning: “A person should not pray in an open area, such as a field, because someone in a non-exposed place has greater fear of the King and his heart is broken” (Orach Chayim 90:5). We should note that several prominent poskim provide various explanations why Tosafos was not bothered by the Beis Yosef’s question (see Perisha, Bach, Taz, Magein Giborim, all in Orach Chayim 90).

The Magen Avraham (90:6) adds to this discussion by quoting the Zohar that implies that a person should daven inside a building. The Chida reports to us that the Batei Kehunah wrote a great deal about this topic. He concluded that it is sufficient if the area is enclosed, but it is not necessary for it to be roofed. The Birkei Yosef (Orach Chayim 90:2) notes that great rabbis often pray in the unroofed courtyards of shullen.

The Mishnah Berurah concludes this topic with the following ruling: Notwithstanding that the Shulchan Aruch rejected Tosafos’s approach, many acharonim justify this answer that it is acceptable to daven outdoors in a place where someone will not be disturbed. A traveler may daven outdoors, but should preferably daven under trees, if practical. However, someone who is home should not rely on this, and should daven indoors (Mishnah Berurah 90:11). Thus, it would seem that, according to the Mishnah Berurah, it is incorrect to daven outdoors in the courtyard of a shul when he has the option of davening in the shul itself. On the other hand, Sefardim, who tend to follow the conclusions of the Chida, probably have a strong halachic basis to daven inside gates, even if there is no roof above them, relying on the Chida who followed the ruling of his rebbe, Rav Yitzchak Rapaport, the author of the Batei Kehunah.

Conclusion:

The power of tefillah is very great. Through tefillah one can save lives, bring people closer to Hashem and overturn harsh decrees. We have to believe in this power. One should not think, “Who am I to daven to Hashem?” Rather, we must continually drive home the concept that Hashem wants our tefillos and He listens to them! Let us hope that Hashem will accept our tefillos together with those of all Klal Yisrael!

Rabbi YY Jacobson

We Need to Get Rid Of the Inferiority Complex -- Why Our First and Greatest Leader Never Ate Schmaltz Herring It Takes a Village

It is one of the great questions about the most impactful Jewish teacher. Why did Providence have it that our first and greatest leader be raised among non-Jews, and even worse, in the home of their archenemy, Pharaoh?

“It takes a village to raise a child,” the old saying goes. No man is an island. We all grow up within a community and are molded by our environment. Nurture, not only nature, craft our identities. We all recall from childhood the “strange uncle,” the “eccentric aunt,” the “insane neighbor,” the “saintly grandmother,” the “stingy owner of the candy store,” the “stern teacher,” the “angry bakery owner,” each of whom left impressions on our psyche and affected our way of dealing with the world around us.

It certainly “takes a village to raise a Jewish child.” Judaism is a family and community faith. We all have memories of Passover with our parents, grandparents, and extended family. We recall the “humorous Rabbi,” the “impatient gabbai,” the “beloved shamash,” the “sweet bubbly,” the “hypocritical teacher,” the “brilliant mentor,” who conferred upon us our own interpretation of Jewish identity, for good or for better. As we grow up among Jews, we absorb the culture, the heritage, the faith, the world-outlook, the sigh, and the laugh of our people. Never underestimate the power of schmaltz herring and chicken soup: It is how generations of grandmothers have passed on their love and wisdom to generations that came after them. Yet the first Jewish leader, who molded us into a people, our greatest prophet and teacher, the transmitter of Torah, grew up without Jewish parents, without a Jewish family, without a Jewish environment, without a community of Jews, completely absorbed in a non-Jewish culture and environment.

What is even stranger is that he grew up in the palace of Pharaoh, the monarch of the superpower of the time, the tyrant who has been systematically exterminating the Jewish people. Imagine, Moses—the great redeemer and teacher of Israel—essentially grew up in the home of a Stalin, or a Hitler! Why?

We know the technicalities of the story. Pharaoh’s daughter, Batya, went to bathe in the Nile River and found a little baby floating in a basket on the Nile. She retrieved the basket, rescued the child, and took him in as a son. G-d’s imagination is fertile. He could have arranged for another Egyptian, not Pharaoh’s daughter, to take in the child.[1] Or, better yet, that somehow Moses would remain among his family and his people, absorbing the energy and ideology of the Jewish people?

The US President

You all recall the controversy around the status of President Obama, triggered by President Donald Trump. The American Constitution places certain restrictions on those who may be eligible to the Office of the President of the United States. These eligibility requirements can be found in Article two, Section one, Paragraph five of the constitution, which reads as follows:

“No person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any Person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty-five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States.”

There is logic to this law. To serve as an adequate leader, you need to be a “homegrown potato.” You need to have been raised “among the people, by the people, with the people,” so that you can truly understand “the people.” To be sure, some of the great Jewish scholars and leaders were converts: Shmaya and Avtalyon, Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Akiva, Onkelus the Translator (whose Aramaic translation of Torah is printed in virtually every edition of the Hebrew Bible), and many more—yet, at least the father and progenitor of all Jewish leaders should have received some hands-on experience from Jews.

Dr. Sigmund Freud’s final book was titled *Moses and Monotheism*. It was published in 1939, by which time Freud had taken refuge in Britain. He, too, was perturbed by the above question and thus reached the absurd conclusion that Moses was the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; he really was a prince of Egypt.

So we are back to our original question: Why?

The Question of Ibn Ezra

The question has been raised by one of the most important Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages, Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, who lived in the 12th century in Spain. He was a sage, philosopher, physician, astronomer, astrologist, poet, linguist, and mathematician.[2] He wrote a commentary on the Torah that is studied to this very day.

Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra was born in Tudela, Spain, but spent most of his life wandering from one country to another, always restless, always seeking knowledge, writing his books, teaching students, and always living in great poverty, depending on people’s patronage. In one of his personal poems he ironically says that at his nativity the stars change their natural course to bring him misfortune, so much so that if he decided to sell candles the sun would never set, and if he decided to sell burial shrouds, no one would ever die.

Let us turn to Ibn Ezra’s prolific pen:[3]

ומחשבות ה' עמוק, ומי יוכל לעמוד בסודו, ולו לבד נתכנו עלילות.

G-d’s thoughts are deep and mysterious, who can grasp His secret? Only He comprehends His schemes!

You just got Judaism 101. The first answer Jews always give is: We don’t understand. We don’t get it. Why did Moses have to grow up in the bosom of Pharaoh? Answer: I don’t know. So the Lord desired.

But, of course, we never stop there. Ibn Ezra goes on to give two powerful speculations why G-d desired this pattern.

Keep the Distance

Answer #1:[4]

ועוד דבר אחר, כי אלו היה גדל בין אחיו ויכירוהו מנעוריו, לא היו יראים ממנו, כי יחשבוהו כאחד מהם.

The first answer is a somewhat satirical comment about Jewish culture, and it holds true to this day. Had Moses grown up among Jews, he would have never garnered the respect and awe he needed in order to lead them to redemption and mold them into greatness.

Had Moses been raised in the Yeshiva and in the community, there would have always been the guys in the back of the synagogue who would come up to him after his speech, pat him on his back, and say "Hey Mosheleh, we miss the days when you played football with us outside? When did you become so serious?"

And when he would come down from Sinai with the Torah, there would always be an old grandmother, who would say to him: "I remember you as a baby in your crib. Oy vey, you did not stop crying, but you were so cute. Your endless sobs made your mother miserable; today, you're such a big shot. But I must tell you, you are still so cute..."

And there would always be the wise guys from the "kiddush club" who would react to any serious sermon he gave: "Moses? Come take a drink."

You know the anecdote: When President Dwight Eisenhower met with Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, the American president said: "It is very hard to be the president of 170 million people." Ben-Gurion responded: "It's harder to be the prime minister of 2 million prime ministers."

When you grow up with people from childhood, it is hard for them to truly submit to your authority, even if you deserve it. "You can't be a prophet in your own town," is the ancient expression.[5] There is always someone who remembers how he used to change your diapers and will make sure to remind you of it.

So Providence has Moses growing up among non-Jews. No Jew ever saw him run around in the yard of shul playing baseball and eating potato chips; no one ever saw him getting a spanking or taking extra ice cream at the kiddush; no one ever babysat for him. The distance was necessary for Moses to become who he needed to become.

A Majestic Attitude

Answer #2:

Now, Ibn Ezra gives a second explanation:

אולי סבב ה' זה שיגדל משה בבית המלכות להיות נפשו על מדרגה העליונה בדרך הלימוד והרגילות, ולא תהיה שפלה ורגילה להיות בבית עבדים. הלא תראה, שהרג המצרי בעבור שהוא עשה חמס. והושיע בנות מדין מהרועים, בעבור שהיו עושים חמס להשקות צאנן מהמים שדלו.

Perhaps G-d caused Moses to grow up in the home of royalty so that his soul would be accustomed to a higher sense of learning and behavior, and he would not feel lowly and accustomed to dwelling in a house of slavery. Indeed you see that he killed an Egyptian who did a criminal act [beating an innocent Hebrew to death], and he saved the Midianite girls from the criminal shepherds who were

irrigating their own flock from the water the girls have drawn.

The curse of the Egyptian exile consisted not only of the physical slave labor, and the horrible oppression of the Hebrews. It also inculcated within the Hebrews an exile-like mentality. Many of them learned to see their misery as an inherent reality. When you are abused as a slave for so many years, you sometimes become accustomed to the darkness and cease to sense the extraordinary degradation of your situation.

You might remember the old anecdote. Two Jewish men in Tsarist Russia were being led out to a firing squad: one, a humble tailor, the other a wild anarchist. As the Tsarist officer in charge of the firing squad tried to put a blindfold on the condemned anarchist, the young Jew fought back. He would face death unblinkingly, he said bravely. Alarmed, his fellow Jew interceded: "Please, don't make trouble!"

This is why the redeemer of Israel needed to grow up in the Egyptian palace, not among his own people. Had Moses grown up among the Hebrew slaves, he too would have suffered from a slave paradigm, lacking the courage to fight injustice and devoid of the ability to mold an enslaved tribe into a great people with a vision of transforming the world. He might have not found within himself the strength to dream of liberty and confront the greatest tyrant of the time. Because he grew up in a royal ambiance, free of physical and psychological shackles, Moses had a clear sense of the horrific injustice and felt the power to fight it. He was raised in an atmosphere of broadness, of endless possibilities. He felt like a prince, not a slave. Thus he can overthrow the government.

The Two Stories About Moses

Ibn Ezra proves this from the two stories the Torah shares about Moses before he was chosen to become a leader.

The opening story the Torah tells us of Moses as an active adult (besides his birth) that went out to his brothers, saw an Egyptian beating a Jew. Moses killed the Egyptian and saved an innocent life.

Why was he the only one who stopped the Egyptian from beating the Jew? Why did no one else kill the Egyptian? Because a slave often surrenders himself to his pitiful fate.

What is the subsequent story in the Torah about Moses? Due to his act of aggression, he is forced to escape to Midian. Once again he finds himself embroiled in yet another conflict. He witnesses the local shepherds bullying a group of girls who were first in line to draw water from a well. He immediately rises to their defense, driving off the offending shepherds.

Moses was a stranger who had just arrived in town. Who asked him to intervene? Who asked him to get involved? Especially after he saw the trouble he endured after the first time he stood up for an innocent victim. The answer is that someone who grew up in a house of royalty has the

courage and the assertiveness to take charge and administer justice wherever it is called for. He had the mindset and the confidence not to allow bullies to bully innocent young women.

Molotov the Follower

There was a time in the nineteen forties when Vyacheslav Molotov was Soviet foreign minister. He was a shrewd man and a hard bargainer but worked for Joseph Stalin, who was The Boss. He was once overheard talking to Stalin by trans-Atlantic telephone during the course of some very intricate negotiations with the West. He said, "Yes, Comrade Stalin," in quiet tones, then again, "Yes, Comrade Stalin, and then, after a considerable wait, "Certainly, Comrade Stalin." Suddenly he was galvanized into emotion. "No, Comrade Stalin," he barked, "No. That's, no. Definitely, no. A thousand times, no!"

After a while, he quieted and it was "Yes, Comrade Stalin," again. The reporter who overheard this was probably never so excited in his life. Clearly, Molotov was daring to oppose the dictator on at least one point, and it would surely be important to the West to know what that point might be.

The reporter approached Molotov and said as calmly as possible, Secretary Molotov, I could not help but hear you say at one point, "No, Comrade Stalin."

Molotov turned his cold eyes on the reporter and said, "What of it?"

"May I ask," said the reporter, cautiously, "What the subject under discussion was at that time?"

"You may," said Molotov. "Comrade Stalin asked me if there was anything which he had said with which I disagreed."

Are You a Slave?

This is true for each of our lives.

Many of us, after being subjected to dysfunctional conditions for a time, learn to somehow tolerate it and accept it as the innate condition of our lives. This can be worse than the condition itself, since it guarantees no way out.

We must cultivate in ourselves and in our loved ones the feeling of royalty. "The greatest tragedy," said the Chassidic master Rabbi Aaron of Karlin, "is when the prince believes he is a peasant," when you settle for less because you think you are destined to slavery. You don't see yourself as a prince, as a child of G-d, and hence lack that feeling that you can rewrite your future and achieve your ultimate potential.

One Day of Sleep

You know the story of Senator David Rice Atchison.

When President-elect Zachary Taylor refused to be inaugurated on the scheduled date of March 4, 1850, because it was a Sunday and the Christian Sabbath, he moved his inauguration to the next day. This would leave the nation without a president for 24 hours, because

Taylor's predecessor, President James Polk, was leaving office as scheduled on Sunday at noon.

The rules of succession left Senator Atchison in line to be president for that one day.

Unfortunately, Senator Atchison, fond of food and drink, overdid things at the inauguration parties on Saturday night and into the wee hours of the next day, and left strict instructions not to be awakened at all on Sunday. By the time he woke up and emerged, it was Monday afternoon.

He had slept through his entire presidency.

Is this not the story of some of our lives? We sleep through our presidency. We sleep through great possibilities, as we forget that each of our souls is infinite, a "fragment of the Divine." Instead of living lives of greatness, we settle for mediocrity. We forget that though not always great ourselves, we are connected to greatness beyond ourselves. We are the sons and daughters of royalty, and we were given the gift to bring healing to G-d's world.

We convince ourselves that we can't be any kinder, or more compassionate, or less angry, or more understanding. We convince ourselves that our marriages are destined to fail and that the fighting in the house will endure. We think like slaves: what was yesterday will be tomorrow, and I am always a victim.

When you see yourself as a victim, you become a victim.

It is true for us as individuals and for Jews as a collective. The world is embarrassed by Jews who are embarrassed with themselves; the world respects and admires Jews who respect themselves and their Judaism.

In our present battle, too, we must get rid of our inferiority complex. We must stand up to evil with unwavering courage and conviction. Our mission is to be ambassadors of love and truth, and never compromise the truth for falsehood and evil. When we let go of moral clarity and leadership, the world suffers. When we embrace our royalty, the world is liberated.

[1] This is how the Maharal states the question in Gevuros Hashem ch. 18

[2] Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (1089 — 1164) was born in Tudela, Spain in 1089, and died on the 4th of Shevat (January 24) 1167, apparently in Calahorra. He was one of the most distinguished Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages.

[3] Ibn Ezra to Exodus 2:3

[4] Actually, in the Ibn Ezra, this is answer #2.

[5] Ahavas Olam By Rabi Shmuel Algazi; Abarbenel, in his commentary Zevach Pesach on the Haggadah Shel Pesach; Midrash Shmuel to Avos 3:11 ("Hamechalel es hakadashim") in the name of "Chazal"; Commentary of Rabbi Yosef Yavvat to Avos ibis; Responsa, Chasam Sofer Coshen Mishpat section 22: "Chazal said that ein navei leero" (Fascinating: He brings this as a source for an actual halacha, that we choose a rabbi who comes from a

different city.) He also states this in his Responsa, *ibid.* section 196. We did not as of yet find an ancient source in “Chazal” for this statement. See here for a longer discussion and many more sources: <http://forum.otzar.org/viewtopic.php?t=23144>

Rabbi Norman Lamm Va'yehi

The Jewish Center - January 5, 1974

“THE MOOD IN ISRAEL”

My recent trip to Israel, from which I returned this past week, was qualitatively different from my many previous trips. I am still in the grip of the mood of the country--indeed too much so to be objective. I shall therefore leave the analysis for some other occasion, and offer now my personal impressions, given without claim to special expertise and without having been privy to any inside information.

The mood in Israel today is not a simple or homogeneous one. It is quite complicated and often contradictory. Instead of describing it in over-all terms, it is best to identify the ingredients of this mood.

Perhaps the best way to begin is by observing the difference between us and the Israelis. During the first several days of the war, we recited *tehillim* (Psalms) at our daily services, and read the “Prayer for the State of Israel” with special fervor. But after a week or two we stopped, feeling that the danger had passed. In Israel, to this day, every service includes the recitation of *tehillim*.

It is true that the deep gloom has lifted somewhat both because of the Geneva conference (although Israelis hardly trust it) and the increase in tourism. The rise of tourism is uplifting for

Israelis, especially since they correctly consider it as the barometer of what the world thinks of Israel's chances, much as the stock-market is a psychological indicator. It is hard to emphasize how important it is for us American Jews to visit Israel now.

But sadness remains a primary ingredient of the mood, and it is very real. *אבלות* (mourning) grips so many of those who have lost members of their families and those who have lost friends or whose friends are in mourning. Never before have I seen so many people, especially children, rise to recite the orphan's *kaddish* in synagogues. It is not uncommon to see maimed or bandaged young men on the street. In many neighborhoods or *kibbutzim* the population is heavily female, with hardly a man in sight. A young lady from America, who accompanied her father on a trip, noticed that many of the bus drivers were wearing caps (*kippot*), far in excess of what she had noticed three years ago when she previously visited the country. She was bold enough to ask one of the bus drivers of the Egged line in Jerusalem whether they had suddenly begun to employ more *datim* (religious Jews) as drivers. The driver explained that many of them are Sephardim, and that the

custom amongst them is that when they are in mourning for a close relative, they wear the *kippah* the whole year...

Even for the survivors there is not complete joy. For instance, youngsters in Jerusalem get a bit nervous when they hear the sound of jet planes overhead--reminding them of the jet planes they heard that Yom Kippur day. When I visited the yeshiva in Gush Etzion, I found a pervasive sadness because one third of the student body was present--those who come from overseas; the Israeli students are serving at the fronts. Shortly after my arrival, I received a telephone call from a colleague who teaches at the Tel Aviv University and who called to say hello because he had heard that I was in the country. We exchanged courtesies, and then I asked him about the situation. He broke down, crying over the phone, and explained that he had just begun to teach three days earlier, on Sunday, when the universities of the country opened up the first time since the war. He told me that he met many of his old students who had survived, but that though they may be whole in body, they were not whole in mind and heart. Some had been in Egyptian captivity, and reported to him that the tortures were so sadistic, so incredible, that they will never be the same. My colleague was dreadfully upset that this was remaining a secret, but apparently the government believes that, for diplomatic reasons, it is best not to publicize this fact. Some of the men who underwent these experiences were perplexed: at least the Nazis had an “ideology” about Jews being sub-humans and dangerous, but the Egyptians had no reasons whatsoever to perform their acts of mad sadism.

However, with this sadness there is another intangible element that I find extremely difficult to describe. I do not know how to identify it, whether as a peculiar Jewish historical awareness or an intensified grief. Perhaps it is best to refer to it as a special kind of dignity which allows one to keep his sanity and dignity intact in the face of the consciousness of all the grief of Jewish history telescoped into the short span of one's own lifetime. The story was told by President Katzir at the Seminar I attended. He decided to pay a condolence call to a father who had lost a son in battle. He came to the home, and offered his words of consolation to the father. After a while, the father looked up, thanked the President, and said to him: “Yes, I am consoled. I feel better this time than I did thirty years ago. Then the Germans killed my father, but I never knew where his grave is; now at least, the Arabs killed my son and I know where he is buried...”

In addition to sadness and what might be called dignity, there is also the element of powerful anger. There is a feeling, especially amongst soldiers who were at the front, that they were betrayed by the government's negligence. What is called the *מהדלים*, the terrible neglect and failures of the security set-up, are being investigated by a national commission of inquiry. But no matter what they will find, the charisma of the old leaders is dissipated, the halos are

wilted, and no longer do they appear as shining and faultless heroes. One hopes that both Israelis and Jews of the Diaspora will now become a bit more sophisticated, and see people as only people, without looking for new heroes.

Part of this anger is revealed in the unusual kind of pre-election propaganda that appeared in the Israeli press this past week. I do not remember ever having heard anything of this sort. For instance, the *מערך* (Alignment), the major political party, announced to the voters: *אתה רוצה להעניש את המערך*, "You want to punish the Alignment--but consider what the alternative is..." In the English press in Israel, the same party published something of this sort: "You hold the government responsible--but that is still better than an irresponsible government..." In other words, it is an open secret, to which the major party confesses, that they are responsible and punishable but they ask for reelection because the others are even worse. All these are signs of a justifiable inner fury.

Following from this is, quite naturally, a feeling of frustration. Often, elections play a cathartic role, they allow the voter to vent his spleen, to get rid of his emotional excess. That did not happen this time in Israel. The elections proved--almost nothing at all.

A distinguished columnist in Israel, Eliyahu Amiqam, wrote on the eve of the election what he once heard from a Communist Polish professor of law, who was an observer at the Eichman trial, about Polish elections, and he applied it as well to the current Israeli elections--namely, that it is a sign of paradise. What does that mean? Because in Paradise, God took Adam, brought him to Eve, and said, "Here, choose a wife!" And so, Adam freely chose Eve...

The Israeli voter did not feel that he had a real, clear, decisive choice to make. The structure of Israeli politico is such that he was confused. Polls show that about 40% of the electorate was undecided on the eve of the election. Hawks and Doves are not clearly definable in Israel. The extreme of either position is probably rejected by the great majority of all voters.

Often, hawk and doves coexist within the same person.

And then there is a feeling of suspiciousness as an important element in the mood of

Israel, a suspiciousness which results from Israel's isolation. Some one put it well in the American press: "in every warm heart there is a cold spot for the Jews." One can hardly meet a single Israeli who does not believe with all his heart that the Arabs have only one ultimate aim: *חיסול המדינה*, the dismemberment of the state. Israeli Arabists expect really nothing of substance to emerge from the current Geneva conversations. Dr. Kissinger is the topic of incessant conversation amongst the Israelis, much of it speculative and unrealistic. Israelis keep reminding themselves several times a day that Kissinger is really the foreign minister of the United States, not of Israel...

Counter-balancing all these negative elements in the national mood, are several brighter aspects. One of them is a manifestation of a great and noble Jewish virtue: gratitude. Israelis are grateful. They are grateful to President Nixon, much to the chagrin of many American Jewish liberals. They are grateful to Jews of the Diaspora for their assistance--although, speaking for myself, I find that it is embarrassing, because I believe that American Jews could have done much more. They are especially grateful to Holland. During one of the days I was in Israel, young people stood at street corners in the large cities and distributed little red round stickers, to be placed on the lapel. They were in the shape of an orange, symbol of Israel, and within it was a windmill, representative of Holland. And on the perimeter were the words: *עם ישראל מוקיר את העם ההולנדי*, "The people of Israel loves (or cherishes) the people of Holland."

Perhaps it will be a good idea for some American Jewish businessmen to build a proper, kosher, and lavish hotel in Holland, and for American Jewish organizations to encourage tourism, so that after Israel, Holland will be the favorite place for American Jewish tourists--more than Paris, London, Tokyo, or even Puerto Rico.

There is also an element of justifiable pride in what Israel has accomplished. President Aber Harman of Hebrew University was right when he said that Israel on Yom Kippur was defending the right of every little country to exist. Israelis know that if the Arabs were to destroy Israel, no little nation in the world would ever be safe. They take pride in the valor of their soldiers, non-professionals who fought against overwhelming odds.

Especially magnificent was the role of the students of Yeshivot ha-Hesder, those "modern yeshivot" whose students served in the army alternatively with studying at the yeshiva. These schools lost a disproportionately high number of their students, because it was they who were serving in the tank and paratroop corps on both fronts on that Yom Kippur day. Furthermore, students from such schools as Kerem Beyavneh, Har Etzion, Yeshivat Hakotel, Shalavim, etc., were also volunteering to serve as officiants during the High Holidays services. Their losses, their valor, their bravery, constitute a great modern instance of *kiddush hashem*.

Finally, I detected a new and deep questing and questioning. It is too early to call it *התעוררות דתית*, a religious renaissance. Sometimes, if one hurries to identify a new movement, he nips it in the bud and effectively kills it. What we are now witnessing is something much slower than the upsurge of feelings after the Six Day War, when we saw the pictures of paratroopers crying as they embraced the Wall. I feel that what is now going on is, perhaps because it is slower and more halting, something that is more profound and lasting than the euphoria of six years ago. It is a deeper, sadder, larger view of the tragic dimension of life, and with it comes a search for meaning.

And the search for meaning is already a religious and spiritual quest.

One detects a kind of teshuva, repentance, for the previous arrogance, over-confidence, and cockiness of so many Israelis, a feeling of regret and contrition for their loss of idealism which made them look more and more like American middle-class Jews.

There is a feeling, vague and inchoate, but conscious nonetheless, that the Yom Kippur War meant something, but they are not quite sure what it meant.

Perhaps this developing attitude for the Israeli during the Yom Kippur War can best be explained in terms of something we read in this morning's Sidra. Jacob, the dying patriarch, called his children about him, האספו ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים, "Gather around me and I will tell you what shall befall you in the end of days." It seems clear that Jacob intends to prophecy for his children, predicting to them their ultimate fate. Yet, after we read his poetic words, we notice that they are predictive only to a very minor extent, that they are mostly a combination of תוכחה וברכה, of rebuke and blessing, and of a description of the collective character of his children. Somehow, then, the major body of Jacob's words does not follow clearly from his prefatory remark. Perhaps that is why the Rabbis, in the Midrash and in the Talmud, maintain that something happened at this moment: ביקש יעקב לגלות את הקץ ונסתלקה ממנו שכינה, Jacob indeed desired to reveal to his children the end of days, the advent of Messiah, but at that moment the Divine Spirit departed from him and so he lost his predictive-prophetic faculty.

However, if I be permitted to offer an alternative explanation, I would say that Jacob never intended to prophesy to his children any detailed program of redemption at the end of days. Note carefully that the word he uses is not יקרה, which we would normally expect in Hebrew as "befall" or "happen," but יקרא, which literally means, "call." What Jacob meant to tell his children is this: I want to describe to you your own inner qualities, so that, at the end of days, no matter what the situation is, no matter what events present themselves to you, you will perceive them as challenges, as a summons from on high to respond with nobility and generosity, as a call from God to rise to new achievements and to greater heights.

Jews recognize that Yom Kippur War was such a or קריאה, such a call. It was a summons and a challenge. It revealed something. But we are not quite sure what that was.

Hence, requests for תשמישי קדושה, for religious articles such as tefillin and copies of tehillim (Psalms). I am fully aware that for many soldiers the little book of Psalms was more of a talisman than an opportunity to read words which would inspire them religiously. The request for tefillin has been derided by some as "foxhole religion." But that does not bother me. Better foxhole religion than penthouse atheism. I prefer that people come to religion out of gratitude and affluence, but the fact is that most people achieve a deeper

recognition of their condition through crisis and hardship. What counts is the end result.

I might add that the Chabad people are not the only group who are distributing tefillin. The same is being done by Gesher, by the Mizrachi, by many small organizations of great significance, and by many private individuals who fill up their car with candy, liquor, cigarettes, and tallit and tefillin.

During the time I was in Israel, a small article appeared in the Israeli press which shows that the tefillin campaign even reaches beyond Israeli troops. Chabad people were at the Suez front, in the western bridgehead of the Israeli army in Africa, and were offering the tefillin to Israeli soldiers. The UN team was nearby, and engaged the Chabad people in conversation, inquiring after the meaning of the tefillin and their particular garb. One UN official was particularly persistent and inquisitive in his questions, and upon inquiry he revealed that he was a Swede by the name of Joseph Bergson. Are you Jewish? One of the Lubavitcher people asked.

Yes, he was. Before five minutes were over, Joseph Bergson of the UN commission was "davening" in his tefillin...

My own experience confirm this new quest. Three years ago I spoke to troops several times, younger boys and girls, and I found that it was not always easy to communicate with them. I felt, uneasily, that I was simply not on the same wave-length. I detected indifference, an anxiousness to emphasize the "normalcy" of Israel and the Jewish people, an aversion to considering themselves as different and special, and a closed mind to the religious word.

It is different today. I was asked to address troops, first in the Canal and then in Syria, but the "full high alert" prevented that. Instead I went to the Bikaah, on the Jordanian front, nearly half a kilometer from Jordanian soldiers. A Hasidic band played and another speaker and I addressed the troops. Our themes were Israel as the עם הנבחר, the Chosen People; אמונה, faith; not wasting their special talents; questioning, searching. I found them not only receptive, but also participating. And in the dancing there was sheer ecstasy. Here were 300 soldiers, combat engineers, who took time out from laying mines and anti-tank traps, 80% or more officially "non-religious," who sang and danced to such songs as עם ישראל חי and other, new melodies both from American and Israel, with the abandon that comes from דבקות, or religious fervor. As one visitor pointed out, it was like a Hasidic wedding, without a bride and a groom.

In conclusion, I would like to share with you one story that I heard, first person, from a brother of a cousin of mine. It tells us something about the hope and the feelings that motivate our Israeli brothers. This young man emigrated with his very young family from the Lower East Side and he became an Israeli citizen. He was assigned to the

reserves that served on the Bar Lev Line on that fateful Yom Kippur day.

Ephraim was one of 200 men, whom he referred to humorously as “third class infantry soldiers,” most of them married with children, in the 24-38 year old bracket. These were part of the *חטיבת ירושלים*, the brigade of soldiers drawn from the Jerusalem area, the one that was most hard hit during the war, stationed near Kantara.

Ephraim told me of how they were attacked by 50,000-60,000 Egyptian soldiers, how the more he picked the enemy soldiers off with his machine gun, the more swarmed over the Canal. After several hours of battle, his own group was mauled and many of his close friends killed or wounded. Shortly thereafter, there came the order from his commander for his group to withdraw back into the desert toward the Israeli lines. Some 47 men departed and broke into two groups, as they made their way through the minefields back to their own lines. Ephraim and 22 others broke off from the rest of the troops, and they decided that each could take but one object with him. Most men chose an Uzi, the submachine gun. Ephraim took an Uzi but also decided to take along his tallit, and one of the other men chose a pair of tefillin. For one and a half days they made their way through the desert, avoiding enemy fire. Then they noticed that they were caught in cross-fire, in between the Egyptian and Israeli lines, both sides firing on them. The Egyptians assumed, correctly, that they were Israeli soldiers. The Israelis thought, incorrectly, that they were Egyptians. At one point they made their way to the top of a hill, behind some bushes. The Israeli tanks thought that they were enemy tanks, and instead of firing with machine guns, aimed their cannon at the 22 Israeli soldiers. The cannon fire kept on getting closer, while the soldiers tried desperately to get a wavelength on their wireless radio to contact the tanks and tell them they are Israelis. But it was all to no avail and they expected the worst. And what seemed the last moment, Ephraim realized that he had with him the best form of communication: he unfurled his tallit and waved it. At first, the Israeli tanks thought it was an Egyptian robe, but they quickly recognized it, got out of the tanks and beckoned to them to run over. Thus were 22 Jewish souls saved because of Ephraim’s tallit.

Ephraim told me, after repeating this story, that he just “knows” that holding the Egyptians down the first two or three days was something that could not be explained by natural, logical, military categories or concepts. Something more was at work. It is inconceivable, he told me, that this was anything but a miracle--and the miracle came soaked in pain and grief and anguish...

I conclude this description of Israel’s mood with the story of Ephraim Holland and his tallit, not because I believe in the magical properties of religious artifacts. I do not. But to me it is symbolic, deeply and gloriously, of Israel, its faith, and its great hope for its future.

Recall that Israel’s colors, white and blue, originally were chosen because the *תכלת ולבן*, the white and blue tzitzit that once were part of the tallit. (Now it is all white).

The tallit is thus the symbol of Israel, both state and people, and it is the tallit, and the faith in the Almighty that it represents, that can and will save us.

When donning the tallit in the morning, many pious Jews recite a preliminary prayer in which, amongst other things, we say:

וע”י מצות ציצית נספצל נפשי רוחי ונשמתי ותפקלתי מן ההיצבנים והטלית יקשר כנפיו עליהם וימילם כנשר יעיר קסב עלגבזליו ירחף.

“And by virtue of my observance of the commandment of the tzitzit, may my soul be saved from all dangers and demonic forces in the world. May the tallit raise its corners over me and protect me, like an eagle spreading its wings over its nest to protect its young.”

May that tallit be the symbol of the wings of the Shekhinah, as the Almighty God of Israel offers us protection and security and love, so that we may go into the uncertain future calmly, prayerfully, successfully--and peacefully.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Shemos

Remove Your Shoes: The Place You Stand Upon Is Holy Ground

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1276 — Cap and Gown at Graduation: Is There A Halachic Problem? Good Shabbos! I would like to begin my remarks by sharing a true story that I experienced. Some time ago, I was in Europe for the summer as a scholar in residence on a tour of different European cities. One of the countries we visited was Hungary. The tour arrived at the banks of the Danube River in Budapest, at what is called “The Shoe Memorial.” A very famous sculptor created a formation of metal shoes secured to the ground along the Danube.

Up until 1944, Adolph Hitler had a peace treaty with Hungary. That is why the Hungarian Jews were not directly affected by the Holocaust until 1944. Jews in Poland and Germany and all over Europe were already rounded up for execution several years earlier, but Hungarian Jews initially escaped exportation because of Hitler’s peace treaty with Hungary.

In 1944, Hitler broke the peace treaty, and it became open season on Hungarian Jews, who were deported to concentration camps in 1944 and 1945. Adolph Eichman was in charge of exporting and exterminating Hungarian Jewry. When the treaty was originally broken, there was a Fascist group in Hungary called the Arrow-Cross, which could not wait for Germany’s exportations, and they started killing Jews themselves in Hungary itself.

They would line up Jews on the banks of the Danube River and mow them down. The Jews fell backwards into the

river giving rise to the famous quote – the Blue Danube literally turned red! But before the Arrow-Cross murderers did that, they made the Jews take off their shoes. Shoes were precious in those days, and they wanted to salvage the Jews' shoes for themselves.

To commemorate this horrible genocide, the above-mentioned sculptor went ahead and fashioned a twenty-foot section of the embankment with various shoes – of men, women, and children.

Our group went to this very moving site. I pointed out the irony that even though this was not the intention of the Arrow-Cross, “The place where we are standing is a makom kadosh (holy place).” Why did I call it a holy place? It is because any Jew who is killed simply because he is a Jew is a kadosh. He has died al pi Kiddush Hashem (as a martyr who sanctifies G-d's Name).

In this week's parsha, regarding a holy place, the pasuk says “Do not draw near, remove your shoes from your feet for the place which you stand upon is holy ground.” (Shemos 3:5). It is ironic. In this particular place, by the banks of the Danube River, the Jews took off their shoes. I was not suggesting to our group that they should take off their shoes. But I made the comment that there is something else that we can learn from that incident where Moshe Rabbeinu was told to take off his shoes at the Burning Bush:

We all know the story. Moshe Rabbeinu saw a burning bush – one of the iconic images of the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim. The pasuk says, “And Hashem saw that Moshe turned to draw near and investigate...” (Shemos 3:4) Both the pasuk and Chazal make a big deal of the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu went to check it out. But let us ask: What is the big deal here? Wouldn't anyone seeing a burning bush that was not being consumed try to get a better look and check out what was happening? Of course they would! People run to view a burning building which defies no laws of nature. Here, a miraculous event was transpiring. Certainly, any person would want to go and investigate the matter!

The Sforno on that pasuk makes the following comment: “He went to see what was happening – l'his'bonen ba'davar (to contemplate upon the matter). Moshe was not just interested in the sight. L'his'bonen ba'davar means he wanted to comprehend “What does this mean? What is the significance of the phenomenon I am witnessing?” Moshe understood that he was being sent a message. The Ribono shel Olam was making an open miracle, which He does not do on a daily basis. “What is the Ribono shel Olam telling me?”

That was the greatness of Moshe Rabbeinu. He saw something noteworthy and it immediately prompted him to ask himself – What is the Ribono shel Olam trying to tell me?

The Ribono shel Olam was trying to tell Moshe that this burning bush, which was not being consumed, was going to

represent the history of Klal Yisrael. We went down to Mitzrayim and the Egyptians tried to eradicate us, but we survived. This is something that has been going on for the last three thousand years. Whether it was the Egyptian exile, the Babylonian exile, the Greek exile, or the Roman exile; whether it was the destruction of the batei mikdash, whether it was the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the decrees of Tac'h v'Ta't (1648/1649), or whether it was the Holocaust, they have tried to eradicate us just like in Mitzrayim. BUT THE BUSH WAS NOT CONSUMED. That is the defining visual icon of Klal Yisrael. They can keep trying to burn us, but the bush will not be consumed. This is the message that Moshe Rabbeinu took out of this incident.

This tour in Hungary that I accompanied took place in July 2014. The previous March, there was a conference of European rabbis, who held a ceremony at the site of this Shoe Memorial, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the start of the deportation of Hungarian Jewry. The Kalover Rebbe (Menachem Mendel Taub, 1923-2018) was present at that ceremony. The Kalover Rebbe was a Hungarian rav, who was deported to Auschwitz. He survived the war and then became a Rebbe of Kalover Chassidim in Yerushalayim. He spoke at that ceremony commemorating what had happened there seventy years earlier!

The Kalover Chassidim have a niggun which many people may have heard. It is actually a Hungarian tune, without Jewish origin, but it has been adopted by Kalover Chassidim. The Kalover Rebbe got up at this anniversary commemoration and sang this niggun. It was incredibly moving that there were a group of young boys, ten- or eleven-year-old Hungarian boys, cheder boys with long payos, singing this song together with their Rebbe.

If there was ever an embodiment of “the bush could not be consumed,” this was it! Seventy years earlier, the Fascists tried to eradicate Hungarian Jewry, along with the rest of world Jewry. And here we were, seventy years later. The old Kalover Rebbe sang that song with a local choir made up of the sweetest looking boys. At the end of this Hungarian song, the Kalover Rebbe and these little cheder boys launched into a soulful rendition of “Yibaneh haMikdash bim'hera b'yamenu” (May the Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days).

It was so moving that even some of the Gentiles present broke into tears. The significance of that site is the pasuk in this week's parsha: “Remove your shoes from upon your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground.” Here, after everything we experienced, kinderlach are learning Torah in Budapest. That is what the pasuk means “And the bush was not consumed.”

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parsha Insights
For the week ending 6 January 2024 / 25 Tevet 5784

Parshat Shemot

Imposter?

“Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should take the Children of Yisrael out of Egypt?” (3:11)

Everyone deserves to feel confident in who they are, because the fact that you exist testifies to the fact that Hashem created you, and that creation comes from love. If you don't love yourself, Hashem certainly does, or why would he have created you?

But if you've ever questioned your success or found it hard to let go of your mistakes, you're not alone.

An estimated 82% of people struggle with imposter syndrome, and 85% have low self-esteem. Imposter syndrome is the feeling that you're a fraud and don't deserve the things you've achieved. Low self-esteem is a negative self-perception that makes you judge yourself harshly.

While these two conditions have a lot of similarities, they're not identical.

The term “imposter syndrome” comes from the term “imposter phenomenon,” which originated with psychologists Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes in 1978. Clance and Imes used the term to describe high-achieving women who felt fraudulent or inadequate like they had fooled people into believing they were successful. Nowadays, imposter syndrome is used to describe consistent feelings of self-doubt, even in areas where you've performed well. A few common signs of imposter syndrome are:

Doubting your competence and skills

Negative self-talk

Getting upset when you fail to meet challenging goals

Overachieving or over-preparing

Sabotaging your own hard work

Attributing your success to something other than yourself

If you have imposter syndrome, you might feel like a fraud or tell yourself you don't deserve the things you've achieved. Imposter syndrome can create anxiety that other people will find out you're a fake and that you'll fail to live up to expectations.

Low self-esteem means you judge yourself harshly, think negative thoughts about yourself, and focus more on your flaws than your successes. Unlike imposter syndrome, low self-esteem usually does not make you feel like a fraud, but you may still live in fear of failing or letting others down.

Some signs of low self-esteem include:

Lack of confidence

Thinking or saying negative things about yourself

Ignoring your achievements in favor of focusing on your failures

Sensitivity to criticism

Withdrawing from social activities

Sometimes, low self-esteem can cause or worsen mental health conditions like anxiety and depression.

Imposter syndrome and low self-esteem share similar signs, and the conditions can overlap. Having low self-esteem may make you more likely to experience imposter syndrome. Sometimes, having imposter syndrome and the anxiety that comes with it can lower your self-esteem.

A person with imposter syndrome has generally achieved some level of success in an area of their life, yet they struggle to attribute that success to their own ability.

A person with low self-confidence, on the other hand, may be too worried about failing to start working toward their goals in the first place. Low self-confidence generally impacts multiple areas of your life, while imposter syndrome is often limited to specific areas.

“Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should take the Children of Yisrael out of Egypt?”

Hashem answered Moshe's two questions in order. “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?” said Moshe. Hashem told him that he need not fear Pharaoh, because He would be with him. And, as for the merit of the Jewish People, Hashem replied they are destined to receive the Torah on Mount Sinai. They deserved redemption on the basis of their future loyalty to Hashem. This teaches us that we can be judged and even rewarded on the basis of our potential alone.

The fact that Jewish People would, in the future, listen to and obey Hashem, was sufficient to merit their redemption. If Hashem rewards us even for our future achievements, how much more should we not denigrate our past achievements and think we are in some way imposters.

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Office of the Chief Rabbi

4 January 2024

Parshat Shemot: There is a phenomenon associated with the current tragic war, which we must preserve well beyond it.

In Parshat Shemot we are told how Moshe emerged from the palace of Pharaoh in search of his brethren.

What he saw was a tragic scene.

An Egyptian task master was beating an Israelite and would have killed him if not for Moshe's heroic intervention.

On the second day, Moshe again went out and this time he saw Shnei Anashim Ivrim Nitzim, two Hebrews who were fighting against each other.

Again, Moshe intervened, and he said to the protagonist ‘Why are you doing this?’ and the answer was ‘What? Are you going to kill me in the way that you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’

What Moshe saw was a tragic scene which sadly has repeated itself time and again in Jewish history at the very time when, our oppressors from without have threatened us, we have been divided within.

This is what happened in the run up to the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70 when civil war was raging in Jerusalem at the very time when the Romans laid siege to our capital city.

And most recently, prior to the outbreak of war on the 7th of October 2023, there was so much tragic division in Israel which spilled over into the diaspora.

But since the commencement of this war, we are blessed with Jewish unity. In the midst of these dark clouds, it is a precious silver lining.

Let us guarantee that we preserve it well beyond the war.

In our Shabbat service for the Mincha afternoon prayer we say, 'Ata Echad V'Shimcha Echad' 'You God are One and Your name is one'.

'UmiK'Amcha Yisrael Goy Echad B'Aretz' – And who is like Your people Israel? One single united people on earth.

Let us indeed guarantee that we remain a 'Goy Echad', a single united people for all time.

Shabbat Shalom.

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

https://torahweb.org/torah/2024/parsha/rlop_shemos.html

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

Goy Mikerev Goy: Becoming Ourselves

The redemption of the Jewish nation from Egypt is the bedrock of the Jewish faith. The more visible part of the process includes the incredible miracles associated with the redemption; miracles such as the ten plagues and the splitting of the sea, that would never be repeated again in history. These miracles serve as a foundation for the core beliefs of the Jewish people: i.e Divine providence and Hashem's omnipotence. We therefore understand why these are a core part of the geulah process.

But the passuk describing the great and magnificent event of the Jewish people being taken out of Egypt adds another crucial point and states (Devarim 4:34), "Has G-d ever taken out a nation from within a nation through such great and astounding miracles...?" The phrase "a nation from within a nation" is a bit redundant. Obviously, redemption means to be freed from your enslaver, exploiter, etc. Chazal (Midrash Tehillim 107) give us two different analogies illuminating the meaning of "a nation within a nation": 1) R' Avuha says, it is comparable to a calf in the mother's womb, that at the time of birth needs to be eased out. 2) R' Ibo says, it is like a goldsmith extracting the gold from the ore. Both of these descriptions, however, are not really conveying the extraordinary difficulty of the event. There is no mention of how strong and tough the Egyptians were; nor how great a miracle it was. Just what are we adding to the description of the great miracles and wonders when we say, "like a calf from the mother's womb" and "like gold from its ore"?

The Maharal (in Gevuros Hashem) describes another dimension of the geulas Mitzraim: when we think of the

miracles associated with taking the Jewish people out of Egypt, we tend to focus on the difficulty of combating the Egyptians, the most powerful nation at that time. But there is a much deeper difficulty in the redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt. The Jewish people themselves had been subjugated and acculturated into the Egyptian society for two centuries. Two hundred years of being buried deep in Egyptian society had almost entirely erased any trace of a sense of being Jewish. As the Rambam (Hilchos Avoda Zara 1:3) says, "the roots planted by the Avraham had just about been uprooted". In order to have the process of redemption, there needed first to be an awakening of this sense of being Jewish.

"A nation within a nation" describes that conflicting duality of identity. When a fetus is in its mother's womb, it is in some sense part and parcel of the mother, while in some sense it is its own being. Its identity is a tug of war between these two identities. Therefore, Hashem had to take out "a nation from a nation".

This perspective helps us understand the two examples cited by the midrash - the fetus from the cow, and the gold from the ore. The gold locked into the ore is much harder to extract than the fetus from the mother. It requires breaking the ore to pieces and applying a tremendous amount of heat. But the gold is of an entirely different nature than the stone that it is bonded to, no matter how difficult to process it is to separate it out. On the other hand, the fetus in the mother's womb it is easier to separate out, but it is inherently of the same flesh and blood as is the mother. It takes a tremendous amount of self-awareness to perceive oneself as being an independent entity despite the fact that the fetus is identical in substance to the mother.

One can now understand the hardship of the Jews' suffering in Egypt, and the process of enslavement and labor imposed on them, as leading to this goal. They needed to come to the painful awareness that they are not, and never will be, Egyptian. The real Egyptians see them as an alien insertion, and even after years of being such productive members of society they were being rejected. In the rejection of the Egyptians, the Jewish people found their own identity. It is almost identical to the birthing process where it is the powerful contraction of the mother that pushes the fetus out, many times unwillingly. Only then can the calf stand on its own feet and begin to realize who it is and what it is.

This is a timeless understanding of the relationship of the Jewish people with the nations that they find refuge in, and in whose societies they become enmeshed. At almost every junction we began to feel at home, and slowly became or tried to become absorbed in the host society. Whether it was Spain or Russia or Germany or any other country that we were hosted by, we slowly began to become integrated, or at least wanted to become integrated. And then inevitably, Hakadosh Boruch Hu arouses powerful forces in our host country, rejecting us.

These rejections are harsh and traumatic, beginning with the psychological aspect of being considered the outsider, to the horrendous sufferings visited upon us by many of these host countries. And it almost always ended in expulsion. As painful as they are they are, these are the forces that shape us as a nation.

Wandering for millennia in other countries, and being as talented and as easily adapting as we are, the danger of becoming absorbed in another culture is great. And once absorbed, we would chas v'shalom lose our own identity, eternally. But Hashem has promised that we will never

disappear. Therefore, in golus after golus, Hashem begins a process of "goy mikerev goy", extracting "a nation from within a nation". The first step of geulah is to sense that indeed we are a nation apart from our host. Sometimes we are intensely cognizant of it, and sometimes Hashem needs to employ our host remind us that this is so.

Once we come out and recognize ourselves as being unique and an independent entity, the geulah has begun!

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה