

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON PARSHAS VAEIRA - 5757

B'S'D'

survive the hail? 20. What was miraculous about the way that the hail stopped falling?

I Did Not Know That! "Aharon married Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav... and she bore him Nadav and Avihu.." (6:23) Traditionally, the woman gets to choose the first child's name. Here, Elisheva named her first child 'Nadav' in honor of her father, 'Ami-Nadav.' Aharon named the next child in honor of his father: Avi-hu -- 'He is my father.'

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"parasha-qa@jer1.co.il" Parsha Q&A - Vaera In-Depth Questions on the Parsha and Rashi's commentary. Parshas Vaera Ohr Somayach

Parsha Questions 1. Name the seven plagues, in order, and in Hebrew, listed in this week's parsha. 2. Did Hashem ever appear to Avraham and say "I am Hashem?" 3. What does "Orlah" mean? 4. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh? 5. How long did Levi live? 6. Hashem told Avraham that his descendants would live as strangers for 400 years (Bereishis 15:13). When did this period begin? 7. Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother? 8. Why are Yisro and Yosef both referred to as 'Putiel'? 9. After which plague did Hashem begin to 'harden Pharaoh's heart'? 10. Give two reasons why the plague of blood was chosen to be the first plague. 11. How long did the plague of blood last? 12. Why did the frogs affect Pharaoh's house first? 13. What did Moshe mean when he told Pharaoh that the frogs would be "in you and in your nation?" 14. How many frogs were there in the beginning of the plague of tzefardea? 15. Why was Moshe not the one who struck the dust to initiate the plague of lice? 16. Why didn't the wild beasts die as the frogs had? 17. As a result of dever -- cattle disease -- "all the cattle of Egypt died" (9:6). Later, the Torah says that the shechin -- boils -- afflicted the Egyptians' cattle. (9:9) How can this be, if all their cattle had already died? 18. Why did Moshe pray to Hashem only after he left the city? 19. Why did the wheat and spelt

Recommended Reading List Ramban 6:2 Subtle and Sensational Miracles 6:6 Four Dimensions of Redemption 6:9 Why Moshe was Ignored 6:10 The Meaning of "Le'mor" 7:3 The Free Will of Pharaoh (also see Sifsei Chachamim on Rashi) 8:6 Why Pharaoh said "Tomorrow" 8:18,25 Uniqueness of Fourth Plague 9:3 The Cattle in the Field Sforno 7:3 Pharaoh's Hard Heart 8:12 Structure of the Plagues. 9:14 Effects of the Plagues Kli Yakar 6:26-27 Aaron and Moshe 7:17 Three Sets of Plagues 8:27 "Mesiras Nefesh" of the Frogs

Answers to this Week's Questions All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. Dam, tzefardea, kinim, arov, dever, shechin, barad. 2. 6:9 - Yes. 3. 6:12 - Sealed. 4. 6:13 - With the respect due a king. 5. 6:16 - 137 years. 6. 6:18 - With the birth of Yitzchak. 7. 6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon. 8. 6:25 - Yisro fattened (pitem) cows for idol worship. Yosef scoffed (pitpet) at his evil inclination. 9. 7:3 - After the sixth plague -- shechin. 10. 7:17 - a) Because the Nile was an Egyptian god and 8:17 - b) Because an invading army first attacks the enemy's water supply, and Hashem did the same. 11. 7:25 - Seven days. 12. 7:28 - Pharaoh himself advised the enslavement of the Jewish People. 13. 7:29 - He warned that the frogs would enter their intestines and croak. 14. 8:2 - One. 15. 8:12 - Because the dust protected Moshe by hiding the body of the Egyptian that Moshe killed. 16. 8:27 - So that the Egyptians would not benefit from their hides. 17. 9:10 - In the plague of dever only the cattle in the fields died. The plague of shechin affected the surviving cattle. 18. 9:29 - Because the city was full of idols. 19. 9:32 - They matured later and their stalks were still soft. Therefore,

they were able to resist the bombardment of hailstones. 20. 9:33 - The hailstones stopped in mid-air and didn't fall to the ground.

Bonus ANSWER: Pharaoh didn't believe that the frogs were a plague from Hashem. He preferred to believe that the frogs were a natural phenomenon about which Moshe had special knowledge. When Moshe asked "When shall I pray...?" Pharaoh thought Moshe was simply timing his question to coincide with the plague's natural end, expecting Pharaoh to say "Right now!" By saying "Tomorrow" Pharaoh tried to trick Moshe and make him look foolish. Ibn Ezra in the name of Rav Shmuel ben Chofni Written and Compiled by Rabbi Reuven Subar General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Lev Seltzer (C) 1997 Ohr Somayach

WEEKLY-HALACHA@TORAH.ORG" Parshas Vaera
SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS VAERA

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

And I shall take out My legions - My people the Children of Israel - from the land of Egypt (Exo. 7:4) In the merit of the righteous women in that generation they were redeemed from Egypt (Sotah 11b)

WOMEN AND PRAYER: OBLIGATIONS AND EXEMPTIONS

The degree to which women are obligated to pray (daven) is a subject debated by the poskim. There are halachic authorities who exempt women from formal davening altogether - as long as they recite a simple supplication upon rising in the morning. Other poskim hold that women are obligated miderabanan to daven twice a day, Shacharis and Minchah, just as men are. Although the majority of poskim agree with the second view that women are obligated to daven(1), in the past, when many women were illiterate, women simply did not daven(2). Even women who knew how to daven were so preoccupied with housework that they were unable to assume the obligation of davening 3.

Nowadays, we are witnessing a remarkable turnaround in regard to

women and tefillah. Many women, especially single girls and older women, have assumed the obligation of davening regularly as the halachah dictates. Even busy mothers attempt to daven as much as they possibly can.

Sometimes, a woman's other responsibilities and obligations make it difficult or impossible for her to daven the entire davening. Often, a mother knows in advance that she will have only a limited time in which to daven. Since there are segments of davening that are more crucial than others for a woman to daven, it is necessary to know the priorities. We will list, in order of importance, the parts of davening that a woman should daven(4). Obviously, if she has enough time, she should daven the entire davening in the right order the way it is printed in a siddur. The more time she has, the further down the list she will be able to progress. Once she knows how much time she has, she can determine - according to the list below - which tefillos to recite. Those tefillos should then be said in the order in which they are found in the siddur:

PREFERRED ORDER OF DAVENING:

1. Any simple supplication(5), such as the Yehi Ratzon that is usually said at the end of Birchos Hashachar(6), or Bircas Hatorah(7). All poskim agree that this is the very least a woman must do.
2. Shmone Esrei Shacharis and Minchah. This is the minimum requirement according to the majority of poskim(8).
3. The first verse of Shema(9) and Boruch Shem(10). Although women are exempt from Shema, the poskim recommend that at the very least they recite the first verse, which is a declaration accepting Hashem's sovereignty upon oneself(11).
4. The blessing of Emes V'yatziv till Goal Yisroel(12), followed immediately, without any break, by Shmone Esrei, so that they fulfill the mitzvah of Smichas Geula L'tefillah.
5. Birchos Hashachar(13), including Birchos Hatorah(14). If a woman has already davened Shmone Esrei, she should not say the blessing of Al Netilas Yadayim, since that blessing can be said only before davening(15).
6. Psukei D'zimrah(16).
7. The entire Shema(17) prefaced by Kel Melech Ne'eman(18).
8. The blessings of Yotzer Ohr and Ahava Rabbah(19).

Some additional notes:

Birchos Krias Shema and Shmone Esrei should be recited l'chatchillah before the fourth hour of the day has elapsed. If a woman is unable to daven before then, she may recite Shmone Esrei until midday (chatzos)(20), but she should not recite Birchos Krias Shema(21).

A woman who cannot find time to daven and must rely on the poskim who allow her to fulfill her obligation with any brief supplication, may not recite the blessing of Al Netilas Yadayim upon washing her hands in the morning, since this blessing is said only in preparation for davening(22).

Women are exempt from Tachanun, Ashrei Uva Ltzion and the Shir Shel Yom. It has become customary from them to recite Aleinu after Shmone Esrei(23).

Women are exempt from Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, Pesach(24), Sukkos and Shevuous(25). Some poskim require women to recite Hallel on Chanukah(26), while others exempt them(27).

The poskim debate whether women are obligated to daven Musaf or not(28).

FOOTNOTES:

1 Mishnah Berurah 106:4. 2 Harav Moshe Feinstein (quoted in Ko Somar L'bais Yaakov pg. 29) once remarked that the fact the many women were illiterate and were not required by the rabbis to learn how to read, is proof that they relied on the poskim who did not require women to daven. 3 The son of the Chofetz Chaim reported (Sichos Chofetz Chaim pg. 13) that his mother almost never davened when her children were young. She said that the Chofetz Chaim exempted her from davening during that period in her life.

4 The list is formulated for Ashkenazic women only. 5 Mishnah Berurah 106:4 6 Suggested by Harav Yaakov Kamenetsky (Ko Somar L'bais Yaakov pg. 31). 7 Shu"t Machaze Eliyahu 19:5-15. If she has specific intent, she can also rely on Bircas Hamazon to fulfill her obligation of Tefillah - ibid. 8 Mishnah Berurah 106:4. See also Mishnah Berurah 263:43. 9 Rama OC 70:1 10 Kaf Hachayim 70:1 quoting the Levush. 11 Mishnah Berura 70:4;

106:4. It is not, however, required that the Shema be said within the time frame allotted to men - Aishel Avraham (Butchach) 70:1. See also Aruch Hashulchan 70:2. 12 This is said first to satisfy the view of some poskim who hold that women are obligated to fulfill the daily mitzvah of Zecher L'yitzias Mitzrayim - Magen Avraham 70:1. 13 Mishnah Berura 70:1; Aruch Hashulchan 70:1. 14 OC 47:14 and Biur Halacha. 15 Mishnah Berurah 4:1. 16 According to some poskim, women are exempt from Psukei D'zimra, while others obligate them - see Mishnah Berura 70:1, Shar Hatzion 4 and Aruch Hashulchan 47:25 and 70:1. [Contemporary poskim also disagree whether women who come late to shul should skip Psukei D'zimrah in order to daven b'tzibur, see Aveni Yashfei, 2nd edition, pg. 202-203.] 17 Although clearly exempt from reciting Krias Shema, it has become customary for women to try to recite the entire Shema, so that they, too, accept Hashem's sovereignty and mitzvos upon themselves. 18 Minchas Elazar 2:28. 19 Aruch Hashulchan 70:1. 20 Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Ko Somar L'bais Yaakov pg. 34); Machazei Eliyahu 19:5-14. Although it is not explicit in the poskim, it seems logical that women should not daven Shacharis earlier than alos amud hashchar. If a woman is unable to daven at a later time, she may daven then, although she may be davening Maariv and not Shacharis. 21 Halichos Baisa 5:5 quoting several poskim. 22 Machaze Eliyahu 11, based on Mishnah Berurah 4:1. 23 Machaze Eliyahu 20. 24 Except from the Hallel said at the Seder, which they are obligated to recite. 25 Biur Halachah 423:2. 26 Toras Refoel OC 75; Minchas Pitim 683; Moadim Uzmanim 2:146. See also Igros Moshe OC 1:190. 27 Bais Sheorim OC 359; Machze Eliyahu 22. 28 Both views are quoted in Mishnah Berurah 106:4 without a decision. Note that in all cases in which women may be exempt, such as Hallel, Musaf and Ashrei Vva Ltzion, they are still permitted to daven those tefillos.

This week's issue has been graciously sponsored by yehonatan ben avraham. ARCHIVE NEWS: As promised back issues of WEEKLY-HALACHA (formerly called HALACHA) are now available on the Project Genesis FTP site. So, if you misplaced an issue, or your dog ate it or even if your cat tore it to pieces ;), it is now easy to get a new copy. Here's how: [ftp://torah.org/torah/advanced/weekly-halacha/5757 Good Shabbos, Jeffrey Weekly-Halacha, Copyright (c) 1997 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Project Genesis, Inc. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Hayeled Doniel Meir ben Hinda.

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"ohr@jer1.co.il" "weekly@jer1.co.il" Torah Weekly - Vaera * TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion ... The Real Thing "...and the staff of Aaron swallowed their staffs..." (7:12) You can't fake the Real Thing. When Aaron's staff swallowed the staffs of the Egyptian sorcerers in front of the king, it became clear who was authentic and who was not. Jewish history has been plagued by other movements purporting to be the Real Judaism. The most successful of these is undoubtedly Christianity, but there have been many others who have tried to authenticate themselves as the 'real' Judaism. Some break away from normative Judaism and change their name, and some try to usurp the authority of the Torah sages and call their beliefs 'Judaism.' During the Ottoman Empire, the Karaites attempted to gain recognition for themselves as the 'authentic Jews.' They approached the sultan, wanting to be recognized as the legitimate 'People of Israel,' and that the Jewish People should be disenfranchised as being fakes. The sultan summoned both a rabbi

and a representative of the Karaites to appear in front of him at the royal palace. After hearing both their cases, he would decide who was the authentic "People of the Book." Of course, as was the custom of the East, both the Karaite and the rabbi were required to remove their shoes before appearing in front of the Sultan. The Karaite removed his shoes and left them by the entrance to the throne room. The rabbi also removed his shoes, but then he picked them up and carried them with him into the audience with the sultan. When the sultan looked down from his throne, he was struck by the somewhat strange sight of the rabbi holding a pair of shoes, and he demanded an explanation. "Your Majesty," began the rabbi, "as you know, when the Holy One, may His Name be blessed, appeared to our teacher Moses, peace be upon him, at the site of the burning bush, G-d told Moses "Take off your shoes from on your feet!" "We have a tradition," said the rabbi, "that while Moses was speaking to the Holy One, a Karaite came and stole his shoes!" "So, now, whenever we are in the company of Karaites, we make sure to hold onto our shoes!" The Karaite turned to the rabbi and blustered: "That's nonsense! Everyone knows that at the time of Moses, there were no Karaites!" The rabbi allowed time for what the Karaite had said to sink in and then quietly added: "Your Majesty, I don't believe there is a need for more to be said..." You can't fake the Real Thing. Heard from Rabbi Zev Leff

Three Times Ten "And I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great judgments. And I will take you to Myself for a people and I will be to you for a G-d." (6:6-7) The World was created with Ten Utterances. ("Let there be light" etc.) There were Ten Plagues in Egypt, and there were Ten Statements (Commandments) given at Sinai. What is the connection between these three `Tens'? It was, in fact, the Ten Plagues that turned the Ten Utterances into the Ten Commandments. Before the advent of the Ten Plagues, the world of nature, which was created with the Ten Utterances, concealed the presence of the Creator. It was possible to miss the Hand of a Divine Creator, to think that nature had no guide. The Ten Plagues affected the whole world. With these inexplicable and vast abnormalities in nature, the existence of a Being who directed and supervised the most minute detail of reality became inescapable. It was this revelation, that Hashem changes nature at will, that opened the way to the possibility of the revelation of Hashem Himself at Sinai -- and the giving of the Ten Statements. In other words, through the "great judgments" -- the Ten Plagues that altered the `laws of nature' -- the possibility of "And I will take you to Myself for a people" -- the giving of the Ten Statements at Sinai -- became a reality. Chidushei HaRim in Mayana shel Torah ...

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair General Editor:
Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Lev Seltzer
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"ryfrand@torah.org" , "ravfrand@torah.org" Rabbi Frand on Parshas Va'eyra

"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Va'eyra
We Knew It Was Right Then, And It Is Right Now! In this week's Parsha, we find the posuk [verse], "And G-d spoke to Moshe and Aharon and commanded them regarding the Children of Israel and regarding Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to take the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt" [Shmos 6:13]. There is an interesting Talmud Yerushalmi in tractate Rosh Hashana, which infers from this pasuk that while still in Egypt, G-d commanded Moshe to give over the Mitzvah of Freeing Slaves to the Jewish people [Shmos 21:2-6]. When the pasuk tells us that Moshe and Aharon were to command the Children of Israel, it means that they would be delivering a command for the future: when they live in the land of Israel, and they have Jewish slaves, they should send them out to freedom after 6 years.

The question is obvious. Why is this an appropriate time to tell them about 'shiluach avadim'? They are slaves themselves. They don't own anything. They certainly don't own other slaves. Is it appropriate to give a person a mitzvah when he is years and years away from the ability to ever fulfill that

command? The answer, says the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, zt"l, is that there was no more appropriate time to tell them about 'shiluach avadim' than this very moment. Now they are slaves; now they know the feeling of having no freedom; now they know what it was to have a master. It is a difficult thing to send away a slave. When one has a worker who has worked for him for six years, it is not easy to send him away. It will be very difficult to fulfill that mitzvah. If G-d would have given them that mitzvah later on, when they already had their own slaves, they would have heard it in a different fashion. One needs to hear something at a time when he will be most sensitive to it. The Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva said that one has to "seize the moment." There are moments in life which must be grabbed and seized. One has to grab the occasion, because it is fleeting. Now is the time to tell them about sending away poor slaves. Now it will make an impression. Now it will be meaningful. This lesson of seizing the moment is something that we have to do in our daily lives. There is an unbelievable Gemara in Sanhedrin [20a] which explains the pasuk [Mishlei 31:29] "Many daughters have acted with valor, but you have exceeded them all." The Gemara says: 'Many daughters have acted with valor' refers to Yosef, the son of Yaakov, who overcame temptation with the wife of Potifar; but 'you have exceeded them all' refers to Palti ben Layish. The deed of Palti ben Layish far exceeded Yosef HaTzadik's accomplishment. What did Palti ben Layish do? The Talmud relates that King Saul had a daughter who was married to David, but Saul argued that based on a technicality she was not married to David and she legally had no husband [despite the fact that according to halacha, David was right and King Saul was wrong]. Saul took this daughter and gave her as a wife to Palti ben Layish. Palti ben Layish was faced with the following situation: He could not refuse King Saul; he had to take her as a wife. Yet, he knew very well that this was a married woman. There he was in the bedroom, the first night, with a woman who was an 'eishes ish.' What does he do in order that he should succeed in withstanding the temptation? The Gemara says that he took a sword and stuck it in the ground and said "Anyone who 'occupies himself with this matter' will be stabbed by the sword." The Gemara goes on to say that because of this tremendous act that he did, he had the help of Heaven and he lived for years with this woman and never once did he touch her. G-d saved him from sin. What was so magnificent about the act of sticking the sword into the ground? Why did he merit this unbelievable "siyata d'ishmaya" [help from Heaven] that for years he never touched her? What was so significant about sticking a sword in the ground? The answer is that on that first night, Palti ben Layish knew what was right and what was wrong. On that first night, he had his priorities straight. On that first night, he knew that she was a married woman and that she was off limits. But, he also knew that as time went on, as the days and the months and the years passed, those feelings would dissipate. He would come up with a 'heter' -- he would find an excuse. He would do something. Therefore, he said to himself, "I need a reminder; I have to seize the moment." There are moments when one does not rationalize, when one can clearly see the truth. Those are the moments to seize as our permanent reminders. This, says the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, is something that we must do so many times in life. There are many occasions when we will be put into situations where in the beginning we will know what's right and what's wrong. But, later on, there will be considerations -- financial considerations, professional considerations, all sorts of rationalizations. How do we know what is right and what is wrong? We have to seize the moment. We have to stick that symbolic sword in the ground and say to ourselves "I know what's right and what's wrong, and I am not going to let my morals slip; I am not going to let my standards slide!" That is the lesson of Palti ben Layish. And that is the reason why G-d tells the Jews about freeing slaves, right here, when they are still slaves and they are sensitive to what is right and what is wrong. We have to grab the opportunity so that when the time comes, when we have temptations and questions, we will always be able to look back and say "We knew it was right then -- and we know it is right now!"

Personalities & Sources: Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva -- R. Chaim Shmulevitz (1902-1978); Mir, Jerusalem
Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@scn.org

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD
dhoffman@clark.net
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Project Genesis, the Jewish Learning Network 3600 Crondall Lane, Ste. 106
Owings Mills, MD 21117 (410) 654-1799

peninim@shemayisrael.com by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew
Academy of Cleveland Parshas Voayra
I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from
their service; I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm...I shall take you to
Me for a People. (6:6,7) The Torah employs arba leshonos shel
geulah, four expressions of redemption, which allude to the distinct stages of
the Jews' liberation from the Egyptian exile. Horav Gedalyah Shorr, z"l,
posits that the four expressions relate as equally to the individual as they do
to the entire nation. Every person experienced his own personal redemption
from the Egyptian culture. Every individual must liberate himself from the
shackles of his own enslavement to the yetzer hora, evil inclination. He cites
the Sfas Emes, who says that these expressions coincide with the four
elements which comprise man: fire, water, wind and dust. The characteristics
of these elements fuse together to create the emotional/physical composition
of man, the gashmius. Man's body, his corporeal essence is but a container in
which the neshamah, soul, is placed. Horav Chaim Vital, z"l, says that these
four elements of man are also the source of every negative character trait
within man. Every bad middah originates in some manner from these
physical foundations of man. The neshamah, spiritual dimension, is
ensconced within the body as if it were in exile. The function of transcending
the physical with the spiritual, by sublimating the physical dimension of man
to its higher calling, is the process by which man "liberates" himself from his
physical bondage. This is one's personal Yetzias Mitzrayim. We strive to
transform these purely physical elements to serve Hashem so that they
become vehicles for spiritual development. In four places in the Torah,
we are enjoined to relate the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim to our children.
Chazal have derived from this apparent redundancy that children may be
categorized into four groups, or "four sons." They are: the chacham, wise son;
the rasha, wicked son; the tam, simpleton; and the she'eino yodea lish'ol, the
child who does not even know what to ask. Horav Yehudah Leib Chasman,
z"l, feels that these "four sons," actually represent four distinct personalities.
The traits typified by these four sons represent the inner struggle within each
one of us. There are moments when we act with wisdom, reflecting common
sense and forethought. There are times when we "lose it," and we foolishly
carry on like the wicked son. There are times when we act like the simple
son, unsure of the direction in which we should go, unclear of the manner in
which we should act. The last son, the one who does not know to ask, is not
that far from us. We can all relate to moments when we just do not know
what, how, or whom to ask. We must address these life situations in the
same manner that the Torah responds to the individual sons. In keeping with
Horav Shorr's thesis that the four expressions apply equally to the individual,
we may suggest another area of focus; the individual's unique tendencies.
We are adjured to address those areas of our personality that are deficient.
Likewise, as we find with the wise son, we must cultivate and enhance the
areas in which we excel. This concept is underscored in the words of the
Hagaddah, "In every generation it is one's duty to regard himself as if he
personally had gone out of Egypt." We are obligated to experience a
personal liberation in which we elevate the physical, addressing those areas
of our character which need improvement.

...
SICHOT - PARASHAT VAERA YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM) STUDENT
SUMMARIES OF SICHOT DELIVERED BY THE ROSHEI YESHIVA
VAERA SICHOT OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT" A
"And They Did Not Listen to Moshe"
Summarized by Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon

"And Moshe spoke thus to Bnei Yisrael, and they did not listen to Moshe
because of shortness of spirit and because of hard labor." (Shemot 6:9)

Why did Bnei Yisrael not listen to Moshe? After all, his message was
one of support, consolation and redemption, and his words - exalted as they
were by virtue of their transmission from God - were supposedly meant to
exert a considerable influence on the nation: "And I shall extract you from
under the suffering of Egypt, and I shall save you from their servitude, and I
shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgements"
(Shemot 6:6). Despite all of this, Moshe's words failed to impress the
nation; their response was one of apathy.

The Torah provides the reason for their lack of enthusiasm: "...because of
shortness of spirit, and because of hard labor." Nevertheless, we still find
the situation surprising. Indeed, the situation of the nation was harsh, with
relentless Egyptian slavedrivers making their lives a misery; but surely
something of Moshe's message should still have penetrated and made
somewhat of an impact?

Apparently, it was specifically the exalted and prophetic nature of
Moshe's message that made it difficult for Bnei Yisrael to accept it. We find
support for this view in two areas. Firstly, the expression "shortness
of spirit and hard labor" can be understood according to the simple and
literal sense of the words, but we may also examine the words "shortness of
spirit" (kotzer ru'ach) more closely and arrive at a different interpretation.
The spiritual barometer of the nation records an all-time low; they are
altogether incapable of hearing this type of promise: "And I shall take you to
Myself for a nation... and I shall bring you to the land...". The nation was
happy to hear of the news that there would be a week-long break from their
work, that their back-breaking labor would ease up a little, etc. But they had
no interest in listening to the type of ideals and promises that Moshe
brought with him. All they wanted was a little respite from their labor.

Secondly, perhaps the nation would have been prepared to accept the gist
of the promises, but could not accept the timetable. They wanted immediate
redemption; they were not interested in listening to lofty prophetic promises
while the whip was lashing at them. Moshe spoke of events that would take
place sometime in the uncertain future: "And I shall take you out...", "and I
shall save you..." etc.

If we accept this interpretation, we are left with some difficulty
concerning the "kal va-homer" ("how much more so," an a fortiori argument)
which Moshe presents to God. He says, "Behold - Bnei Yisrael did not
listen to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me - I, of uncircumcised lips?"
(Shemot 6:12). It would seem that this argument is out of place,
considering the fact that the reason for Bnei Yisrael failing to react to his
words was the "shortness of spirit and hard labor". The same would not
apply in the case of Pharaoh, who would have no reason for "shortness of
spirit" and was certainly not enslaved. What, then, is the meaning of
Moshe's argument?

It would seem that an additional reason would be the very lack of interest
displayed by Bnei Yisrael. It is true that the nation failed to respond to him
because of their shortness of spirit and the hard labor, but if Moshe had been
a demagogue, a charismatic speaker, he could have succeeded in sparking
some interest; he would have managed to excite them. Moshe is aware of
the fact that he is not blessed with oratorical powers and knows that this
contributed to Bnei Yisrael's lack of enthusiasm for his message. Hence his
claim is justified: "Behold, - Bnei Yisrael did not listen to me; how then will
Pharaoh listen to me - I, OF UNCIRCUMCISED LIPS?" Hence there
are two factors which combine to explain why Bnei Yisrael would not listen
to Moshe: A. shortness of spirit and hard labor. This can be understood on
two levels: 1. shortness of spirit, i.e. the immersion in materialism which
nullified their openness to spirituality, and 2. a sense of immediacy - their
desire for immediate redemption. B. "uncircumcised lips" - the speaker is not
a great orator, he doesn't come across well in a public forum.

Thousands of years have passed since the momentous Exodus, but our
generation, too, needs to take the message of our parasha to heart. We need
to remember both the nation's words and Moshe's message. We must
transmit the message of redemption to the entire nation, but in order to

achieve this we require two conditions: we have to ensure that we do not reach a situation of "shortness of spirit and hard labor," and we have to avoid a situation of "uncircumcised lips." A person who is overly immersed in materialism, concerned exclusively with matters of livelihood and enslaved to money and material things, is bound to gradually lose his spirituality. Even when momentous spiritual phenomena take place before his eyes, he remains apathetic. Such "shortness of spirit" leads to a situation in which he himself will be "of uncircumcised lips." A person who is not imbued with a sense of the Divine providence which accompanies us and the redemption which awaits us will not be able to transmit the tradition further. We need to overcome the condition of "shortness of spirit" - to strengthen our spiritual awareness and thereby to transmit the message of redemption onwards and outwards.

(Originally delivered at Seuda Shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Vaera 5750. Translated by Kaeren Fish.) Copyright (c) 1997 Yeshivat Har Etzion.

PARASHAT VAERA YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY
VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM) PARASHAT HASHAVUA
In honor of the yahrzeit (2 Shevat) of Gitel bat Reb Moshe Halevi Drazin
A"H.

PARASHAT VA-EIRA

by Rav Ezra Bick

I. The Text The opening sections of parashat Va-eira are very confusing, from the narrative point of view. The story seems to grind to a halt, as the Torah recounts a number of times that God commands Moshe, or Moshe and Aaron, to go to Par'o and free the Jews. There is clearly a great reluctance on Moshe's part, but it is unclear just what is happening, and why what seems to be more or less the same thing is retold three times. Let us first enumerate the different occurrences in the beginning of the parasha, without at this point deciding whether they constitute distinct events or not. It would be desirable to follow this list with an open Tanakh. 1. (6:1-8) God appears to Moshe, explains his promise to the avot, and instructs Moshe to tell the Jewish people that He will deliver them from Egypt. 2. (6:9) Moshe speaks to the nation, but they do not pay attention. 3. (6:10-12) God tells Moshe to speak to Par'o and Moshe answers that if the Jewish people did not listen to him, why should Par'o; "and I am 'aral sefatayim.'" 4. (6:13) God speaks to Moshe and Aaron, commanding them concerning the nation and Par'o, "to take the children of Israel out of Egypt." [5. (6:14-27) The genealogy of Moshe and Aaron.] 6. (6:28-30) God tells Moshe to speak to Par'o and Moshe answers he is 'aral sefatayim,' so how will Par'o listen to him? 7. (7:1-5) God tells Moshe that Aaron will speak for him and sketches the pattern whereby Par'o will continually refuse until the final redemption. 8. (7:6) "Moshe and Aaron did as God commanded them, so they did." 9. (7:8-13) The story of the staff which changed into a crocodile (or a serpent, see Rashi). 10. (7:14 ff) The plagues begin. God twice tells Moshe to speak to the nation, and three times to speak to Par'o, then a fourth time together with the sign of the crocodile, before finally beginning the plagues. Twice Moshe answers that he is aral sefatayim. What is the meaning of these repeated missions and what precisely is Moshe's point concerning his speech impediment? What is the relationship between the failure of Moshe in regards to the Jewish people and his fear of failure in regards to Par'o? In short, while the narrative seems to stall for two chapters, what is really going on?

II. The Mission to the Nation of Israel Moshe has two different missions, one regarding Par'o and one regarding the his people. We know what he is supposed to do before Par'o - he will order him to free his brethren and then will perform the plagues until Par'o breaks down. But what is the nature or purpose of his mission to the Jewish people at this stage? Notice that in parashat Shemot, God never tells Moshe to go to the Jews. First (3:10), God states, "And now, go, and I shall send you to Par'o, and take my people out of Egypt." Moshe seems to ASSUME that he has a message for his people, asking, "For I am to come to the children of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you; and they will say to me, what is His name

- what shall I say to them?" God, in turn, answers this question; but nowhere has He actually given Moshe a mission to go to the Jews. He does order Moshe to gather the ELDERS (3:16), in order to take them with him when he goes to Par'o. In response, Moshe again refers to his anticipated problems convincing the his brethren - "But they shall not believe me, and shall not listen to me, for they shall say, God has not appeared to you" (4:1). Only in response to this and subsequent complaints of Moshe does God say, "He (Aaron) shall speak for you to the people... (4:16)." When Moshe gets his traveling orders (4:21-23), he is told, "Say to Par'o...," without any instructions concerning the Jews, though the first thing Moshe does when he gets to Egypt is to speak to the people (4:30-31), only afterwards (5:1 - "And afterwards...") going to Par'o. It appears that when God tells Moshe to go to Par'o, his main concern is always how to address the Jews first. Only after his failure with the Jews in the beginning of our parasha does Moshe begin to worry how to appear before Par'o. Only then do we find the verse, "God spoke to Moshe and Aaron and charged them (va-yitzaveim)

concerning the CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, and concerning Par'o king of Egypt, to take the children of Israel out of Egypt" (6:13). What has happened here? The answer, I believe, is that Moshe understands that his task entails more than merely informing the Jewish people that they are about to leave Egypt. While this may indeed be a nice thing to do - after all, it will cheer them up - that is not a MISSION. Aside from getting the Egyptians to let them go, Moshe must free the Jewish people from the psychological state of enslavement and dependency that they have sunk to. Last week, Rav Moshe Lichtenstein pointed out that Moshe, fresh from his life in the king's palace, was shocked by the apathy and resignation of the Jews he met. Moshe, upon being told by God that the Jews are to be freed, immediately shifts the center of gravity of the problem from how to convince Par'o to how to convince the Jews, not so much to agree to go a land of milk and honey as to liberate themselves spiritually, to act as free, responsible, autonomous individuals.

III. How Does One Change a Slave Mentality Moshe's solution to the problem of the ingrained slave mentality of the Jews is to inspire them. He believes that if a gifted speaker, a man of inspiration and spiritual vision, will directly address the slaves, he can awaken the slumbering tzelem Elokim of human dignity within them. But, he argues, he is not that man. He lacks a golden tongue, the ability to unleash the hidden powers latent in the human soul. It is this mission which worries Moshe, even as God sends him to Par'o. God's answer in parashat Shemot is to give him Aaron as a "mouth," even as Moshe plays the role of "elohim." And indeed, Moshe at first meets success. His encounter with the people results in belief, and they bow down. But what follows? Total disaster. The Jewish representatives attack Moshe, the situation is worse, the people totally disheartened. "Why have you worsened (the state) of this people, why have You sent me? For since I have come to Par'o to speak in Your name, it is worse for this people, and you have not at all saved Your people." Two things, Moshe says. One - it is worse for the people, and, at the same time, the physical redemption has not been advanced at all. Here God tells Moshe to reassure the people that He will redeem them. Moshe does so, but the people are so sunk in the apathy of enslavement that they barely hear him. They are unable to absorb the message, it cannot lift their spirits. Is it any wonder that Moshe is depressed? If the Jews won't hear him, what can he, as an individual do to Par'o? Moshe has proof that he does not have the power to effect a change of heart in his listeners. Moshe believes his mission is to reach the hearts of his listeners, whether the Jews or Par'o, and this seems to be beyond his powers. Here God explains the answer. God tells Moshe that indeed he has two missions. God charges Moshe to speak to both to the Par'o and the Jewish people, in both cases "to take the children of Israel out of Egypt." (6:13) There is a mission to the Jews, not only to keep them informed, but to take them out, to emancipate them. How will this be done? Here God's answer is different than Moshe's assumption. Moshe will directly act only in regard to Par'o. He will not persuade Par'o, by dint of the power of his possibility. "I shall harden Par'o's heart, and multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt" (7:3). Moshe is not going to persuade Par'o; God is

going to crush Par'o, slowly, publicly. We do not find Moshe speaking to the Jews again about how they will be free, trying to inspire them. The liberation of the Jews will be accomplished by their witnessing the drawn-out victory of God over the power of Par'o, his magic and his gods. The destruction of Egyptian might, the humbling of the sources of its power, will liberate the spirits of the slaves. Moshe has a dual goal, but only one means. Practically, God tells Moshe always to go and speak to Par'o, but that act will have meaning on the one hand on the political level of Moshe vs. Par'o, and secondly on the socio-psychological level of the Jews vs. their masters.

"They were Aaron and Moshe, whom God had told, take the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt 'al tzivotam'. They were the ones who spoke to Par'o, to take the children of Israel out of Egypt, they were Moshe and Aaron." (6,26-27) The double role is clearly evident here. What does "al tzivotam" mean? The phrase is repeated in parashat Bo in describing the exodus. "In that very selfsame day, God took out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt 'al tzivotam'" (12:51). One might be tempted to explain the verse in Bo as merely describing the order in which they left. But why was that part of the original mission - to take them out 'al tzivotam'.

I believe that the phrase means 'in dignity', not as a horde of escapees, but as an ordered entity, with responsibilities, roles, acting with precision according to a plan. Moshe's role to the Jews is not just to move them, but to take them out of Egypt 'al tzivotam'; i.e., as free individuals, members in the host of God. "After four hundred and thirty years, on that very selfsame day, all the hosts of God left the land of Egypt" (12:41). After 430 years of enslavement, generations of abdication of personal responsibility, they left as the hosts of God. They didn't flee Egypt, they marched out.

IV. The Plagues and the Jews This is the key to understanding the process of the ten plagues. In the beginning of Bo this is made clear. God has hardened the heart of Par'o, "so that you shall tell in the ears of your son and your son's son, all that I did in Egypt, and the signs which I put in them, and you shall know that I am God." The plagues are an exercise in public relations for the Jews. The basic formative experience of the Jewish people was to have been a helpless mass of slaves, without the power to raise their own heads in protest, and to have witnessed how their proud oppressors were humbled before God. This process is not completed until the drowning of the Egyptians in the sea, when "Israel sees the Egyptians dead on the shore." Only then are they really free of the enslavement of spirit, and only then can they continue to Har Chorev to receive the Torah.

In parashat Va-eira, when reading the individual makot, it is worth noticing the emphasis placed on the publicity given to God's power and protection over the Jews. Many plagues explicitly are constructed so that the distinction between the Jews and the Egyptians is evident to all. The recurring theme of Moshe praying to God to stop the plague, and the statement that "God listened to Moshe," emphasizing that a Jew was the one to free Egypt from its problem, strengthen this effect. The Jews are passive bystanders, but not unaffected. What Moshe does to Egypt is the means of their inner liberation and not merely the means to their physical expulsion. It is only the former that requires such a long drawn-out contest between God and Par'o, so that the transformation of spirit can take place.

I think a very good question can be asked here. All too often, some clever expositor discovers a hidden meaning in a parasha, and then goes on to claim that it is the real and essential theme. But if that is true, why does God hide the central point? (Sometimes it seems that the only logical explanation is to keep us in business.) If Va-eira is about the liberation of the Jews, why not state it a bit more clearly, instead of letting us think it is about the contest with Par'o?

The answer in this case is clear. The theme of the spiritual liberation of the Jews is a hidden theme because it is a hidden occurrence. If Moshe had liberated the Jews through a stirring speech or two, or through a self-liberation workshop, I imagine we would have had a parasha describing it. The whole point is that the direct inspirational method will not work. The inner workings of the soul is a hidden process, responding to events in the outside world. In this case, it is the power of God overcoming the Egyptians which releases the Jews, and not the power of Moshe's personality. Hence, the Torah describes the outward event, and hints - rather

clearly I think - at the corresponding inner process.

V. Physical Freedom and Spiritual Freedom There is a common distinction between Pesach and Shavuot that summarizes their significance as follows: Yetziat Mitzraim is about the physical liberation of the Jews, Matan Torah about the spiritual liberation. Based on what we have seen today, that is overly simplistic. In order to receive the Torah, the Jews have to be free already, and not merely in the physical sense. Even a slave is obligated, according to halakha, in some mitzvot. The necessary prerequisite is that they be free in spirit, able to accept responsibilities (a slave has no personal responsibilities) and to make choices. This process begins at the exodus and achieves its minimum goal BEFORE the giving of the Torah. On a certain level, the rest of the history of the Jews in the desert (and perhaps afterwards as well) can be read as a continuation of the same process. On the one hand, one must be free to receive the Torah; on the other hand, the Torah itself emancipates, is the path to freedom. The forty years in the desert can also be understood as a long struggle with the slave mentality of the people. There are distinct phases in the process of liberation, beginning with the exodus (and especially the fall of Egypt), followed by receiving the Torah, and continuing with the special conditions of desert life (manna, clouds of glory, a closed camp, Moshe teaching, etc.). Presumably, we are still engaged in the process, through the application of Torah to our daily lives, on an individual and national level. Peeking ahead, I would like to suggest that this is the key to understanding the laws of Pesach Mitzraim. Since the practices commanded by God for the Jews at the time of the exodus are not identical to the halachot of the pesach celebrated afterwards, it must be understood as a distinct experience. After all, the Jews had not received the Torah and were therefore not obligated to observe Pesach. I would suggest that the following details of Pesach Mitzraim should be understood as instrumental in liberation (rather than celebrating it): the blood on the doorposts (showing a distinction between the Jews and the Egyptians), the hurriedness (anticipation, planning for a future, the opposite of the celebrated laziness of a slave), the borrowing from the Egyptians (forcing an attitude change), the korban pesach (a free man's meal), al matzot u-merorim yokhluhu (eating, that is mastering, one's experience as a slave). I leave the details to you to work out. One final point, concerning Moshe. The opening scenes of parashat Shemot describe a heroic Moshe, striking out against injustice and fighting for human dignity, whether it is a case of Egyptian vs. Jew, Jew vs. Jew, or Midianite vs. Midianite. It would be fair to assume that these scenes describe the personality of one who will be the emancipator of Israel, the Liberator. I believe that the continuation of last week's parasha describes the failure of that theory - Moshe's heroic challenge results in further deepening of the slavery and the total collapse of the people's spirit. The liberation will take place with the name of God, the Tetragrammaton (6,2), meaning not the mysterious workings of God in nature, but the full-bodied glory of direct divine intervention (compare Rav Leibtag's shiur from last year). Moshe is immortalized as Moshe Rabbeinu, as a teacher, and not as a liberator. I believe that refers not only to his teaching Torah, but to his teaching freedom as well. He did not break the bonds of the Jews, God did that. But he did help the Jews understand the meaning of their freedom. He taught them freedom by performing the plagues. We do not thank Moshe for coffering freedom upon us, but for teaching us what it means.

VI. Reading the Text To return to the order of the events in the beginning of the parasha (it will be extremely useful to follow this with a Tanakh open): 1. (6:1-8) God explains to Moshe that He, in His power, will liberate the Jewish people and Moshe need not worry about his inability to persuade Par'o. 2. (6:9) Moshe conveys this message to his brethren, but fails to move them. 3. (6:10-12) God sends Moshe to Par'o, but Moshe, still thinking he must be the one to persuade and inspire Par'o, objects that the mission is hopeless. 4. God commands Moshe (and Aaron) with a double mission, with one method for Par'o, and another, as a result of the first, for the Jews. 5,6,7. Moshe, still the Egyptian prince, raised in royalty and not in slavery, does not understand. He wants to impart his free spirit, his inherent dignity, to the Jews, and can see no way to do this. The Torah interjects the

genealogy of Moshe and Aaron here, a section that has puzzled commentators for centuries. The following sections (6,7) repeat the conversation before this genealogy, according to nearly all commentators. The difference is that the genealogy stresses that Moshe is rooted in Jewish descent, is part of his people. "Hu Moshe ve-Aharon" - this person, listed as part of the sons of Yaakov, is the one whom God has commanded to the Jews, to lead them out of Egypt 'al tzivotam', and to Par'o, to lead the Jews out of Egypt. In Moshe's response this time (6:30 compared with 6:12), he does not repeat the argument from the fact that the Jews did not listen to him. Moshe, as a son of Amram rather than an Egyptian prince, understands that his speeches to the Jews are not the method to free them. He still wants to know how he will persuade Par'o, and this time God explains to him that Moshe will be "elohim" (= power) to Par'o, and Aaron will do the talking. Par'o will not listen, God says (7:3) but I, God, will put forth My hand over Egypt, and "I will take out my hosts (tzivotai), MY people the children of Israel, from Egypt, by great judgments (or punishments)" (7:4). 8. (7:6) "Moshe and Aaron did as God commanded..." This is not a statement of narrative fact, since they have not yet done anything. It means that they now understand the plan, and their roles, and so, from now on, they will fulfill the plan exactly. 9,10. The story of the liberation, as a public contest between God and Par'o, begins. More points to think about: 1. Are there distinct educational points for different plagues? Why are some plagues followed by an act of Moshe to end them (prayer), while some just die off on their own? Why do some contain an explicit emphasis on the distinction between Jew and Egyptian, while others do not, at least not explicitly? Why do some plagues have a warning to Par'o beforehand, while others do not? 2. What, precisely, is the meaning of the story with the staff which turns into a crocodile (or a snake according to Rashi - the reason for Rashi's insistence on an unorthodox interpretation of the word "tanin" is verse 7:16; see the Netziv to 7,9)? 3. Notice that God and the Torah speak about "Bnei Yisrael," but when speaking to Par'o, God calls himself "elokei HA-IVRIM." 4. The midrash claims that from the commencement of the plagues, the Jews were not set to work. There is therefore a long period between actual slavery and freedom, during which the center stage is occupied by Moshe and Par'o. 5. Moshe speaks to the Jews a lot, in parashat Bo, about mitzvot. The end of Bo, immediately after the exodus (but before the crossing of the sea), includes a perfectly normative mitzva section of the Torah, the mitzvot of bechor and tefillin. How does this fit in with the theme of this week's shiur? 6. What is the purpose and meaning of 6,28. Notice this is the LAST verse of a parasha setuma (see Rashi, Ibn Ezra and Ramban). I will award the VBM doughnut award to whoever comes up with a really satisfying explanation for the verse (I am the judge.)

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"kornfeld@netmedia.net.il" "parasha-page@jer1.co.il" The Weekly Internet PARASHA - PAGE by Mordecai Kornfeld of Har Nof, Jerusalem (kornfeld@jer1.co.il)

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 == This week's issue is dedicated to the memory of Monroe (Mordechai) Feibus Z'L, by Aaron Meir Ziegler and his wife Sophia, Har Nof, Jerusalem. *** Please contact me if you would like to dedicate a Parasha-Page. Spread Torah through the farthest reaching medium in all of history!
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== PARASHAT VA'ERA 5757 - ALL BUT ONE

All the cattle of Egypt died, but from the cattle of the Jews not one died. Pharaoh sent [messengers to verify] and behold, there did not die from the cattle of the Jews even one ("Ad Echad" - lit. "until one"), and Pharaoh's heart hardened, and he did not send the people out [as he had promised]." (Shmot 9:6,7)

The expression, "Ad Echad," which is used to describe the number of Jewish animals that died in the Plague of Pestilence, is used again to describe the devastation of the Egyptian army at the Red Sea: "There did not remain from the Egyptians 'Ad Echad' (even one)" (Shmot 14:28). In that

instance, the Midrash (Mechilta ad loc.) interprets the term "Ad Echad" to mean "*but* one," that is, one *did* remain alive -- Pharaoh, who Hashem let live that he may tell his tale to others and teach them to respect their Creator (see Da'at Zekenim ad loc.; see also Tehillim 59:12, "Do not kill the evildoers lest my nation forget..."). The words "Ad Echad" appear only once more in the Scriptures. When Cicero's Canaanite army's was decimated by Barak and his impromptu Jewish forces we are told that "there did not remain from the army of Cicero 'Ad Echad'" (Shoftim 4:16). This time, the verse tells us quite frankly that one person indeed escaped Barak's grasp, and that person was none other than Cicero himself, as the next verse relates. This serves as strong support for the Midrashic suggestion that "Ad Echad" may be taken to mean "*but one." (See also II Shmuel 17:22, "Ad Achad." The Midrashic interpretation may easily be applied there as well.) This interpretation of "Ad Echad" is supported by the verse in our Parasha as well. If Pharaoh had found that not one Jewish animal died, why did does the verse conclude, "*And* Pharaoh's heart hardened?" It should have been, "*But* Pharaoh's heart hardened"! If, however, "Ad Echad" means "but one," the verse may be telling us that this anomaly is what caused Pharaoh's heart to harden. It remains to be explained, however, exactly why one Jewish animal did die. Besides, doesn't the previous verse state unequivocally that "not one of the Jewish animals died?" A number of answers have been proposed for these questions.

II Shemen Hamor (Rav Mordechai Rubino, 1793, in Ma'amar Arubot Hashamayim Ch. 13), quoting one Rav Baruch Lifshitz, suggests that the cattle of "*Bnai* Yisrael" (v. 6) did not die, but an animal of "*Yisrael*" (v. 7) did die. What is the difference between the two expressions? The Midrash informs us that out of all the multitude of Jewish women in Egypt, only one Jewess ever had marital relations with an Egyptian -- Shlomit Bas Divri, who raised an illegitimate Egyptian-fathered child (Vayikra 24:10,11, and Rashi). The Ramban (ad loc.) maintains that a child born from a gentile before we received the Torah on Mt. Sinai was not considered to be Jewish even though maternally he was of Jewish descent. Shlomit's child may have appeared to all to be a Jew, since he was raised by his Jewish mother in her home, but in reality he was not. His cattle died along with the cattle of the Egyptians. This is what the verse means by telling us that no cattle from "Bnai Yisrael" (sons of *two* Jewish parents) died. However, when Pharaoh found that one animal of "Yisrael" (those that he thought to be of Yisrael), *had* died, he hardened his heart, not aware that the child was really an Egyptian and not a Jew at all! (Koheleth Yitzchak, Parashat Emor; Gan Raveh; Pardes Yosef; Peninim Yekarim; see also Malbim) Koheleth Yitzchak adds that this interpretation offers us insight into the cryptic statement of the Midrash (Shmot Rabba 32:5) that "Shlomit Bat Divri brought 'Dever' ('Davar?') upon her child." According to the above reading of the verses, she indeed brought the Plague of Dever (Pestilence) upon her child's cattle, by bearing him from a Mitzri!

III For all its brilliance, this explanation is still wanting. If the words "Ad Echad" mean "all but one," it ought to be referring to one *animal* and not one *person's* animals. Secondly, why was the plight of this pseudo-Jew not mentioned until except in this particular Plague? We must continue our search for a consistent interpretation of the verse. Hagaon Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin suggests another approach to the verse in question. One of the taxes kings were accustomed to levy was an animal head tax of one in ten animals from every herd. Presumably, Pharaoh also collected such a tax from the Jews. When the Plague of Pestilence ravaged the Egyptian flocks, it would have been fitting for Pharaoh's portion in the *Jewish* cattle to die as well. However, if one in ten Jewish animals were to die, Pharaoh would certainly collect his dues from the remainder of the flock -- the Jew would be the only one to lose out. If, however, the Jew had a number of cattle that was exactly divisible by ten, Pharaoh would indeed be the one to lose out through the death of a single animal. For instance, a Jew had 30 heads of cattle he would expect to give 3 heads to Pharaoh in payment of the tax. If the thirtieth dies leaving the Jew with only 29, he will only have to give Pharaoh *two* heads, not three -- it is Pharaoh who takes the loss. Perhaps in such situations Hashem killed one Jewish animal, so that Pharaoh

would not be able to claim an extra animal when collecting his taxes. The verse may now be read as follows. "All the cattle of Egypt died, but from the cattle of the Jews..." i.e., the head-tax animals whose death would cause a loss to the Jews, such as those in the odd-numbered flocks, "not one died". Since Pharaoh lost all of his cattle, he sent messengers to the Jews to collect the animal-taxes. "Pharaoh sent [messengers] and behold," the tax collectors found that, "there did not die from the cattle of Yisrael but one ('Ad Echad') -- only one per flock, i.e. in the flocks with round numbers of animals. Nevertheless, "Pharaoh's heart hardened..." since he could still collect the rest of the tax, "...and he didn't send the people out!"

We may lend support to Rav Diskin's interpretation from the Midrash (Shmot Rabba 11:4) which asserts, "What does 'Ad Echad' mean? Even if an animal was partially owned by a Jew and partially owned by an Egyptian, it did not die." The king's share of the Jewish flocks did not die in order that the Jews would not incur a loss! It is also interesting to note that the "Echad" which remained in the other two verses quoted above (section I) was a king. The word "Echad" is often used to refer to a king (see for example Rashi to Bereishit 49:16; 26:10), because he evokes singular respect among his people (see also Bamidbar 28:4 and Megilah 28a). According to Rav Diskin's interpretation, the "Echad" of our verse also refers to the animals of a *king* -- the taxed animals that Pharaoh did not succeed in collecting from the Jews!

IV We may suggest yet another manner to the decipher the "Ad Echad" of our verse. Ba'alei Hatosefot and Chizkuni translate the verse, "All the cattle of Egypt died but from the cattle of the Jews not one died" in a rather unconventional manner. They read the verse as, "All the cattle [that] died, [were] from Egypt, but from the cattle of the Jews, not one died". Extending their suggestion a bit further, we may translate the following verse ("Behold, there did not die from the cattle of the Jews even one -- "Ad Echad") in a similar manner: "Behold the cattle [that] did *not* die, [were] from the Jews, 'Ad Echad' -- all but one." That is to say, but one of the Egyptian animals survived! Which one was that? Why Pharaoh's, of course. The Midrash Hagadol (14:23) tells us that Pharaoh had a singularly beautiful royal horse, which led all the other horses of his army into the sea -- apparently it had survived all of the Ten Plagues! (It was common practice for a top-quality horse to be set aside as the royal horse -- see Esther 6:8, Mishnah Sanhedrin 22a.) This may be why Moshe warned Pharaoh that Pestilence will strike "your cattle *which are in the field*" (Shmot 9:3). All of the Egyptian animals were kept in the fields, as the Ramban (ibid.) asserts -- except for Pharaoh's royal horse, which undoubtedly was kept in a special stables in the king's palace! When the cattle died, Pharaoh sent messengers to check out the welfare of his personal horse. When he found it still alive, although every other Egyptian animal had died, "Pharaoh's heart hardened, and he didn't send the people out." The "Ad Echad" of the verse can now be read exactly as the "Ad Echad" of the other verses. It is hinting at one that *did not* die, and referring to *royalty*!

SEE HOMEPAGE - <http://www.shemayisrael.co.il/dafyomi2>
Mordecai Kornfeld Tl/Fx(02)6522633 6/12 Katzenelenbogen St.
US:(718)520-0210 Har Nof, Jerusalem, ISRAEL POB:43087, Jrslm

From: "ml@jer1.co.il" "tsc-al... HAFTARA - PARSHAT VA'EYRA
Yechezkel perek 29

PROPHETIC BACKGROUND After a lengthy rebuke of Am Yisrael in the first 24 chapters, [in which Yechezkel explains how and why the "shechinah" (divine presence) is leaving Yerushalayim and moving to Bavel], chapters 25 thru 32 of Sefer Yechezkel contain prophecies which censure the many nations who neighbor Israel. Chapter 25 - Amon, Moav, Edom, & Plishtim Chapters 26->28 The city of Tyre (on coast of Lebanon) Chapters 29->32 Egypt

In this unit, better known as "nv'ut ha'amim", these nations are warned that they will be punished for both their haughtiness and their rejoicing over the destruction of Yerushalayim.

THE REBUKE OF EGYPT FOR THEIR HAUGHTINESS Chapter

29, this week's Haftara, the first in a set of prophecies concerning Egypt, opens by explaining the reason for their haughtiness: "I am going to deal with you Pharaoh - king of Egypt... who said: The Nile is my own, I made it for myself" (29:3)

Although this prophecy is given almost one thousand years after the story of the Exodus, the reason for the haughtiness of Egypt remains the same. They had become prosperous and powerful because of their natural resource - the Nile River. Its fertile delta and location near the Mediterranean made Egypt a 'super- power' in ancient civilization. God is angered at Egypt at this time, just as He was at the time of the Exodus, for they relate this greatness unto themselves instead of unto God. Their control of this wealth and resource led to the haughtiness of Pharaoh and his attitude that he can master and enslave other nations. Because of this haughtiness, Yechezkel continues: "Assuredly, thus says Hashem, Lo I will bring a sword against you, and I will cut off man and beast from you, so that the Land of Egypt will become desolate and lay in ruin, then THEY SHALL KNOW that I am the Lord, BECAUSE he boasted - The NILE IS MINE, and I made it... (29:8-9)

Even when Egypt will recover from this destruction some forty years later, they will no longer be a mighty empire, instead: "...they shall be come a MAMLACHA SHFALA - a lowly kingdom. It shall be the lowliest of all kingdoms, and SHALL NOT LORD OVER OTHER NATIONS again..." (see 29:13-15)

A HOLLOW CANE In this chapter, Yechezkel mentions an additional sin of Egypt, this one more specific to their relationship with Am Yisrael: "And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am God, for you were A STAFF OF REED for Bnei Yisrael" (29:6)

What does this metaphor "staff of reed" ("mishenet kaneh") imply? A "mishenet" (staff) is a walking stick. Usually, a walking stick is made out of strong wood, so that it will support one who leans on it. However, a walking stick made of 'reed' ("kaneh") may look like wood on the outside, but on the inside it is HOLLOW. Therefore, it breaks as soon as the user leans on it. This explains the next two psukim: "When they grasped you with the hand, you would splinter... and when they leaned on you, you would break..." (29:7)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND To appreciate this metaphor, we must understand what was happening between Egypt and Israel at this time. Chapter 29 opens with a precise date - the 12th of Av, Year 10 [since "Galut Yehoyachin"], in other words, about a year before the first Bet HaMikdash was destroyed. Recall that in "Galut Yehoyachin" (the Exile of Yehoyachin - approx. 597 BCE), the aristocracy of Yehuda was exiled to Bavel by Nevuchadnetzar, while the working class remained in Jerusalem. Bavel appointed Tzidkiyahu as a vassal king, on the condition that he remain loyal to Bavel. (See II Kings 24:8-17.) Against the advice of Yirmiyahu (who consistently encouraged Am Yisrael to ACCEPT sovereignty of Bavel (see Yirm. 27:1-13!)), Yehuda joined its neighbors in a rebellion against Bavel (see 27:3). This rebellion was based on a false hope that Egypt would defeat Bavel and come to the aid of its neighbors. In Yirmiyahu 37:1-10, we even find an instance when the Babylonian siege on Yerushalayim was lifted due to an Egyptian attack! This led to such high hopes in Yehuda (that Egypt would bring salvation) that false prophets such as Chanaya ben Azur predicted the imminent fall of Bavel and the return of Galut Yehoyachin within two years! (See Yirm. chapter 28!) Nonetheless, as Yirmiyahu had forewarned, Egypt retreated and Bavel returned in the ninth year to continue the siege which ultimately led to the destruction of the Temple and Galut Tzidkiyahu. Yechezkel is commenting on this reliance on Egypt that caused Yehuda to revolt. Egypt, however, faulted on their treaty - like a "mishenet kaneh". This fiasco led to the final exile of Yehuda and Churban ha'bayit. Yechezkel himself speaks of the 'flip side' of this 'worthless treaty' with Egypt in Chapter 17 (see 17:11-21). There he explains that divine reason why Egypt faulted on their treaty with Yehuda. Yehuda was guilty, for they too had broken their covenant with Bavel (and with God): "... The king of Bavel came to Jerusalem and carried away its king and its officers and brought them back to Bavel (= Galut Yehoyachin). He took one of the royal seed (=Tzidkiyahu) and made a covenant with him ... that he must be a

humble kingdom and not exalt himself, but keep his covenant... BUT, He (Tzidkiyahu) REBELLED against him and sent his envoys TO EGYPT to get horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Will he who does such escape? Shall he bread a covenant and escape?... (17:13-16)

Later in the Haftara, Yechezkel (some 17 years later, in the 27th year) notes when this prophecy concerning Egypt is about to come true, as Bavel marches their army for Tyre to conquer Egypt. (see 29:17-21). As throughout Yechezkel, the underlying theme is always "v'yadu ki ANI HASHEM" (29:21). These prophecies, when they come true, will ultimately lead Am Yisrael and (all mankind) to recognize that He is God. Mankind is responsible for its deeds and God will bring justice.

shabbat shalom menachem Menachem Leibtag ml@virtual.co.il POB 265 Alon Shevut, Gush Etzion 90433 ISRAEL tel : 972-2-993-1650

"rmk@yoss.org""drasha@torah.org" HITTING PAY DIRT -- DRASHA PARSHAS VA'EIRAH DRASHA PARSHAS VA'EIRAH -- HITTING PAY DIRT 1/3/97 Volume 3 Issue 14

There is a certain sensitivity displayed in this week's portion that serves as a lesson to mankind.

The first two of the 10 plagues that befell Egypt evolved around water. In the first plague, the waters of Egypt turned into blood. The second plague had frogs emerge from the water. In order to generate those miraculous events Moshe's staff struck the waters. Moshe, however, did not strike the water. He was told that his brother Ahron should do the smiting. After all, as a three-month-old child the waters of the Nile were Moshe's refuge as he was hidden in a reed basket from Pharaoh's soldiers who were drowning all Jewish males. It would not be fitting for one who was saved by the water to strike it.

The next plague, lice, emerged from the earth. After striking the earth with his staff, lice emerged, afflicting all of Egypt. Again Moshe was told not to be the agent of transmutation. After all, he must be grateful to the earth that hid the Egyptian whom he had killed.

Of course, the great ethicists derive from Moshe's behavior the importance of gratitude. "Imagine," they point out, "Moshe had to refrain from striking inanimate objects because he was saved by them years back! How much more must we show gratitude to living beings who have been our vehicles of good fortune."

Such morals deserve a homily to themselves, and there are countless stories of gratitude to accompany such essays. However, I am bothered by the simplicity of that message and the derivations that lead to it. Why is striking water or earth a display of ingratitude? Was it not the will of Hashem to have the dust and waters converted? Would it not be a great elevation to those waters or the dust to be transformed to higher components of G-d's glory? That being the case, wouldn't it be most fitting that Moshe be chosen to elevate simple waters or lowly dirt into objects that declare the open presence of an Almighty Creator who shouts together with his humble servant, "Let My people serve Me"?

Rabbi Nosson Schapira of Krakow (1585-1633) once told of his most difficult case. A wealthy businessman from Warsaw would do business each month in the Krakow market. On each visit he noticed an extremely pious widow huddled near her basket of bagels reciting Psalms. She only lifted her eyes from her worn prayer book to sell a bagel or roll. After the sale she'd shower her customer with a myriad of blessings and immediately she'd return to the frayed pages of her prayer book that were varnished with tears and devotion. Upon observing her each month, the Krakow businessman came to a conclusion. "This pious woman should not have to struggle to earn a living. She should be able to pursue her prayers and piety with no worries."

He offered to double her monthly earnings on one condition: she would leave the bagel business and spend her time in the service of the L-rd. The woman, tears of joy streaming down her face, accepted the generous offer and thanked the kind man with praise, gratitude and blessing. A month later, when the

man returned to Krakow, he was shocked to find the woman at her usual place, mixing the sweet smell of bagels with the sweet words of Tehillim. As soon as he approached, the woman handed him an envelope. "Here is your money. I thought it over I can't accept your offer." "A deal is a deal," he exclaimed. "We must see Rabbi Schapira!" After the businessman presented his case, the woman spoke. "The reason this generous man offered to support me was to help me grow in my spirituality and devotion. From the day I left my bagel business I've only fallen. Let me explain. "Every day that it would rain, I would think of the farmers who planted the wheat for my bagels. I would sing praises for the glory of rain as I felt the personal guidance of Hashem with each raindrop. When the sun would shine I would once again thank Hashem from letting the farmers harvest in good weather. When I would grind the flour and then sift it again I'd find countless reasons to thank the Almighty. When the bread would bake golden brown I'd thank Hashem for the beauty of the product and its sweet sell. And when a customer would come I'd thank both Hashem for sending him and then bless my patron, too! Now this is all gone, I want no part of a simple, all-expense-paid life."

Moshe had a very personal relationship with the water and the dust. Each time he saw the Nile or tread upon the ground, he remembered the vehicles of his good fortune and used them to praise Hashem. Blood, frogs, and lice are surely miraculous, but they were not Moshe's personal salvation. Striking the water or earth may have produced great national miracles, but Moshe would be left without the simple dirt that yielded piles of personal praise. When one forgoes marveling at a lowly speck of dust and chooses to focus instead upon huge mountains, he may never hit pay dirt. He may only bite the dust.

Dedicated in memory of A. Milton Brown by Mr. & Mrs. Ben Brown Mordechai Kamenetzky - Yeshiva of South Shore Drasha, Copyright (c) 1997 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc. Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Rosh Mesivta at Mesivta Ateres Yaakov, the High School Division of Yeshiva of South Shore, <http://www.yoss.org/>

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Congregation House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel 1613 92nd Ave. SW
Calgary, AB, T2V-5C9 Phone:(403) 259-3230/8404 Fax: (403) 259-3240

Dvar Torah: Shemot-Va'eira 5757

Rabbi Moshe Shulman

The Jews in Egypt

Concerning the Jews of Egypt, the Midrash says: "By what merit were the Jews worthy of Redemption? By merit of the fact that they did not change their names, or their dress, or their language."

What a beautiful picture of the steadfastness of the Jewish spirit. When faced with the hardships of servitude, they maintained their Hebrew origins and identity. Their Hebrew names, their Jewish speech, their unique dress - with these they fought the temptations of assimilation, and emerged victorious. This is what this Midrash would have us understand. But the image presented here is a contradiction to the image presented in a second Midrash, dealing with the root cause of the slavery, from a spiritual perspective:

"When Joseph died, the Jews said: 'Let us be like the Egyptians', and they abandoned the Covenant of Circumcision. The Holy One, blessed be He, immediately turned the Egyptians' love for them, into hatred, as it says: (Psalms 105:25) 'He turned their heart to hate his people.'"

Which was it? Did the Jews cling to their heritage? Or did they attempt to shed every vestige of Hebraic origin in an attempt to embrace Egyptian culture and idolatry, in order to be "accepted"? To answer this question, we must re-examine the story of the Jews' sojourn in Egypt.

At the end of the Book of Genesis, Ya'akov and his children made it abundantly clear that their sojourn in Egypt was only temporary: "LAGUR BA'ARETZ BANU...To sojourn [temporarily] in the land we have come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine is severe in the

land of Canaan. We pray, therefore, that thy servants dwell in the land of GOSHEN." (Gen. 47:4)

In Goshen, away from the mainstream of Egyptian culture, they had a fighting chance of maintaining their culture, their language, their dress, and their names, in short - of remaining the "Children of Israel".

But 23 verses later, the Torah says: "And they dwelt in Egypt in the land of Goshen; VA'YEIACHAZU BA - and they took possession of it, and grew and multiplied exceedingly." (ibid 27)

An ACHUZA, a possession and inheritance, is very different than LAGUR BA'ARETZ BANU - "we have come to dwell temporarily in the land." Indeed, in the beginning of Shemot we find: "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and SWARMED, and multiplied and grew very mighty, AND THE LAND WAS FILLED WITH THEM."

Which land? Goshen? Or Egypt? Did the Jews stay in Goshen, protected, distant and distinct, or did they leave their seclusion in an attempt to be part of Egypt? R. Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, the Netziv, in his commentary, Ha'amek Davar, points out that by the time the plague of the first born came around, the Torah says that G-d had to PASS OVER the Jewish homes, in order to find the Egyptian ones. The ENTIRE LAND had been filled with them. VAYISHRETZU - They had SWARMED over Egypt, like a plague of locusts!

What about Egyptian culture? What about their idolatry? Says the prophet Yehezkel (20:6-10): "On the day that I lifted up My hand to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt... I said to them: Cast away, every man, the abominations of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt, I am the Lord your G-d. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken to me. They did not cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt."

Such were the Jews who said: "Let us be like the Egyptians, and forsake circumcision."

But why does the first Midrash quoted earlier depict the Jews as having remained steadfast in their Jewish roots, despite all the above evidence to the contrary? Did the Midrash ignore the Jews' emergence from Goshen and resettlement in Egypt? Did the Midrash not know about these verses in Yehezkel? Obviously not.

Evidently the Midrash understood that there was a second "side" to this coin. Indeed, the Jews may have filled the land, but on the other hand, many did choose to stay in Goshen. For example, in the warning to the fourth plague - wild beasts, G-d warns Pharaoh that the land of Goshen will be spared this affliction: "And I will separate in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of wild animals shall be there; to the end that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth." (8:18)

Look at the commitment of the midwives, who were, according to most commentaries, Jewish midwives, who risked their own lives, rather than comply with Pharaoh's decrees.

Look at Jews like Yocheved and Amram, who, despite Pharaoh's decree to kill any Jewish male child, married, and had children - And what children? Aaron, Miriam, and Moses!! What commitment to the Jewish people? Could you describe these people as assimilationists?

Look at the commitment of the Jewish people after the plagues, who were willing to take the Egyptian deity in the form of a lamb and slaughter it before all to see.

Chazal saw two extremes amongst the Jews of Egypt. There were the assimilationists. Perhaps they even numbered the majority of the Jewish People. They had left Goshen to go and live in Egypt. They had wanted to look like the Egyptians, to sound like them, and to be accepted by them. But the ensuing slavery frustrated their efforts.

There were also those Jews who fought the assimilation. There were those who stayed in Goshen, and yearned for the day when they could return to Israel, and to the G-d of their Forefathers. They kept their Hebrew names, maintained their own Jewish language and culture of speech, and who wore their Jewish clothing, their "Tzitzit and Kippot", their Hebrew origins, along with their Judaism - on the outside, with pride!!

Ultimately, the question remains: by what merit were the Jews redeemed? It

was not because the slavery frustrated the attempts of those Jews who wanted to hide from their Judaism. The Redemption took place because there were Jews like Yocheved and Amram, like Aaron and Moshe Rabeinu. The Redemption took place because of those Jews who did not change their names, their language, or their dress.

Those Jews prevailed then, as they have always prevailed throughout our history, as they will prevail today!!

For more information about Congregation House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel or any of the programs or services of the Synagogue, please contact Rabbi Moshe Shulman

"yhe@jer1.co.il" "yhe-intparsha@jer..."

INTPARSHA - 13: PARASHAT VAERA YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)
INTRODUCTION TO PARASHAT HASHAVUA

by Zvi Shimon
PARASHAT VAERA
The Names of God

The opening verses of this week's portion, parashat Vaera, are amongst the most cryptic and intriguing in the Torah.

"God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am 'Hashem' (Tetragrammaton, see glossary). I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as 'Kel Shakkai', but by My name 'Hashem' was I not known to them" (Exodus 6:2,3)

God reveals to Moses a hitherto concealed name unknown even to the patriarchs. Several questions beckon in response to these verses. 1) The verse states that God did not reveal the Tetragrammaton to the patriarchs. There are, however, several instances in Genesis in which God uses the Tetragrammaton when speaking to the patriarchs. God tells Abraham: "I am 'HASHEM' who brought you out from Ur Kasdim" (Genesis 15:7) and reveals Himself to Jacob saying: "I am 'HASHEM' the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac" (ibid. 28:13). In addition, Abraham apparently knew this name, since Scripture states: "and [Abraham] called upon the name of 'Hashem' (12:8, see also 13:4). These examples contradict our verse which implies that this name was concealed until it was revealed to Moses. 2) What is the significance of God's different names and why does God reveal to Moses a name which, according to our verse, was concealed from the patriarchs?

We will begin with the first question. Rasag (Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon, Persia, 892-942), apparently troubled by this very question, interprets our verse differently. He suggests that the verse is to be understood as follows: "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as Kel Shakkai, but I did not make Myself known to them ONLY by My name 'Hashem.'" God indeed appeared to the patriarchs as 'Hashem.' Our verse does not deny this. The difference is only that God would also appear to them through other names such as Kel Shakkai. However, when revealing Himself to Moses, he appears as 'Hashem' using the name 'Hashem' alone.

Rabbi Bekhor Shor (Rabbi Yosef Ben Yitzchak Bekhor Shor, France, 12th century) reaches a similar conclusion to that of the Rasag, albeit through a different interpretation. According to Rabbi Bekhor Shor, the verse should be read: "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as Kel Shakkai AND by my name 'Hashem,' but I did not make Myself known to them." Although God appeared to the patriarchs using different names including Kel Shakkai and 'Hashem,' His revelation was nevertheless still limited. God will further reveal himself to Moses. Both the Rasag and Rabbi Bekhor Shor attempt to solve the contradiction between Genesis and Exodus by re- interpreting the verse in Exodus in a somewhat forced manner, either by suggesting that the verse should be understood through an insertion of the word "only or by a change in the punctuation of the verse.."

The majority of the commentators, however, offer a different solution. They suggest that our verse does not relate to the revelation of the name, Hashem, per se. The patriarchs were definitely familiar with this name.

What they were unacquainted with is the significance of the name and what it represents. When God states: "but I did not make Myself known to them by My name 'Hashem,'" He is not referring to the actual name but rather to the divine attribute which the name represents. What, then, does the Tetragrammaton denote?

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak, France, 1040-1105) explains the name 'Hashem' as He who is "faithful to recompense reward to those who walk in my ways." God, by revealing his name to Moses, informs him that the purpose of his mission is to fulfill the promises which God made to the patriarchs of giving them the land of Israel. Rashi interprets the continuation of our verse as follows:

"I APPEARED TO ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB AS KEL SHAKKAI - I made many promises to the patriarchs and in all cases I said to them, I am Kel Shakkai BUT BY MY NAME HASHEM WAS I NOT KNOWN TO THEM - It is not written 'but my name Hashem I did not make known to them' rather it is written "but by my name Hashem WAS I NOT KNOWN TO THEM" - I was not recognized by them in My ATTRIBUTE of faithfulness, by reason of which My name is called 'Hashem' which denotes that I am certain to fulfill the words [of my promise], since I made promises [to the patriarchs] but did not fulfill them [during their lifetime]."

Rashi's interpretation relates to both of the questions raised in relation to our verse, i.e. the contradiction between the verses in Genesis and Exodus as well as the significance behind God's names. Rashi points out that the verb at the end of the verse is in the passive form, "not known" as opposed to "not made known." God indeed revealed himself to the patriarchs through the name 'Hashem.' They, however, did not recognize the attribute of faithfulness, of truth, which the name implies. There is therefore no contradiction between our verse and the book of Genesis since it is not the actual name but only its significance which our verse states was unknown to the patriarchs. The name Kel Shakkai relates to God's promises to the patriarchs, the name 'Hashem' to the actualization of the promises. God's words to Moses are a response to his complaint at the end of last week's portion, parashat Shemot: "Why did You bring harm upon this people? Why did You send me? Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has dealt worse with this people; and still You have not delivered Your people" (5:22,23). God responds that He is about to reveal the facet of 'Hashem,' the fulfiller of promises. The verse immediately following ours further specifies, "I also established My covenant with them [the patriarchs], to give them the land of Canaan..." (6:4). God established the covenant and He will now fulfill it.

The Ibn Ezra (Rabbi Avraham ben Ezra, Spain, 1092-1167) agrees with Rashi that our verse does not relate to the name 'Hashem' per se but rather to the attribute which the name denotes. He, however, offers a different explanation of this attribute. God's names do not relate to the making or fulfillment of promises. They relate to the method by which God intervenes in the running of worldly events:

"The purport of the verse is that He appeared to the patriarchs by this name [Kel Shakkai], which indicates that He is the victor and prevailer over the hosts of heaven, doing great miracles for them except that no change from the natural order of the world was noticeable. In famine, He redeemed them from death, and in war from the power of the sword, and He gave them riches and honor and all the goodness, just like all the assurances mentioned in the Torah in the section dealing with the blessings and curses. It is not [in nature] that man should be rewarded for performance of a commandment or punished for committing a transgression but by a miracle. If man were left to his nature or his fortune, his deeds would neither add to him nor diminish from him. Rather, reward and punishment in this world, as mentioned in the entire scope of the Torah, are all miracles, but they are HIDDEN. They appear to the onlooker as being part of the natural order of things, but in truth they come upon man as punishment and reward for his deeds.... Thus God said to Moses: 'I have appeared to the patriarchs with the might of My arm with which I prevail over the

constellations and help those whom I have chosen, but with My name 'Hashem' with which all existence came into being I was not made known to them, that is, to create new things for them by the open change of nature. And Wherefore say unto the children of Israel: I am 'Hashem' and inform them once again of the Great Name [i.e., the Tetragrammaton], for by that Name I will deal wondrously with them, and they will know that I am the Eternal, that maketh all things." (The Ibn Ezra as formulated in the commentary of the Ramban):

Kel Shakkai represents a form of intervention which does not go counter to the laws of nature. When God wished to rescue the patriarchs, he did not do so through miraculous cataclysmic means but rather by effecting the natural course of events. God now informs Moses that salvation will come through a different mode of celestial intervention, through the name 'Hashem.' God will create miracles which will defy all the rules of nature. God as Kel Shakkai intervenes through natural means. God through the attribute of 'Hashem' rises above nature. As creator of the world he has the power to not only manipulate nature but also to negate it. Several verses later, God elaborates on the imminent salvation: "Say therefore to the Israelite people: I am 'Hashem' ... I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through EXTRAORDINARY chastisements" (6:6). God's revelation to Moses as 'Hashem' is thus a foreshadowing of the ten plagues and the supernatural manner of the salvation.

The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, Spain, 1194-1274), building on the interpretation of the Ibn Ezra offers another explanation of our verses.

The Ibn Ezra points to the difference between the verb used to describe God's revelation to the patriarchs as Kel Shakkai and the verb used in relation to Moses. With regard to the patriarchs Scripture states: "I APPEARED ("va-eira") to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as Kel Shakkai." However, in relation to the name 'Hashem' the Torah reads: "but by My name 'Hashem' was I not KNOWN to them." Why does the Torah once use the verb appear in relation to revelation and then switch to the verb to know? The Ramban gives the following explanation:

"By way of the Truth, the verse can be explained in consonance with its plain meaning and intent. He is saying: 'I the Eternal appeared to the patriarchs through the speculum of Kel Shakkai,' just as is the sense of the verse, 'In a vision do I make myself known to him' (Numbers 12:6). But Myself, I the Eternal did not make Myself known to them, as they did not contemplate [Me] through a lucid speculum so that they should know me,' just as is the sense of the verse, 'And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Eternal knew face to face' (Deuteronomy 34:10). The patriarchs did know the Proper name of the Eternal, but it was not known to them through prophecy. Therefore, when Abraham spoke with God, he mentioned the Proper Name together with the Name Adnut- Lord or Adnut alone. The purport thereof is that the revelation of the Divine Presence and His communication with them came to them through an ameliorated attribute of justice, and with that attribute was His conduct towards them. But with Moses, His conduct, and His recognition to him were by the attribute of mercy, which is indicated by His Great Name [i.e., the Tetragrammaton].

The Ramban notes two related differences between God's revelation to the patriarchs and His revelation to Moses. The first difference relates to the medium of the revelation, the second to its content. The verb APPEARED is used in relation to the patriarchs because God's revelation to them was not direct, "face to face," but rather through visions. Moses, however, received direct revelation from God and was thus able to have a closer grasp of the essence of God (compare to the Ramban's analysis in the Guide to the Perplexed part 1, chapter 61). The patriarchs recognized God through the attribute of Kel Shakkai which, according to the Ramban, represents the attribute of justice. Moses recognized God through his name 'Hashem' which denotes mercy. God in revealing himself to Moses and freeing the people of Israel from bondage is bestowing goodness upon Israel beyond that which justice would require and thus revealing His mercy.

To summarize, we have so far seen three explanations of the attributes

which the names Kel Shakkai and 'Hashem' represent. According to Rashi Kel Shakkai represents God's promises to the patriarchs while Hashem represents their actualization. According to the Ibn Ezra Kel Shakkai represents divine intervention through natural means while Hashem represents supernatural miraculous intervention. According to the Ramban, the name Kel Shakkai symbolizes indirect revelation through visions and the attribute of justice while the name 'Hashem' indicates direct revelation and the attribute of mercy.

Whichever explanation is adopted, one question still remains to be answered; why does God reveal to Moses an attribute which was concealed from the patriarchs? Did not the patriarchs merit the actualization of God's promises or His performance of greater miracles or direct revelation as experienced by Moses? Were the patriarchs inferior to Moses? Opinions differ in regard to this question. [The answer to this question of course depends upon which explanation of God's names we adopt.]

The Ibn Ezra comments that the miracles performed through Moses are proof that he reached a greater attachment to God than the patriarchs. The patriarchs did not have a sufficient grasp of the attribute indicated by the name 'Hashem' to merit the performance of such overt cataclysmic miracles. This is also the position of the Rambam (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, Egypt, 1138-1204) in his analysis of the uniqueness of Moses's prophecy (see the Guide to the Perplexed, part 2, chapter 35, and the Code of Law, 'Yesodei Ha-Torah' 7:6). Moses' direct prophecy is unique and unmatched by any other prophet. All the prophets received revelation through visions and metaphoric symbols. They received revelation while sleeping and through an angel but not through God Himself. Prophecy was for them an emotionally and physically stirring experience. Moses, by contrast, received direct revelation from God and prophecy was for him a natural experience. Moses had miracles performed before all of Israel. The other prophets only had miracles performed before small numbers of people. All this is proof of Moses's greatness and his superiority over all other prophets.

An opposite opinion to that of the Ibn Ezra and the Rambam is raised by our Sages as cited in Shemot Rabba (a compilation of homiletical interpretations of our Sages):

"Said the Holy One blessed be He to Moses: Alas for those who are gone, never to be replaced (in reference to the patriarchs)! Many times I revealed Myself to Abraham Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty, but I did not make known to them that My name is the Lord as I have told thee and **THEY DID NOT QUESTION MY WAYS.** I said to Abraham: (Gen. 13) 'Arise and go forth in the land the length and breadth ... for to thee shall I give it' - He sought to bury Sarah and did not find where, until he purchased a place with money - **YET HE DID NOT QUESTION MY WAYS.** I said to Isaac (ibid. 26): 'Dwell in this land ... for to thee and thy seed shall I give all these lands' - He sought to drink water and did not find, 'And the shepherds of Gerar strove with the shepherds of Isaac' - **YET HE DID NOT QUESTION MY WAYS.** I said unto Jacob (ibid. 29): 'The land which thou liest on, to thee will I give it and unto thy seed' - He sought a place to pitch his tent and did not find, until he acquired it for a hundred kesita - **YET HE DID NOT QUESTION MY WAYS,** and did not ask Me what was My name as thou didn't ask. Yet you at the beginning of My mission did say to Me, 'What is His name?' And at the end you did say, (Exodus 5:23): 'Since I came to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people.' (Shemot Rabba 6:4)

The patriarchs' faith was actually greater than that of Moses. The patriarchs were fully confident that God would fulfill his promises to them even when reality presented a contradictory picture. God promised to give the patriarchs the land of Israel but they always had to struggle with the native inhabitants over their rights to the land. They nonetheless never questioned God's faithfulness. By contrast, Moses, at the first sign of difficulty on his mission immediately protests: "Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has dealt worse with this people; and still You have not delivered Your people" (Exodus 5:23). According to this interpretation, it is Moses' lack of faith which demands God's immediate

fulfillment of His promises. Moses needs the evidence of overt miracles to buttress his faith. The patriarchs, by contrast, possess a pure and absolute faith. They are not deterred by a delay in the fulfillment of the divine promise; their faith is unswerving. Even if reality is harsh and even while they suffer the patriarchs' faith stands firm.

Rabbi Hirsch (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Germany, 1808 - 1888) adopts a different approach to the question. The difference in Moses' revelation is not a sign of superiority or inferiority. It is rather a product of a divine plan for the creation of the Jewish people. It is not due to Moses, the individual, but to his mission of redeeming the people of Israel:

"This new revelation of God has been prepared from the very beginning of Jewish history.. You are surprised that up till now things have become worse and worse I could equally well have led you on a upward path. Instead of letting Abraham get a son in his hundredth year, I could have caused a family to be raised by him by the time he had reached seventy, and allowed his descendants to flourish in happy favorable circumstances to a powerful nation on its own native soil. But then that nation would not have been the nation that reveals God as 'Hashem.' Then this nation would be no different from all other nations, would have developed like them from ordinary natural causes, like them, stand on material visible firm ground, would find the source of power and greatness in material power and greatness, and only aspire to the spiritual and moral, as far as their materialism left space for it, and as far as it fitted in with their materialism. But, in contrast to the other nations, this nation is to get its land, and have its foundation, solely in God."

God wished to save the people of Israel through unnatural means to stress their unique essence and mission. The people of Israel will not develop naturally like the rest of the nations. They will inherit their land through divine intervention. Their right to the land is intricately connected to their commitment to fulfill their destiny as the people of 'Hashem.' The history of Israel does not follow the natural route of the other nations of the earth; it is a history governed by the covenant with God. Not only is our connection to the land related to the covenant, our whole experience and existence stems from our relationship with God. Moses is embarking on a mission to save the people of Israel, take them to the promised land and establish them as an independent nation. This mission will not be accomplished through 'Kel Shakkai,' through natural means. It will be accomplished through 'Hashem,' divine intervention which negates the laws of nature. Through this divine intervention the people of Israel become the people of 'Hashem.'

Glossary:

The Tetragrammaton, the four-letter-name of God, is not pronounced but is rather read as the name of 'Adnut' - Lord, another of the names of God (see Rambam, Code of Law, 'Yesodei Ha-torah' chapter 6). When not reading full verses from the Torah, in order to avoid having to pronounce the holy name, it is referred to as 'Hashem' which literally means 'the name.'

For direct questions or comments to Zvi Shimon, please send email to intparsh@etzion.org.il .

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Va'eira - Chassidic Dimension Date: 97-01-07 17:13:46 EST From: listserv@lubavitch.chabad.org (W-2 LIST Chabad-Lubavitch) B"H The Chassidic Dimension Adaptation of Likutei Sichos

by Rabbi Sholom Ber Wineberg
Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion
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W-2

Va'eira

Havayah -- The Attribute of Truth

The Torah portion of Vayeira begins with G-d revealing to Moshe His Ineffable Name "Havayah". G-d then goes on to tell Moshe that He did not make this name known to Avraham, Yitzchak or Ya'akov.

Rashi comments that G-d was thereby implying that "He did not make Himself known to them with His unlimited attribute of truth."

The Alter Rebbe explains that, with this statement, G-d was answering Moshe's complaint of "Why do You mistreat Your people?" G-d in effect told Moshe that redemption is tied to the revelation of His Ineffable Name. In order to merit this great degree of revelation, it was necessary for the Jews to undergo the hardships of the Egyptian exile.

This redemption thus involved more than physical and spiritual liberation from slavery; its ultimate purpose was the revelation and knowledge of the Name Havayah. As long as the Name was not known by the Jewish people, there could be no true freedom.

What is the connection between Havayah and liberation?

The explanation is as follows: The Hebrew root of the word for Egypt (meitzar) means straits and limitations. These are found within holiness as well. All human beings are inherently limited, so even when we serve G-d with all our power, we have still not transcended these built-in boundaries. In a more profound sense, exodus from Egypt requires the transcending of even the limitations of holiness. Understandably, a person is not capable of doing this on his own, as man is inherently limited. One can leave this "Egypt" only by nullifying oneself before G-d, thereby becoming a receptacle for the G-dly revelation of Havayah, which takes a person beyond all limitations.

Herein lies an eternal lesson to Jews, at all times and in all places:

An individual can attain a personal state of spiritual redemption even before the redemption of the entire nation. It is thus possible for an individual to be in doubt as to whether he or she has already attained spiritual redemption or is still in a state of spiritual exile.

A person might well think that, if he has vanquished his evil inclination and is wholly dedicated to the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos, with even his worldly activity being performed for the "sake of Heaven," that he has attained a state of redemption.

The verse therefore informs us that one may have attained the spiritual state of the Patriarchs, serving G-d with complete devotion to Torah, prayer and good deeds, but as long as the Name Havayah does not illuminate his life, he has yet to leave Egypt and attain true redemption.

But how does a person know whether he has merited the revelation of Havayah? Rashi answers by explaining that the Patriarchs did not merit Havayah because "He did not make Himself known to them with His unlimited attribute of Truth."

Truth is not subject to change. Thus, the Talmud Yerushalmi states that "G-d's seal is emmes -- truth."

The Hebrew word emmes is composed of the three letters, alef, mem, tav -- the first, middle and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This indicates that, from the beginning, through the middle and until the conclusion, truth does not vary.

This, then, is the criterion by which we can determine whether a person has truly left behind all spiritual straits and limitations:

If the person's manner of service defies change, i.e., his Torah study, prayer, performance of mitzvos and involvement in permissible matters are all done -- under all circumstances -- without change and with total nullification before G-d, then he can rest assured that he has attained a true state of spiritual redemption. Havayah is revealed within him, for his service displays

the imprint of unvarying Truth.

Based on Likkutei Sichos, Vayeira 5749, pp. 1-5

The Order of Redemption

At the beginning of the Torah portion of Vayeira, four expressions are used regarding the redemption of the Jews from Egypt:

"I will release you... I will save you... I will liberate you... I will take you to Myself."

Our Sages note that the four cups of wine we drink during the Pesach Seder correspond to these four expressions.

The Alter Rebbe writes in his Shulchan Aruch that "the Sages established the four cups of wine in consonance with the four expressions: 'I will release you... I will liberate you... I will take you... I will save you.'"

Why does the Alter Rebbe change the order?

There are four general levels of repentance, alluded to in the passage: "Turn away from evil; do good; seek peace; pursue it."

The first level, that of "turning away from evil," requires that an individual not transgress in thought, speech or action. If he has transgressed, he is to regret his past misdeeds and uproot his evil desires. For a person does not want to abandon his unity with G-d, and desires G-d's imminent revelation.

The second level of repentance involves doing teshuvah for shortcomings in the performance of mitzvos and good deeds. In order to draw down the level of holiness that is lacking due to a lassitude in the performance of positive commands, one's repentance must be of an extremely high order, so that one can unite with that level of G-dliness which transcends the world.

The third level, that of "seeking peace," is an even loftier form of repentance, wherein an individual resolves to excel in Torah study, which "brings about peace both above and below." This level of repentance enables an individual to reach out to G-d Himself -- far beyond the level of either imminent or transcendent G-dliness.

The highest level of repentance, the level of Torah, is itself composed of two levels -- seeking peace and pursuing it -- corresponding to the revealed and hidden levels of Torah.

The Seder's four cups of wine also correspond to these four levels of repentance. Accordingly, the four expressions of redemption conform to these four levels.

Thus, "I will release you from the bondage [the spiritual impurity] of Egypt," corresponds to the action of "turning away from evil."

"I will save you -- v'hitzalti" (related to the Hebrew word tzeil or "shadow"), refers to the encompassing level of G-dliness that is drawn down through the performance of mitzvos.

"I will liberate you" corresponds to the level of Torah, for as our Sages state: "Only the person who studies Torah is truly free." More specifically, this refers to the revealed portion of Torah, as understood from the simple reading of the text.

Finally, "I will take you unto Me as a nation" (true unity with G-d) refers to the esoteric dimension of Torah, the highest level of repentance.

As these four degrees of repentance progress from the lowest to the highest, the Torah's expressions with regard to the Exodus also move from the smallest to the greatest.

Now, there is a well-known debate about which is more important: Torah study or the performance of mitzvos. If study comes first, then "I will liberate you" and "I will take you" would come last in the order of progression from lowest to highest. But, if positive performance is more important than study, "I will release you" should be mentioned last.

The reason for the difference in the order of expressions found in the Torah and in the Shulchan Aruch is now clear: The order in the Torah (the Torah desiring to emphasize Torah study) concludes with "I will take you," emphasizing the primacy of Torah study. The order in the Shulchan Aruch (which deals with laws of performance) concludes with "I will save you," emphasizing the primacy of performance.

Based on Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XI, pp. 14-22

**** End of Text - Chassidic Dimension - Va'eira

One of the more famous questions asked about the process of the exodus from Egypt is that of Pharaoh's free choice. In several places G-d tells Moshe that He will harden Pharaoh's heart, and make him stubborn. He'll refuse to send the Children of Israel. As a result of his stubbornness and refusal, he'll be punished with plagues progressively until he is humbled. If Pharaoh is forced to act stubbornly, and it is not of his own free choice to withhold permission to leave, what is his sin? He is not responsible for his actions at that point. There is a saying that one who acts in a certain way out of coercion cannot be praised or criticized for his deed. Besides this, there is a well known concept that G-d does not give anyone a test he can not withstand. Doesn't making Pharaoh stubborn contradict this rule?

The Bais HaLevi offers this approach. In truth Pharaoh did not want to send the Jewish Nation. The plagues were coercing him to go against his will. The plagues were removing his free choice. G-d gave him an extra dose of stubbornness in order to offer him the opportunity to do as he truly wished.

>From this perspective we can see that Pharaoh can be held 100% responsible for his actions. He can be criticized and punished because he was exercising his free will. Giving Pharaoh the extra stubbornness is what gave him the opportunity to withstand the test with free will intact. Otherwise he is merely acting out of coercion. In addition, what G-d wanted from Pharaoh was a change of heart brought about through recognition of His majesty. He wanted Pharaoh to want to send the Jews, so his free choice played an important role, and needed to be maintained. The plagues were the display of G-d's sovereignty over every aspect of the universe. They were the tools used to convince Pharaoh of G-d's might.

The Bais HaLevi applies this to the concept of suffering and repentance. Why is repentance acceptable when it is brought about through suffering? As we know, the Jewish exiles are forms of suffering designed to bring about a turn-around in our behavior, and more importantly, our attitudes. The same question can be asked. Changing one's behavior through suffering is not a reflection of a change of heart. It's just a way of avoiding pain. The attitude remains intact, and when the threat of suffering is removed, the negative behavior will return.

The answer to this is that we really do want to do G-d's will. Why don't we do it? It's because we get distracted by other "priorities". In other words, our desire to act in a way contradictory to G-d's desires is not intrinsic to us as it was with Pharaoh. It is a consequence of ignorance of the whole picture; losing the forest for the trees. Troubles tend to be sobering, and they focus our attention on things with true intrinsic value. We come to realize that we were not putting the emphasis in life on the correct priorities. Afterwards, even in the absence of further threat of suffering, we tend to take life more seriously, and regret the time wasted violating G-d's will.

The analogy to this is of the olive. Hidden within the olive is the oil. However, the olive must undergo an extremely traumatic, crushing experience to bring out its best. The same is true with us. Deep within us is the desire to serve our Creator with fire and enthusiasm. Many times that desire remains hidden even from ourselves. Sometimes, though, difficult experiences in life act as a catalyst to bringing out that beautiful potential which is hidden deep inside. May we all be privileged to discover and fulfill our true desire to serve G-d under the most pleasant circumstances.

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