

BS"D

To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com  
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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON VAEIRA - 5763

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)] Sent: January 01, 2003 To: [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org) Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vaeyra

"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Va'eyra  
Moshe and Aaron Remained Moshe and Aaron From Beginning To End

There is a strange set of verses near the beginning of our parsha. After G-d charged Moshe and Aaron with taking the Children of Israel out of Egypt, the pasuk launches into their genealogy. The pasuk says, "This was Aaron and Moshe to whom Hashem said, 'Take the Children of Israel out of Egypt, according to their legions'. They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, King of Egypt, to take the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, this was the Moshe and Aaron." [Shmos 6:26-27] This last pasuk is seemingly a total repetition of the preceding pasuk.

Rashi notes this apparent redundancy, and says that it teaches that Moshe and Aaron retained their righteousness and their perfection throughout their mission.

Rav Gifter, zt"l, explains this Rashi. When the pasuk first introduces Aaron and Moshe "who received the command to take the Jews out of Egypt" the reason why they were doing what they did was simply because G-d told them to do it. This is how we all start out when we embark on a task. Why do we do it? We do it because we were told to do it. When someone first assumes a position of responsibility -- whether as a result of being elected to a post, or appointed to a job or whatever -- he takes his charge seriously and does what he was elected or appointed to do.

But then what happens? After beginning to work and getting involved, we are no longer doing it because we were told to or because we were asked. We are doing it because our egos have become involved. Now it has become a question of whether WE will succeed or fail. Our reputation is on the line.

The pasuk is informing us that the greatness of Moshe and Aaron was that from the time they got the initial command to take the Jews out of Egypt -- which they did solely for altruistic purposes (because G-d said so) -- until they completed the entire process, they remained totally committed -- at a completely altruistic level (because G-d said so). At the end of the day, when it was all said and done, the Torah reiterates "This is the same Moshe and Aaron" as at the very outset. They were not acting because of egos or because their reputations were on the line. They were acting -- until the very end -- simply because they were carrying out G-d's will. It was not 'them', it was G-d's command that was operative. They remained in their righteousness from beginning to end.

So many times, our trouble is that despite the fact that we embark on extremely noble endeavors, we become too involved with our egos. Eventually, "our success and glory" drives us, rather than the nobility of the cause or endeavor. When we are working for G-d, success should not be the factor. Effort is all that counts. Did

we do the job honestly? Did we give it our best shot? That is what counts.

When the ego becomes involved and drives us to 'succeed' at any cost, that is when we lose perspective. That is when our character traits (midos) are put on the line. That is when things sometimes go awry.

The Scrolls They Read On Shabbos Gave Them Hope

There is an interesting Medrash Tanchuma that comments on Pharaoh's reaction to the plagues. The pasuk [Shmos 5:9] says that Pharaoh's reaction to the plagues was to turn the screws tighter against the slaves: "Increase the workload upon these people and make sure they do it and do not allow them to occupy themselves with false words." The Medrash elaborates on the "false words" that concerned Pharaoh: "They had scrolls (megillos) in their possession that they used to enjoy reading each and every Shabbos. In the scrolls was recorded a promise that G-d would redeem them and take them out. Pharaoh wanted to increase their workload so they would no longer have time to read these scrolls of 'propaganda and fantasy'.

We need to understand: Why did the spare time activities of the slaves bother Pharaoh? Why did he care that they were reading these scrolls, as long as they completed their work? What was his obsession with these megillos?

Perhaps these scrolls represented more than merely something to help pass the time on Shabbos. Pharaoh was not merely interested in having people work for him. He was interested in breaking the spirit of the people. The way to break the spirit of a nation is by taking away from them that which every human being and every nation needs -- hope. The scrolls that they would read every Shabbos promised that G-d would redeem them. These scrolls kept them going. No matter how bad it became and how terrible it was, they knew that it would come to an end. Ultimately, G-d would take them out.

The Jews did not understand the reason for their dire circumstances. They were righteous. The Egyptians were wicked. They asked the question: Why do the righteous suffer? But somehow, despite the questions, they had the strength to continue. Why? Because they read in the megillos that G-d would redeem them and they had hope.

Taking hope away from a people breaks a people. No matter how desperate a person becomes, as long as there is hope, he is not broken. This is what Pharaoh wanted to destroy.

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[DavidATwersky@aol.com](mailto:DavidATwersky@aol.com) Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD [dhoffman@torah.org](mailto:dhoffman@torah.org) These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 357, Birchas Hamotzi Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail [tapes@yadyechiel.org](mailto:tapes@yadyechiel.org) or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

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From: torahweb@zeus.host4u.net Sent: December 31, 2002 0:  
weekly1@torahweb.org  
Subject: RABBI ZVI SOBLOFSKY - The Survival of the Wheat -  
A Lesson for Pharaoh And For Us  
to subscribe, email weekly@torahweb.org for anything else,  
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Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky The Survival of the Wheat - A Lesson for  
Pharaoh And For Us

At the conclusion of makkas barad (plague of hail) the Torah  
elaborates on precisely which plants were destroyed. Why is it  
important to know that the flax and barley were destroyed  
whereas the wheat survived? What lessons can be learned from  
which plants survived the barad?

According to the literal meaning of the pesukim in Shemos 9:31 -  
32 the plants that were not damaged were those that did not  
stand firm as the hail fell. Those plants that were not yet  
developed were able to withstand the pressure of the hail.  
However, the fully developed, stronger plants which tried to stand  
up to the hail were decimated.

The message to Pharaoh was clear. When you are confronted by  
Hashem whose power is so much greater than yours, how do  
you react? Do you attempt to stand firm and obstinate like the  
flax and barley. Thereby guaranteeing your destruction? Or, like  
the wheat, do you realize your limitations and refrain from  
attempting to battle the hail? Pharaoh failed to see the obvious  
message in the makka and continued to be obstinate thereby  
sealing his own fate.

The Ohr Hachaim has a different suggestion regarding the  
significance of the wheat being spared. The medrash explains  
that this was miraculous, but Pharaoh saw it as a sign of  
Hashem's weakness and limited ability. Rather than drawing the  
correct conclusion that Hashem decided exactly what to destroy  
and what to retain in a miraculous manner, Pharaoh saw it as a  
justification to continue to question whether the makkos were  
merely magic.

The wheat survived the hail in order to teach Pharaoh to repent.  
Pharaoh drew the incorrect conclusion and continued along his  
evil path. Let us hear the messages that Hashem sends through  
events that occur to us and learn the lessons He is trying to  
teach.

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[http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2002/parsha/rsac\\_vaera.html](http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2002/parsha/rsac_vaera.html)

TorahWeb.org from last year

RABBI YONASAN SACKS

HAKORAS HATOV

The opening parshios of Sefer Shmos provide keen insight into  
the significance of hakoras hatov, thankfulness and appreciation.  
The Torah emphasizes the failure of Pharaoh to recognize the  
goodness of Yosef Hatzaddik, "Vayakam melech chadash al  
mitzrayim asher lo yadah es yosef."

Later, the very same Pharaoh would deny Hashem. The medrash  
links these two acts of denial, teaching us that one who fails to  
recognize and appreciate the kindness and graciousness of  
others will ultimately deny the goodness of Hashem.

Similarly, the Chinuch (Mitzvah 33) emphasizes hakoras hatov as  
the foundation of the mitzvah of kibbud av voem. The Chinuch  
further connects honoring one's parents with appreciating  
Hakadosh Baruch Hu. "Ukesheyikba zos hamitzva benafsho  
yaaleh mimenahlekhir tovas Hakel Baruch Hu."

The Medrash Rabbah (Perek 10) explains that the proper  
expression of gratitude and thankfulness required that the first

three makos be performed by Aharon instead of Moshe  
Rabbeinu. Moshe, who had been saved by water and dirt was  
unable to actively participate in these plagues.

How are we to understand this sense of hakoras hatov? Surely,  
the water and dirt did not go out of their way to aid Moshe  
Rabbeinu. Inanimate objects do not need, and cannot appreciate  
our gratitude.

We often measure our obligation of hakoras hatov from the  
perspective of the one who performed the act of chessed. We ask  
ourselves, how far did he go out of his way to help me? Will he  
appreciate my thankfulness?

The inability of Moshe Rabbeinu to participate in the initial makos  
teaches us that we must also view hakoras hatov from the  
viewpoint of the beneficiary. The mere fact that Moshe Rabbeinu  
benefitted from the water and dirt elicited an overwhelming sense  
of gratitude.

In this sense, Gemora Brachos (58b) contrasts the Oreach Tov  
and the Oreach Ra. Whereas the ungrateful guest minimizes his  
need to express gratitude, claiming, "kol toreach shetorach baal  
habayis zeh, lo tarach elah bishvil ishto uvanav," that the baal  
habayis exerted little additional effort on the guests behalf, the  
appreciative guest views any benefit that he received as though it  
was exclusively for him.

The Gra explains that each of us is an oreach in this world which  
Hashem created. One could selfishly feel that Hashem created  
little exclusively for him. How difficult was it for Hashem to provide  
me with a measure of good. True hakoras hatov, however,  
demands that each of us, as an oreach tov, view all chasdei  
Hashem as though bishvil nivra haolam, they were performed  
exclusively for me.

If the Torah insists that we acknowledge benefit from water and  
dirt, how much more so must we be constantly mindful of the  
gratitude our fellow man and ultimately that of Hakadosh Baruch  
Hu.

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent:  
January 02, 2003 To: yhe-sichot@etzion.org.il Subject:  
SICHOT63 -14: Parashat Vaera  
Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm)  
Student Summaries Of Sichot Of The Roshei Yeshiva

SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A PARASHAT  
VAERA

Let Me Hear Your Voice Summarized by Dov Karoll

At the beginning of this week's parasha, Moshe delivers a  
beautiful and inspiring message to the people of Israel,  
containing the five phrases of redemption:

And I will bring you out... and I will deliver you... and I will  
redeem you... and I will take you to Me as a people, and I will  
be your G-d... and I will bring you into the land... (Shemot 6:6-8)

What could be more uplifting? Yet this message did not  
meet with the enthusiastic response one might have expected:

But they hearkened not to Moshe, for anguish of spirit and  
for cruel bondage. (6:9)

One message emerging from this episode is that words alone  
cannot solve problems. Even the greatest message can fail if  
the crowd is not willing to listen. The people physically heard  
what Moshe was saying, but they were not hearkening in the  
deeper sense. They did not pay sufficient attention to his words,  
nor did they allow the words to penetrate.

The Maharal explains that Moshe was "impeded of speech"  
because his speech was beyond the constraints of normal  
physical speech; it was purely spiritual.

Even if we do not go as far as the Maharal, we could say that G-d wanted Moshe's message to be conveyed by their content alone and not through persuasive rhetoric. Many leaders throughout history have succeeded in this latter method, but Moshe's message needed to be conveyed in a pure manner, and the Torah highlights the fact that he was "impeded of speech" to emphasize this point. Moshe got his point across through the strength of the message itself.

Yet even the inspired words of Moshe Rabbeinu were not enough to get his message across. At that stage, the Jewish people were not open to hear his message.

In order for Torah to penetrate, we need openness. We can listen to sichot and learn tremendous amounts, but we still need Divine assistance for the message to pervade us and to allow us to grow. We pray to G-d daily (in the "U-va le-Tziyyon" prayer), "Hu yiftach libbenu be- Torato, ve-yasem be-libbenu ahavato ve-yirato..." - "May He open our hearts with His Torah, and place in our hearts love and fear of Him..."

Not only do we need to be open to have G-d's words penetrate our heart, but we need to open our hearts to call out to Him in sincerity. In Shir ha-shirim, which the rabbis understood as an allegory for the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people, we read the following:

For the winter has passed, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing bird has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines in blossom give their scent. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O, my dove, who is in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliff, let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet and your countenance is comely. (2:11 - 14)

G-d is calling out to the Jewish people: the winter has passed and the new spring is upon us. Please let Me hear your voice. G-d is, so to speak, asking us to pray to Him. He desires our prayers. He wants to take the Jewish people out of Egypt, and all He awaits is for them to call out to Him.

We need to bear in mind that G-d desires to hear our prayers, and that this is what can help us when we are in difficult situations. May we merit that G-d should hear our prayers, when we can express our real selves to Him, and escape our false cover.

[Originally delivered at Se'uda Shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Vaera 5762 (2002)]

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THE PRACTICAL TORAH  
BY RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

Parshas VaEira: When to Recite Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGesheim  
No definitive Halacha LeMa'aseh conclusions should be applied to practical situations based on any of these Shiurim.

When Paroh pleads with Moshe to pray to Hashem that He should stop the plague of Barad, hail, Moshe says that when he leaves the city, he will spread out his hands to Hashem, and the plague will indeed end (Shemos 9:29). The Pardes Yosef on this Posuk (Ibid.) takes note of the fact that Moshe never says that he will actually ask Hashem to stop the hail, just that he will stretch out his hands. When he does approach Hashem (Ibid. Pasuk 33), he indeed never specifically requests that the hail and the rain stop; he merely stretches out his hands and the plague ends. The Pardes Yosef (Ibid.) explains that although Moshe stretched out his hands in

prayer, he did not want to ask that there be no more rain or hail, because rain, of course, is generally necessary and beneficial, and it is improper to request that something good should stop, even if there is too much of it. Moshe therefore simply stretched out his hands, trusting Hashem to respond appropriately to his silent prayer.

This idea that one shouldn't ask Hashem to take away something good is found in a Mishnah in Taanis (19a) which describes different communal difficulties and tragedies because of which the Chachomim would declare public fast days, featuring special Tefillos; the Mishnah (Ibid.) states that they would never declare such a fast day if there was too much rain. The Gemara there (22b) explains that this is because it is inappropriate to daven to Hashem because one has too much of a good thing. The Gemara (Ibid.) adds, however, that if the excessive rain is actually damaging or dangerous, then one could daven for it to stop because it is then no longer a good thing. The same Mishnah (Ibid.) then relates the famous story of Choni HaMe'agel who "persuaded" Hashem to cause the rains to fall by "threatening" to remain standing in the circle he drew on the ground until it would rain, which it then did, coming down at one point with such force that Choni had to request that it fall in the proper measure. The Gemara (Ibid. 23a) elaborates on this story, saying that when the rain fell very hard, Choni's students asked him to daven that it should stop entirely, to which he responded that he had it by tradition that one doesn't daven because of having too much of a good thing. He solved the problem using only specific and precise language and actions. The Rambam (Hilchos Taaniyos 2:15) and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 576:11 and 577:1) rule in accordance with all of the above.

This issue of not asking Hashem to hold back something good even when we don't need it is relevant to us today concerning our practice regarding the last recitation of Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGesheim in the spring. Based on the Mishnah at the beginning of Taanis (2a), the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 114:1) writes that we start reciting this phrase in the second Beracha of the Shemoneh Esrei at Mussaf on Shemini Atzeres. The Yerushalmi in Taanis (Perek 1 Halacha 1, 1b), discussing why we wait until Mussaf, quotes a view that an individual should not begin to say it until he has heard it from the Sheliach Tzibbur. The Shulchan Aruch (Ibid. Sif 2) accepts this view; the Ramo (Ibid.) adds that prior to the silent Shemoneh Esrei of Mussaf, an announcement is made to begin saying Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGesheim so that the Tzibbur will say it then too. This same Mishnah in Taanis (Ibid.) then indicates that we stop saying Mashiv HaRuach at Mussaf on the first day of Pesach, and the Shulchan Aruch (Ibid. Sif 1) rules accordingly. Here, however, no mention is made of any announcements not to say Mashiv HaRuach any longer. In fact, the Ramo (Ibid. Sif 3) writes that the Tzibbur does indeed say it in the silent Shemoneh Esrei of Mussaf; only the Chazzan omits it in the Chazoras HaShatz, and the Tzibbur, hearing the Chazzan's omission, then leaves it out starting with Minchah. The Taz (Ibid. Sif Katan 9) explains that this is because any announcement not to say this phrase would be potentially confusing. The Magen Avraham (Ibid. Sif Katan 8) and the Be'er Heitev (Ibid. Sif Katan 5), however, explain that this is really because an announcement not to daven for rain would be like davening that Hashem should hold back something which is generally a Beracha, and this is inappropriate. Elsewhere, the Magen Avraham (Ibid. Siman 488 Sif Katan 4) actually quotes the aforementioned Gemara in Taanis (Ibid.) which says that one shouldn't daven to Hashem because one has too much rain as the source for this practice not to announce that people should stop saying Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGesheim.

This idea may relate to an interesting question. Why do we wait on the first day of Pesach until Mussaf to stop saying it? Why not stop already the night before, at Maariv? The Yerushalmi cited above (Ibid.) discusses this question regarding when to start saying Mashiv HaRuach on Shemini Atzeres, and explains that we don't start at Maariv because not everybody is in Shul then. The Rosh in Taanis (Perek 1 Siman 2) elaborates, saying that since people often stay home at night, those in Shul will therefore know to say it, those at home will not, and as a result, different people will be doing different things, which is inconsistent and thus improper. The Rosh (Ibid.) says that this reason actually explains specifically why we don't stop saying Mashiv HaRuach at Maariv on the first night of Pesach; the Ra'avad (Hasagas HaRa'avad on Ba'al HaMaor to Taanis, 1b on the Rif Ot 2) says even more clearly that this reason applies only to the first night of Pesach. In truth, however, this explanation is not needed. If no announcement is made to stop saying Mashiv HaRuach, and the Tzibbur must first hear the Chazzan's omission of it before they omit it, obviously it will be said by the Tzibbur at Maariv.

As for making the change during Shacharis, the same Yerushalmi (Ibid.) presents two reasons for not starting to say Mashiv HaRuach then on Shemini Atzeres. First, people who were not in Shul the night before may think, upon hearing it at Shacharis, that it was to have been said at Maariv too, and will make a mistake in subsequent years. Second, since an announcement to recite it must precede the Shemoneh Esrei, at Shacharis no announcement is possible, because there can be no interruption at all between the Beracha of Go'al Yisrael and the start of the Shemoneh Esrei; we thus wait until Mussaf. The Magen Avraham (Ibid. Siman 114 Sif Katan 1) cites both these reasons. If, however, no announcement is actually made to stop reciting Mashiv HaRuach anyway, it would indeed be possible to stop at Shacharis on the first day of Pesach, at least during the Chazoras HaShatz, except for the first reason of the Yerushalmi (Ibid.) about causing confusion in subsequent years. The Aruch HaShulchan (Ibid. Sif 4) adds that the Halachos should be consistent; if we start saying Mashiv HaRuach at Mussaf, we should stop saying it at Mussaf as well, especially since there are more people in Shul at Mussaf time who will take note of the change. The Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Sif Katan 2) does write, however, that if one did in fact recite Mashiv HaRuach at Maariv or at Shacharis on Shemini Atzeres, his Shemoneh Esrei is still valid. It is worth noting that according to the Minhag of those who daven Nusach Sefard (and many who daven Nusach Ashkenaz), Morid HaTal is recited in place of Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGesheim. That begins at Mussaf on the first day of Pesach, and for that, an announcement should be made, as the Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Sif Katan 3) and the Aruch HaShulchan (Ibid. Sif 7) write. All the same explanations would then hold true for both insertions, as the Taz (Ibid. Sif Katan 3) implies. The Kaf HaChaim (Ibid. Ot 14) writes that the special Piyutim recited by some before the Shemoneh Esrei (or perhaps, we may add, the special tune used by the Chazzan for Kaddish) may constitute a sufficient announcement for the Tzibbur to begin including the new insertion.

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From: RABBIWEIN@JEWISHDESTINY.COM Sent: January 01, 2003  
 Subject: Rabbi Wein's Weekly Columns  
 Parsha Archive January 03, 2003  
 Vaera

Many people are stubborn. Stubbornness, tenacity, purposefulness are all ambivalent characteristics. They can be positive and constructive traits under certain circumstances and they can be terribly destructive and negative under others. Pharaoh has his heart hardened by G-d and refuses to let the people of Israel leave Egyptian slavery. But G-d only gives Pharaoh the courage of his convictions. Pharaoh sincerely does not wish to allow the Jews to leave his bondage and he is prepared to be very stubborn about it. Ordinarily, Pharaoh's stubbornness would hardly be tested. But with plagues raining down on Egypt, Pharaoh is sorely tested. Even his advisers, who had until now supported Pharaoh's stubbornness fully, finally are brought to their knees by the blows falling upon Egypt. They tell Pharaoh, "Do you not realize that Egypt is lost?" But Pharaoh himself remains unconvinced. And his stubbornness affects Moshe and the Jewish people. There is an apparent wavering of faith among the Jews. Maybe they will never be redeemed. Perhaps Moses' promises are only dreams that will never become actualized. Facing a stubborn and intractable foe weakens one's resolve and saps the belief of triumph that is so necessary for the achievement of victory. So Pharaoh looks like a winner after all. But Pharaoh eventually will not only bend, he will break. Stubbornness is not necessarily synonymous with martyrdom. When Pharaoh himself faces the Angel of Death on the night of Pesach, he relents and frees the Jewish people. But he will turn stubborn again when he feels that the odds are in his favor. For he is not convinced of the power or rectitude of Moshe's mission and of the G-d of Israel. He will therefore pursue his stubborn course till its bitter and unnecessary end in the deep waters of the Yam Suf. Pharaoh thus becomes the paradigm for all those tyrants and megalomaniacs who have followed him throughout the centuries. The past century especially has spawned this breed of cruel stubbornness in earnest and in numbers. From the Kaiser to Hitler, from Lenin and Stalin to Chairman Mao, from the Grand Mufti to Sadaam Hussein and Yassir Arafat the imitators of Pharaoh are clear to see. Stubbornness in the name of evil, in the cause of conquest and hatred of others, is a very negative and dangerous trait. It destroys many innocent people but eventually it destroys the stubborn person as well. Evil is an infection of the soul. Unless it is fought and controlled it will ravage the entire body. But you will say, "Is not the secret of Jewish

survival somehow rooted in our own stubbornness?" And the answer to that must be "yes." But there is stubbornness and stubbornness. The stubbornness of morality, of kindness, of Sinai and its basic commandments for our civilization (one of which has become particularly public and pertinent in our political and governmental lives) and of commitment to do the right and the just, is an admirable quality. Thus, a truly sophisticated and intelligent Jew is stubborn and flexible at the same time. In worldly matters, in the marketplace, in the tactics of home and family and education, flexibility is the watchword. "Do it my way or don't do it all," is a dangerous policy in everyday living. Openness to others and to new ideas and situations guarantees greater success and accomplishment in the world.

Parents who are flexible and not rigid in the management of their home will usually see happier results from their children. But in matters of the spirit and soul, in issues of ethics and morality, in the defense of the code and traditions of Sinai, stubbornness and backbone are the traits required for success. "But everyone is doing it," is the refrain that is used to justify negative and costly conduct. One must have the strength to say "not everyone, not me, not us, not our family, not the Jewish people." The Jewish world is reeling from a lack of stubbornness regarding the vital issues of the Jewish world - Torah, observance, the Land of Israel, Torah education, family and Jewish grandchildren. It has too much flexibility regarding these issues. It is far too stubborn regarding defending current politically correct and slogan-prone issues. Pharaoh exemplifies the wrong stubbornness. Moshe represents the correct stubbornness. We should certainly attempt to be the followers of Moshe. Shabat Shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

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From: RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY [rmk+@torah.org] Sent: January 01, 2003 To: Drasha Subject: Drasha - Parshas Va'eirah - Lost in Egypt by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky  
 Negotiating redemption is not a simple process. You must deal with two different sides and send two different messages to opposite parties. First, you must speak to the oppressors. You must be demanding and firm. You can not show weakness or a willingness to compromise. Then you have to inform to the oppressed. That should be easy: in a soft and soothing manner you gently break the news that they are about to be liberated. They will surely rejoice at the slightest hint that their time has finally come. That is why I am struck by a verse in this week's portion that directs Moshe to send the exact same message to Pharaoh and the Jewish people, as if Pharaoh and the Jews were of one mind, working in tandem. (Shmos 6:13) "Hashem spoke to Moshe and Ahron and commanded them to speak to the B'nei Yisrael and to Pharaoh the King of Egypt, to let the B'nei Yisrael leave Egypt"

I was always perplexed by this verse. How is it possible to encompass the message to the B'nei Yisrael and Pharaoh in one fell swoop? How can you compare the strong demand to Pharaoh to the soft, cajoling message necessary for the Jews? Pharaoh, who does not want to hear of liberation, has to be warned and chastised and even plagued. The Jews should jump at the mention of redemption! Why, then, are the two combined in one verse and with one declaration?

There are those who answer that the Jews in this verse actually refer to the Jewish taskmasters who were appointed by Pharaoh as kapos to oppress their brethren. Thus the equation is clearly justified.

However, I would like to offer a more homiletic explanation:

There is a wonderful story of a poor farmer who lived under the rule of a miserable poritz in medieval Europe. The evil landowner provided minimal shelter in exchange for a large portion of the farmer's profits. The farmer and his wife toiled under the most severe conditions to support their family with a few chickens that laid eggs and a cow that gave milk.

Ultimately, time took its toll and hardship became the norm. The farmer and his wife had their bitter routine and never hoped for better.

One day the farmer came back from the market quite upset. "What's the matter?" cried his wife, "you look as if the worst calamity has happened."

"It has," sighed the anxious farmer. "They say in the market that the Moshiach is coming. He will take us all to the land of Israel. What will be of our cow and our chickens? Where will we live? Who will provide shelter for us? Oy! What is going to be?"

His wife, who was steeped with faith in the Almighty, answered calmly.

"Don't worry my dear husband. The Good Lord always protects His people. He saved us from Pharaoh in Egypt, He redeemed us from the evil Haman

and has protected us from harsh decrees throughout our exile. No doubt he will protect us from this Moshiach too!" Hashem understood that the Jewish people were mired in exile for 210 years. They had decided to endure slavery rather than abandon it. Moshe had to be as forceful with those he was planning to redeem as he was with those who had enslaved them.

Often in life, whether by choice or by chance, we enter into situations that we ought not be in. As time progresses, however, we get accustomed to the situation, and our worst enemy becomes change. We must tell the Pharaoh within each of us, "let my people go!" Let us not continue on the comfortable path but rather get on the correct one. That message must be told to the victim in us with the same force and intensity as it is told to the complacent.

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From: Ohr Somayach [ohr@ohr.edu] Sent: December 30, 2002 To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Vaera \* TORAH WEEKLY \* from Ohr Somayach | [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu) Highlights of the weekly Torah portion Parshat Vaera For the week ending 4 January 2003 / 1 Shevat 5763 Sponsored by the Kof-K Kosher Supervision [www.kof-k.org](http://www.kof-k.org) | [info@kof-k.org](mailto:info@kof-k.org) INSIGHTS Schmatters

"...I have heard the groan of the Children of Israel..." (6:5)  
If I asked you now to tell me what's written on your wristwatch, could you tell me? Go ahead. Don't peek! Think of everything that's written on your watch.

Now - have a look.

I'll bet you missed out at least something.

How many times a day do you look at your watch? Twenty? Thirty? And you've probably owned that watch for a year or so. That makes a minimum of over 7,000 times. You've looked at your watch over 7,000 times, and you still don't know what it is says!

We can look at things every day, but unless we make an effort to see them, they will never register in our minds.

Until a couple of years ago, living in Israel was about as dangerous as living in Brisbane.

True, there was the very occasional terrorist outrage, but no more than the average maniac-on-the-loose that modern society seems to spawn most anywhere in the world.

A couple of years ago, all that changed. Being a Jew in the land of the Bible meant living on the front line, and sometimes behind it. Tragedy followed tragedy on a daily basis. For those of us who were post-war babies, born into a world of relative tranquility for the Jewish People, it's easy to think that the past couple of years have been an aberration, and what preceded it was the norm.

A cursory glance at Jewish History proves the reverse. Since the Babylonian Exile, some 2500 years ago, the majority of Jewish history has been full of suffering. The notoriety of the Holocaust needs no further publicity. The Chielminitzki massacres, the Crusades and the expulsion from Spain were near total devastation to the Jewish People. Let us also not forget the oppression of the medieval Moslem world, the so-called "Golden Age" of Spain in which Jews had no legal enfranchisement and were at the mercy, or the lack of it, of their Moslem rulers.

Today's situation isn't the exception. It's the historical norm.

Jewish law mandates that whenever we hear of a tragedy we should tear our clothes. However, this law was abrogated many years ago, for were we

to tear our clothing at every tragedy, we would be walking around in shreds.

And it wouldn't be just our clothes that would be in shreds.

So would be our emotional life.

Regrettably and inevitably, every new tragedy that occurs has less and less effect on us.

There's a fine line here. If we made ourselves, as well as our clothes, into schmatters - rags -what good would we be to ourselves, to our families or to society at large. On the other hand, how do we combat the numbness of the heart that repeated death and injury seems to inflict?

It says in last week's Torah portion, "And he (Moshe) went out to his brothers and he saw their burdens..." (2:11) Rashi comments "he gave over his eyes and his attention to experience their pain." Moshe did not lack for servants to bring him news of the situation of his fellow Jews. Why was it that Moshe himself went out to his brothers?

You can't compare hearing to looking. And you can't compare looking to seeing.

Moshe wanted to see. He wanted to give over his eyes to the sight of the suffering of the Jewish people. He wanted to give his heart, to pay attention, to their pain.

Empathy requires effort.

"...the G-d of Israel, and under his feet was the likeness of a sapphire brick." (Shemot 11:10) That brick was in front of G-d all the time that the Jewish People were captive in Egypt as a reminder of the pain of the Jewish People and their slave labor.

Let me ask you a question. Does G-d need to tie a knot in His handkerchief to remind Himself not to forget? The Omniscient needs no reminders.

There is no forgetfulness before His throne. He sees everything. He knows everything.

G-d was teaching us a lesson.

To empathize we must concretize.

We must make the effort, set aside a little time each day, and think. Think for a few moments. Think about what it means to be on the phone to my wife and I suddenly hear gunshots, shouting in Arabic, and I recognize the screams of my wife and my children and realize that there is NOTHING I CAN DO.

By nature we are all selfish. Why should I concern myself with the problems of others? I have my own share of problems.

The only way we can love other people is to love ourselves less. We must conquer our most cherished unexamined belief: That I am the most important thing in the world.

Every drop of self-love poisons the love of others.

We must make the effort to know the suffering of others, better than the writing on our own wristwatches.

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom List [parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: January 01, 2003 To: Shabbat\_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vaera BY RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vaera (Exodus: 6:2-9:35) By Shlomo Riskin Efrat, Israel - Our Torah portion opens with the great and ineffable name of G-d - JHVH - which had not been revealed to the patriarchs, as well as with the lofty promises of redemption about to be effectuated: I am J-HVH; I shall extract you ..., I shall save you ... I shall redeem you ... I shall take you to Me as a nation... I shall bring you to the land which I have sworn to give... I shall give it to you as a heritage (morasha) (Exodus 6:1-6). Since this Biblical passage puts us all in a Passover frame-of-mind, I shall take the opportunity of asking four questions. Firstly, if indeed the Divine promise guarantees complete freedom as these four expressions of redemption certainly convey, why does the Almighty suggest requesting from Pharaoh a mere three-day celebration-vacation in the desert? (Exodus 3:18,5:3). It is aliyah which G-d is promising, not a limited seventy-two hour long UJC mission! Secondly, the fact is that G-d doesn't fulfill His statement that He will bring you to the land which I have sworn to give; the Israelites who left Egypt are destined to die in the desert, with only their descendants entering the Promised Land. How can the Almighty renege on a prophecy? Thirdly, G-d refers to the land of Israel as a morasha, a heritage: why does He not call it the more usual yerusha, inheritance? Indeed, what is the difference - if any - between morasha and yerusha, heritage and inheritance? And finally, there are five expressions

of redemption in the Biblical passage we have cited, not four. So why do we only drink four mandated cups of seder wine and not five? I believe the answer to these questions is contained in the very response of the Israelites to the Divine promises: And Moses spoke thusly (relayed the Divine words) to the children of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses because of (their) shortness of breath (or spirit) and their arduous labor. Isaac L. Peretz, one of the most profound and beloved of Yiddish - Hebrew writers of the last century, authored a magnificent tale called Bontche Schweig, or Bontche the Silent, which illuminates the significance of these words.

The story recounts a heavenly tribunal which judges Bonche, a newly arrived soul who had lived a poverty-stricken pogrom tortured life with never having uttered a word against G-d or a word against any human being. The defense-attorney angel catalogued his life of super-human piety with great pathos, and even the prosecuting-attorney angel could not express a negative note against this suffering, saintly soul. The Almighty Himself then summons Bontche, expressing His inability (as it were) to properly reward such an exemplary life and offering to grant whatever reward Bontche will choose. Really?, asks Bontche, takeh? Really, takeh!, responds G-d. Then every morning please give me a fresh, hot roll and butter, requests Bontche.

The last lines of the tale are the most poignant and instructive. The defense-attorney angel hid his face in shame. The prosecuting-attorney angel smiled a bitterly mordant smile of triumph. And the Almighty G-d wept... Obviously Peretz's message is that the greatest tragedy of suffering, the worst fall-out of an unjust world, is that it robs its victims of the ability to dream, it makes it impossible for them to have the breadth of vision to even contemplate the possibility of redemption. Poor Bontche. The evil world had so constricted his imagination that the best he could conjure up for himself and for humanity was a hot roll and butter each morning!

This is precisely the condition of the Israelites after two-hundred-ten years of Egyptian enslavement, persecution and infanticide. Their arduous labor and shortness of breath had led to a brevity of spirit (ruah can mean wind, breath and spirit), a constriction of the soul. They were mired in such a morass of misery, their self-image had been so debased and demeaned, that they could not even begin to envision a life in which they would be the masters of their fate, a situation of freedom and redemption.

Hence the Almighty must provide them with freedom in small doses, must begin by attempting a three-day respite from servitude which might at least begin to lift up their heads, their eyes, their spirits. JHVH is the G-d of historic becoming and redemption - but Hebrew slaves are not yet psychologically ready to accept His loving and uplifting message of freedom; they are only prepared at this time for El Shaddai, the G-d of power and laws, the G-d who sets limits and boundaries.

Although Pharaoh does not agree to even a three day respite from their labor, Moses does succeed in taking the Israelites out of Egypt: but he does not succeed in taking Egypt out of the Israelites! Hence the sin of the scouts, the most grievous transgression of the desert generation, is their inability to believe in themselves and their G-d sufficiently to go for the conquest of Israel. That is why, explains Rabbenu Bahya, the land of Israel is called a morasha, a heritage and not a yerusha, an inheritance; morasha is the causative (hiphil) form, suggesting a transmission from generation to generation, an ideal to be talked about and taught about from parents to children rather than a reality to be achieved by the present generation, which is clearly not yet ready to take the plunge. And we are mandated to drink four cups of wine and five on the seder eve because the fifth promise did not come to pass for those who left Egypt- although many do drink a fifth cup, which is voluntary and not obligatory, especially after the miraculous establishment of the State of Israel in modern times.

A true leader must establish the ultimate goal and ideal vision - but at the same time must educate the people step by step to accept and achieve it. In Israel, after almost 2,000 years of exile, we must learn to express, in a unified voice, what it means to be a free and sovereign nation with our inalienable rights to a land. In the diaspora both total aliyah as well as partial aliyah must be encouraged: owning a second home in Israel, coming to Israel rather than Hawaii to celebrate Passover, joining missions to Israel, and sending our children to study in our eternal, sacred land. And Torah - which is also called morasha - must similarly be taught as a complete ideal as well as in stages, for Jews as well as Gentiles. Jews must be brought to Torah mitzvah by mitzvah, and sovereign nations must earn their right to sovereignty only after they demonstrate that they absolutely condemn and punish the murder of innocent individuals and

they learn to conduct a free society for every one of their citizens. All of humanity must leave the darkness of Egyptian enslavement and emerge into the light of morality, freedom and democracy. Shabbat Shalom.

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm>  
Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Chancellor Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Dean To subscribe, E-mail to: <Shabbat\_Shalom-on@ohrtorahstone.org.il>

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From: RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG [tsc@bezeqint.net] Sent: January 01, 2003 Subject: PARSHAT VA'ERA - shiur on ANI HASHEM Dedicated to the memory of Sidney and Bessie Mashbaum, z"l Yeshaya ben Harav Moshe, 1 Shvat Batya bat Yitzchak Elchanan, 6 Tevet THE TANACH STUDY CENTER [<http://www.tanach.org>] In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag for PARSHAT VA'ERA -- "ANI HASHEM"

How much can (or should) G-d expect from a nation that had endured so many years of oppression? Considering this suffering, shouldn't we expect for their redemption to be unconditional? Certainly, the opening lines of Parshat Va'era appear to leave us with this impression. In the following shiur, we examine those opening psukim (i.e. Shmot 6:2-9) a bit more carefully, and will arrive at a very different, yet significant conclusion! INTRODUCTION As we explained in our introductory shiur, the story of the Exodus in Sefer Shmot unfolds as G-d's fulfillment of His covenant of "brit bein ha-btarim" (see Breishit 15:13-15); which foresaw both Israel's bondage in Egypt as well their redemption. Based on the simplest reading of that text, one would expect for Bnei Yisrael's redemption from Egypt to be 'unconditional', i.e. once the four hundred year time limit had passed. On the other hand, when one considers the primary theme of Sefer Breishit - that Bnei Yisrael are chosen in order to become G-d's special Nation - it would be logical to expect a requirement of at least some sort of 'spiritual readiness' on the part of Bnei Yisrael in the midst of this redemption process. In the following shiur, we will discuss how and why Israel's redemption from Egypt emerges as a reciprocal process.

INFORMATION 'PLUS' In our study last week of Parshat Shmot, we explained how Moshe Rabeinu received a 'double mission' (when G-d appeared to him at the 'burning bush'). His mission included both: \* To INFORM Bnei Yisrael that G-d has come to fulfill His promise to the Avot to take them to Eretz Canaan. \* To ORDER Pharaoh to allow Bnei Yisrael to journey into the desert and worship G-d.

Moshe's mission to Bnei Yisrael appears to be much more 'technical' (and hence easier) than his mission to Pharaoh. In regard to Israel, he needs only to 'bear tidings' of redemption - something the people want to hear. In contrast, in his mission to Pharaoh, Moshe must convince him to do something against his will - i.e. to allow Bnei Yisrael to leave Egypt to worship their G-d. However, as the story continues in Sefer Shmot, we will see how Moshe's mission to Bnei Yisrael becomes no less difficult than his mission to Pharaoh. To explain why, we first consider the setting as Parshat Va'era begins. When Moshe first informed Bnei Yisrael concerning their forthcoming redemption, the Torah tells us how they were quick to believe: "and the people believed that G-d had come to redeem His people..." (see 4:29-31).

However, this initial enthusiasm quickly turned into bitter disappointment when Moshe's first encounter with Pharaoh resulted in a 'double workload' (see 5:18-21). Instead of the redemption they had prayed for (see 2:23-25), Bnei Yisrael's plight only became worse. Understandably, the people accuse Moshe for this aggravation of their condition; whereupon Moshe turns to G-d in prayer, asking: "Why have you made things worse for this people, why have you sent me! From the time I have gone to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, their situation has only gotten worse, and You have not saved Your nation!" (5:22).

It is precisely at this point when Parshat Va'era opens. The people appear to have a legitimate complaint, and Moshe awaits G-d's answer to his disappointed nation. With this in mind (i.e. looking for G-d's answer), we must read the opening psukim of Parshat Va'era. As your review these psukim (i.e. 6:2-9), note how G-d first provides Moshe with some preliminary information (see 6:2-5), and only afterwards tells Moshe what he must tell Bnei Yisrael. [Our shiur will focus on G-d's answer to Bnei Yisrael (i.e. 6:6-8), while our additional shiur on Parshat Va'era will discuss why G-d first mentions brit Avot in 6:2-5.]

ANI HASHEM In G-d's answer to Bnei Yisrael in 6:6-8, take special note of how the phrase 'ANI HASHEM' forms the opening, closing, and 'central' phrase of G-d's answer: "Therefore, tell Bnei Yisrael: ANI HASHEM, and I will take them out from their suffering in Egypt... and I will save them from their enslavement, and I shall redeem them with an outstretched arm.... And I shall take them for Me as My Nation and I will be their G-d... then they shall know that: ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM who has taken them out of Egypt. And I will take them to the Land... and I will give it to them as an inheritance... ANI HASHEM." (see 6:6-8, read carefully!)

Furthermore, G-d's opening statement to Moshe begins with this very same phrase: "And Elokim spoke to Moshe, and told him: ANI HASHEM" (6:2). Even though this statement appears to be superfluous, for Moshe already know who G-d is, nonetheless, G-d emphasizes this point already in his opening remark. Clearly, a primary focus of G-d's message to Bnei Yisrael is His repeated statement of 'ANI HASHEM'.

But why should this statement answer the people's complaint? If G-d thought that this second promise of redemption would stop their complaining - it certainly didn't help, as we are told: "But they did not listen to Moshe..." (see 6:9).

To answer this question, we must take a closer look (in Hebrew) at this concluding pasuk: "Ve-lo SHAM'U el Moshe mi-kotzer ruach u-meavoda kashah" - And they did not LISTEN to Moshe, due to their crushed spirits and hard work" (6:9).

'TO BELIEVE' OR 'TO OBEY'? What does ve-lo SHAM'U mean? Usually, the phrase 've-lo SHAM'U el Moshe' is translated as, 'they did not LISTEN to Moshe'. However, the implication is not quite clear. Let's consider several possibilities based on the various meanings of the Hebrew verb 'lishmoa':

\* They did not HEAR what Moshe said. That can't be its meaning in this pasuk, as they obviously (physically) heard what Moshe said. \* They did not COMPREHEND what he said. This would also seem unlikely, for nothing in Moshe's statement seems particularly complex or intellectually demanding. \* They did not PAY ATTENTION to what Moshe told them.

This seems to be the simplest understanding, the problem only being that this is not what the word "sham'u" means. \* They did not BELIEVE (or accept) what Moshe told them. This is the popular understanding of 've-lo sham'u' in this pasuk. However, if this is indeed the case, then the Torah should have used the Hebrew word 've-lo he'eminu', as it did to describe Bnei Yisrael's original belief in G-d's first promise of redemption - see 4:30-31. \* They did not OBEY what Moshe told them. Although this is the most common translation of 've-lo sham'u' elsewhere in Chumash [see Devarim 28:15 & Vayikra 26:14], such a translation in our context seems entirely untenable, as Moshe's remarks contained no commandment or imperative for the people to obey! [Or maybe there was, let's see.] If indeed 've-lo sham'u' implies that the people did not 'obey' what Moshe told them, then we must identify some sort of commandment in G-d's statement (in 6:6-8). We posit that the statement of ANI HASHEM could be understood as a commandment. We will prove this point from a careful reading of a parallel source in Sefer Yechezkel. A PROOF FROM YEchezkel [Before continuing, I recommend that you first read Yechezkel 20:1-12 and carefully compare it to Shmot 6:2-13. Note the obvious textual parallels, such as between 20:5-6 and 3:6-8.]

Yechezkel chapter 20 opens in the seventh year since the first wave of Exile from Jerusalem (of Yehoyachin), as a group of elders of Yehuda (the leaders of the Exile in Bavel) request that Yechezkel pray to G-d for their redemption (see 20:1). As [false] hopes among the people have risen that G-d may soon redeem his people (see Yirmiyahu chapter 28!), the people are hopeful that G-d may be willing to shorten the time of their Exile and return them to their homeland. Instead of answering this request, G-d tells Yechezkel to rebuke the people instead (see 2:4). [If you read 20:2-8 carefully, you'll note that G-d is basically telling them "don't ask what G-d can do for you (i.e. for your redemption), ask rather what you can do to deserve redemption!" / This was a few thousand years before JFK.]

G-d's response in the psukim that follow basically tells the people that they do not deserve redemption, just as their forefathers did not deserve redemption! [See 20:5-10.] For the sake of our shiur, we must focus on how Yechezkel reminds the people how the nation's behavior (nine hundred years earlier) at the time of the Exodus from Egypt, was no different: As you review these psukim from Yechezkel, note the numerous parallels to the opening psukim of Parshat Va'era. Note especially the phrase of ANI HASHEM as well as 've-lo sham'u': "And you shall say to them .. on the day that I chose Israel ... [va-ivada lahem -]

when I made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt... and I stretched out My Hand to them saying ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM". [Compare with Shmot 6:3 & 6:6] "... on that same day ["nasa'ti et yadi"] I lifted out My Hand to take them out of Egypt into a land flowing with milk and honey" [see Yechezkel 20:5-6], compare with Shmot 6:8, 3:8].

Up until this point, the parallel to the beginning of Parshat Va'era is clear. However, in the next pasuk, we find some additional information, that Sefer Shmot never tells us about - that G-d also made a COMMANDMENT to Bnei Yisrael at that time: And I said to them [at the time of Yetziat Mitzrayim]: - "Each man must rid himself of his detestable ways and not DEFILE himself with the fetishes of Egypt - [for] ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM" (20:7).

Despite this command, Yechezkel informs us that Bnei Yisrael DID NOT OBEY. Note the meaning of 've-lo sham'u'! "But they REBELLED against Me -'ve-lo avu lishmoa eilai' - and they did not want to listen to Me (i.e. obey) - for no one rid himself from his detestable ways, nor did anyone give up the fetishes of Egypt, and I resolved to pour out My anger upon them..." (see 20:8).

Much to our amazement, Yechezkel here states explicitly that which Sefer Shmot only alludes to. G-d had called upon Bnei Yisrael to repent prior to the Exodus, to cleanse themselves from the 'tum'a' of their Egyptian culture in preparation for their redemption. Unfortunately, at that time Bnei Yisrael did not OBEY ["ve-lo avu lishmoa" / see 20:8] and thus deserved to be destroyed in the land of Egypt. As Yechezkel explains in the next pasuk, only for the 'sake of His Name' did the redemption process continue (see Yechezkel 20:9-10). [These psukim in Yechezkel support the popular Zohar that explains how Bnei Yisrael in Egypt had reached the 49th level of 'tum'a' before the redemption began. See Further lyun section for additional sources that are based on (or quote) these psukim in Yechezkel.] Thus, these psukim in Yechezkel can help us understand the deeper meaning of the phrase 'Ani Hashem' in Parshat Va'era. G-d's instruction to Moshe to tell Bnei Yisrael - 'Ani Hashem' - implies not only that they must accept G-d, but they must also reject any other gods (and/or culture). Basically, G-d is telling His nation that He will indeed redeem them from Egypt, as they request; but this redemption demands that they become a 'loyal partner' in this relationship. If this understanding is indeed correct, then Bnei Yisrael's response of "ve-lo sham'u el Moshe" would definitely mean that they did not OBEY!

A LOGICAL 'KAL VA-CHOMER' Additional proof of this interpretation of 've-lo sham'u' can be inferred from the next three psukim that follow in Parshat Va'era: "Then G-d told Moshe, go speak to Pharaoh... that he should SEND Bnei Yisrael from his land. [A command!] Moshe retorted [employing a 'kal va-chomer'], saying: If even Bnei Yisrael - LO SHAM'U eilai - didn't 'listen' to me - ve-eich YISHMA'ENI Pharaoh - why should Pharaoh 'obey' me?" (see 6:10-12).

Note how the Torah uses the word 'sham'u' on each side of the 'kal va-chomer'. In the context of Pharaoh's refusal to comply with G-d's command - 'sham'u' definitely means to OBEY - for Moshe commands Pharaoh to grant Bnei Yisrael permission to leave Egypt (to worship their G-d). However, for this 'kal va-chomer' to make sense, the verb 'sham'u' in both halves of the pasuk must carry the same meaning. Thus, if 'sham'u' in the second half of the pasuk means 'obey', then 'sham'u' in first half of the pasuk - in reference to Bnei Yisrael - must also mean to OBEY. In other words, the 'kal va-chomer' should be translated as, "Why should Pharaoh OBEY me, if Bnei Yisrael did not OBEY me!" Once again, we find proof that the phrase 've-lo sham'u' in 6:9 should be understood as: Bnei Yisrael do not obey.

THE FIRST TWO 'DIBROT' Let's take a minute now to explain why the statement of ANI HASHEM could (and should) be considered a 'command':

G-d's command that Bnei Yisrael's need to recognize 'Ani Hashem' encompasses much more than pure intellectual knowledge. This statement is not simply a fact that must be understood, it is a precept that must be INTERNALIZED. A true recognition of 'Ani Hashem' generates an immediate, inner drive to perform G-d's will and the willingness to OBEY any command He may request. Furthermore, if this statement is indeed internalized, then it also implies that one must rid himself from his attachment to any other god. From this perspective, the statement of ANI HASHEM in Parshat Va'era constitutes a commandment, implicitly demanding that Bnei Yisrael prepare themselves spiritually for their redemption - to perform proper 'teshuva'. Even though Bnei Yisrael did not internalize this message at that time (as 6:9 implies), their redemption cannot be complete until that message is totally accepted. Therefore, it is not by chance that when Bnei Yisrael finally arrive at Har Sinai to receive

the Torah, the first commandment is "ANOCHI HASHEM ELOKECHA asher HOTZEITICHA me-eretz Mitzrayim..." (see 20:2-3, compare w/6:6!).

Furthermore, this also explains why the next commandment is "lo yihyeh lachem elohim acherim al panai..." - not to have any other gods. In fact, this can explain why some commentators consider Anochi and Lo Yihyeh as one commandment, for the first statement automatically implies the second (like two sides of a coin)!

**A DIFFICULT MISSION** From this perspective, Moshe's mission to Bnei Yisrael is no less difficult than his mission to Pharaoh. His assignment involves not only informing the people, but also EDUCATING them, teaching Bnei Yisrael how to prepare themselves for their redemption. Just as Pharaoh must be convinced to recognize G-d, so too Bnei Yisrael must be convinced that it is indeed G-d who is coming to redeem them.

Accordingly, they must perform proper 'teshuva' in order to be worthy of that redemption. Thus, Moshe's 'shlichut' to Bnei Yisrael, just like his mission to Pharaoh, is also a 'mission' in the fullest sense of the word. Not only must he INFORM Bnei Yisrael of their forthcoming redemption, he must also COMMAND and TEACH them to perform proper 'teshuva'.

This interpretation can also explain the interesting wording of G-d's response to Moshe's objection in 6:11-12: "And G-d spoke to Moshe & Aharon, and COMMANDED them [va- yetzavem] TO Bnei Yisrael AND TO Pharaoh the king of Egypt to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt" (6:13).

G-d once again gives Moshe a double mission - to command Pharaoh to allow them to leave, AND to command Bnei Yisrael to 'become worthy' of that redemption. [See Ramban's interpretation of this pasuk!]

**SOME HELP FROM SEFER VAYIKRA** So what were Bnei Yisrael doing in Egypt that was so terrible? Considering that these events took place before the Torah was given, what did they need to do 'teshuva' from? A possible answer can be found in Parshat Acharei Mot, where we find once again an interesting textual and thematic parallel to Yechezkel chapter 20 and Shmot chapter 6. In Vayikra chapter 18 (which just so happens to be the Torah reading for Yom Kippur afternoon, and not by chance), G-d bids Bnei Yisrael not to follow the corrupt lifestyle of the Egyptians. Note once again the repetition in these psukim of the phrase 'ANI HASHEM': "And G-d spoke to Moshe: speak to Bnei Yisrael and TELL them ANI HASHEM! Do not act as the Egyptians do... and do not follow their customs. Follow My laws instead... for ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM. Keep My laws, for by them man lives... ANI HASHEM" (see Vayikra 18:1-5).

This short introduction is followed by a long list of forbidden marital relationships [better known as the 'arayot'], which had apparently become common in the Egyptian and Canaanite cultures (see 18:24-25!). Thus, G-d's call for 'teshuva' may have included a demand that Bnei Yisrael's refrain of their decadent Egyptian lifestyle, as well as their preparedness to accept whatever mitzvot G-d may command.

**A THEME IN SEFER SHMOT** This interpretation not only helps us understand the phrase "ve-lo sham'u el Moshe" in 6:9, it also explains a whole series of events which take place up until Bnei Yisrael arrive at Har Sinai. Recall that G-d had originally planned (at the 'sneh') for Bnei Yisrael to travel a three-day journey directly to Har Sinai immediately after the Exodus (see 3:12-18). Instead, they arrive at Har Sinai only some six weeks later. Why? Based on what we saw in Yechezkel, the answer is quite simple. As he explained, G-d saved Bnei Yisrael for the 'sake of His Name' - even though they were undeserving (see 20:8-9). But given their unworthiness, the redemption process could not continue, i.e. Bnei Yisrael cannot travel on to Har Sinai, until they become spiritually prepared.

Therefore, even before Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt, they must offer a special Korban [Pesach] to affirm their faithfulness. [See shiur on Parshat Bo.] Then, after their first 'three-day journey' into the desert, they must pass the test at 'Mara' (see 15:22-26), where they are given one more chance to accept what they had earlier rejected in Parshat Va'era. Note what G-d commands Bnei Yisrael at MARA: "And He said - IM SHAMO'A TISHMA - If you OBEY the voice of the Lord your G-d, do what is upright and listen to His commandments, then the afflictions that I brought upon Egypt [which you deserved as well!] I will not bring upon you, for ANI HASHEM, your Healer" (16:26). [This topic will be discussed in greater detail in our shiur on Parshat Beshalach.] Finally, immediately upon their arrival at Har Sinai, G-d again demands as a PRE-REQUISITE for receiving the Torah a similar 'pledge of allegiance': "And now, IM SHAMO'A TISHME'U BE-KOLI - if you agree to obey My instruction and keep My covenant..." (see 19:3-6).

Of course, this time Bnei Yisrael agree (see 19:7-8). Finally, as we explained above, this explains why the very first DIBUR of the Ten

Commandments is "ANOCHI [=ANI] HASHEM ELOKECHA who took you out of Egypt - LO YIHIYEH... Do not have any other gods INSTEAD of Me" (see 20:2). As we saw in Yechezkel, these two statements - ANI HASHEM and LO YIHIYEH - act as 'two sides of the same coin' - for the statement of ANI HASHEM automatically implies that you shall have no other gods.

**ELIYAHU AT LEIL HA-SEDER** In closing, the conclusions of this week's shiur can also help us appreciate our custom to 'invite' Eliyahu ha-navi to our 'seder table'. On Pesach night, as we commemorate the events of Yetziat Mitzrayim, we conclude the SEDER with our hope for the final redemption. However, before we begin Hallel & Nirtza, we first invite Eliyahu. Most likely, this custom is based on the final pasuk of Mal'achi, which promises: "Behold I am sending you Elijah the prophet, BEFORE the great and awesome day of the Lord, and he will return the hearts of sons to their fathers, and the hearts of fathers to their sons, lest I come and smite and land instead."

In the final redemption, just as in the first redemption, our obligation to perform 'teshuva' is as important an ingredient as G-d's readiness to redeem us. After all, what purpose would there be in our redemption if we were not ready to fulfill our covenantal obligations? In order for redemption to succeed, a constant recognition of ANI HASHEM must become not only a 'frame of mind', but even more so, it must become a 'way of life'.

shabbat shalom, menachem

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