



Parshas Shmos

For the week ending 19 Teves 5758
16 & 17 January 1998

Overview

With the death of Yosef the Book of *Bereishis* (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of *Shmos* (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate continues to increase, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all baby boys. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and places him in a basket in the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts the baby even though she realizes he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's older sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe. She arranges for his mother Yocheved to be his nursemaid and help raise him. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, and Moshe kills the Egyptian. When Moshe realizes his life is in danger, he flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yisro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mt. Sinai), Moshe witnesses the "burning bush" where Hashem commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*, which Hashem has promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People in Egypt will doubt him being Hashem's agent, and so Hashem helps Moshe perform three miraculous transformations to validate him in the eyes of the people: Changing his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker Hashem tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before, but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but Hashem assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

Insights

KVELLING

"And these are the names of the children of Yisrael" (1:1)

Imagine a grandmother sitting with a stack of photos of her grandchildren. She takes out the pictures after breakfast and leafs through them, reciting the names of each of her beloved treasures one by one.

After lunch she has a nap, and then she takes out her photos again and recites their names over again.

And last thing at night, out come the pictures for a last time, kissing them and calling each of them by name.

The name of the book of Exodus in Hebrew is "*Shemos*" — "The Book of Names." It starts with a list of the names of the children of Yaakov.

Even though the Torah had already detailed the names of Yaakov's children in their lifetimes, the Torah lists their names again after their passing to show how dear they are to Hashem.

Something that is dear and highly-prized is repeated and re-examined many times.

Like the photos of a doting granny.

The children of Israel are likened to the stars: Just as Hashem counts the stars and calls them by name when they come out, and again when they pass from the world and are gathered in, so too he counts the children of Israel, both when they enter this world and when they are gathered in.

We should remember that since we are compared to the stars, we must emulate the stars. Just as the purpose of the stars is to radiate light to the darkest and most distant corners of the universe, so too it is the job of the Jewish People to radiate spiritual light to the most benighted and spiritually desolate corners of the world.

BEING IT

Pharaoh said to his people: "Come, let us outsmart it, lest it become numerous and if a war will occur, it too may join our enemies and wage war against us" (1:9-10)

"The Germans did not have DDT. Their general-purpose pesticide, which was used whether the pests were rats, lice, or whatever, was a commercial product named Zyklon B. Its active ingredient was hydrogen cyanide. Zyklon B consisted of solid disks that would give off hydrogen cyanide gas when exposed to air. Large amounts of Zyklon B were found in the Nazi camps. But there is a non-criminal explanation for this that is well documented. In the camps there were outbreaks of typhus fever, which was carried by lice. Zyklon B was the agent supposedly used to kill Jews in mass in the alleged gas chambers."

(from an anti-Semitic 'revisionist' version of the Holocaust)

In the Pesach Haggadah we read: "*The Egyptians mistreated and afflicted us.*" (Devarim 26:6) If you examine the Hebrew phrase closely, you will see that it actually says "*The Egyptians made us bad.*" How do you unite an entire nation in the persecution of a minority? You "make them bad."

You conduct a smear campaign to demonize them. You turn them from people into a sub-species; into an affliction, a disease. You turn them from a "them" into an "it."

Continued on reverse

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel
©1998 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

972-2-581-0315

fax: 972-2-581-2890

ohr@virtual.co.il

38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

1-212-213-3100

fax: 1-212-213-8717

RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

1-905-886-5730

fax: 1-905-886-6065

Somayach@MSN.com

Dedication opportunities are available for Torah Weekly — Please contact us for details.

Parshas Shmos — 19 Teves 5758, 16 & 17 January 1998

Production Design: Lev Seltzer

Continued from first page

The Torah gives us a chilling vision of the future in the above verse. Pharaoh refers to the Jewish People with a masculine singular pronoun — "hoo." You can read "hoo" as "him." But you can also read "hoo" as "it."

When people become an "it," when they become in your eyes no more than an alien organism, then you treat them as any sensible person behaves when faced with a germ. You kill it. You "disinfect" yourself. You carry out a medical program of bacteriological genocide.

It's all so chillingly logical.

BELIEVING YOUR OWN PRESS RELEASE

"And Moshe grew, and he went out to his brothers" (2:11)

There once was a Hollywood cowboy who had come from a very "uncowboyish" background: He was an assistant in a men's clothing store in Detroit.

To beef up his image a bit, the studio publicity machine concocted a new identity for him. They did a quick face-lift on his life story, which now depicted him being discovered in a Wells Fargo telegraph office in a small cowboy town in Arizona.

It happened one day that at the peak of his fame the Hollywood cowboy came to that small town. As befitting his fame, he was given a ticker-tape parade down Main Street.

As he was riding on the back of his open limousine, his car passed the Wells Fargo office. He leaned across to his press agent — the very same press agent who had re-written his past — and said to him without batting an eyelid:

"You see that Wells Fargo station? That's where I was discovered..."

One of the dangers of fame is that you can start to believe your own press release.

The Midrash tells us that when Moshe "grew," he grew "not like the way of the world." The way of the world is that when a person grows and becomes celebrated and famous, he forgets his roots, his background and his brothers. He seems to have a kind of insidious amnesia when it comes to their problems and difficulties.

Moshe grew up in the palace of Pharaoh with an Egyptian gold spoon in his mouth. Nevertheless, he grew up "not like way of the world," he never forgot the plight of his people. Moshe "went out to his brothers." He went out to discover their problems and the ways he could rescue them from oppression.

THE PRINCE OF PROPHETS

"And a man from the House of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi" (2:1)

When writing about the union of Moshe's parents, why didn't the Torah just say "And Amram went and married Yocheved"?

In his lifetime, Moshe achieved a closeness to Hashem unequalled by any other human being. He alone ascended to heaven and received the Torah for Israel. He alone spoke to Hashem face to face, with crystal clarity, unlike all the other prophets.

There was a concern that in the course of time someone might say that Moshe came from heaven, and make Moshe into a god. For this reason, the Torah stresses that his origin was as normal and earthly as anyone. "A man from the House of Levi married a daughter of Levi." Although Moshe was the prince of prophets, his parents were regular flesh and blood.

Haftorah: Yishayahu 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23

Yaakov had two names: "Yaakov" and "Yisrael." The Jewish People are called by both of these names.

The name Yaakov depicts the experience of the Jewish People in times of degradation and hardship. Yisrael connotes the Jewish People realizing its potential.

The Prophet Yishayahu lived in a time of spiritual decay. He begins the Haftorah with the prophecy that the "root" of Yaakov, like all roots, though unseen and trampled by all, will once again bring forth its luxuriant produce.

THE REVOLUTION THAT WENT WRONG

"To whom shall one teach knowledge, who can be made to understand a message? Those weaned from (mother's) milk, removed from the breast!" (28:10)

Since the time of the Industrial Revolution, we have witnessed an ever-accelerating development of science and technology.

As the Zohar predicted, from the year 5600 the gates of wisdom were opened. If the Jewish People had been worthy, this tremendous outpouring of knowledge would have found its proper home in the wisdom of Torah and holiness.

Now, since we were not worthy, this diffusion of higher energy has found its way to the realm of superficial wisdom and precipitated the invention of weapons of mass destruction to humanity's profound loss.

From the day that the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed, "prophecy was given to fools and infants." Meaning, that when the Jews dwelled in the Holy Land, celestial energy, both spiritual and material, descended to its correct landing place.

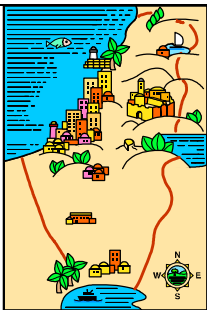
However, since the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, this spiritual radiance has gone astray — descending on desolate lands and unsuitable people — "fools and infants."

This is what the prophet means when he asks whether "those weaned from (mother's) milk" can be "made to understand a message."

Sources:
Kvelling - Rashi, Gur Arie, Sfas Emes
Believing Your Own Press Release - Yalkut HaDrush in Iturei Torah
The Prince of Prophets - Kehillas Yitzhak in Iturei Torah
The Revolution That Went Wrong - adapted from Ahavas Yonason and Rabbi Simcha Bunem M'Pschiske

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael



THE WATERPROOF LAND

Noah knew that the waters of the Deluge had begun to recede when the dove he had released from the ark returned with an olive leaf in its mouth. (*Bereishis 8:11*)

Where did the dove manage to find a leaf in a world so completely devastated by flood waters?

From the branches in *Eretz Yisrael*, says Rabbi Levi. This is in accordance with the opinion of the Sages who say that *Eretz Yisrael* was not affected by the Deluge. This view finds expression in what Hashem told the Prophet Yechezkel about this Land that "it was not rained upon in the day of fury." (*Yechezkel 22:23*)

Midrash Rabba Vayikra 31:10

Parshas Shmos

For the week ending 19 Teves 5758, 16 & 17 January 1998

Torah Weekly is available from several sources: • World Wide Web: Our address is <http://www.ohr.org.il> • Fax and Mail in Israel and US-MAIL in America. Send us a note requesting a subscription in Israel, or call 800-431-2272 in the US for details. • E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message "sub weekly {your full name}" to listproc@virtual.co.il

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.