

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT SHEMOT

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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

SHARE THE PAIN!

The Gemara Sotah (11a) tells us that Pharaoh had three advisers: Yitro, Iyov and Bilam. Pharaoh wished to decide how to deal with the Israelite "problem". He sought the opinion of each of his three advisers. Bilam was an evil man and relished the prospect of eradicating the Jewish people. He advised Pharaoh to kill the male Israelites.

Iyov was opposed to any plan to destroy the Jewish nation. Rather than display his true feelings on the issue, he refrained from offering any opinion and he remained silent.

Yitro on the other hand, vocally rejected Pharaoh's idea of exterminating the Jewish people. Yitro believed it was wrong that these people should be made to suffer for no crime other than being Jewish. Yitro's loud protests angered Pharaoh and Yitro had to flee Egypt in order to save his life.

The Talmud continues by telling us that each of the three advisers were rewarded or punished according to his deed. Bilam was killed by the very people he sought to exterminate. Iyov, who remained silent in the face of Jewish oppression, was afflicted with a life of pain and suffering. Yitro, who fled because of his opposition, sacrificing his position of leadership and life of comfort and wealth in Egypt, eventually became the father-in-law of Moshe and his descendants merited serving as prominent judicial leaders in the Sanhedrin.

Hashem dealt Mida Keneged Mida – measure for measure with all three of them.

On retrospection one can understand both Yitro and Bilam's reward and punishment, yet it is difficult to comprehend why Iyov's punishment was so severe. In fact, even if Iyov had objected, Pharaoh would have still enacted his decree. Iyov's only sin was remaining silent. Why then did he have to suffer such a harsh life, where tragedy followed tragedy?

The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot lists 48 ways to acquire Torah. We are taught for example that studying, listening and minimising one's sleep are all ways of acquiring the Torah.

One way out of the 48 seems to stand out. The 39th way is - Nosei Be'ol Chaveiro – participating in the burden of ones fellow. Why should participating in the burden of one's fellow enable us to acquire Torah?

Hashem gave Am Yisrael the Torah as a nation. We were all there at Har Sinai, in fact all the future souls of our nation were there. The Torah was not handed down to one individual; rather it was handed to the nation. One of the intrinsic messages in this action was that in order to uphold and learn this Torah, there needs to be unity. One needs to see himself as part of the other person, one big family.

Choosing a leader isn't easy. When it came to redeeming Am Yisrael, Hashem chose Moshe from the tribe of Levi. What actions reveal Moshe's potential as a leader, and what was so special about the tribe of Levi? When the Torah relates the lineage of Reuven, Shimon and Levi (Shemot 6:14-16), the Torah states the sons of Reuven... The sons of Shimon... yet when it comes to

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Levi, the Torah states "These were the NAMES of the sons of Levi..." Why does the Torah emphasize the names of Levi, whilst those of Reuven and Shimon are seemingly ignored?

The Sh'l'ah HaKadosh (Rav Yeshayahu HaLevi Horowitz) explained that in Egypt the nation were subjugated to servitude. The tribe of Levi however were not. One might have expected them to enjoy this status and "forget" about their brothers.

It is to this that the Torah emphasises the names of Levi's children. He named his sons after his brothers' bondage. "Gershon" – for they were "Gerim" (aliens) in a foreign land. "Kehat" – for they gritted their teeth in their suffering. "Merari" – for their lives had been embittered (Maror). Levi wished to actively participate in his brothers' anguish, identifying with them in their times of stress and he named his sons accordingly. It is for this reason the Torah stresses their names.

Similarly, the Torah relates that "Moshe grew up, and he went out amongst his brethren and he saw their suffering" (Shemot 2:11).

Moshe was a prince in Pharaoh's palace. He had everything going for him. Yet he knew his identity and he yearned to relate to his people.

The Midrash comments that Moshe saw their suffering and cried: "How my heart goes out for your suffering! If

only I could die for you, to spare you your suffering." Moshe removed his princely garments and went out into the field to try to help his brethren make the bricks and mortar, just so that he could be a part of their pain.

According to the Midrash, Hashem said to him: "You left your comforts to participate in the pain of Israel as an equal; I will leave the company of the Higher Ones so that I may speak with you."

It is for this reason that Moshe was chosen as a leader. A leader must be able to see beyond the physicality to delve deep and feel the emotional suffering as if that suffering is happening to him. Moshe felt it, he was distressed and he acted accordingly.

The Alter of Kelm comments that earlier we find the Torah relates that "Hashem Saw and Hashem Knew" (that the time had come for redemption) (Shemot 2:28).

Rashi, explaining this verse, uses virtually the same expression as he did concerning Moshe: "G-d placed his eye upon them and did not remove his heart from them." The Alter of Kelm explains that G-d was inspired - as it were - by the actions of Moshe. It was Moshe's own similar actions that triggered G-d's looking at and taking to heart, so to speak, the troubles of the Jewish people.

Such is the power of Am Yisrael, when

we are together, when we truly feel for our brothers and sisters; then Hashem's redemption is sure to follow.

We can now understand why Iyov suffered for his silence. Iyov was not sure what possible good would come out of him voicing resistance to Pharaoh's evil edict. He reckoned it would not change anything. Even if Pharaoh would not change the edict, he still should have voiced his opinion. When Iyov personally suffered, then he did not remain silent, rather he raised his voice beseeching G-d.

Thus Iyov's punishment stirred him to react in a manner that in turn demonstrated the error of his failure to raise his voice in protest against Pharaoh's heinous plan.

I was once in Yerushalayim talking to a Gadol Hador when an ambulance with its sirens wailing whizzed by. The Gadol stopped in the middle of talking to me, and with his eyes closed started to say a prayer. At first it didn't hit me, but then I realised what had happened. The Rav didn't see the ambulance as a piece of scenery in the background. He saw it as a person in distress, a person who is being rushed to hospital, a person in need of help. This is how we must approach the suffering of our fellow Jews.

Just as we share in our nations sorrow, so too may Hashem Bless us to always share in our people's Simcha Bekarov. Amen



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

THE LIGHT OF UNITY IN EXILE

The Book of Shemot opens with a powerful reminder of the individual greatness of B'nei Yisrael. As Rashi notes, the Torah recounts their names even after their passing to demonstrate their beloved status before Hashem. The Torah compares B'nei Yisrael to stars,

emphasizing their unique value and divine purpose. This imagery of stars, along with sand and dust, appears repeatedly in the Torah, raising the question: why are the Jewish people likened to such different elements?

The Kli Yakar offers one interpretation: stars symbolize times of triumph, shining brightly in the heavens, while sand and dust

reflect moments of suffering, when the Jewish people are trampled by enemies. However, the Sfat Emet provides a deeper insight, particularly relevant to the opening of Shemot. He explains that the stars represent the Jewish people during times of exile, a period of darkness and challenge. Paradoxically, exile becomes a time of unity and illumination. Just as stars shine most brightly in the night sky, the

Jewish people reveal their inner light – Torah, mitzvot, and acts of kindness – most vividly in the darkest of times.

Shemot marks the beginning of B'nei Yisrael's first exile, a period of suffering under Egyptian oppression. Yet, it was precisely in this darkness that their collective identity was forged. Through their faith, resilience, and commitment to divine commandments, they grew closer to one another and to Hashem. This unity enabled them to

survive and eventually receive the ultimate gift of the Torah at Har Sinai

Throughout history, this pattern has repeated. Even today, despite ongoing challenges, this lesson remains vital. Exile may bring difficulties, but it also offers the opportunity to strengthen unity, illuminate Hashem's light, and prepare for redemption.

The Sfat Emet reminds us that exile is not merely a time of despair but also one of potential transforma-

tion. As we navigate the challenges of modern times, may we take inspiration from the stars – remaining steadfast in our mission to spread light through Torah, mitzvot, and acts of chesed. In doing so, we bring ourselves closer to the ultimate blessings Hashem promised to Avraham Avinu and the enduring hope of redemption for all Israel.

May our light never dim, and may we continue to thrive as a nation, illuminating the world with goodness and divine purpose.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

The Importance of Netilat Yadayim After Waking

The Netilat Yadayim (washing hands) upon awaking is the most important of all the various washings required after cutting hair and nails etc. Therefore, it requires washing each hand three times. The Seder Hayom (Rabbi Moshe ben Machir, 16th Century, Tsfat) explains that three times establishes a Chazaka (a Halachic presumption). That is, the three washings uproot the previous

status of Tum'ah (impurity) and establish a new status of Tahara (purity). Based on this, he suggests that the word "Netilat" (washing), which literally means "to take", implies that the washing "takes" away the previous status of Tum'ah and replaces it with a Chazaka of Tahara. Moreover, the waters of the Netilat Yadayim have special powers; they originate in the supernal waters in Heaven.

The Seder Hayom also emphasizes

that one should not delay performing Netilat Yadayim in the morning. As soon as he wakes up, he must remove the Tum'ah from his hands. The same is true of other washings-they should not be delayed. For example, when leaving a cemetery, a person should not wait until he arrives home to remove the Tum'ah. Rather, he should either use the sink at the cemetery or bring a bottle of water in the car to wash as soon as possible.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Shemot

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shemot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their

birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males.

Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother

Yocheved to be his nursemaid. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mount Sinai), Moshe witnesses the burning bush where G-d commands

him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael, the Land promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the people's eyes: transforming 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, G-d 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 G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews go.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

1. Why does the verse say "And Yosef was in Egypt"?
2. "...And they will go up out of the land." Who said this and what did he mean?
3. Why did Pharaoh specifically choose water as the means of killing the Jewish boys? (Two reasons.)
4. "She saw that he was good." What did she see "good" about Moshe that was unique?
5. Which Hebrew men were fighting each other?

A

1. 1:5 - This verse adds that despite being in Egypt as a ruler, Yosef maintained his righteousness.
2. 1:10 - Pharaoh said it, meaning that the Egyptians would be forced to leave Egypt.
3. 1:10, 22 - He hoped to escape Divine retribution, as G-d promised never to flood the entire world. Also, his astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer's downfall would be through water.
4. 2:2 - When he was born, the house was filled with light.
5. 2:13 - Datan and Aviram.



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