

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT SHEMOT

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

SHARE THE PAIN!

The Gemara Sotah (11a) tells us that Pharaoh had three advisers: Yitro, Iyov and Bilam. When b 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, 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 ones 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 to 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 action reveals 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 Levi, the Torah states "These were the NAMES of the sons of Levi...". Why does the Torah emphasize the names of Levi, while those of Reuven and Shimon are seemingly ignored?

The Sh'lah 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

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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 (Kehat) 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 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 siren 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 to may Hashem Bless us to always share in our people's Simcha Bekarov. Amen



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

WHAT MAKES A PERSON TRULY GREAT

The Torah tells us: "וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה" Moshe grew up, וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אֶחָיו and he went out to his brothers." At first glance, this seems like a simple narrative detail. Moshe matured, and then he left the palace. But the Torah is teaching us something much deeper about the very nature of greatness.

What does it mean that Moshe "grew up"? Greatness is not defined by age, position, or achievement. The Torah immediately explains what made Moshe a gadol: "וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אֶחָיו." He went out to his brothers. He stepped out of his comfort, out of his privilege, out of himself and toward others. Growth becomes greatness when it leads to empathy.

Moshe could have remained in Pharaoh's palace, insulated from pain. Instead, he chose to see. He chose to feel. He chose to care. To "go out" means more than physical movement; it means emotional availability. When a person leaves their own concerns and enters the reality of another, that is true maturity. That is gedulah.

The Torah often compares the Jewish people to kochavim, stars. Why stars? Rashi explains that when the moon was diminished, it felt a sense of loss. The stars were created to appease the moon, to comfort it, to accompany it in the darkness. Stars do not produce their own daylight, yet they exist for one purpose: to be present when light is missing.

This is why we are likened to stars. A Jew is meant to notice who feels diminished, who feels overlooked, who feels alone, and to be there. Not to fix

everything. Just to shine quietly, faithfully, reassuringly. Like Moshe, greatness is not standing above others, it is standing with them.

This idea is reflected in the custom that a chatan and kallah are married under the open sky, beneath the stars. At the very beginning of their life together, they are taught a profound lesson: be like the stars. When one feels diminished, the other must shine. When one feels small, the other must appease, comfort, and uplift. Marriage, like greatness, is built on concern, presence, and care.

True greatness is not measured by how high a person rises, but by how far they are willing to go out of themselves for another. וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה Moshe became great because וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אֶחָיו. He went out to his brothers. And that is what makes a person truly great.



RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

Tehillim for Our Times; Chapter 16: מכתם לדוד שמרני אל ביחסיי בך

YOU HAVE TO BE IN IT TO WIN IT (PART 1)

George loves his Saturdays. He wakes up as late as his biological clock decides to ring and dashes straight into the shower. After a filling breakfast he meets up with his video game console and enters into a virtual world where he has the opportunity to connect with (and shoot) his faceless companions. Lunch is a simple affair from the local hot-dog stand followed by a football game in the park. Arriving home exhausted, George collapses in front of the TV, gathering energy to engage in battle once again with his online friends before he finally gets to bed...

Looking around the world, the prospect of a life without obligation appears extremely attractive. Imagine, doing what you want - when you want - with no-one or nothing breathing down your neck. No need to arise early for shul or to recite a bracha every time you wish to eat. No need to hold back on Shabbat from engaging with the digital world or experiencing the thrill of watching your favourite team play in real time. No need to dread that day where you are required

to sit in shul in your plimsoles, praying from dawn to dusk without food or drink. Imagine putting on your shoes without the need to be concerned which one is to be put on first - or which shoelace is to be tied first. Rushing out to learn Torah after a busy day at work? Not a chance.

In this chapter King David reflects on what it means to be a Jew. What benefit do we have from our faith? Is it a practical framework in which we can live with ease and tranquillity? How does the quality of the life of one who treads the Torah path measure up to that enjoyed by non-believers?

1. PURPOSE

First of all King David points out that in living a Torah life we tap into our real purpose in this world.

יְהוָה מְנַתֵּחַלְקֵי וְבוֹסֵי אֶתְּהָ תוֹמִיד גּוֹרְלִי:
"Hashem you are my allotted share and my portion. You sustain my lot" (ibid; 5)

What is the difference between a "חלק" (share) and a "בוֹסֵי" (portion)? A "share" is something allocated by right. Each Jew is automatically given a "share" in Hashem Himself, a divine spark, connecting him to the upper world. It is then up to the individual to build up his own "portion" through hard work and commitment to his avodat

Hashem. Once the individual is engaged in this process he enters into a "lottery" (גורל) whereby Hashem will now give him further reward based on principles known only to Him. One who has not bought in to this process cannot enter the lottery. You have to be in it to win it.

1. QUALITY OF LIFE

"My portion has fallen to me in pleasantness; my inheritance is beautifully fitting for me" (ibid;6)

The "portion" referred to here is the possibility of true spiritual satisfaction. One does not walk away from an extended session of digital entertainment with a real glow in their eye. If however one truly appreciates the value of each mitzvah and the fact that in its performance they can connect to the creator of the world they will surely feel elevated and joyous.

In contrast, the "inheritance" referred to here is the enjoyment of material goods. The Torah Jew who recognizes the superiority of spiritual pleasure does not seek anything over and above that which he needs. He appreciates the finer things in life, but these are not his real focus. He is happy with his lot and feels no great lacking if he does not manage to experience the "riches" which this world has to offer.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Breaking a Minyan by Leaving the Synagogue

As discussed in previous installments, if a Minyan of precisely ten people is praying, and one of them leaves in the middle of a section that requires a Minyan, those who remain may complete that section despite not having a Minyan. As long as at least six men remain, they may complete the section that began in the presence of a Minyan. Thus, for example, if the Hazzan began the Hazara (repetition of the Amida), and the Minyan was lost in the middle of the repetition, he may continue and complete the Hazara. However, Halacha speaks very harshly of a person who breaks a Minyan by departing in the middle of the service, leaving behind fewer than ten men. The Sages applied to such a person the stern warning of the prophet Yeshayahu (1:28), "Ve'ozebeh Hashem Yichlu" - "Those

who abandon G-d shall be annihilated," Heaven forbid.

It must be emphasized that this applies only to someone whose departure results in the loss of a Minyan. If there are more than ten men present, then one who leaves the synagogue is not included in this harsh condemnation. Furthermore, the Mishna Berura writes that the Sages speak here only of a person who leaves during a part of the prayer service that requires a Minyan - such as the Hazara (repetition of the Amida), Kaddish and Torah reading. If a person needs to leave, he may do so if the congregation is not currently reciting a part of the prayer service requiring ten men. For example, if the Hazzan is reciting the Kaddish after Yishtabah, and the tenth man wishes to leave, he may wait until after Kaddish and then leave. This is allowed even though

he prevents the remaining nine from reciting the later sections of the service that require a Minyan. Similarly, if a person needs to leave during the Hazara, he should do so after the completion of the Hazara. (According to Ashkenazic custom, which views Kaddish Titkabal as part of the Hazara, he must wait until after Kaddish Titkabal.)

An exception to this rule is Nakdishach, during which one may never leave the synagogue.

Importantly, this entire discussion applies to a person who already prayed. Irrespective of one's responsibility to the other nine men in the synagogue, he has a personal obligation to pray with a Minyan, and so he should not leave without a pressing need that justifies missing a Minyan.



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,
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