



MAIMONIDES

"There is a good reason for every passage – the object of which we cannot see. We must always apply the words of our Sages, "It is not a vain thing for you" (Deut. xxxii. 47), and if it seems vain, it seems your fault."

*Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification
of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices*

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Weekly Parsha

Shemot

RABBI BERNIE FOX

Avraham's prophecy of his descendants' exile and oppression

And the children of Israel were fruitful and had many children.

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Weekly Parsha

Anger Its Many Expressions

RABBI DR. DARRELL GINSBERG

According to Benjamin Franklin, "Anger is never without a reason, but seldom for a good one." This statement, while true about man, cannot possibly be applied to God. And yet, throughout the Torah, we see instances of God expressing anger at Bnai Yisrael. That there is a basis and purpose to God's anger is irrefutable. That same emotion, however, when expressed by man, is treated quite harshly by Chazal. Is man's tendency toward rage an absolute evil, or can there be a value to our angry inclinations?

We see the expression of God's anger at the end of a fascinating discussion between God and Moshe regarding Moshe's future role as leader of Bnai Yisrael. On the surface, it almost seems as though Moshe was trying to wiggle himself out of the commitment. The Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 1:63), however, explains (to paraphrase)

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Fundamentals



MOSES a Divine Phenomenon

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Unfortunately, we are conditioned to accept that when reading any text, especially those containing stories or historical accounts, that there is nothing more to the story than the surface information. We err when viewing Torah accounts in this superficial manner and forfeit God's intended messages. Maimonides expressed this in his Guide. We must be

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Weekly Parsha

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And they multiplied and became very mighty. And the land was filled with them. (Shemot 1:7)

The opening pesukim of Sefer Shemot list the sons of Yaakov. The Chumash explains that Yosef and his brothers died in Egypt and that in Egypt in exile, Bnai Yisrael grew into a large and mighty nation.

Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno explains that during the lifetime of Yosef and his brothers, Bnai Yisrael emulated the example of these tzadikim – righteous individuals. The people were committed to lives of truth and morality and their descendants emulated them. However, with the passing of these inspirational characters, the behavior of their descendants began to deteriorate. This moral corruption was responsible for their bondage. In other words, Bnai Yisrael became enslaved to the Egyptians as a consequence of their abandonment of the values of their ancestors.

Sforno does acknowledge that the exile of Bnai Yisrael was the realization of a Divine decree upon the Jewish people. It was predetermined. However, this decree did not include bondage and suffering. The suffering of Bnai Yisrael in Egypt was a punishment for the sinful behavior of the people.

Sforno's position presents an obvious problem. Earlier, in Parshat Lech Lecha, Hashem revealed to Avraham that his descendants would be exiled to a foreign land; they would be oppressed in that land, and finally, they would be redeemed. This prophecy was a reference to the exile in Egypt. This prophecy seems to contradict Sforno's contention that the oppression experienced by Bnai Yisrael was not preordained. If the bondage and oppression was not predetermined, how could Hashem tell Avraham that his children would suffer Egypt?

Sforno explains that Hashem's message to Avraham does not indicate that the fate of the people was preordained. They sinned of their own volition and this behavior caused the bondage. Hashem knows the future with complete clarity and through means we cannot

understand. Hashem's knowledge does not imply preordination.

This explanation reconciles Hashem's message to Avraham with Sforno's contention that bondage and suffering were not preordained. However, the answer gives rise to a further question. Why then did Hashem share this information with Avraham? If the bondage and oppression of Bnai Yisrael were not preordained, why did Hashem include these elements in His description of the nation's future?

Sforno responds that this message was given to Avraham for transmission to his descendants. The prophecy would serve as evidence that the suffering of the people was not merely an arbitrary nuance of fate. Hashem had



revealed to Avraham that this punishment would occur. Because of this revelation, the people would know that their suffering was not the result of chance events. They would know that Hashem was aware of and had foretold their oppression. This would lead them to search for the reason for their suffering and hopefully to the realization that the deterioration in the nation's relationship with G-d was the basis for the bondage. This would suggest a means to end the suffering. Repentance could save the people. Without the message

transmitted through Avraham, the people might conclude that they were the victims of political or sociological forces and that repentance could not help. Avraham's prophecy disproved this assumption.[1]

Moshe was the first prophet to act as Hashem's spokesman

And Moshe answered: They will not believe me and they will not obey my voice. For they will say, "Hashem has not appeared to you." (Shemot 4:1)

Hashem directs Moshe to address Bnai Yisrael. He is to reveal to them his mission. He is to tell them that Hashem will redeem them from Egypt. Through Moshe, Hashem will

(continued on next page)

take Bnai Yisrael out of Egypt and lead them to the Land of Israel. Moshe protests. The people will not follow him. They will not believe that Hashem has spoken to him. Certainly, they will not follow him through the wilderness to the Land of Israel.

Moshe's objections are difficult to understand. Moshe was not the first prophet. Hashem had spoken to the forefathers and others. None of these prophets raised Moshe's objections. They did not contend that their prophecies would be denied or that they would be dismissed as madmen. Why did Moshe bring up these issues?

Maimonides deals with this question in his *Moreh Nevuchim*. He offers an amazing answer. Maimonides begins by explaining that Moshe's objections were completely appropriate. He was to represent himself as Hashem's emissary. The nation should require Moshe to provide credentials. They would be fools if they followed Moshe without proof of his authenticity. Moshe recognized the legitimacy of Bnai Yisrael's suspicions.

Therefore, he asked Hashem to provide him with the means to verify his authenticity.

Based on this analysis, Maimonides reformulates our question. We cannot criticize Moshe's concerns. However, we must ask a different question. Why did previous prophets not raise these issues? Why did Avraham not ask Hashem for some means to confirm his authenticity?

Maimonides explains that Moshe was different from previous prophets. Previous prophets received prophecies aimed at guiding them towards their own personal perfection. Alternatively, their prophecies provided knowledge of their destiny or the future of their progeny. The people did not require these prophets to prove their authenticity. They did not speak to the people in the name of Hashem. Maimonides further explains that Avraham did not speak to humanity as Hashem's spokesman. He addressed humankind as a teacher. He provided instruction based upon reason and argument. He presented rational proofs for his theology and philosophy. Therefore, Avraham did not need to prove his prophetic status to the people. He never insisted that he be followed and obeyed as Hashem's spokesman. Moshe was the first prophet instructed to address a nation on behalf of Hashem. Moshe was to reveal Hashem's will and act as His spokesman. Moshe needed proof. He was confronted with a different and new mission. This mission required that he prove his authenticity.[2]



Moshe's bewilderment with Hashem's silence

And Moshe returned to Hashem and he said: G-d, why have you mistreated this nation? Why have you sent me? (Shemot 5:22)

Moshe goes to Paroh. He tells Paroh that Hashem has commanded Bnai Yisrael to go out to the wilderness and worship Him. Paroh refuses to allow Bnai Yisrael to travel into the wilderness or worship Hashem. Furthermore, Paroh increases the burden of Bnai Yisrael. He demands more labor from them. Moshe is troubled by this outcome. In our pasuk, Moshe addresses Hashem. He recounts that Hashem told him that Bnai Yisrael would be redeemed. He sent him to Paroh to demand their freedom.

Moshe had dutifully followed Hashem's directions. However, he had failed to achieve any positive result. Instead, Moshe's actions had increased the suffering of the nation! How can this outcome be reconciled with Hashem's promise to redeem His nation?

The commentaries are troubled by Moshe's question. Hashem had revealed to Moshe that Paroh would not acquiesce to his request. Paroh would only relent as a result of overpowering plagues.[3] Moshe should not have been surprised by Paroh's response. The required plagues had not yet begun!

Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra offers an interesting response. The final redemption would be the exodus from Egypt. Moshe understood that this ultimate step would require overwhelming force. Moshe understood that this final stage of rescue had not yet arrived. However, Moshe expected some immediate improvement in the condition of Bnai Yisrael. In other words, he assumed that redemption would be a process. The final step would only be secured through the plagues. But the process would begin immediately. Therefore, Moshe was shocked by the deterioration in Bnai Yisrael's condition.[4]

Nachmanides explains Moshe's question differently. Moshe understood that Paroh would only respond to force. He was not surprised that Paroh increased his torment of the Jewish people. But he was shocked that Hashem did not respond and punish Paroh. Moshe expected the plagues to begin immediately. Instead, Hashem was silent. Moshe was puzzled. If the time had come for redemption, let the process begin. If the moment of redemption had not yet arrived, why had he been sent to Egypt? Moshe had spoken to the people of their salvation but not produced any positive results. This could only undermine Moshe's credibility.[5] ■

[1] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 13:13.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) *Moreh Nevuchim*, volume 1, chapter 63.

[3] Sefer Shemot 3:20.

[4] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 5:22-23.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 5:22.

that Moshe was trying to ascertain from God how he was to go about proving God's existence to the Jewish nation. At the end of the discussion (Shemos 4:10-11), Moshe relates that his speech impediment would be a major defect in his ability to act as leader. God famously responds that He created the ability to speak; therefore He would assist Moshe in accomplishing the task. Moshe's final response to God is to attempt to reject the mission (ibid 13):

"[Moshe] said, 'I beg You my Master, please send the one You usually send.'"

God's famous response is to transfer the role of speaker from Moshe to Aharon (ibid 14-17):

"God displayed anger toward Moshe and said, 'Is not Aharon, the Levite, your brother? I know that he knows how to speak....'"

It is the manifestation of God's anger that is the focus of Rashi (ibid 14, based on the Talmud Zevachim 102a):

"This is dependent on Tannaim: And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses. R. Yehoshua

b. Karchah said: A [lasting] effect (roshem) is recorded of every fierce anger in the Torah, but no [lasting] effect is recorded in this instance. R. Shimon b. Yochai said: A [lasting] effect is recorded in this

instance too, for it is said, Is there not Aaron thy brother the Levite? Now surely he was a priest?

Rather, this is what He meant: I had said that thou wouldst be a priest and he a Levite; now, however, he will be a priest and thou a Levite."

In his commentary on the Talmud, Rashi expands on the concept of this roshem. He explains that at times the lasting effect is expressed through hitting someone, other times through admonishment, and other times through cursing (kelala). He also cites numerous incidents involving these particular effects. For example, he makes reference to Yaakov's anger at Rochel (Bereishis 30:1-2). When Rochel saw Leah's success in bearing children, she became jealous and approached Yaakov, in a sense demanding children. Yaakov replies in anger ("vayichar af"), and addresses Rochel, saying, "Am I in God's place?... The roshem here, according to Rashi, is the language of admonishment, nezifa.

The concept of a lasting mark resulting from anger, based on the examples cited by Rashi, seems to function within the domain of mankind's emotional state. Yet somehow, the Talmud is questioning whether this same characteristic applies to God! Furthermore, what is the nature of this argument between the two tanaaim? Regarding the first opinion, why is God's anger at Moshe different from other instances of fierce anger? Regarding the second, there is no outright mention in the Torah of a transfer of Moshe's kehuna rights to Aharon. Obviously its source is

found in the Torah She'beal Peh; yet where does this allusion exist in the Torah? When Rashi refers to incidents exemplifying the concept of roshem he uses concrete examples, not insinuations.

It is the subject of anger that underlies these issues and ultimately needs to be understood. The Rambam writes about the danger of anger in Hilchos Deos (2:3), explaining in vivid detail the damage done when a person allows anger to overcome him. He advises a person to avoid this middah at all costs, offering numerous sayings by Chazal as to the perils of becoming angry. What is the source of anger? Why do we get angry? We live in a world where we are subject to the laws of nature and God's will. When a person is in harmony with this world, he is operating in line with his tzelem Elokim. It is when the objective actuality surrounding him does not conform to his own subjective version of reality that anger emerges. Essentially, it occurs when the world doesn't work according to our wishes. We can all think of countless examples when anger overcame us, all emerging from this core concept. In a sense, it is almost a part of our nature – and yet, it is a tremendous danger. As the Rambam describes, it essentially removes the person from his ability to think, as his mind now functions under the cloud of this overpowering emotion. In these instances, the emotion of anger takes center stage, and the results are harmful.

The Rambam's concern about anger seems to be in the situation where the anger itself guides the individual's decision making. The anger being described by the Talmud, and elaborated by Rashi, is a different idea. In these instances, a message or idea needs to be transmitted to the individual, and presenting the message, using anger as a vehicle, accomplishes this successfully. The example by Yaakov helps clarify this concept. Yaakov recognized a flaw in Rochel on the basis of her request. He had to rebuke her in a way that would help jar her out of her state of mind and allow her to perceive her flaw. Therefore, he makes use of anger, where the anger functions to help illuminate the flaw in the individual. This might be the concept of a roshem – where the anger is not the essence, rather it serves as a vehicle to delivering the message.

With this in mind, we can now try and tackle the argument above. The first question that must be dealt with is the nature of anger in God's realm, since it is obvious that God does not "get angry." The expression of anger by God occurs when mankind does not operate in line with God's will, the ultimate reality. This is most often occurs when Bnai Yisrael engages in idolatry (see Moreh Nevuchim, 1:36) – yet it is not limited to these instances. The characteristic of anger expressed by God brings to light this lack of harmony – the flip side, so to speak, of man's anger. Therefore,

when mankind is on the receiving end of God's anger, it is being revealed to him that he is not acting in line with objective truth. The mere expression of anger by God serves to bring to light man's flaws, an abstract realization. The anger, though, can extend beyond the abstract, manifest in punishment, onesh. It may be that the concepts alone are not enough to correct the wrong, thereby necessitating the onesh. This then could be the basis for the argument. According to R' Yehoshua, the middah of anger need not always be expressed with an onesh as well. God's anger itself is enough. According to R' Shimon, it is part of the middah of God's anger that mankind experience an onesh.

There is no doubt there was some type of flaw expressed in Moshe's final insistence in not accepting the mission (the nature of Moshe's "flaw" is not the subject of this article). According to R' Yehoshua, in this instance there was no punishment emerging through God's anger. This means God's anger, which was expressed in the decision to allow Aharon to be the spokesman, served to expose to Moshe the emotional resistance in his position, which was the source of his flaw. According to the second opinion, though, part of the very middah of God's anger is a roshem. How did this emerge with Moshe? The arrangement introduced by God would be Moshe transmitting the concepts and commands from God to Aharon, and Aharon being the "spokesman", the communicative link to Bnai Yisrael. They both were charged with bringing the ideas of God to Bnai Yisrael, but Aharon would be the face of the transmission. This formula was indicative of the future roles of the kohanim and leviim. The entire tribe of Levi was entrusted not just to run the Bais Hamikdash, but to serve as the link between Bnai Yisrael and God. The kohanim, however, were the ones who communicated directly with the nation, whether through korbanos or teaching of Torah. Therefore, we see in the arrangement between Moshe and Aharon the foundation for this future relationship between the kohanim and leviim.

Whether or not onesh is a requirement of God's roshem remains debatable, but what is clear is that God's expression of anger is always a tool of clarification for Bnai Yisrael, a means for us to recognize our flaws and being the path to teshuvah. Within man's realm, anger primarily serves the opposite function, leading to the dangers so vividly expressed by Chazal and the Rambam. True enough, there are times when anger can serve a positive role – yet it can only happen when its role is secondary to a true concept. Benjamin Franklin got it right in man's realm; but without understanding how God makes use of anger, it is more of an idiom than chachma. ■

RABBI REUVEN MANN

Those *who* FEAR HASHEM *Resist Evil*



PARSHA

In this week's parsha, Shemot, we read about the transformation of a group of seventy souls into an eternal nation which changed the course of history. The birth and continued existence of this people is contrary to the laws of nature and can only be accounted for with reference to Divine providence. Hashem brought this nation into being and has preserved it, to this very day in spite of the opposition of mankind. This is clearly depicted in our parsha. As soon as the Jews underwent a period of tremendous growth and expansion the fear and paranoia of Pharaoh was aroused. He accused them of being a disloyal "fifth column" who would side with Egypt's enemies should war ever break out. He resolved to crush their spirit by imposing excessive burdens on them. When this failed to diminish their growth he resorted to an evil scheme. The midwives were instructed to execute all male infants in the process of delivering them. Had the plan succeeded it would have insured the destruction of the Jewish people before they ever got off the ground.

The plan did not work. Not one child was killed as a result of Pharaoh's command. The midwives refused to go along with it. What motivated them to resist and risk the wrath of the mighty ruler? One might, at first glance, ascribe their behavior to ordinary compassion for helpless, innocent babies. However, the Torah makes it clear that such was not the case. The pasuk

says, "and the midwives feared G-d and did not do as Pharaoh had instructed." It was only because of their fear of Hashem that the women were able to thwart the heinous plan of the king. This episode is very inspiring and relevant to the human condition. One of the most enduring themes of history is that of man's inhumanity to man. In our own time we have been witness to the worst expression of human evil and degradation; the systematic extermination of 6 million innocents who were targeted for extermination. Pharaoh failed because the fear of G-d was so powerful that it overcame the fear of man. The Torah maintains that man has the ability and responsibility to resist evil. Hitler succeeded because the fear of G-d was absent from the world in the dark days of the Holocaust. There were no "midwives" who could summon the bravery to oppose his murderous designs. Judaism maintains that evil succeeds not only because of the deeds of wicked people. Of equal or even greater consequence is the cold indifference of the "bystanders." The "good" people are responsible for their failure to oppose the wicked plans of powerful tyrants. In acquiescing to evil they demonstrate that they are completely devoid of the true fear of Hashem which, alone, can give mankind the courage to triumph over its worst enemies. "The fear of Hashem which is pure, endures forever." May we merit to attain it.

Shabbat Shalom. ■

Weekly Parsha

Pharaoh's
New
Plan

RABBI DR. DARRELL GINSBERG

In this week's parsha, the process for the redemption of Bnai Yisrael from Egypt begins. G-d instructs Moshe and Aharon to meet with Pharaoh and request the release of Bnai Yisrael. Simply put, Moshe and Aharon's initial conversations with Pharaoh were far from successful. After teaching Bnai Yisrael about G-d, and then showing them the signs, they proceed to meet with Pharaoh and request a temporary release of Bnai Yisrael to serve G-d. Pharaoh, after questioning the existence of G-d, proceeds to not only reject their request, but subsequently to make life harsher for Bnai Yisrael. A close look at this incident reveals some fascinating questions.

The Torah first tells us (Shemos 5:4-5):

"The king of Egypt said to them, 'Why, Moshe and Aharon, are you distracting the people from their work? Get back to your burdens.' Then Pharaoh said, 'Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you want them to take leave from their hard work.'"

Why does the Torah describe Pharaoh first as "king of Egypt", and then in the next verse by his name? Furthermore, what is the difference between the two verses insofar as Pharaoh's critique?

The Torah continues, describing in detail Pharaoh's new edict. His plan was to no longer provide Bnai Yisrael the necessary straw to form the bricks required to erect the monuments and buildings in Egypt. From that point on, Bnai Yisrael would have to gather the straw on their own, yet still maintain the same quota of brick making. His justification for this plan was that Bnai Yisrael was lazy as a result of their attention having become diverted from work. Rashi explains (ibid 8):

"[I.e., 'They have become disengaged] from their work. Therefore, their attention has turned towards idleness and they cry out, saying: 'Let us go, etc.'"]"

The Torah clearly presents Pharaoh as a vicious rasha and we are to have very little sympathy for him. His new decree on Bnai Yisrael was nothing short of tortuous. What is intriguing is why he never implemented this plan to begin with. What was his

goal with this new decree? It cannot simply be a reflexive response from an angry king. There was a method to his thinking.

The Haggada of Pesach may provide an opening into understanding Pharaoh and the effect he was striving for. Every year, when reciting the haggada, we recount the famous verse of "an Arami destroyed my father". We then proceed to offer an in depth explanation, based on the Sifrei, of the different ideas contained within this verse. One particular section of this verse gets into the heart of the nature of the suffering of Bnai Yisrael. We recall how we cried out to G-d and He heard our voices. The Torah continues (Devarim 26:7):

"...and perceived our suffering, and our labor, and our oppression."

The Haggada first explains that "suffering" refers to (according to most commentaries) the lack of intimate relations between husband and wife. The second, "labor," alludes to the slaughter of the male Jewish infants. Finally, there is the "oppression," which relates to the "pressure."

Essentially, each of these refers to how the enslavement of Bnai Yisrael was leading to their eventual eradication. The lack of intimacy between husband and wife referred to the psychological upheaval Bnai Yisrael were suffering. Their enslavement was producing an altered psyche, one that was unable to function within the human norm and allow them to engage in normal relationships. Then there was "labor," the genocidal decree to kill the male infants. Obviously, this is referring to the slow physical destruction of the nation, child by child. Finally, there was the "oppression," defined as "pressure". Many commentaries explain that this referred to the religious persecution faced by Bnai Yisrael. The common theme here is that the enslavement of Bnai Yisrael went beyond simple manual labor, but had overtaken every part of their existence – the psychological, physical and philosophical.

It could be that this decree was a component of the above concept of pressure—the erosion of the religious identity of the Jewish people. The greatest fear the ruler of a slave nation can endure is the fear of revolt. Pharaoh was acutely aware of what Moshe and Aharon were trying to accomplish. He understood that re-introducing both a sense of national unity as well as a religious ideology to Bnai Yisrael would ignite the fire of intellectual creativity, where the mind yearns to understand the underlying truths of the universe. He realized that the key to a revolt would lie in their turning their minds away from their dependent relationship on him and to a theology that would require their worship. Recognizing that engaging in worship would restore them psychologically, physically and philosophically, Pharaoh sought to stamp out any chance of revolt via religion. He refers to them as "lazy," with their minds turning to "idleness" as any energy directed towards religious thought was decreed as being worthless since it was

not in line with his goals. His innovation, and it was a brilliant one, was to force them to gather the straw themselves. Until this point, their labor focused on building monuments and other edifices; they received the raw materials and assembled them. It was repetitive work, the type that requires little intellectual focus. Pharaoh wanted to wipe out any remaining intellectual spark. He therefore forced Bnai Yisrael to gather the raw materials as well. This meant they were consumed with every part of the building process, from beginning to end. Every vestige of their existence was now defined as slave, with the entire intellect focused on even the minutest aspect of the building process. The guaranteed same quota of bricks ensured that Bnai Yisrael would be completely subsumed by the labor. No part of their day, no part of their lives, would lend itself to thinking about G-d. It was as if Pharaoh not only owned their psyches, but he took possession of their minds as well. This is a type of religious persecution. Many times it emerges as decrees and edicts against religious practices. However, in this case, it was the redirection of the mind to the exclusion of everything but their labor, from its inception to its culmination, resulting in the potential dissolution of the nation.

This also explains why the Torah differentiates between referring to Pharaoh by his title first and then by his name. Any ruler would see Moshe and Aharon as a distraction and recognize that the slaves would need to be punished to counteract the effect they were having. Any ruler would decree that his slaves must "get back to work." However, a normal punishment might be a temporary increase in demands or harsher punishments for those who falter from their labors. Initially, he reacted like any king would. In his decree, however, we see his ideology and his motives emerge. He was seeking to destroy any ideological remnant of the Jewish people, an attack beyond the normal scope of slavemaster. As a result, he changed the nature of their enslavement, forcing them to apply their creative energy to the labor process itself. It was his attempt to control their minds that separated Pharaoh from the "typical" ruler. Once the decree was issued and took effect, the potential ideological destruction of the nation was set in motion. And now, just as the greatest threat to them becomes apparent, G-d initiates the plan to release Bnai Yisrael. What's clear is that while the physical enslavement of Bnai Yisrael was a difficult burden to endure, the true danger to us, as a nation, is the preoccupation of our minds with that which prevents us from focusing our attention on our true purpose. As we go through our daily lives, there is a great deal that distracts us, both physically and psychologically. It is our great challenge to retain our commitment and adherence to the worship of G-d and his commandments so that while we may live in a world that seeks to occupy our bodies, our minds are never in danger of becoming enslaved to it. ■

(Moses continued from page 1)

Fundamentals

highly sensitive to all Torah portions. Only then, will the questions leap from the pages to our surprise, and delight.

We are told of Pharaoh's enslavement of the Jews, and then his plan to exterminate all males. The Rabbis teach he feared the idolatrously-predicted birth of the Jewish messiah and therefore wished to kill him. Names are disclosed of the midwives who feared God and saved the newborns, whom the Rabbis teach are Moses' mother and sister. This is followed by Moses' birth, but it describes his father and mother as Levites. Why do we need to know all of this added information?

We read further, and must ask of what significance it is that Moses was "good". Good in what way? He was yet an infant; an early stage where one is incapable of goodness.

What is so vital in Pharaoh's daughter's coinciding bathing and finding the infant Moses; her pity on him; the information that she took him as a "son" – that Moses ended up raised in Pharaoh's palace?

Subsequent to this, the Torah continues with Moses' "going out" to his brothers; his killing of the Egyptian; a second "going out" and the rebellious Dathan and Aviram; Pharaoh's desire to kill him; and Moses' defense of Yisro's daughters after he fled Egypt.

We just finished Genesis, where we learned of God's command to Abraham that he leave his home town. We learned of Joseph's dreams which forced his sale and eventual rise to viceroy status. Whether it is an outright, Divine decree to Abraham, Joseph's prophetic dreams, or a series of ostensibly "natural" events surrounding Moses, the Torah's record of these accounts intends to communicate important lessons. Not history lessons, but lessons of God's providence and human perfection.

I'd like to suggest a few thoughts regarding this week's Parshas Shmos. It appears from the sequence that due to the enslavement, God created Moses. Yes, God "created" him Divinely, with his high level of intelligence, like no other man. Moses was necessary at this precise historical moment to function as God's emissary. His timed birth, prematurely, saved him from the Egyptian murderers. And his keen intellect was demanded that he perform the miracles. The fact that he was "good" must refer to his unusually beautiful appearance, also indicating Divine intervention. His parents were of the house of Levi, those immersed in the study of God. This too may have contributed to Moses' development in God's path.

Moses' striking form may have been necessary to appeal to Pharaoh's daughter, that she pitied him and took him in as a son. His beauty could also bolster her ability to violate her father's decree on infant males. I did not see a source, but I wonder if God kept her barren, as the verse indicates to me, taking him in as a son might suggest she had no son prior. Being barren would add to her desire for a child, even a Hebrew.

What demanded Moses be raised among royalty? The following acts of his "going out" to care for his brothers may answer this. For one who is raised with a level of social superiority might be better groomed for his eventual leadership role, and greater ability to confer with kings, as Moses eventually required in connection with Pharaoh. Despite this, Moses did tell God later

"Who am I to speak with Pharaoh?" However, this does not mean Moses was not better prepared to do so, through his upraising. This only refers to his great humility, a perfection. But one can be perfected and humble, yet possess the ability to stand before kings.

"Going out to his brothers" immediately follows the account of Pharaoh's daughter, teaching that one is related, or due, to the other. Moses' "going out" may serve to substantiate that his upbringing successfully offered him leadership abilities. Moses also went out on two occasions, teaching that his concern and ability to lead was not an isolated case. And following this account, we learn of Moses' defense of Yisro's daughters, a third case of Moses' expressed abilities. ■



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RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Written by a student

In the beginning of the book of Exodus Chapter 1 Verse 8 it states, "A new king arose on Egypt that did not know Joseph." There is an argument amongst the Rabbis. Rav says it was literally a new king. Shmuel says it was not a new king but rather the same Pharaoh, who acted as though he did not know Joseph and made new decrees against the Jews. The position of Shmuel seems difficult. A simple reading of the text would indicate it was merely a new king. Why did Shmuel feel compelled to understand the meaning of the verse to such a strained interpretation? This explanation seems to stretch the simple meaning of the verse. It is obvious that Shmuel detected something in Pharaoh's personality that indicates that he pretended as though he did not know Joseph.

In order to properly analyze the personality of Pharaoh and his relationship with Joseph, we must examine Pharaoh's dream and how Joseph's interpretation led to his ascendancy to power. The dreams of Pharaoh can help us examine his personality. There are two causes of dreams. One is a dream of divine origin, a prophetic vision. Another cause is the person's wishes or the thoughts of his unconscious. Pharaoh had two dreams. By analyzing and contrasting both dreams we should be able to determine the portion of the dream, which is prophetic, and the part, which is an expression of his personality. The aspects of his dreams, which are duplicative, are obviously of divine origin. However, if we examine the portions of one dream, which are not common to the other, said portion is not prophetic. It would understandably be an expression of Pharaoh's unconscious.



By analyzing the dreams we note one striking difference with respect to the dreams concerning the cows. Pharaoh sees himself as part of that dream. Genesis Chapter 41 Verse 1 states at the end thereof "...and behold I was standing above the river." Another unique aspect of this dream is that it states the origin of the cows. The cows were coming up out of the river. However, the dream of the bundles of wheat does not state their origin. We must understand; why does Pharaoh include himself in the first dream, and why does he envision the cows appearing from out of the river?

Another clue to Pharaoh's personality would be an analysis of his actions. Upon Joseph's interpretation of the dreams, Pharaoh's response seems overwhelming. He immediately appoints a despicable "Jewish lad, a slave" as his viceroy, the second most powerful position in Egypt. He dresses Joseph in ornate clothing and extends him a regal coronation. Furthermore, when his subjects come to ask his advice when they were starving, he replies "go to Joseph and whatever he tells you to do, abide by it". It would seem rather unlikely that Pharaoh was willing to relinquish all control and credit, and suddenly bestow it upon Joseph. His response, besides being overwhelming, seems incongruous to Shmuel's interpretation of his later actions. At this juncture he seems to be a righteous individual capable of appreciating and recognizing the good of Joseph. However, later, after Joseph's death, there is a complete transformation of his personality and he denies Joseph's existence and in fact, acts ruthless to his people the Jews.

(continued on next page)



An understanding of the extraneous portion of his dreams can give us an insight into his personality and can demonstrate why seemingly incompatible actions are actually consistent with his character.

In his first dream the cows arose from the river. The Hebrew term for river that the Torah uses is “ye-or”. Rashi explains that this term is used because it is referring to the Nile. The Nile was the source of sustenance for the land of Egypt. Egypt is a dry climate and the Nile overflows and irrigates Egypt. The Nile thus represents the source for the fulfillment of the Egyptians’ basic needs. However, in Pharaoh’s dream he was standing “al ha ye-or”, above the Nile. This signifies that Pharaoh felt that he was ‘above’ the Nile. In his own mind he was more powerful than the powers of nature. Pharaoh considered himself a god. In fact, the Medrash tells us, that he even emptied his bowels without anyone knowing, so as the feign divinity in front of his people, never needing to relieve himself. He professed to be above the laws of nature. Thus, the most threatening occurrence to Pharaoh would be if he were not in total control. It would shatter his self image as a god. Thus, the occurrence of a drought was a fearful event to Pharaoh. The Torah tells us “vatepaem rucho”, his spirit was troubled. Unconsciously, he feared losing control. That is why in the dream he envisioned the cows coming out of the river. He feared a natural event that would be beyond his control. He thus sensed that Joseph’s interpretation was accurate. He therefore had to come to grips with the possibility of losing control. However, Joseph presented him with the ability to maintain control. He realized that through Joseph he would be able to retain control and keep intact his image as a god. However, in order for him to view his reliance on Joseph as a situation akin to being in control, he was coerced into viewing Joseph as an extension of himself.

Psychologically there was total identification with Joseph. Therefore, his response to Joseph was overwhelming. The deification of Joseph was not an abnormal response, but on the contrary it was necessitated by his identification with Joseph. It was an expression of his vision of Joseph as his alter ego. This relationship reinstated his threatened view that he was not the most powerful force in the world: with Joseph, he now resumed his self-image as a god. Therefore, when people asked him what to do, he quite naturally responded, “whatever Joseph says, do”. It bolstered his image of being in control. Joseph’s actions were merely expressions of his own power. Pharaoh and Joseph together, in his mind, were one entity.

We can now understand Shmuel’s explanation. After Joseph’s death, Pharaoh, because of his psychological make-up, faced a terrible problem. Narcissism, the love of oneself, was a key characteristic of Pharaoh’s personality. A narcissistic individual’s psychic energies are directed towards the love of the self. However, when a person like Pharaoh, strongly identifies with another individual and views him as his alter-ego, that other person becomes a source of his narcissistic, psychic energy. Therefore, upon Joseph’s death, the excess psychic energy could no longer be channeled towards his alter ego. He began to confront the same emotions that he previously experienced. He felt threatened by the fact that he was really not in control. However, he could not use the defense mechanism of identification but instead resorted to denial. He was unable to confront the fact that Joseph really allowed him to retain control. Therefore, psychologically, in order to function without feeling threatened, he had to act as though he did not know Joseph. Any remembrance of Joseph or acknowledging Joseph’s value was painful to his self-image of being all-powerful. Accordingly, not only did he

have to act as though he did not know Joseph, but that denial coerced him to act in the opposite fashion. His remembrance of Joseph was so painful; it served as the source for his oppression towards Joseph’s people, the children of Israel.

Therefore Shmuel stated that “a new king” is only viewed as new, in terms of his actions. However an analysis of Pharaoh’s personality indicates that on the contrary, it was the same Pharaoh. That is why the Torah specifically articulates that the new king did not know Joseph. If he were truly a new king the statement would be redundant. The Torah is really offering us an insight into his nature.

An example of this type of psychological mechanism is evident in Christianity. The Christian hates the Jew for ostensibly killing his G-d. However, this is indicative of a psychological defense mechanism. The Christian cannot admit that we gave them their G-d, since Jesus was Jewish.

Jacob upon meeting Pharaoh was keenly aware of Pharaoh’s true nature. His response to Pharaoh’s inquiry with respect to his age seems rather lengthy and irrelevant. Genesis Chapter 49 at Verse 9, “And Jacob said to Pharaoh, the days of the years of my sojourning are 130, few and bad were the years of my life and I have not reached the days of the years of the lives of my fathers, in the days of their sojourns.” Nachmanides questions this rather lengthy response. However, based upon our insight into Pharaoh’s personality, it is understandable. A person, who perceives himself as all-powerful and god-like, feels threatened by someone who possesses something that is desirable, which he does not have. Jacob realized that Pharaoh had such a personality. He sensed that Pharaoh, when questioning his age, noted he was an elder and was asking more, out of a sense of envy rather than curiosity. He sensed that he possessed something that Pharaoh desired: old age. Accordingly, Jacob who was old, at a time when people were not living so long, responded based upon this perception. He stated that he was not so old, and that he did not have a good life nor live as long as his fathers. He attempted to dispel any envy that Pharaoh may have had. He did not want to entice Pharaoh’s anger by giving him any cause for jealousy. Therefore, his lengthy response was appropriate and warranted, considering the circumstances.

It also explains the blessing that Jacob bestowed upon Pharaoh. Rashi tells us that he blessed him that the Nile should rise to greet him whenever he approaches it. Jacob was aware of Pharaoh’s personality. This blessing Pharaoh truly cherished. It represented that even the most powerful phenomenon of nature would be subordinate to his control. ■

Year-end Contributions



As we draw to a close of 2010 we look back on all we have accomplished these past 12 months. With much toil, endurance and a passion to share new Torah insights with you, we're about to reach a milestone issue #400, enjoyed mostly by you, our regular readers. Here's a few more stats from this past year:

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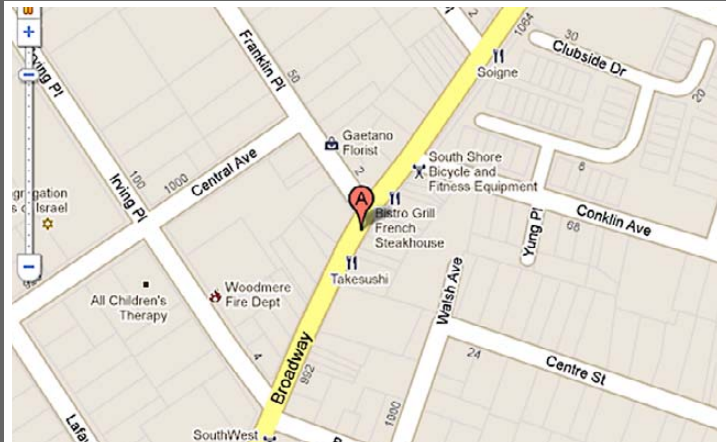
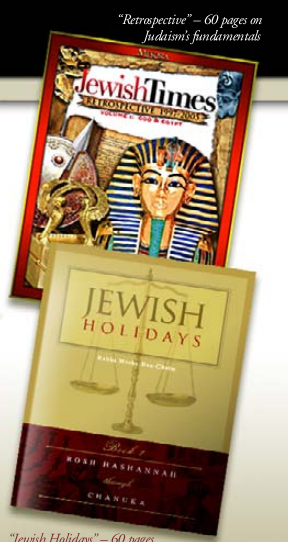
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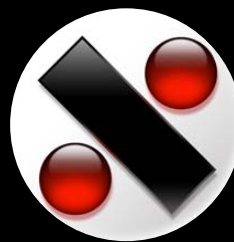
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