

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

She is one of the most unexpected heroes of the Hebrew Bible. Without her, Moses might not have lived. The whole story of the exodus would have been different. Yet she was not an Israelite. She had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by her courage. Yet she seems to have had no doubt, experienced no misgivings, made no hesitation. If it was Pharaoh who afflicted the children of Israel, it was another member of his own family who saved the decisive vestige of hope: Pharaoh's daughter. Recall the context. Pharaoh had decreed death for every male Israelite child. Yocheved, Amram's wife, had a baby boy. For three months she was able to conceal his existence, but no longer. Fearing his certain death if she kept him, she set him afloat on the Nile in a basket, hoping against hope that someone might see him and take pity on him. This is what follows: Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe in the Nile, while her maids walked along the Nile's edge. She saw the box in the reeds and sent her slave-girl to fetch it. Opening it, she saw the boy. The child began to cry, and she had pity on it. "This is one of the Hebrew boys," she said (Ex. 2:6).

Note the sequence. First she sees that it is a child and has pity on it. A natural, human, compassionate reaction. Only then does it dawn on her who the child must be. Who else would abandon a child? She remembers her father's decree against the Hebrews. Instantly the situation has changed. To save the baby would mean disobeying the royal command. That would be serious enough for an ordinary Egyptian; doubly so for a member of the royal family.<sup>1</sup>

Nor is she alone when the event happens. Her maids are with her; her slave-girl is standing beside her. She must face the risk that one of them, in a fit of pique, or even mere gossip, will tell someone about it. Rumours flourish in royal courts. Yet she does not shift her ground. She does not tell one of her servants to take the baby and hide it with a family far away. She has the courage of her compassion. She does not

<sup>1</sup> "Seeing that she [Pharaoh's daughter] wanted to save Moses, they [her handmaids] said to her, 'Mistress, it is customary that when a king of flesh and blood issues a decree, even if the whole world does not fulfil it, at least his children and the members of his household fulfill it. Yet you transgress your father's decree!'" (Sotah 12b)

flinch. Now something extraordinary happens: The [child's] sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a Hebrew woman to nurse the child for you?" "Go," replied Pharaoh's daughter. The young girl went and got the child's own mother. "Take this child and nurse it," said Pharaoh's daughter. "I will pay you a fee." The woman took the child and nursed it. (Ex. 2:7-9)

The simplicity with which this is narrated conceals the astonishing nature of this encounter. First, how does a child – not just a child, but a member of a persecuted people – have the audacity to address a princess? There is no elaborate preamble, no "Your royal highness" or any other formality of the kind we are familiar with elsewhere in biblical narrative. They seem to speak as equals.

Equally pointed are the words left unsaid. "You know and I know," Moses' sister implies, "who this child is; it is my baby brother." She proposes a plan brilliant in its simplicity. If the real mother is able to keep the child in her home to nurse him, we both minimise the danger. You will not have to explain to the court how this child has suddenly appeared.

We will be spared the risk of bringing him up: we can say the child is not a Hebrew, and that the mother is not the mother but only a nurse. Miriam's ingenuity is matched by Pharaoh's daughter's instant agreement. She knows; she understands; she gives her consent.

Then comes the final surprise: When the child matured, [his mother] brought him to Pharaoh's daughter. She adopted him as her own son, and named him Moses. "I bore him from the water," she said. (Ex. 2:10)

Pharaoh's daughter did not simply have a moment's compassion. She has not forgotten the child. Nor has the passage of time diminished her sense of

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responsibility. Not only does she remain committed to his welfare; she adopts the riskiest of strategies. She will adopt him and bring him up as her own son.<sup>2</sup> This is courage of a high order.

Yet the single most surprising detail comes in the last sentence. In the Torah, it is parents who give a child its name, and in the case of a special individual, God Himself. It is God who gives the name Isaac to the first Jewish child; God's angel who gives Jacob the name Israel; God who changes the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah. We have already encountered one adoptive name – Tzafenat Pa'neah – the name by which Joseph was known in Egypt; yet Joseph remains Joseph. How surpassingly strange that the hero of the exodus, greatest of all the prophets, should bear not the name Amram and Yocheved have undoubtedly used thus far, but the one given to him by his adoptive mother, an Egyptian princess. A Midrash draws our attention to the fact: This is the reward for those who do kindness. Although Moses had many names, the only one by which he is known in the whole Torah is the one given to him by the daughter of Pharaoh. Even the Holy One, blessed be He, did not call him by any other name.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed Moshe – Meses – is an Egyptian name, meaning “child,” as in Ramses (which means child of Ra; Ra was the greatest of the Egyptian gods).

Who then was Pharaoh's daughter? Nowhere is she explicitly named. However the First Book of Chronicles (4:18) mentions a daughter of Pharaoh, named Bitya, and it was she the sages identified as the woman who saved Moses. The name Bitya (sometimes rendered as Batya) means “the daughter of God.” From this, the sages drew one of their most striking lessons: “The Holy One, blessed be He, said to her: ‘Moses was not your son, yet you called him your son. You are not My daughter, but I shall call you My daughter.’”<sup>4</sup> They added that she was one of the few people (tradition enumerates nine) who were so righteous that they

entered paradise in their lifetime.<sup>5</sup>

Instead of “Pharaoh's daughter” read “Hitler's daughter” or “Stalin's daughter” and we see what is at stake. Tyranny cannot destroy humanity. Moral courage can sometimes be found in the heart of darkness. That the Torah itself tells the story the way it does has enormous implications. It means that when it comes to people, we must never generalise, never stereotype. The Egyptians were not all evil: even from Pharaoh himself a heroine was born. Nothing could signal more powerfully that the Torah is not an ethnocentric text; that we must recognise virtue wherever we find it, even among our enemies; and that the basic core of human values – humanity, compassion, courage – is truly universal. Holiness may not be; goodness is.

Outside Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, is an avenue dedicated to righteous gentiles. Pharaoh's daughter is a supreme symbol of what they did and what they were. I, for one, am profoundly moved by that encounter on the banks of the Nile between an Egyptian princess and a young Israelite child, Moses' sister Miriam. The contrast between them – in terms of age, culture, status and power – could not be greater. Yet their deep humanity bridges all the differences, all the distance. Two heroines. May they inspire us. *Covenant and Conversation 5779 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2018 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org*

### RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

## Shabbat Shalom

**"B**lessed art Thou, Lord our God, and God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob..." (The Opening Blessing of the Amida) The opening of the Amida prayer stops with Jacob's name. But why should the patriarchal line be limited to three – why not four patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph? After all, Joseph's role in the Genesis narrative is unquestionably central to the entire book of Genesis. A case could be made for showing that he shares a similar fate to those of all three patriarchs. Like Abraham, he lives among idolaters and must maintain his faith and traditions within a hostile environment. Like Isaac, he suffers a personal akedah, about to be slain not by his father but by his brothers, saved not by a ram but by Midianite traders. And like Jacob, who set the foundation for the twelve tribes of Israel, Joseph provided Jacob's descendants with life and sustenance as the Grand Vizier of Egypt. Moreover, in resisting the seductive perfumes of his master Potiphar's wife, Joseph merits the unique accolade haTzadik (literally, 'the righteous one') appended to his

<sup>2</sup> On the adoption of a foundling in the ancient world, see Nahum Sarna, *Exploring Exodus* (New York: Schocken, 1986), 31–32

<sup>3</sup> Shemot Rabbah 1:26

<sup>4</sup> Vayikra Rabbah 1:3

<sup>5</sup> Derekh Eretz Zuta 1

name. As a result, he has come to represent for all of his descendants the mastery of the spiritual over the physical. If indeed Joseph is known to us forever as Joseph the Tzadik, and being that he is the son of Jacob, why is he not considered the fourth patriarch? After all, there are four parallel matriarchs!

To understand why, we must compare and contrast him not with the patriarchs who precede him, but with the personality who, from the moment of his appearance in the book of Exodus, stands at center stage for the rest of the Torah and all of subsequent Jewish religious history: Moshe Rabbenu, Moses our Teacher.

In many ways, Joseph and Moses are contrasting personalities, mirror images of each other, with Moses rectifying the problematic steps taken by Joseph. Joseph was born in Israel, but became professionally successful in Egypt; Moses was born in Egypt, but established his place in history by taking the Jews on their way to Israel. Joseph was the insider who chose to move outside (he dreamt of Egyptian agriculture, as well as the cosmic universe). Moses was the outsider (Prince of Egypt), who insisted on coming inside (by slaying the Egyptian taskmaster). Joseph brought his family to Egypt, Moses took his people out of Egypt. Moses saw Egypt as a foreign country, and names his son Gershom "for he said I have been a stranger in a strange land" (Ex. 2:22). Joseph has at best ambiguous feelings about his early years in Canaan, naming his firstborn in Egypt Manasseh "since God has made me [allowed me to] forget completely my hardship and my parental home" (Gen. 41:51). Joseph, through his economic policies, enslaves the Egyptian farmers to Pharaoh; Moses frees the Jews from their enslavement to Pharaoh. And Joseph's dreams are realized, whereas Moses' dream – the vision of Israel's redemption in Israel – remained tragically unfulfilled at the end of his life.

The truth is that for the majority of Joseph's professional life he functions as an Egyptian, the Grand Vizier of Egypt. He may have grown up in the old home of the patriarch Jacob, heir to the traditions of Abraham and Isaac, but from the practical point of view, his time and energies are devoted to putting Exxon, Xerox and MGM on the map. Ultimately his professional activities enable him to preserve his people, the children of Israel; but day to day, hour to hour, he is involved in strengthening and aggrandizing Egypt.

A good case could easily be made in praise of Joseph. He never loses sight of God or morality, despite the blandishments of Egyptian society. And God would even testify that He had a special task for Joseph, personally chosen to save the descendants of Jacob and the world from a relentless famine. Nevertheless, he must pay a price for being Grand Vizier of Egypt: The gold chain around his neck is Egyptian, his garments are Egyptian, his limousine is

Egyptian, and even his language is Egyptian. Indeed, when his brothers come to ask for bread, an interpreter's presence is required for the interviews because his very language of discourse is Egyptian, with his countrymen totally unaware of his knowledge of Hebrew!

The difference between Moses and Joseph takes on its sharpest hue when seen against the shadow of Pharaoh. Joseph's life work consists of glorifying and exalting Pharaoh, in effect bestowing upon the Egyptian King-God the blessings of a prosperous and powerful kingdom, whose subjects are enslaved to him; Moses flees Pharaoh's court with a traitorous act against him, ultimately humiliating and degrading him by unleashing the ten plagues.

A shepherd and the son of shepherds, Joseph becomes the first Jewish prince in history, while Moses, a genuine prince of Egypt, begins his mature years as a shepherd on the run, risking his life for his commitment to free the Israelites. Jealousy and destiny force Joseph to live out his life away from his brothers, estranging himself from them. But Moses, despite his foreign, Egyptian background, nevertheless cares for his Hebrew brothers and identifies with them. As the Torah most poignantly records: "And it happened in those days [after the baby Moses was taken to the home of Pharaoh's daughter] that Moses grew up and he went out to his brothers and he saw [attempting to alleviate] their sufferings." (Exodus 2:11)

Even though Joseph and Moses both change the world and preserve the Jewish people through the divine will that flows through them, their energies get channeled into different directions: Pharaoh and Egypt on the one hand, the Jewish people and Torah on the other.

This may be the significant factor in explaining why our sages stop short at calling Joseph a patriarch. He may be a tzadik, two of his sons may become the heads of tribes, and he may even deserve burial in Israel; but ultimately a hero who spends so much of his energies on behalf of Egypt cannot be called a patriarch of the Jewish nation.

It is recorded that the first chief rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, was tended to in his final years by an internationally known physician. His last words to the doctor were: "I yearn for the day when Jews who are great will also be great Jews." It was Moses who was undoubtedly the greatest Jew who ever lived. ©2018 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

#### RABBI BEREL WEIN

### Wein Online

**T**his week's portion records for us the beginning of the career of the great teacher of Israel, and in fact of all of civilization, Moshe. We are told of his miraculous salvation as a child from the River Nile and of the fact that he was raised by the daughter of the

pharaoh in luxury and security. However, when he reaches an age of maturity, he realizes that the Egyptians are enslaving the Hebrews, and his sense of justice overwhelms him. When he sees an Egyptian taskmaster unmercifully beating a Jewish slave, he kills the Egyptian.

The next day however, when he sees that Jews are beating Jews themselves, he becomes rapidly disillusioned. And he's forced to flee because the Egyptian authorities are looking to arrest him and kill him for murdering the Egyptian taskmaster. He disappears from our radar screen for decades and becomes a shepherd for the high priest of Midian. When he reemerges in our story, he is called to his great mission by the Angel of God and is entrusted with the task of taking the Jewish people out of bondage and in fact of elevating them into being a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, a special group of people that would influence all of civilization from that moment onwards. If we think about this, it is a very unlikely story.

Why would God choose someone with as checkered a past as Moshe to be the leader of the Jewish people when his brother Aaron, whose background was spotless and holy and who stayed with the Jewish people for the entire time that Moshe was gone, apparently is overlooked? And why would God choose the Jewish people if they were guilty of murderous faults and, according to the opinion of the rabbis, were even pagans during that period?

It's a question that the Moshe himself asked of God. "Who am I, that you should send me?" And then he asked, "And who are they," meaning the Jewish people, "who are worthy of being saved?" The Lord did not answer him. The Lord speaks in mystery. The Lord says, "I am who I am. I will be who I will be. Just do what I say, and go forth with the mission, and don't try to fathom me. Don't try to know my name. Don't try to understand me. Your job is to obey me."

This becomes the matrix and pattern for Jewish life, in fact, for all civilized human beings throughout their history. Unlikely things always happen. Things never happen the way we think they should happen. The people who lead us are not always the people who we think we should lead us. And the events that occur are sometimes so unlikely that we cannot fathom as to why they happened and what we should do with them, yet it is the will of the Lord that pervades all human history. Human beings have freedom of choice; they can do whatever they want. However, there is a broad parameter that surrounds all human history, and that is the guiding force of Heaven that dictates events.

The rabbis and the Talmud succinctly put it in a metaphor. They say that human beings are like fish that are caught in the great net. I remember that once I saw how tuna fish were being captured by the fleets off the California coast. There is a net that is spread mechanically for miles, and in that net are thousands of

fish. They are all swimming around, unaware that they're in a net. Only when the net is full, and the boats draw the net up to the decks of ships, do the fish realize that they are truly in the net.

Similarly, with human beings and with human events and, if I may add, especially in Jewish history and with Jewish events. It is very strange as to who leaders become and how events evolve. When we look at the whole pattern, we realize that it is only the story of the fish that are trapped in this great wide net, which heaven has set for us, which becomes the story of the Jewish people.

I think that this narrative that we read in this week's portion is a great example of this for it sets the scene for everything else that will occur in Jewish life throughout the centuries. It is the lesson that Moshe himself learns and attempts to communicate to us through his immortal words and through the events that he himself will experience and that will guide the Jewish people throughout their existence. ©2018 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

**RABBI AVI WEISS**

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**A**fter being raised in the Egyptian palace, Moshe (Moses) goes into the field and sees an Egyptian smiting a Jew. In the words of the Torah, "He looked this way and that way, and when he saw there was no man (ish) he smote the Egyptian." (Exodus 2:12)

Taken literally, it seems that Moshe looked to see if anyone was watching. With the coast clear, Moshe defends the Jew. But this interpretation is difficult because in the midst of a busy working field, it's doubtful that no one was there.

The Netziv (Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, 18th Century in his Ha'amek Davar) reads it differently. In his view, Moshe, seeing a Jew beaten, looked to see if any Egyptian would stand up for him. Moshe looks this way and that way, but sees no one who seems to care. In the absence of Egyptian or worldly justice, Moshe acted. Things are not so different today. All too frequently, the world is silent as Jews are attacked.

Ha-ketav Ve-ha-kabalah (Rav Ya'akov Zvi Mecklenberg, 19th century) has another take. Moshe knew that no Egyptian would come forward. He looked, however, to see whether any Jew would care enough to save his own brother. When no Jew did, Moshe killed the Egyptian. Once again, this dynamic plays out today. Tragically, too often, Jews don't respond to the suffering of their fellow Jews.

There is another way to look at it. Moshe was raised in an Egyptian home, but nursed by his

biological Jewish mother. As a consequence, Moshe was always unsure who he really was. When seeing an Egyptian smiting a Jew, he looked within himself to ascertain whether he should help the Egyptian or defend the Jew? The meaning of, "he looked this way and that way," is that he looked within himself to see who he really was, Egyptian or Jewish.

When he fully grasps that he had not firmly established his identity, he makes a decision—he smites the Egyptian, symbolically eliminating a part of himself declaring unequivocally that he was a Jew.

The Talmud tells of an aging man who in a polygamous society decides to marry a second younger wife. Both wives vie for his affection. "You're graying," said his wife of many years. "Why not age maturely?" As she speaks, she plucks his black hair and says, "Look in the mirror and you'll see you're all gray." The younger wife, not to be denied, declares, "You're old in age but young in vigor." As she speaks she plucks out his gray hair, and tells him, "Look into the mirror and you'll see your hair is all black." In the end, looking into the mirror, the man finds himself absolutely bald.

At a certain point it's crucial for each of us to stop wavering and to stand up and identify ourselves boldly and clearly. When we find ourselves in a place where there is no person (ish) as so many of us often do it's crucial that each of us step in as Moshe did to make the difference. To paraphrase our rabbis, in a place where there is no ish, struggle to be one. (Ethics 2:6) © 2018 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

## ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

### Suspicion

*Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

**"A** person who suspects an innocent man, will be punished physically ("Hachoshed b'chsherim lokeh begufo"). This is one of the themes in this week's portion as Moshe loses faith in the Jewish people when he says "V'hem lo yaaminu li" (and they will not believe me). This would seem to be a good reason not to suspect another Jew of committing a sin. However two stories are told of Rabbi Yehoshua, which seem to indicate that he didn't care if people suspected him, nor whether he suspected others of wrong doing.

One story is found in tractate Derech Eretz. Rabbi Yehoshuah welcomed a guest to his home and gave him a place to sleep in the loft. Before retiring Rabbi Yehoshua removed the ladder which was used to gain access to the loft. In the middle of the night this guest gathered all of Rabbi Yehoshua's utensils and attempted to leave the house with them. In the morning the man was found at the bottom of the loft with a

broken neck. Rabbi Yehoshua concluded "All people should be looked upon as robbers".

The question that is obvious is how could Rabbi Yehoshua suspect this person when we know that one is not permitted to suspect another person?

Various answers are offered. Some say that this law (not to suspect another person) only applies to someone you know, such as Moshe in relation to Israel or the Elders of the Sanhedrin in relation to the High Priest. Those regarding whom you do not know, one may suspect.

A second answer offered is that in the case of Rabbi Yehoshua the guest had already been suspected of wrongdoing and thus Rabbi Yehoshua had a right to suspect him.

A second story is found in Tractate Shabbat (127;2). One time Rabbi Yehoshua had to speak to a Roman noblewoman. He went with his students but before he entered the closed room with this woman he took off his Tefillin. When he completed his meeting he asked his students if they suspected him of wrongdoing. They responded that they judged him favorably as there could easily be a valid explanation. How did Rabbi Yehoshua place himself in a position that his students would be tempted to judge him unfavorably?

Perhaps we can answer that Rabbi Yehoshua knew his students well and he also knew the kind of education that they received from him and was confident that they would not judge him unfairly. © 2016 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

## RABBI DAVID S. LEVIN

### Moshe's Flaw

**O**ne of the most controversial stories of the Torah is found in this week's parasha. The Torah tells us, "And it was in those days that Moshe grew up and he went out to echav, his brothers, and he looked on their burdens and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Jewish man mei'echav, from his brothers. And he turned this way and that and he saw that there was no man, and he struck the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." These two sentences define Moshe and indicate his worthiness to become the leader of the B'nei Yisrael. Yet at the same time these two sentences inform us of a grave sin committed by Moshe which was eventually punished by excluding him from entering the Land of Yisrael.

The word echav, his brothers, occurs twice in that pasuk. Most of the commentators understand both times to mean the B'nei Yisrael. The ibn Ezra, however, describes a transformation happening within Moshe. Ibn Ezra tells us that Moshe went out to see his brothers, the Egyptians, for he grew up in the palace of the King and believed himself to be an Egyptian. The problem with the ibn Ezra stems from two things: (1) the Midrash tells us that the daughter of

Par'oh informed Moshe of his heritage, and (2) the next words of the pasuk tell us "he looked on their burdens," which clearly means slaves. The ibn Ezra attributes only the second echav to his Jewish brothers, which now shows Moshe's transformation.

In the Pirkei d'Rebi Eliezer we find that mei'echav was used to indicate that the person being beaten was from Moshe's own tribe, the Levi'im. HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin disagreed with this interpretation since it would be unlikely that Moshe would have acted only because the person was from the Levi'im and besides, they were not subjugated to work as slaves, as they were the priests. Sorotzkin suggested instead that the man was standing among his fellow Jews and was pulled out to be beaten, mei'echav. Moshe saw that none of this man's fellow Jews were willing to defend him because they were afraid. Moshe also understood that this Egyptian knew who Moshe was and knew that Moshe was a Jew who had been raised in the palace. In spite of this, he continued to beat the Jew. This placed Moshe in a serious predicament.

Rashi tells us that this guard had entered the Jew's home and was raping his wife. When he noticed the Jew had returned and was disturbed by what he saw, he dragged the Jew outside and began beating him. Moshe saw what took place inside (this way) and what took place outside (and that) and decided to punish this Egyptian for both sins. Others understand that Moshe looked around to see if there were any observers to his actions. HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch credits Moshe that he did not jump impetuously to the aid of an innocent person but thought through the matter and realized that his life would be in danger should he be discovered. Still, he acted. Sorotzkin says that Moshe was concerned that witnesses should learn of this murder and see this as a rebellion against their King.

There is no question that the Egyptian deserved to die, but was it right for Moshe to carry out this punishment without bringing this man before a court? The Midrash says that even when the brothers sought to kill Yosef because of his dreams, they brought charges before a court. The Torah tells us, "and he saw that there was no one." According to Hirsch, "A man who first 'looks all around to make sure there are no witnesses', to such a man it would not occur in a dream to become the savior and leader of his people." Rashi also does not like the idea of Moshe being careful that there are no witnesses. Instead he brings a Midrash that says that Moshe looked into the man's future to determine if there would be "an important, worthy man" that would be a descendant of this Egyptian, and only when finding none, did he proceed to kill him.

According to Rav Sorotzkin, if we wish to accept Rashi's explanation, why do we not find this

same process used by Yehudah when he suspected Tamar of adultery? Surely he would have discovered that King David and Moshiach would come from her. In Gemara Sanhedrin we discover that the Mitzri should not have been punished by Moshe but would have suffered death at the hands of Heaven. The Rambam is so concerned by Moshe's actions that he posits that Moshe did not act alone but consulted the angels. Rav Sorotzkin quotes the Ari who says that Moshe was punished with exile because of this sin. Rav Sorotzkin asks why Moshe would go forward with this behavior. He answers using Rashi's original Midrash. This Mitzri not only raped a married woman but was beating her husband when he objected. And this Mitzri did more; he encouraged his friends, the other guards, to join him in his activities. Moshe knew that one of the four things that would enable the Jews to be taken out of Egypt was the purity that was maintained by the Jewish women. Moshe saw in this moment that this Mitzri threatened the entire Jewish nation with eternal slavery. It was that understanding that spurred his actions.

As we examine Moshe's actions, we can see the character of Moshe being formed. Moshe is quick to judge and quick to decide. He is clear in his thinking and he is able to analyze people's actions to determine their motives. He will later view Dan and Aviram fighting and immediately know which is the aggressor. He sees the daughters of Yitro at the well and instantly understands that they are the righteous party in their dispute. He will listen to hundreds of court cases a day and still be able to judge quickly and fairly. In Hirsch's words, "he has a deep feeling of duty which makes him jump to the aid of any innocent person whom he sees mishandled." Yet with all of these positive qualities, Moshe is still human and subject to flaws. The Torah does not try to justify Moshe's sin nor does it hide this sin from us. Yet Moshe is still Moshe Rabbeinu, Moshe our teacher and our leader. We must emulate Moshe's greatness while at the same time understand and learn from this flaw. We are all capable of greatness even though we are all plagued by human frailty. May we learn to recognize our own frailties as well as our own greatness. © 2018 Rabbi D.S. Levin

#### SHLOMO KATZ

### Hama'ayan

**M**idrash Rabbah teaches that one of the merits that enabled Bnei Yisrael to be redeemed from Egypt was that they did not reveal each other's secrets. How do we know that they did not? Because Moshe Rabbeinu told them (in our Parashah -- 3:22): "Each woman shall request from her neighbor and from the one who lives in her house silver vessels, golden vessels, and garments; and you shall put them on your sons and daughters, and you shall empty out Egypt." Although they were told this a full year before the actual Exodus, no one forewarned the Egyptians about it.



R' Chaim Zaichyk z"l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buchach, Poland; later in Israel) asks: What's the big deal; is it so hard to keep a secret? And he answers: Yes, it is. Indeed, the only reason there are explorers and dare-devils in the world, R' Zaichyk writes, is because they want to have adventures that they can tell others about. As R' Yehuda Heller Kahana z"l (1743-1819; rabbi of Sighet, Hungary) writes: If a person were offered a chance to travel to outer space, he would have no pleasure from his journey until he could return and shared his experiences with someone else.

R' Zaichyk continues: The Sages during and after the Second Bet Hamikdash criticized the Avtinas family for not sharing the formula of the Ketoret / incense. One day, however, they gave the formula to the sage Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri. When he told Rabbi Akiva, the latter cried and declared, "Now we may no longer criticize them!" Why was Rabbi Akiva so moved, asks R' Zaichyk? He explains: At first the Sages thought that the Avtinas family was concealing the Ketoret recipe for its own glory. However, once they shared it with Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri, Rabbi Akiva realized that they wanted to share the recipe and were just waiting for the right person and the right time and place. To keep a secret that you want to share until the time is ripe is an act of extreme self control, and is praiseworthy. (Haggadah Shel Pesach R' Chaim Zaichyk zt"l p.120)



"They embittered their lives with hard work, with mortar and with bricks, and with every labor of the field." (1:14) R' Shlomo Zarka z"l (Algeria; died 1876) and R' Yehuda Chermon z"l (Algeria; 1812-1911) ask: Why does the verse begin with construction work ("with mortar and with bricks") and then switch to farm work ("every labor of the field")?

They explain: As we read later in the Parashah, Bnei Yisrael had a quota of bricks they had to produce each day. If they finished early, they could go home for the day. However, on their way home, Egyptians would grab them and force them to do farm work and perform other tasks, i.e., "every labor of the field." (Haggadah Shel Pesach Rinah V'yeshuah p.102)



"It happened in those days that Moshe grew up and went out to his brethren and observed their burdens." (2:11) Midrash Rabbah teaches: Moshe saw that weak people were forced to carry large burdens, and strong people were required to carry small burdens; women were forced to carry burdens appropriate for men, and men were forced to carry burdens appropriate for women. [Until here from the Midrash]

R' Klonimus Kalmish Shapira z"l Hy"d (Chassidic Rebbe of Piasetzno, Poland; killed in the

Holocaust in 1943) asks: It is understandable that the Midrash relates that weak people were forced to carry large burdens. But, why would the Midrash view it as oppression that strong people were required to carry small burdens?

He explains: The difficulty of any task depends on the nature of the one doing it. A burly construction worker can carry heavy cinder blocks all day long, but force him to perform a more delicate task and it will pain him. Force a scholar to carry even a light burden, and he will suffer; likewise, if a farm worker were impressed into kitchen duty, it would be an unbearable chore. This was the Egyptians' plan: to oppress Bnei Yisrael by forcing every man and woman to do work that was not suitable for his or her nature.

R' Shapira adds: The same thing is true in the spiritual realm -- ask someone to do something that it is not in his nature, and it will be unpleasant. Thus, a person who is focused on Olam Ha'zeh / the material world will not object to performing the most difficult work or studying the most complex science, but he will assert that Torah study is too difficult or boring. On the other hand, a Ben Olam Ha'ba / a person whose life is focused on spiritual growth will have exactly the opposite reaction. Indeed, a person can use this as a litmus test to determine which world -- Olam Ha'zeh or Olam Ha'ba -- he belongs to. (Chovat Ha'talmidim ch.12)



"Moshe was shepherding the sheep of Yitro, his father-in-law..." (3:1) A Midrash comments on the verse (Tehilim 11:5), "Hashem will test a Tzaddik" -- Hashem tested Moshe and David as shepherds. [Until here from the Midrash]

R' Aharon Kotler z"l (1891-1962; Rosh Yeshiva in Kletsk, Poland, and Lakewood, N.J.) asks: What does being a shepherd have to do with leading the Jewish People? He answers: A person who is organized, diligent, and caring about small things -- for example, sheep -- will be organized, diligent, and caring about big things too -- i.e., the whole nation. One who is callous or lax about small things will behave so about big things also. (Mishnat Rabbi Aharon Vol. I, p.116)



"An angel of Elokim appeared to him in a blaze of fire from amid the bush. He saw, and behold! The bush was burning in the fire but the bush was not consumed." (3:2) R' Yaakov bar Abba Mari Antoli z"l (France and Italy; died 1256) writes: Among other lessons, this vision was meant to teach Moshe at the outset of his career that Hashem, Who is very lofty, rests His Shechinah even on a nation that is at its lowest point, just as He appeared from within a lowly shrub. And, Hashem appeared from inside a bush that was burning but was not consumed to teach that such is the destiny of the Jewish People in exile: to be

oppressed, but never to be destroyed. (Malmad Ha'Talmidim: Parashat Tzav p.95a)



"Moshe said to the Elokim, 'Behold, when I come to Bnei Yisrael and say to them, "The Elokim of your forefathers has sent me to you," and they say to me, "What is His Name?" -- what shall I say to them?' Elokim answered Moshe, 'I Shall Be As I Shall Be.'" (3:13) R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (Rambam; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) asks: Why did Moshe expect Bnei Yisrael to ask him at this stage what G-d's Name is? Moreover, what good was the answer Moshe was given? If Bnei Yisrael already knew the Divine Name "I Shall Be As I Shall Be," they would assume Moshe learned it the same way they had learned it; thus, his mentioning it now would not prove that Hashem had spoken to him! On the other hand, if Bnei Yisrael did not know this Divine Name, then what value was there in citing it?

Rambam explains: In Moshe's time, nearly all people attributed Divine power to heavenly bodies, spirits, and angels. And, while there were people who claimed that those entities had spoken to them, no one before Moshe Rabbeinu's time had claimed that G-d Himself appeared to him with a message for mankind. Even Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov never claimed that Hashem had told them, "Tell mankind, 'Do this!' or 'Don't do that!'" The Patriarchs' prophecies were for their private use, and Moshe was the first to claim he was a messenger from G-d to other people.

Given this environment in which Bnei Yisrael had been raised, continues Rambam, Moshe expected that Bnei Yisrael would respond to his message, "How can we be sure that the G-d for Whom you are speaking even exists?" Moshe also expected that they would say, "Prove that, if He exists, G-d gives prophets messages, as you are claiming He gave you."

In response to Moshe's first concern, Hashem told him to say, "I Shall Be As I Shall Be." This Divine Name indicates that there is no way to describe Hashem other than to say, "He is what He is." He cannot be defined because He is not of this world, in contrast to the heavenly bodies, spirits, and angels that were worshiped in those days, all of which are part of this world. Also, He is eternal, unlike those other entities which are not eternal. Hashem added (verses 16, 18), "Go and gather the elders of Yisrael... They will heed your voice."

As for Moshe's second concern, convincing the masses of Bnei Yisrael that Hashem had sent him -- for

that Hashem gave Moshe the various signs (such as turning the staff into a serpent). (Moreh Nevochim, Part I ch.63) ©2018 S. Katz & torah.org

**RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ**

## Shabbat Shalom Weekly

**T**he Torah states regarding Moses: "And the lad grew up. And she (Miriam) brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh and he was to her as a son. And she called his name Moshe... because he was drawn from the water" (Exodus 2:10).

Why was it necessary for Moses to grow up in Pharaoh's court?

The Ibn Ezra states that it is possible the Almighty had Moshe raised in the palace of the king in order for him to experience a royal behavior. He would see it firsthand and get into the habit of acting in this manner. We see how this training helped Moshe develop into a dynamic personality. He killed an Egyptian in order to defend a person who the Egyptian was attacking. He rescued the maidens in Midian and enabled them to water their flocks.

Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz commented on this that we see here a powerful lesson on the importance of learning and habit in the development of a person and in preparing him for greatness. Even someone with the inherent greatness of Moshe needed a total environmental learning experience of royalty to integrate the personality necessary to be a great leader. The attribute of dynamic leadership is not easy to acquire. One needs much effort and many learning experiences to obtain this attribute.

One's self-image is a key factor in one's behavior. Moshe's self-image was of a prince growing up in the palace of an absolute monarch. This allowed him to take any action necessary to do what was right.

The most precious gift you can bestow upon any child is a positive self-image. Constant criticism and fault-finding knocks away at one's self-esteem. A child growing up with inferiority feelings is handicapped. This will limit him in many ways. The key focus of anyone dealing with children must be, "How can I elevate this child's self-image?" *Dvar Torah from Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2015 Rabbi K. Packouz & aish.com*




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