Summary

With the death of Yosef, the era of the Avos and the Book of Bereishis (Genesis) come to an end. The Book of Shmos (Exodus) now chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week’s Parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews in Egypt, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate continues to increase, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all baby boys. Yochved gives birth to Moshe and places him in a basket in the Nile before anyone can kill him. Pharaoh’s daughter finds and adopts the baby even though she realizes he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe’s older sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe. She arranges for his mother Yocheved to be his nursemaid and help raise him. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, and Moshe kills the Egyptian. When Moshe realizes his life is in danger, he flees to Midian where he rescues Tzipporah, whose father Yisro approves their subsequent marriage. In Chorev, Moshe witnesses the “burning bush” where Hashem commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael, which Hashem has promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People in Egypt will doubt him being Hashem’s agent, and so Hashem helps Moshe perform three miraculous transformations to validate him in the eyes of the people: Changing his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe realizes the Egyptian is in danger, he flees to Midian where he rescues Tzipporah, whose father Yisro approves their subsequent marriage. In Chorev, Moshe witnesses the “burning bush” where Hashem commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael, which Hashem has promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People in Egypt will doubt him being Hashem’s agent, and so Hashem helps Moshe perform three miraculous transformations to validate him in the eyes of the people: Changing his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe realizes the Egyptian is in danger, he flees to Midian where he rescues Tzipporah, whose father Yisro approves their subsequent marriage. In Chorev, Moshe witnesses the “burning bush” where Hashem commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael, which Hashem has promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People in Egypt will doubt him being Hashem’s agent, and so Hashem helps Moshe perform three miraculous transformations to validate him in the eyes of the people: Changing his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood.
(continued from the other side)

“I will be that Which I will be.” - My essence is the fact that I exist, I have always existed and I will always exist. That is My essence. That is My Name. That’s what ‘not changing their names’ means: The Children of Israel didn’t change their essence. They didn’t lose their identity. Even in the depths of exile they never stopped feeling that their essence - their total gestalt was Jewish. Right at the beginning of the Book of Shmos the Torah tells us “These are the names of the Children of Israel...” - With these names they came and with these names they left - their essence and their identity unaltered in any way.

(Based on L’Torah U’moadim by Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin)

Haftorah: Yishayahu 27:6-8:13, 29:22-23

THE REVOLUTION THAT WENT WRONG

“To whom shall one teach knowledge, who can be made to understand a message. Those weaned from (mother’s) milk, removed from the breasts!” (28:10)

Since the time of the Industrial Revolution we have witnessed an ever-accelerating development of science and technology. As the Holy Zohar predicted, from the year 5600 the gates of wisdom were opened. If the Jewish People had been worthy, this tremendous outpouring of knowledge would have found its proper home in the wisdom of Torah and holiness. Now, since we were not worthy, this diffusion of higher energy has found its way to the superficial wisdoms and precipitated the invention of weapons of mass destruction to humanity’s profound loss.

From the day that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, ‘prophecy was given to fools and infants.’ Meaning, that when Yisrael dwelled in the Holy Land, celestial energy, both spiritual and material, descended to its correct landing place. However, since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, this spiritual radiance has gone astray - descending on desolate lands and unsuitable people - “fools and infants.” This is what the prophet means when he asks whether “those weaned from (mother’s) milk” can be “made to understand a message.”

(Adapted from Ahavas Yonason and Rabbi Bunem M’Pschisch)

Baruch Kel Elyon - ick l’k t’ wrc

“...And He shall seek out Zion the outcast city.”

The reason given by our Sages for a number of religious practices in our post-Temple times iszecher l’Mikdash - a desire to remember how things were done when we had a Beis Mikdash in Zion. The importance of recalling Zion in its spiritual glory is found in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah (30:17) who bemoans Jerusalem - Zion - as an “outcast city” because no one cares enough to seek her. In this song we turn to ‘Kel Elyon’ - the Most Exalted G-d - and confess that all our efforts to seek out Zion are only symbolic and that it is He alone who can effectively “seek out Zion” and end its isolation as “the outcast city.”

Parshas Shmos For the week ending 21 Teves 5756, 12 & 13 January 1996

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