

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT SHEMOT · 21 TEVET 5776 - JAN. 2, 2016 · VOL. 23 NO. 13

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE

*"And there arose a new king over Egypt" (1:8)*

**R**abbi Leib Chasman was the *mashgiach* (spiritual mentor) of the Chevron Yeshiva in the 1930s. The Yeshiva was faced with a certain problem and it was decided that the issue should be decided in a general meeting of all the rabbis. One of the speakers, a venerable man in his late eighties, rose to the podium. His advanced years and fragility necessitated the help of two of the younger rabbis. Finally, he cleared his throat and began to speak. "My esteemed and honored colleagues — hear my words! My body is weak and old. The natural desires of youth no longer affect my judgment. Nothing clouds my judgment any longer. All life's temptations have no taste for me anymore. Hear my words and be guided by me!" Rabbi Chasman jumped to his feet and pounded the table. "Not true. All desires may wane with age except one, and that gets stronger and stronger — the attraction to status and honor."

Our internal negative impulse is an opportunist. It's always looking for an opening. When one door closes on it,

it pushes even harder to get in the other.

*"And there arose a new king over Egypt"*

The people of Egypt came to Pharaoh after Yosef's death to organize themselves against the Jews. Pharaoh wouldn't hear of it. "We only live because of them. How can we turn on them?" Their reaction was to depose Pharaoh. He became a mere commoner, no longer enjoying the position of king and the honor that goes with it. After cooling his heels for three months, he suddenly saw the light, did a 180 about-face, and embraced the will of the people. Thus the Torah writes, *"And there arose"* meaning that the former Pharaoh "arose" from his deposed position.

Such is the power of status. Our deepest convictions can be held to ransom by an offer we can't refuse.

• Sources:

*Da'at Zekeinim miba'alei Hatosefot;*  
Rabbi Mordechai Perlmán

## PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

*"Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land — may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon."*

## GITTIN 23 - 29

*Everyone is acceptable as an agent to deliver a get except for... and a blind person”*

This teaching in the *mishna* is qualified by Rav Yosef in the *gemara* to refer to a get brought from outside of Israel. Since an agent who brings a woman a get from outside of Israel must say that the get was written and signed in front of him specifically for her, as our Sages decreed, a blind person is not qualified since he cannot testify to that which he could not see.

However, earlier in the *masechta* (6a) the *gemara* stated that it is sufficient if the agent even only hears the sound of the pen write the get for her. Tosefot there writes that this “hearing” does not qualify a blind person, as we learn in our *mishna*, but does not explain the reason. One reason offered is that since a blind agent cannot see, he cannot be certain that the get he heard written for her is the same get that he is actually delivering to her, and cannot definitely testify that it was written and signed in front of him for her. (Rabbeinu Asher)

• Gittin 23a

*Rava said, “That he died, we are not worried; that he will die, we are worried.”*

With these words Rava resolves an apparent contradiction posed in the *gemara* between a statement in the *mishna* and a teaching in a *beraita*.

The *mishna* states that if a *kohen* travels overseas, his wife may continue to eat terumah since we assume he is alive until known otherwise. A *beraita*, however, teaches that if a *kohen* gives his wife a get, stipulating that it will take effect right before he dies, she is forbidden to eat terumah immediately. Why don't we allow her to eat terumah in this case as well, based on the assumption that he will continue to remain alive right after she eats, just like we assume he continues to be alive in the case in the *mishna* in which he travels abroad?

To answer this question Rava says the above distinction, “That he *died*, we are not worried; that he *will die*, we are worried.” What is the difference?

The distinction that Rava makes is based on the fact that his “*chezkat chai*” only tells us what to assume about his *present status*. Therefore, when her husband is away we assume he is still alive at the “present” time and she may eat terumah. However, his “*chezkat chai*” does not apply to his *future status*, which is what we are concerned about in the case in which he gave her the conditional get. Since the *chazaka* does not tell anything about his *future status*, we cannot assume he will continue to be alive right after she eats the terumah. Therefore, we are worried he will die at any moment, making her a divorcee a moment earlier, and it will turn out that she wrongly ate the terumah at a time when she was no longer married to the *kohen*.

• Gittin 28 a-b

## LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

## DRAINAGE IN ANCIENT JERUSALEM

In his “The War of the Jews”, historian Josephus Flavius writes that numerous people in Jerusalem fled from the invading Roman legions into the subterranean drainage channel which served the city.

An archaeological excavation has uncovered this channel in the City of David. Its walls reach a height of three meters in some places, an indication that those



who fled to this sewer were able to actually live there until they could escape from the city through its southern end.

What particularly impressed the channel's discoverers was the planning on a grand scale which the city's rulers did in order to develop a system that drained the rainfall and prevented flooding.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why does the verse say “And Yosef was in Egypt”?
2. “...And they will go up out of the land.” Who said this and what did he mean?
3. Why did Pharaoh specifically choose water as the means of killing the Jewish boys? (Two reasons.)
4. “She saw that he was good.” What did she see “good” about Moshe that was unique?
5. Which Hebrew men were fighting each other?
6. Moshe was afraid that the Jewish People were not fit to be redeemed because some among them committed a certain sin. What sin?
7. Why did the Midianites drive Yitro’s daughters away from the well?
8. How did Yitro know that Moshe was Yaakov’s descendant?
9. What lesson was Moshe to learn from the fact that the burning bush was not consumed?
10. What merit did the Jewish People have that warranted G-d’s promise to redeem them?
11. Which expression of redemption would assure the people that Moshe was the true redeemer?
12. What did the staff turning into a snake symbolize?
13. Why didn’t Moshe want to be the leader?
14. “And G-d was angry with Moshe...” What did Moshe lose as a result of this anger?
15. What was special about Moshe’s donkey?
16. About which plague was Pharaoh warned first?
17. Why didn’t the elders accompany Moshe and Aharon to Pharaoh? How were they punished?
18. Which tribe did not work as slaves?
19. Who were the: a) *nogsim* b) *shotrim*?
20. How were the *shotrim* rewarded for accepting the beatings on behalf of their fellow Jews?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 1:5 - This verse adds that, despite being in Egypt as a ruler, Yosef maintained his righteousness.
2. 1:10 - Pharaoh said it, meaning that the Egyptians would be forced to leave Egypt.
3. 1:10,22 - He hoped to escape Divine retribution, as G-d promised never to flood the entire world. Also, his astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer’s downfall would be through water.
4. 2:2 - When he was born, the house was filled with light.
5. 2:13 - Datan and Aviram.
6. 2:14 - *Lashon hara* (evil speech).
7. 2:17 - Because a ban had been placed on Yitro for abandoning idol worship.
8. 2:20 - The well water rose towards Moshe.
9. 3:12 - Just as the bush was not consumed, so too Moshe would be protected by G-d.
10. 3:12 - That they were destined to receive the Torah.
11. 3:16,18 - “I surely remembered (*pakod pakadeti*).”
12. 4:3 - It symbolized that Moshe spoke ill of the Jews by saying that they wouldn’t listen to him, just as the original snake sinned through speech.
13. 4:10 - He didn’t want to take a position above that of his older brother Aharon.
14. 4:14 - Moshe lost the privilege of being a *kohen*.
15. 4:20 - It was used by Avraham for *akeidat Yitzchak* and will be used in the future by *mashiach*.
16. 4:23 - Death of the firstborn.
17. 5:1 - The elders were accompanying Moshe and Aharon, but they were afraid and one by one they slipped away. Hence, at the giving of the Torah, the elders weren’t allowed to ascend with Moshe.
18. 5:5 - The tribe of Levi.
19. 5:6 - a) Egyptian taskmasters; b) Jewish officers.
20. 5:14 - They were chosen to be on the Sanhedrin.

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# Abarbanel

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## ON THE PARSHA

BY RABBI PINCHAS KASNETT

### Shemot

#### Pharaoh's Daughter Hides Moshe's Identity

**T**he narrative that describes the infant Moshe's rescue by the daughter of Pharaoh and his being raised by her in the palace of Pharaoh presents numerous difficulties. Firstly, how could Pharaoh's daughter even think of raising this child under the very noses of Pharaoh and his advisors? Wouldn't they be suspicious of a Hebrew in the very palace of the king, especially since they might very well have been aware of the prophecy that the eventual savior of the Hebrews was born at that time? It is likely that they would think to themselves, "How can we allow this Hebrew child to grow up being exposed to and ultimately learning all the strategies and tactics of the ruler and his advisors?" Secondly, the verse (Shemot 4:11) tells us that, "It happened in those days that Moshe grew up and went out to his brethren and observed their burdens..." How did Moshe know that he was a Hebrew himself, that they were his brethren? Ordinary Egyptians avoided any contact with these lowly Hebrews. Certainly a prince raised in the palace of the king would have had nothing to do with them.

Abarbanel answers the first question by carefully analyzing the scenario of Moshe's rescue by Pharaoh's daughter. Because of her concern for modesty she was looking for a

very private place to bathe, far from any populated areas. The verse tells us that she went down to bathe *by* the river, and her maidens walked *along* the river. Either they were just out for a stroll or perhaps they were on guard to make sure that nobody saw their mistress while she was bathing. In either case they were not in the immediate vicinity of Pharaoh's daughter. We are then told that when she saw the basket in the reeds, she sent her maidservant and she took it. We can learn two things from this. First of all, the Hebrew word that is used for maidservant is not the same as the one used previously for her maidens. This woman had a unique position as her mistress's trusted main attendant, and she was the only other individual to witness what had happened. As a result, Pharaoh's daughter was able to keep Moshe's true identity totally secret during all the years that she was raising him in Pharaoh's palace.

In terms of the second question, Abarbanel answers simply that Moshe was never disconnected entirely from his mother Yocheved. Even though Pharaoh's daughter had raised him like a son, Yocheved had a hand in raising him as well, and his soul, his very essence, was connected to her. He knew the truth about his origins and it was perfectly natural that he should relate to the other Hebrews as his brethren. As a result, it made perfect sense for him to show his concern for their plight.

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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**W**ith the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shemot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother Yocheved to fulfill that role. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mt. Sinai) Moshe wit-

nesses the burning bush where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the people's eyes: transforming his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker, G-d tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

## BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

**From: Harrison**

*Dear Rabbi,  
My wife and I are not observant but we are traditional Jewish. We have been married several years and never intended to have children — we both consider it too much of a burden. Lately we have encountered a lot of criticism for this from a Jewish point of view. We've agreed to hear various opinions on the matter. May I ask what yours would be? Thanks.*

Dear Harrison,

In addressing your question to an Orthodox rabbi you clearly understand that my position will be the position of the Torah, namely that it is a mitzvah to be fruitful and multiply.

Barring serious health concerns or other extreme exceptions, the anticipation of children being a burden is no justification for not raising a family, and the fact that this mitzvah is the first commandment of the Torah stresses the personal responsibility one has to perpetuate humanity in general, and the Jewish People in particular.

The Talmud (Berachot 10a) elaborates on an incident in Tanach where G-d sends the prophet Isaiah to the righteous king Hezekiah with the message, "You're going to die and you're not going to live". Alarmed, the king asks for an explanation, also questioning the redundancy of dying and not living.

The prophet responded that the decree had been issued by G-d since the king refused to get married and have children, for which he was to be punished by dying in this world and being barred from life in the World-to-Come.

Even though the king's reasoning was sound, for he saw through Divine inspiration that his children would be

wicked, and as sons of the king they would one day rule Israel and could thereby cause great harm to the Jewish People, obviously G-d thought he was "dead wrong".

Ultimately, the king repented, was granted life and married the prophet's daughter, with whom he had children. The children did in fact turn out to be wicked as prophesied, and as part of the Divine plan, but the king at least did what was incumbent upon him and received life.

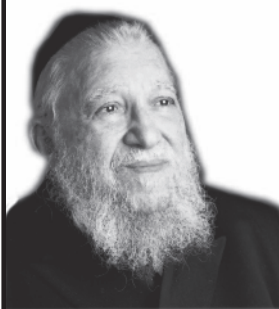
If G-d takes the mitzvah of having children so seriously, even despite the very justifiable reason of wanting to avoid having wicked children rule over Israel, certainly He does not favor avoiding having children because of the natural burden all parents have, particularly when it's reasonable to hope that any children you would have will be good people and good Jews.

In addition to the great mitzvah of having children, there are so many joys and so much love that far outweigh any burden of raising them. So many people either don't get married or refrain from having children for reasons similar to yours, and believe me, their lives are no easier or fulfilling.

On the contrary, unfortunately, by the time they realize how much they've forfeited or lost, it's often too late. For this reason many remain single or childless for the rest of their lives, living with a void of loneliness and regret. And after they die, it's all over for them, since they lacked foresight by considering it too much of a burden to impart life into children who would continue to impart life to their parents in this world and the next.

Perhaps these thoughts add extra meaning to G-d's warning to the king that by not having children he would die in this world and have no life in the next: Intentionally refraining from marriage and bestowing life ultimately causes emptiness in life, which is akin to death, and simultaneously aborts perpetuating life after one's death.

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*  
on the  
Torah Portion of the Week



## THE POWER OF PRAYER

**T**he extraordinary power of prayer is so great that its ability to annul a negative decree is even greater than *ma'asim tovim*, good deeds. It is thus taught in the Talmud, "Prayer is greater than good deeds. For no one had more good deeds than Moshe, yet he was only answered after he prayed (Berachot 32b; see also Pnei Yehoshua)."

Here are the words of Rabbi Yosef Albo in his monumental work *Sefer Ha'Ikarim* (4:20) regarding the power of prayer: *Prayer contains within it a unique and wondrous power in that it helps for all things. We find that it helps to heal the sick, as it did for King Chizkiyahu, as the verse states, "I have heard your prayer... Behold I will heal you, and on the third day you will ascend to the House of G-d (Kings II, 20:5)."*

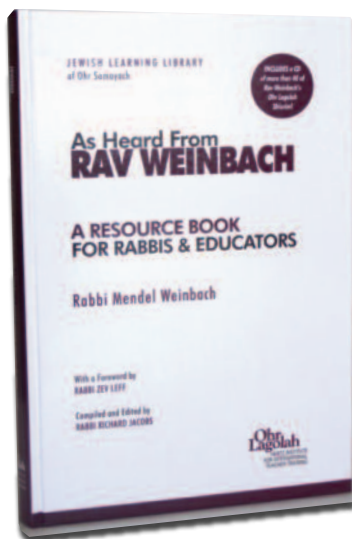
*It can also help to save one from death, for when the Jewish People sinned with the Golden Calf, G-d said to Moshe, "Leave Me alone that I may destroy them (Devarim 9:14)," and they were saved by the prayer of Moshe. So too, the prophet Yonah was saved when he prayed from inside the stomach of the fish (Yonah 2:2, 11).*

*Prayer also has the power to help barren women become pregnant, as we see from the prayers of Yitzchak that were*

*answered by G-d. So too, Chana became pregnant through her prayers. We find that prayer also helps against famine, "There was a famine in the days of David for three years. And David entreated G-d (Shmuel II 21:1)."*

*For war as well, prayer helps, as we see in the war against Sanchariv, "King Chizkiyahu and Yishayahu son of Amotz the prophet prayed and cried out to Heaven. And G-d sent an angel who destroyed every mighty warrior, captain and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria (Divrei Ha'Yamim II, 32:20-21)."* We thus find that prayer is like an all-inclusive cure, which helps for all sorts of sickness.

After hearing about these great miracles accomplished through prayer, one should not be discouraged, feeling that such results are impossible for him to achieve. Rather, he should do his best to pray wholeheartedly. One must remember, only G-d can measure the true value of our prayers. If one's words are sincere, he can trust that G-d will certainly accept his prayers, just as a father hears the cries of his beloved child. You may not always see a miracle, but you will always be heard. And above all, G-d is always able to deliver.



## As Heard From **RAV WEINBACH**

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*Author's note:* A few weeks ago in Ohrnet Magazine we published a profile of **Adam Zeiff**, [[http://ohr.edu/this\\_week/ohr/6621](http://ohr.edu/this_week/ohr/6621)] a student in the Jintern program. Adam spent the last five months with us here in Jerusalem and left a lasting impact on the Yeshiva and on the Jintern program. As mentioned in that article, Adam displayed an unusual level of *hakarat hatov* (gratitude), and the day he left the Yeshiva he left a letter for the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Schiller, as an expression of his gratitude. He has kindly allowed us to post the letter here.

December 17, 2015

Dear Rabbi Schiller,

As I think back on my time here I am reminded of friendly faces, of laughter and of growth. But, you can find these things almost anywhere — so why was Ohr Somayach so special? Growing up, I didn't associate much with religion, let alone my own. Judaism always felt like a category I fell into. My parents were Jewish, so I was Jewish. Hebrew school was mandatory so I went to Hebrew school. Bar Mitzvahs were fun and cool, so I had a Bar Mitzvah. Birthright was basically free, so I went on Birthright. I had no idea what this is. The media always seemed to be full of religiously based conflict and disagreement. The more I read, saw and heard about religion in the news, the less I wanted to be part of one.

I believed in G-d though. For some reason. I felt that He was around and I used to pray, long before I knew what davening even meant.

And then I came here and met you. Young guys like me trying to figure this all out — and it felt better. The classes were stimulating, the teachers were approachable and I was happier. Books I would have glanced over without a second thought became topics of inspiring conversation. A language I never dreamed I could understand, I learned to read. A country I recognized as a vacation spot became a place where I want to raise a family of my own.

In closing, nothing happens by coincidence and everything is from Hashem. Thank you for letting me be a part of your life in the world He has created.

(signed) Adam Zeiff