

שבת בשבת



Parshat Shemot

No 1657: 23 Tevet 5777 (January 21, 2017)

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Religious Zionists of America

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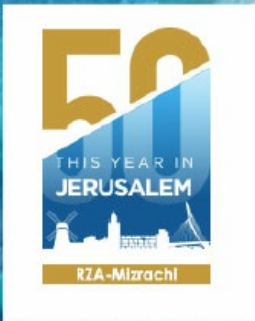
office@rza.org, www.rza.org

Dear Friend of Religious Zionism,

One of the initiatives we are planning, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the re-unification of Jerusalem, is an "Honor Roll" to be signed by the leadership of congregations and schools across the country.

- 1) Please have your leadership inform us if they want to be included on our Honor Roll. (We will include the names of all participating institutions in the media).
- 2) Please share this Honor Roll with institutions in your community and encourage participation.
- 3) Please arrange to hang this Honor Roll in the lobbies of your Shuls and Schools. Click [here](#) to print out a copy of the poster OR kindly email us to let us know if you'd like us to mail you a hard copy flyer or poster.

Rabbi Gideon Shloush
Religious Zionists of America - Mizrahi
gshloush@rza.org



YOM YERUSHALAYIM

Honor Roll

MY COMMUNITY IS PROUD TO CELEBRATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF YOM YERUSHALAYIM.

The fiftieth anniversary of the re-unification of Jerusalem is upon us. Yom Yerushalayim 2017 will take place on Wednesday, May 24th.

In celebration of this historic milestone the RZA-Mizrachi is preparing an Honor Roll of synagogues and schools who will be organizing t'fillot and festivities to mark this occasion.

JERUSALEM HONOR ROLL

Fifty years ago, through the miracle of the Six Day War, the holy city of Jerusalem was reunited. As the soul-stirring cry of "Har Habayit b'yadeinu" rang out, Israel's courageous young soldiers fulfilled the hopes and dreams of countless generations. At long last, the destroyed synagogues of the Old City would be rebuilt; the desecrated graves on the Mount of Olives would be restored; and the Kotel would resume its rightful place at the center of the Jewish universe. Yom Yerushalayim both commemorates that incredible moment in time and symbolizes the joining of G-d, Torah, and the Land of Israel, now and forever. On this 50th anniversary of the reunification of the eternal capital of the Jewish people, we renew our commitment to protecting the safety and sanctity of united Jerusalem.

(signature)

(name of institution)



The Religious Zionists of America is the US affiliate of the 115 year old World Mizrahi movement. The goal of the RZA-Mizrachi is to instill in the American Jewish community a commitment to religious Zionism, the preservation of Jewish political freedom, the enhancement of Jewish religious life in the land of Israel, and the promotion of aliyah. For more information, visit: www.rza.org

In The Spotlight

We are pleased to announce a new initiative: Each week, we will (translate and) feature a d'var Torah shared by a Rav who teaches at a Dati Leumi Hesder Yeshiva in Israel. Our goal is – until we get there ourselves – to bring Torat Yisrael closer to America.

ParshatShemot

G-d's Name Revealed

By RavZe'ev Soltenovich

Translated by RZA-Aryeh Fellow Yehudith Dashevsky

This week, we begin a new Sefer, a Sefer in which the nation of Israel is born and the redemption of the world progresses to its next stage. This Sefer, as its name and opening phrase, "And these are the names," suggests, will highly emphasize the concept of names.

Already at the beginning of the Parsha, the Torah stresses the issue of names and identifies the names of the Jews going down to Egypt. In the rest of the Parsha, as well, we find that the Torah devotes no small space to discussing names. This begins with the naming of Moshe by the daughter of Pharaoh, as it says "She called his name Moshe and she said, 'Because I have taken him out of the water,'" and continues throughout until Moshe names his own son – "He called his name Gershom because he said, 'I was a stranger in a foreign land.'" In the continuation of the Parsha, we find a fascinating discussion between Moshe and HaKadosh Baruch Hu about the name that Moshe should say to the Jews – "Moshe said to G-d: Behold I am going to the Children of Israel and I will say to them 'The G-d of your forefathers sent me to you' and they will say to me, 'What is His name?' What should I say to them? ...[G-d] said: This is what you should say to the Children of Israel, 'I Will Be sent to you.' And G-d said further to Moshe, 'This is what you should say to the Children of Israel, 'Hashem, the G-d of your forefathers, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov sent me to you'. This is my name forever, and this is My remembrance for generations." The matter of names is further mentioned, and in an even more pronounced way, in the next Parsha, Va'era, which opens with the following, "G-d spoke to Moshe and He said to him, 'I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov with [the name] E-I Shakkai, but My name 'Hashem' I did not make known to them."

The importance of names and the place they have in Sefer Shemot in general and in Parshat Shemot in particular is what we will attempt to understand today: Our question is: Why is the concept of names so essential?

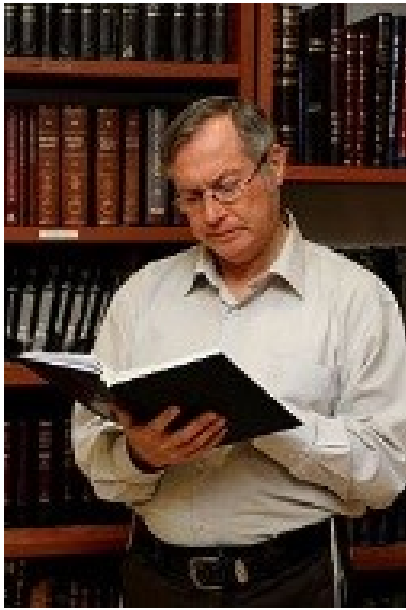
The idea of a name is the exposure of essence. The hidden, spiritual essence of a thing is concretized and actualized in the world via words, in that speech is what exposes and reveals what is happening on the inside. With its extensive focus on names, the Torah wanted to reveal to us that the substance of Israel's redemption is the exposure of names. The nation of Israel's role is to sanctify and reveal G-d's name in the world. The purpose of redemption is not physical liberation or even the establishment of a neutral national existence. Rather, it is the establishment of a nation that exposes G-d's name to the world. Israel is the greatest revelation of HaKadosh Baruch Hu in the world, and the clearer and more revealed the names of the Jewish people become, the more G-d's name comes into view. The verse "These are the names of Israel" is directly connected to the verse "This is My name forever, and this is My remembrance for generations." When the nation of Israel is redeemed, G-dly existence appears in the world – the name of Hashem turns into a living, enduring reality, as suggested in the verse, "I Will Be sent to you."

This idea is crucial to understanding the history of the Jewish people, and therefore it appears immediately at the beginning of Sefer Shemot, in which the nation of Israel will appear and take its place on the stage of the world, at the same time which G-d will reveal Himself.

The Jewish nation continues to enter a more revealed state in our generation, as well, and the stronger this nation becomes, the more the Name of Heaven appears in this world. The purpose of strengthening ourselves is to sanctify G-d's name. As Chazal say, as long as Israel's enemies exist on earth, G-d is not revealed in the world: "The Name is not complete and the Throne is not complete all the time that the seed of Amalek is not wiped out."

May it be G-d's will that we merit that this awareness trickle down into and guide all our actions, that the question of our lives should be, 'How can we, in our speech and actions, reveal and sanctify the Name of Heaven?' This needs to be the stick by which we measure ourselves, the driving force of our lives. It is not for nothing that when a person passes away

the prayer we say in summary of his life is Kaddish, "May His great name become great and be sanctified..." May it be that from our individual and collective lives as well, G-d's name will become great and be sanctified in the world.



Rav Ze'ev Soltenovich teaches at **Yeshivat Har Bracha** in the Shomron. Although well-versed in philosophy, history, finance and Israeli law, poetry and art, he specializes in the Torah of Rav Kook and Jewish history and philosophy. Rav Soltenovich was one of the founders of Pri HaAretz, the institution responsible for publishing *Em HaBanim Smeicha*, the work of Rav Shlomo Yissachar Teichel. Rav Soltenovich's series *Binah Lelim*, published by Yeshivat Har Bracha, deals with the history of the Jewish nation and attempts to expand on Rav Kook's methodology. He is one of the few who teach Rav Dovid Cohen's philosophy and work *Kol HaNevuah* methodologically.



Yehudith Dashevsky is a sophomore at the University of Pennsylvania majoring in English Literature.

We are pleased to feature a different Religious Zionist rabbi each week from around the country to share a Dvar Torah.

Moshe's Missing Years

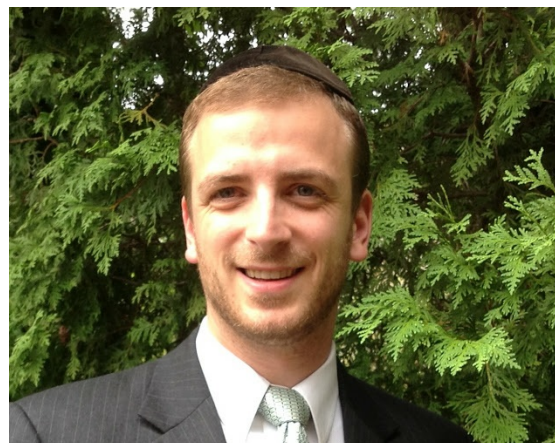
Rabbi Yonah Gross

Rabbi of Congregation Beth Hamedrosh

Wynnewood, PA

How much are we really told about Moshe's life? We know that he was born, cast into the river, and eventually rescued by the Princess of Egypt. When he got a little older, he saved a Jew from the torturous hands of an Egyptian only to be rebuked the next day by two fighting Jews. He then ran away from Egypt to Midian and upon his arrival met the daughters of a Midianite Priest, married one of them and then...? Silence.

The silence lasted decades until Hashem revealed himself to Moshe at the burning bush. What had Moshe been doing in the interim?



The Torah tells us that Moshe “desired to dwell with (Yisro)” (2:21). The Talmud (Sotah 11a) explains that Yisro had also been in Egypt before running away. He was one of Pharaoh’s advisors and was consulted on how to solve the ‘Jewish Problem.’ When Yisro realized Pharaoh’s intention to throw all the Jewish baby boys into the Nile, he ran away in protest. Yisro, then devotes his life to meditation and the pursuit of personal religious fulfillment.

This is what Moshe wanted when he ‘desired to dwell with Yisro’. Moshe was disappointed by the reaction of Jews to his courageous act of killing the Egyptian. He even doubted whether they were really fit for redemption (Rashi 2:14). Moshe felt it more appropriate to give up on public life and focus on his own religious growth as Yisro was doing. Such was the life he was living until he was confronted by Hashem at the Burning Bush.

How does Chazal view the actions of Yisro in running away to the seclusion of Midian? The Talmud initially praises him, and as a reward for his protests of Pharaoh’s plan, he merited to have descendants who served as members of the Sanhedrin. However, perhaps he should have done more.

The Torah (Shemos 18) describes Yisro’s meeting with the Jewish people in the desert. We read that Yisro came inspired by all the news he had heard about the great miracles that Hashem had done on behalf of the Jews. He stayed for a bit, gave Moshe some meaningful advice on how to delegate the powers of leadership, and then abruptly left before the giving of the Torah (18:27).

The Midrash (P’siktad’Rav Kahana 12:118) comments that the reason for his sudden departure was that he was not going to be permitted to partake of the receiving of the Torah. “Hashem said the Jews were forced to work with cement and bricks while Yisro lived in relative security in Midian, and now he comes to receive the Torah?!”

God desires a relationship with those that look to help the Jewish people. Moshe responded to the need of the enslaved Jews and, despite his trepidation, left a secure existence to return to Egypt and lead the exodus. He saw the opportunity to redeem the Jewish people from hardship, and seized it. Yisro, despite knowing of the challenges facing the Jews and that Moshe was going back to Egypt to help them, stayed behind content to work on his personal growth. As a consequence of their respective decisions, Moshe was granted the opportunity to deliver the Torah at Har Sinai while Yisro wasn’t even allowed to attend the festivities.

Introducing the New RZA-Aryeh Fellowship!

The RZA-Aryeh Fellowship is a new initiative of the RZA-Mizrachi to strengthen the mission of Religious Zionism. Fifty college and graduate school students from around the country have been invited to spend their winter-break in Israel where they will be studying Torah and attending intensive seminars devoted to Religious Zionism education. Upon their return the Aryeh Fellows will focus on their year-long Manhigut (leadership) projects designed to bring the message of Religious Zionism back to communities across America. We are excited to profile a different “Aryeh Fellow” each week.

Meet Margo Feurer

Margo Feuer hails from sunny Los Angeles, CA, and attended Shalhevet High School.



As a proud Firehawk at Shalhevet, she was very involved of in Mock Trial, pro-Israel activism and anything related to graphic design. She has subsequently turned in her sunglasses for sweaters at Yale University where she is freshman. She hopes to pursue a degree related to Chemistry, as she is fascinated by the minuteness of this science, but how it so deeply affects the world on a macro level.

Before starting her studies in New Haven, she spent a year in Jerusalem, Israel at Midreshet Torah V'Avodah. There, she more fully realized her love of Gemara, the land Israel, and Jewish philosophy. In her summers, she puts her problem-solving skills and crafts to work as a counselor at Camp Ramah in California. She could spend hours learning a daf, unpacking the next Chemistry problem set, working in production and design for the Yale Daily News or just being with her friends. She is very excited to continue to explore the nexus of her Jewish

identity and broader religious Zionism through the RZA Aryeh fellowship!

Pictures from our Fellows and the Yom Iyun

On Thursday January 12th, the RZA Aryeh Fellows participated in a Yom Iyun in Jerusalem. The day featured stellar shiurim and panel discussions from leading figures including Rabbanit Shani Taragin, Brigadier Effie Eitam (who participated in the Entebbe rescue) and Rav Yishai Fleisher (the international representative for the Chevron community). Other highlights included a powerful and touching Yonatan Razel concert and the Stayin' Alive satirical comedy show which exposes the double-standards of the BDS movement. In the words of Aryeh Fellow Yishai Pearl, "To say that this is 'recharging' just scratches the surface of the impact this trip is having on me as I'm sure it is having on the other fellows as well."





RZA Los Angeles Shabbaton

 Religious Zionists of Los Angeles



and the
Religious Zionists
of America - Mizrachi

Shabbaton

Shabbat, January 28

TRUMP'S AMERICA and its Israel Relations

Special Guest Presenters:



Rabbi Shaul Robinson
Lincoln Square Synagogue,
New York, NY

Shabbat Morning Sermon
Beth Jacob Congregation
Seudah Shlishit
Young Israel of Century City



Rabbi Gideon Shloush
Executive VP
of the RZA-Mizrachi
Congregation Adereth El,
New York, NY

Friday Night
Bnai David-Judea Congregation
Shabbat Morning Sermon
Young Israel of Century City

Melave Malka

Hancock Park • 8:00pm

featuring a conversation with



Rabbi Marvin Hier

Dean & Founder of
the Simon Wiesenthal
Center

*Upon his return from in the
inauguration of President-
elect Donald J. Trump*

Shabbaton Sponsors:

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Dr. Berny & Temi Monderer • Steve & Murielle Uretsky

Stayin' Alive Comedy Show Coming to Religious Zionists of Chicago (RZC)

What: Stayin' Alive - Israel Comedy Show (in English).

Light Supperserved.

When: SaturdayNight January 21, 2017 at 8 pm

Where: Mayne StageTheater, 1328 W. Morse. Complimentary Valet Parking

Questions: Contact Rabbi Jerry Isenberg at 847-674-9733 x 3 or ji@rzc.us

Stayin' Alive: BDS hasmet its match

The BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement which advocates the delegitimization of Israel, together with media bias and a general misrepresentation of Israel is being fought with various quality educational initiatives and fact-based programs. Yet the battle is far from over. Stayin' Alive is all about finding a new, effective response. With the encouragement of Israel's Foreign Ministry, World Mizrachi produced a unique hard-hitting show. Developed by some of Israel's top comedy writers, it helps set the record straight, utilizing satire, humor and music to explain Israel's point of view. Mizrachi is proud to present this relevant, uplifting and entertaining satirical show to the Chicago community to shine the glaring light of satire on the BDS misleading comparisons and deceptive assertions.

For info, a promo video, reservations and sponsorships, please click here:
betcafe.rzc.us

If you would like to bring this show to your community, please contact our office at office@rza.org.

MIZRACHI WORLD MOVEMENT PRESENTS

SOLD OUT

AN SPRELI COMEDY SHOW

SATURDAY NIGHT BET CAFE

JANUARY 21, 2017

MAYNE STAGE

1328 W. MORSE, CHICAGO

DOORS OPEN 8PM

MIZRACHI RELIGIOUS CONSTITUENTS OF CHICAGO

BASA

Help save the old Jewish cemetery of Vilna

Help save the old Jewish cemetery of Vilna. Please click here for more info:

<https://www.change.org/p/hon-dalia-grybauskaitė-please-move-new-vilnius-convention-center-project-away-from-the-old-jewish-cemetery>

Join us for Yom Yerushalayim!

Please ask your Shul Rabbi and local school to include this in their weekly emails.
Make sure to join us for this once in a lifetime opportunity!



**JOIN THOUSANDS
FOR THE MEGA-
MISSION OF A
LIFETIME**



**May 22-25
Iyar 26-29**
Celebrating 50 YEARS of
a reunited Jerusalem



**For more details
and to book:**
www.mizrachi.org/YY50



In light of the UN Security Council vote, our support for Yerushalayim is needed now more than ever. Register now for this once in a lifetime opportunity. Join Jewish people from around the world as we gather in our holiest city to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. The time is now. Show your support!



SPACES LIMITED

**WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US
THIS YEAR IN JERUSALEM**

FOR A MEGA-MISSION OF A LIFETIME
Be Front and Center, Celebrating 50 years of a reunited Jerusalem
over Yom Yerushalayim
MAY 22-25, 2017

Dear RZA-Mizrachi Friends,

We very much look forward to having you take part in our Mizrachi World Movement's "This Year in Jerusalem" Mega-Mission over Yom Yerushalayim. Our aim is to bring thousands of people (including rabbinic and community leaders) from hundreds of communities from across the global Jewish community to learn, experience and celebrate together at this momentous time in Jewish history.

Please see below a personal invitation from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, one of the global leaders of the mission, inviting you to join him on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

More details about the program can be found at the following link - www.mizrachi.org/YY50 - including the draft schedule, highlights, pricing options and booking procedure.

Please note the following:

1. There are 10 hotel options, with a price range depending on hotel choice. Each hotel package includes breakfast, lunch and dinner (excluding Wed evening). The hotel packages also include the entire 4 day program at discounted rates.
2. There is also an option for people who are not staying in hotels - if they have their own accommodation - to join for the 4 day program, at a cost of \$630 per person. It does not include hotel, breakfast and dinner, but does include transport from central meeting points to and from all the venues, lunch each day, and participation in the full program.
3. For those shuls/communities/groups who wish to bring missions and want to extend their trip either before or after our 4 day mission, that can also be arranged by contacting us at YY50@mizrachi.org, and we - together with our partners - will put together a tailor-made package for your group.

Looking forward to celebrating together – in Jerusalem – on this historic occasion.

With excitement and anticipation,

Rabbi Gideon Shloush
Mizrachi – Religious Zionists of America

Rav Doron Perez
Mizrachi World Movement

Click below to see our video!



POINT OF VIEW

A Scintillating “Reality Show” by the Press

"I am not a man of words... I am slow of speech and with a slow tongue" [Shemot 4:10].

Reality Drama

Lately we have been subjected to a "reality show" run by the press, with the well-known stars Bibi (Netanyahu, the Prime Minister) and Noni (Mozes, the publisher of the newspaper Yediot Acharonot). You can call it, "**Bibi, Noni, and Friends.**" It can be assumed that until this article is published, this "little brother" will become more and more dramatic, day by day. This "reality" event, almost-true as it is, recorded and staged, will excite the imagination of all those who enjoy shows full of tension caused by clashes and friction. As is so typical of "reality," they provide perfect background material for analysis and commentators and commentators on the commentators who spend their lives in the "reality bubble." In the end, the ultimate judge (which, as is well known, is the press itself), prodded by public opinion, will provide a verdict – and decide who if anybody will be cast aside with the cruelty of a gladiator from the public eye. Perhaps they will all be cast aside, sent out of the arena, accompanied by the wild cheers of an excited audience, "couch potatoes" all.

In case I have bewildered you, my readers, with my extremely complex wording, let us go down a step and speak plainly: **My "fondness" for the press is well known. The people who sit there see themselves as all-wise, and they are sure that the entire world is fashioned by their actions.** They constantly interview each other. Just check the high level of internal interviews in the media: written, broadcast, on screens, and online. That is how new stars are born, and the "reality" existence is created (as opposed to real life). In their world the people are convinced that they mold public opinion, that they alone build and destroy alternate worlds. For example, they are in charge of "reality" shady plans for "keeping a Prime Minister happy" and allowing him to sleep in peace, since after all they are in "complete control." They set the daily public agenda, based on daily and nightly news broadcasts.

But I, miniscule as I am, am willing to declare that I have no respect for this mythological world, or for the endless stream of "analyses." Except for the "media elites," I am sure, for example, that the vast majority of the public have no interest whatsoever in the complex interactions between Gabi Ashkenazi, Boaz Harpaz, and Yoav Galant, which so occupied the media, confused us no end, and gave work to the best "analysts." Nobody remembers at all whether this affair is over, and what decisions were made. This is of course only one example out of many more.

Bibi-Noni

As far as I am concerned, all of the above is true of the current hullabaloo about Bibi and Noni. As far as I can tell, **the vast majority of the public views the material in the same way as the foolish audiences with extra time on their hands who so avidly watch "Big Brother."** This is something of an upgraded version of "This is Your Life." So Nuni and Bibi said and hinted, "engaged in some horse-stealing," made secret recordings, traded in public opinion (which they presumably control) and Knesset laws (which they seem to control), and shook hands or put a knife in each other's backs, whispered in "smooth" language, made advances towards each other in a very ungentlemanly way, threw the "Jinji" to the dogs, and perhaps even smoked cigars and drank champagne. Well, that is very interesting, full of suspense and super-drama, but it all has absolutely no significance.

We are a democratic country, thank G-d. Public opinion is not the result of coercion, voting in elections does not follow the party line of a newspaper named "Pravda" – just as the pre-election polls in the United States so clearly showed! **Our people are healthier than all of the deal-makers** who think that they can control the boorish people according to the desires of the media elites.

We can conclude as follows: I propose to the State Attorney and his office, and the police, **to ignore this entire affair, which is no more than a "reality show" for simple folks** and a "pound of flesh" for the media professionals. The citizens, and even the MK's, know better than to pay attention to this matter!

Moshe, the ultimate leader, **had a gift that might be considered anti-media. He was “slow of speech” and had “a slow tongue,”** as noted in the quote above. Many commentators, both early and modern, saw this as a lesson to be learned from the one who brought us the Torah – to contradict those who mistakenly claim that the leadership at a time of redemption must have superior oratorical skills.

We also learn from the Midrash that Moshe was not born with this trait (a lack of media skills) but acquired it from the blow of **an angel who pushed his hand away from a shiny golden goblet** (is this a reference to physical pleasures? – was it filled with whiskey?), and turned him towards a burning coal. This provided a promise of true leadership qualities, not “reality” speech.

As Shabbat Approaches

“Open Up for Me, My Sister, My Lover” [Shir Hashirim 5:2]

By Esti Rosenberg, Head of the Midrasha for Women, Migdal Oz

There were seventy souls in the family of Yaacov who descended to Egypt, and they became “Bnei Yisrael” – transformed from a family into a nation, from individuals into a community. The children of Yaacov descend into Egypt in order to meet their brother and to survive the famine. At the same time, they are fulfilling the decree of going into bondage. “Know that your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not theirs” [Bereishit 16:13]. Their private lives become the foundation for an entire nation.

There is a lot of power and strength in the stories of individuals. Each one feels great responsibility and acts accordingly. In a community the emphasis is different. There are times when the individual disappears in the broad framework of the community. His personal point of view sometimes disappears, and the feeling of responsibility can be eroded.

This week’s Torah portion tells both kinds of stories. On one hand, a nation is born. It is fertile and multiplies. But this fertility carries within it a danger of alienation and estrangement. On the other hand, the story emphasizes the ability of the individual to influence the community and to save it from disaster.

The community is broken by their suffering. The suffering is not described in detail in the Torah, the people are passive and are in despair. “And Bnei Yisrael sighed from the labor, and they cried out” [Shemot 2:23]. The people do not even know how to formulate their pain and their prayers, they cry out, and their cry reaches out to G-d. “And G-d saw...and G-d knew” [2:25]. The Creator is aware of their pain but He does not yet redeem them. He is waiting for community action which will show mutual responsibility, which will have an influence on the situation. The suffering community does not have the necessary strength, only individuals are capable of joining the Creator of the world on this journey to redemption.

And the individuals sparkle in the dark. “And the midwives feared G-d, and they did not do what the King of Egypt commanded them” [1:17]. A combination of courage and faith led the midwives to stand up to the tyrant and to revolt against him.

“A man from the house of Levi went, and he took a daughter of Levi” [2:1]. We know the Midrash which states that this was Amram, who remarried Yocheved in spite of the mortal threat to the children. One couple were not afraid to stand up in the face of reality, and to believe that matters can be changed and that an individual can make a statement even when evil is extant in the world.

And beyond all the others – Moshe stands up time after time as an individual in the face of evil, and against a community which lives and acts in a way that is different than the way he does. In his encounters with those who struck the Jews in Egypt, and the shepherds of Midyan – and in the next stage standing up against Pharaoh, King of Egypt – Moshe always seeks truth and justice. He shows no fear or terror.

Moshe's behavior gives him the right to stand up to the Creator in prayer, in speech, and even with demands – the demand for redemption and salvation.

The individual who has courage, who takes on responsibility, who acts with reality in mind, is privileged to join together with the Creator in the process of redemption. And we must never forget – the Creator is waiting for just such individuals, from time immemorial.

A PARSHA INSIGHT

Separation in Order to Reconnect

By Rabbi Asaf Harnoy, Post-Graduate Beit Midrash for Torah and Leadership, Jerusalem

In a book, the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre describes the life of one of the kings of France, who was kept fully occupied from morning to night.

The king would wake up every morning to the sound of classical music played by the royal orchestra. He would get dressed and immediately go on to a sumptuous breakfast prepared by the best of the royal chefs. He would then immediately go out on a wearying hunt in the forests near the palace, and return to take part in a delicious lunch. And then, tired from the hunt and feeling heavy from the meal, he would have an afternoon nap, from which he would once again wake up to the sound of the orchestra. In the afternoon he would hold a meeting with the best French philosophers on subjects of worldwide significance, eat his supper, and then spend his time until the wee hours of the night dancing at festive balls.

Whenever he moved from one stage of his busy day to the next, he was joined by a royal clown, whose task was to keep the king laughing. In this way, the king never had a free moment through the entire day.

One day the royal clown passed away, and the king found that he had a few minutes to himself. He stopped for a moment and thought, but this made him sick to his stomach, and he vomited. For the first time in his life he had found a free moment to stop and think about himself and his life, and he could not stand what he saw.

When the Principal Announced that all Tests were Cancelled

When Moshe comes to free Bnei Yisrael from the slavery in Egypt – they are not ready to listen to him at all. The Torah gives us the reason for this. “They did not listen to Moshe, because of their lack of spirit and because of the **harsh labor**” [Shemot 6:9].

When I taught the Torah portions of Shemot and Va'eira in the Hebrew Gymnasium in Jerusalem, I tried to illustrate the absurdity of the above verse to my students by using an allegory from their own lives.

Let us suppose, I said, that you are in the midst of a time jammed full of difficult tests, when suddenly the principal comes to your classroom and announces that all the tests have been cancelled. But instead of hearing the good news of the principal, you ignore him and refuse to listen – and all because you are too busy studying for the tests.

After all, Moshe came in order to redeem Bnei Yisrael from their harsh labors. How then could the **labor itself** be the **reason** that they were not willing to listen to him?

Egyptian Guile

The evil Pharaoh understands in this week's Torah portion that there is no way that he can beat Yisrael in a conventional war. He understands that mass destruction of the people will not be accepted by the international community, and that any attempt to kill them will lead to a revolution by their very large population.

So Pharaoh makes a different move, one that is more sophisticated and better planned, which from his point of view will totally suppress any thoughts or practical capabilities of a

revolution, from the very roots.

Pharaoh understands that harsh labor, every single day and around the clock, will take away from Bnei Yisrael the ability to think clearly about their lives, and it will suppress any ideas of a revolution. And that is why Pharaoh increases the harsh labor even more. He knows that every person who is kept busy and whose thoughts are upsetting – will never be able to even consider raising a demand or a desire for freedom.

And therefore, when Moshe finally does come to free them from their bondage, **the harsh labor itself is the reason** that they do not listen to him. It put them in a mental state where it is impossible to rise up and to attempt to move on to a better place.

Stand Up to Face Ourselves

Pharaoh's technique is alive and full of vitality to this very day. It may present a different face, but it is just as dangerous and threatening as it was in the past. The daily routines of our lives are filled with many activities and irritations. Many technologies and instruments surround us, often preventing us from achieving even one moment of real and honest thought about ourselves and our lives.

The exit from bondage means first and foremost the ability to remove all of the elements that distract us, and once and for all to become linked to ourselves.

WHEN THE CHILDREN OPEN THEIR HEARTS

A Place in the Heart

By Meirav Maggeni, Author of Content and Stories in Chemed, the Religious School System

Lately, I have been having trouble falling asleep at night. I cannot stop myself from thinking about what to expect. In order for you to understand what I mean, let me tell you something about me and my family.

In our home, things are always noisy and happy. I have four brothers and four sisters, and we are never bored when we are together. We play games, we produce shows, we take hikes in our neighborhood, we ride our bikes. And now and then we also fight with each other...

Abba always says that children are a great joy. And Imma says – especially when we are all waiting for a new baby to be born – that she has lots of love in her heart. There is so much love that we don't have to worry, nobody will ever feel a lack of love.

Last week, Imma gathered us all together and told us about Tali, a cute girl five years old who was in need of a warm home and a loving family, because her parents could not raise her. Imma said that there are thousands of children like Tali in Israel who are in need of foster homes – that is, a family where they can grow up and feel warmth and love. Imma said, "Abba and I have enough love in our hearts for Tali too... I know it's not easy to welcome a strange and different girl into our house and it's definitely not easy to share everything we have with her... But you must remember that Tali needs our love very much..."

Imma stopped for a moment and looked at us. My little brothers didn't really understand what she was saying and they went right back to their games. But Dan, Ruth, and I, the older children, understood very well the significance of what we had heard. Each one of us tried to digest what was happening. But then Imma surprised us by saying: "The decision of whether to bring Tali into the family has to be a joint decision by us all, because Tali will need your love just as much as she needs the love that Abba and I can give her. Next week we will all go to Jerusalem to meet her, and after that we will talk about the matter again." Imma went back to what she was doing, and we, the older children, went outside to the big swings in the park, in order to discuss the matter. Dan, the firstborn, surprised us when he said that his best friend Yoav is actually a foster child.

“Yoav is a great friend, and a little while ago he told me that it is to the credit of the Markowitz family that took him in as a foster child when he was little, that he grew up to be what he is. Whoknows what would have happened to him if he hadn't found a warm and loving home?” Dan finished with strong emotion in his voice.

Ruthie, my sister, said, “Wow, that's wonderful for the Markowitz family, what they are doing is a great mitzva!”

Rachel sat deep in thought. When Dan asked her what she thought about it all, she said that the family of Chagit Cohen, her friend in school, had taken a foster child into the home. They wanted to show the child lots of love and good will, but it turned out to be a very difficult task. The boy did not get used to his new family, and he was angry a lot and managed to irritate them quite often. In the end, the boy was sent away, to another home. She asked a question which echoed in the room: “What will we do if this becomes very difficult for us right away?”

And then, Dan turned to me. “Galit, what do you think?” But I didn't know what to say. How could we give up the opportunity to perform such a great mitzva? However, I wondered if I really did have room in my heart for a new “sister,” a stranger. Would I be able to help her, behind, give in to her needs, go with her on hikes, play, help her do her homework. Would I be able to read her a bedtime story, hug her and really listen to her?

If I can manage to do even a small part of the above list, I will have become a better Galit than I was before, happier than I was. (I once heard a wise man say that giving to somebody else gives us a lot of happiness. It seems to me that he was right.)

So now, here I am lying in bed, but I can't fall asleep... Tomorrow I will meet Tali. I close my eyes and try to imagine what she looks like. What color are her eyes? What color is her hair, is it straight or curly? Does Tali smile a lot? What makes her happy?

In my heart, I begin to pray: “G-d, help Tali to fit in with us, in a way that will not cause too much difficulty. And, just like Imma always says... Let me have lots of love in my heart... enough for everybody.”

HOLY AND SECULAR

Meir Banai's Last Poem

By Rabbi Amichai Gordin, Yeshivat Har Etzion

I am not much of a connoisseur of music. My parents' home was not filled with music. My father, who spent the first three decades of his life struggling against the KGB and its subsidiaries (which luckily ended in a victory for him), was only interested in things with “real” value. The radio in our living room was always tuned to Reshet Bet (news and talk radio). And anyway, it goes without saying that the radio was only turned on for morning and evening news summaries. Only at an advanced age did I discover that the dial could be moved, and that it was possible to hear other sounds from the radio. And then I was exposed for the first time to Hebrew songs. (One exception was the song, “Did you see the beauty,” which we learned in music lessons in the fifth grade.)

Today I am still no expert in music. It is very lucky for me that the power of music is so great that even one as musically inarticulate as I am can still enjoy meaningful songs that penetrate deep into the heart. The last poem by Meir Banai is like that. It has only one line and no tune. It is a poem that can burst through “Sha'ar Harachamim” – the Gate of Mercy.

** * * * *

Last Thursday, I came home from a reunion of my class at “Netiv Meir.” Twenty-five years after we graduated from the yeshiva high school, some classmates organized a reunion. In spite of my low expectations, I returned home full of vim and vigor. The return to the years of my youth and the encounter with all of the boys who grew up with me gave me a feeling of being young once more.

On my way home, I turned on the radio. They were playing some very sweet songs. And then the announcer said that they would continue with another song by **the late** Meir Banai. After getting over the shock, I remembered his last album, which was a collection of “*piyutim*,” liturgical poetry put to music. We played this album in our home, week after week, on Friday – over and over again. Oh, how I loved those *piyutim*.

I hesitated for a second. Our sages commanded us not to recite any unnecessary blessing. But after a few seconds, I gathered my strength and said the blessing “*baruch dayan ha’emet*,” recited when a person hears of the death of one close to him, and I included the full name of G-d. We have been taught that just like a person should recite a blessing when hearing good news so he should recite a blessing over bad news.

* * * * *

On Sunday, I had another encounter with Meir Banai. This time it was a radio interview with his sister Ornah. She told about a spine-tingling sentence that her brother said to her before he died. She repeated it, and I sat in the car and I could not stop crying. I have heard many declarations of love for Torah in my life, but I have never heard anything as profound as what Meir Banai said.

Ornah said, “Meir loved two things: Music and the Torah. Before he passed away, he asked me: ‘Ornah, do you think that in the world to come it is possible to study Torah?’”

Meir, I love you until death.

** * * * *

Later on, I remembered the answer Meir Banai gave to Sivan Rahav-Meir when she asked him why he doesn’t write poetry. And this man of truth replied that it is not easy to write religious poems that are not merely full of kitsch. But, he said, I plan on writing poetry not about religion but about my place and my feelings as a religious person. He promised her, “I will write poetry.” And here, is a short poem he wrote, one sentence that says it all:

***Do you think that in the world to come
It is possible to study Torah?***

Meir, I love you until death.

** * * * *

I am reminded of some lines from the wonderful poem by Alterman, “The Great Road” –

***I will never stop looking,
I will never stop breathing,
And I will die, and I will continue to go.***

** * * * *

Dear Meir Banai: “You may die, but you shall continue to go.”

May your soul be bound in the bond of life.



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