

Echoes of the Ages

“ויהי כִּי־ראו המילדת את - האלקים ויעש להם בתים” - שמות א : כא

Few people have achieved the level of true שמים (fear of heaven). One such man who did was R' Yitchok Belzer. From the moment he ascended the בימה on ראש חודש in shul, the entire congregation would burst into tears. Those that heard the great Rabbi speak during the ימים נראים (the High Holy Days), would see this auspicious time in a new light.

R' Yitzchok, wrapped in his טלית, would relate many stories to help move the listeners to performing a more sincere תשובה. One year he told over the following parable:

It happened once that a Jew was wandering in a forest and got lost. For two days he stumbled around without any exit or civilisation in sight, until he finally bumped into another Jew. Overjoyed, the man begged to be told the way out of the thicket.

“Show you the way out!?”
Sreplied the man, “How long have you been lost in here?” he

asked.

“Two whole days!” the first man answered.

“Two days! I’ve been lost in here for two weeks without any result and you’re asking me to show you the exit?”

R' Yitchak, raising his voice, cried out “My friends! You are young still. You have not yet had the time to make many mistakes in your lives. But I - I am old. For years now I have been transgressing the word of G-d and seeking forgiveness, as well as ways of rectifying my actions and changing my negative character traits. How is it that you summon me here to show you the way!?” He sobbed aloud and the congregation wept with him.

“There is one way which I might help you!” the saintly Rabbi concluded, his voice cracking with emotion. “From my vast experience, from the errors I have made and the challenges I’ve faced, I can point to paths that are not correct and warn you to stay away from them!”

Adapted from “Stories my Grandfather told me”, Shemos



לעלוי נשמת ר' אליהו רחמים בן מאיר דוד ע"ה ואחיו ר' עבדאללה פרג בן מאיר דוד ע"ה
מס' רמז פרשת שמות תשס"ו No. 247 Parshas Shemos 5767

Remembering Your Friends

“ויקים מלך - חדש” - שמות א : ח

“A new king arose” - *Shemos 1:8*

At the beginning of שמות we are told of the “new king” that was appointed during יוסף’s reign as viceroy. However, the new king was not like the old. The good deeds of יוסף were promptly forgotten, only to be repaid by harsh laws and commandments.

The סוטה - דף יא in גמרא relates a dispute between רב and שמואל: One said that this was actually a new king, while the other argued that it was still the same king - only his decrees were new. In place of the fair treatment he had given the Jews until then, he began to impose harsh decrees in order to increase their labour.

This dispute can be interpreted on a deeper level as follows: the one who said it was a מלך חדש believed that however wicked a person may become, he would never betray those who have done him favours by repaying their kindness with unfair treatment. (Thus, in his view it is inconceivable that the same פרעה whose country יוסף had

saved from famine and whose power he solidified would turn against יוסף’s people and enslave them.) The lesson that emerges from this view is that even though one must always worry that he might become so depraved, he need not fear that he might betray those who have helped him.

According to the second view, however, this is exactly what פרעה did. Despite the kind treatment he had shown יוסף and his family until now, he suddenly forgot the benefits they had brought to his land and he cruelly turned against them. In this view, each of us must always suspect that he himself might also be capable of such ingratitude.

We are inclined to this interpretation because we do not feel that the גמרא would take so much trouble to discuss a mere historical question that did not contain moral implications. Also, since the simple meaning of the פסוק is obviously a מלך חדש, why would anyone interpret the פסוק otherwise, if not to extract this moral point?

By Gaby Perrin

Like this publication? Want to help? Why not sponsor us?

Call **Tali Rowe** or **Aaron Djanogly** at the school on 0208 203 1411

You can pick up your copy of the Living Torah in school, online or by email. Visit hasmonean.co.uk/livingtorah, where you can view all past issues online or sign up for the weekly email. Email us at livingtorah@hasmonean.co.uk

Editorial Team:

Yisroel Greenberg
Shane Lefkowitz
Yedidya Livingstone

Technical Editor:

Eli Coten

Editorial Advisor:

Rabbi D Rowe

Contributors:

Gaby Perrin

Rabbi Y Hager

Reviewed By:

Mr K Davis

Under the direction of: Rabbi D Meyer

The True Reward

”וייטב אלקים למילדת וירב העם ועצמו מאד” - שמות א : כ

Hashem rewards מרים and יוכבד for defying פרעה's orders to kill all newborn males by strengthening the nascent בני ישראל and vastly increasing their numbers. Yet even a cursory glance at this פסוק immediately presents a number of questions.

Firstly, as is well known, the שכר (reward) of a מצוה isn't given in this world, but reserved for the world to come. That being the case, why did Hashem do “good to the midwives” and recompense them on earth? Secondly, what type of “good” or reward is it for the midwives that בני ישראל grew into a formidable entity?

The נחלת צבי resolves these problems with two novel insights. חז”ל explains that רמב”ם no-earthly-reward principle only applies to מצות done out of *fear of Hashem*. However, people who act out of *love for Hashem* are indeed worthy of reward on earth. Indeed, earlier on גמרא brought the רש”י in סוטה, mentioning that not only did the midwives save the baby boys - they even strengthened their patients with water and food. With this knowledge, our conundrum is resolved. The midwives at first acted out of Heavenly fear in *not killing the newborns*, yet their provision of *sustenance to mother and infant* was totally predicated on love of G-d.

Hence they were worthy of physical reward. “And Hashem

did good to the midwives”, says the פסוק. Precluding any possibility of a query as to how they could be rewarded in this world, it then states, “the people increased and became very strong”, showing that it was precisely because the midwives assisted the people that they became so strong and hale, and since this was an act of love rather than fear, they fully deserved partial remuneration in this world.

The מדרש רבה answers the second query. The midwives' reward was that יוכבד merited giving birth to משה, and מרים's grandson was בצלאל. Now, it is known that the proliferation of בני ישראל reduced their original 400 years of slavery to 210. Only under these accelerated circumstances was משה still alive to accept the Torah and בצלאל around to construct the ארון! יוכבד and מרים's earthly reward for developing בני ישראל wasn't only that their descendants could achieve what they did, but that the mothers themselves were able to witness their progeny's greatness. This was only due to כלל having multiplied through their efforts, thereby hastening redemption by 190 years.

By Yedidya Livingstone

Quote of the Week

“A man envies everyone except his son and pupil” - גמרא סנהדרין

Unity Leads the Way

”הבה נתחכמה לו פן ירבה” - שמות א : י

At the beginning of this week's Sedra, פרעה gathers his nation to prepare them to deal with כלל ישראל. He tells them that בני ישראל have grown larger, we must be ready “פן ירבה,” lest they multiply and wage war against us.

ומדרשו רוח הקודש אומרת כן אתם! אומרים פן ירבה, ואני אומר כן ירבה” - רש”י שמות א : יב

Rashi in פרעה quotes the מדרש that answered to פרעה's threats by saying, “כן ירבה,” they - the Jewish people - will multiply.

There is another way of understanding this phrase. פרעה said “פן ירבה.” The גמטריא of the name יצחק is 208 or 8 times 26, the גמטריא of the name of Hashem - Yud, Kay, Vov, Kay. The name יעקב is 182 or 7 times 26. The גמטריא of the name יוסף is 156 or 6 times 26.

When פרעה said “פן,” whose גמטריא is 130, he was mistakenly talking about one of the

forementioned leaders whose name would be 5 times 26. Hashem answered him, not “פן” but “כן,” whose גמטריא is 70.

In the beginning of the פרשה the “שבעים נפש” reminds us that 70 “soul” came down to Egypt. Why does it say “נפש” in the singular and not “נפשות” in the plural? Going down to Egypt they may have been 70 separate people, but it was as if they had one soul.

It was this אחדות that would make them worthy of being redeemed. פרעה searched for a leader who would be worthy. Hashem answered him that it was their אחדות rather than their leader that would lead them out of גלות.

Jews may have many differences between themselves, but only with true אחדות will we merit the end of this גלות and see the coming of משיח speedily in our days.

Based on the Divrei Yisroel, Parshas Shemos.

By Rabbi Y Hager

Riddle of the Week

What ברכה is only ever recited on a Wednesday?

Last week's riddle: Is it possible for someone to be a half כהן and half ישראל ?

Answer: Yes. A שפחה (non-Jewish woman slave) is owned by two people, one of the owners frees her, the other does not. After being freed by one of the owners she becomes pregnant and the father is a כהן. When the child is born the שפחה is still owned by one of the owners. Upon being freed by this owner, the boy will be a half כהן from his father and a half ישראל because when an עבד כנעני (non-Jewish slave) is freed, he becomes a ישראל .