



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Parshiyos of Purification

ואֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת וּגְוִי' (שמות א, א)

These are the names of the Children of Yisrael... (*Shemos 1:1*)

Early Torah sources tell us that the weeks beginning with *Parshas Shemos* are called שׁוֹבְבִי"ם *Shovavim Tat*, which is an acronym of the names of the *parshiyos Shemos, Va'Eira, Bo, BeShalach, Yisro, Mishpatim, Terumah, Tetzaveh*. This period is highly suited to purifying our thoughts, and to *teshuvah* for sins connected to our base physical desires and all that they entail.

This is a time of refinement and purification because the Torah calls Egypt כּוּר הַבְּרִזָּל, "the iron crucible," and these are the *parshiyos* that deal with the Jewish people's descent into Egypt and exodus therefrom. *Mitzrayim* was the place where we were refined and purified. Also in our days, the period of

Shovavim Tat provides us with a unique opportunity to attain this same refinement and purification, without the terrible suffering of Egyptian oppression. We accomplish this by *teshuvah, tefilah* and the special type of *avodas Hashem* practiced this period.

Sins connected to gross physical desires, besides being a great barrier to proper *avodas Hashem*, also create strong malicious forces and *mekatregim* that work against a person. *Tzaddikim* say that many traffic accidents and acts of terrorism and other tragic events so common in our times are closely connected to the deterioration in *tzniyus* that has taken place in recent times. *Kedushah* and *taharah* are hard to find these days.

העלון השבוע מוקדש לזכות ידידינו היקר נתנאל בן אסתר הי"ו
שיזכה לזיווג הגון בקרוב ולפרנסה בשפע גדול

These weeks have a special *segulah* for attaining purification and getting rid of all of those *mekatregim*. There are various praiseworthy *minhagim* that many people practice at this time of year, especially on the Thursdays of all these weeks. But without a doubt, the main thing is to work on sanctifying our thoughts and our eyes, and to purify them from sin.

One of the special forms of *avodah* that refines a person's soul, and protects him from all the above-mentioned evils, is *Krias Shema She'al Hamitah*.

Chazal say:

Reciting *Krias Shema* on one's bed is like wielding a double-edged sword.¹

¹ *Berachos* 5a.

Wielding this “sword” strikes down the malicious forces and *mekatregim* that are created by one's evil desires. Therefore, much of a person's success in purifying his heart and mind, and sometimes in all areas of life, depends to a significant extent on *Krias Shema She'al Hamitah*.

Now is the time to work on reciting the entire *Krias Shema She'al Hamitah*, slowly and with *kavanah*, and not to fall asleep before we finish this beautiful and wonderful prayer. This will protect us from unwanted occurrences and from all kinds of *mekatregim*, and Hashem's Oneness will always be our guiding light, to protect us on our way. ●

Getting a Lot in a Short Time

וַיְהִי כִּי יֵרְאוּ הַמַּיִלְדוֹת אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בָּתִּים (שמות א, כא)

Because the midwives feared G-d, He made for them Houses. (*Shemos* 1:21)

“He made for them Houses” – The Houses of *Kehunah*, *Leviyah* and *Malchus*, which are called “Houses.” (*Rashi*)

Yocheved and Miriam, due to their *yiras Shamayim* and self-sacrifice for the Jewish people at the time of Pharaoh's decree, received a tremendous and wondrous reward. Generation upon generation of *Kohanim*, Levites and kings, and even *Mashiach*, will descend from them.

This matter may be compared to a soldier in the army. During peacetime, he doesn't have much opportunity to climb to a higher rank, or to be

rewarded with a medal. But in wartime, he gets the chance to show his valor and bravery. Even in a short war, he could rise to the rank of a high officer.

So it is in the spiritual war. When the whole environment is constantly fighting against a Torah way of life. When in a person's personal *avodah*, everything he tries to do meets with lots of difficulties. This is when we can attain tremendous *madreigos* in a short time!

לְעִלּוֹי נִשְׁמָת

מוֹהַ"ד מִשֵּׁה בֶן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְבוֹהָר זצ"ל

וּמוֹהַ"ד בְּרוּךְ זַאב בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קְדוּסָא זצ"ל

גִּרְבַת נְכֻדִים ~ עֲטַרְת זְקִנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְתַפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם

One example is reciting *berachos* over food and drink. We all recite dozens of *berachos* during the course of the day, many of which we might rush through, or say without *kavanah*. But the Arizal spoke emphatically about the importance of *berachos*. This is because the food we eat provides us with life, and when the *berachah* is not recited over it properly, impurity can get into a person's body and soul, which leads to a lot of evils and tragedies.

The opposite is true, as well. When we recite our *berachos* properly, and with *kavanah*, this rectifies great and lofty matters, and draws down Heavenly

blessing to us and the whole world.

When we hear about this subject, our natural reaction might be: "But who actually does that?" or "It's too hard to change" or "Come on, it's not possible to live like this." But in fact, it's just a matter of getting into the habit. If a person fights for it, and tries tenaciously again and again, he will get special help from Above. Because it is so hard, because so many people make light of it, Hashem will give you special *siyata d'Shmaya*.

We can thereby attain a lofty spiritual level, and merit eternal *kedushah* for ourselves and for our generations after us. ●



Hashem's Firstborn Child

כֹּה אָמַר ה' בְּנִי בְכוֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל. (שמות ד, כב)

Thus said Hashem: "Yisrael is My firstborn son." (Shemos 4:22)

When *Moshe Rabbeinu* first came to Pharaoh, he was confronted by a question: "Who is *Hashem* that I should listen to Him?" The first word Moshe said in response to this was בני בכורי ישראל – "Yisrael is My firstborn son."

What message was this meant to convey?

Hashem was telling Pharaoh, so to speak: You better beware, because you have started up with My Yankeleh, with My dear child whom I love!

Let's say a small child aggravates Reuven, and Reuven slaps him. Then someone comes up to Reuven and lets him know that the child's father is a policeman. Now Reuven is pretty worried. If someone would have told him that before, he wouldn't have touched the child.

This is what Moshe was saying to Pharaoh: Watch out, because the people you are oppressing is G-d's beloved child!

And how much does a parent love his child? As we know, it is an incredibly powerful love.

For instance, we sometimes hear of a very wealthy

person who bought a present worth thousands of dollars for a friend. This is a very nice gift, no question about it. But I know someone who paid \$15,000 just for the flowers when his daughter got married; you can imagine how much the wedding itself cost. I also know a wealthy family whose son had an eye disease, and they spent close to a million dollars to heal it. The amount of money a person is willing to invest in his children is inestimable.

It does happen that when a child comes home, and wants to talk to his father, that the father might say, "I'm sorry, I don't have time for you right now." But if that same child would be suffering severe stomach pain, his father would find the time to take him to the doctor, and if it turns out to be an advanced case of appendicitis, he will rush with him to the hospital, and sit by his bedside after the operation. Because a parent's love for his child is so great and so deep that it knows no limits.

This is exactly how it is with *Hashem's* love for His people Yisrael. It is simply endless. ●

וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לְוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת בַּת לְוִי. (שמות ב, א)

A man from the House of Levi went and married the daughter of Levi. (*Shemos* 2:1)

Their Names are Hidden

There is a fascinating point here about *Geulas Mitzrayim*.

First we need to know who the Torah is actually talking about in this story: Amram, Moshe's father, was the *Gedol Hador*. His wife Yocheved was the most distinguished and elderly woman of that generation. She was 123 years old. She was the daughter of Levi and the granddaughter of *Yaakov Avinu*. And her daughter Miriam was a prophetess. The Torah testified about Yocheved and Miriam that they were G-d-fearing: וַתִּירָאן הַמִּילְדוֹת אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים – “The midwives feared G-d.”¹

Yet, surprisingly enough, when the Torah recounts the coming to the world of *Moshe Rabbeinu*, the great *go'el* of the Jewish people, it does not say that Amram went and married Yocheved. The Torah tells the story in a generic manner without names. It says that “a man went,” as if it was an ordinary, unknown person, just one of the people. And it says that “he married the daughter of Levi,” leaving his wife unnamed. Similarly, it says about *Moshe Rabbeinu's* famous sister Miriam וַתִּצַּב מֵרְחוֹק – “His sister stood at a distance,” failing to mention that this was Miriam the Prophetess.

Even regarding *Moshe Rabbeinu* himself, the Torah glosses over all his glorious names mentioned in the *Midrash* – Tuvia, Avigdor, Chever, Yekusiel and more – and just calls him by the simple name granted him by Basya, daughter of Pharaoh (whose name is also not mentioned in the *pasuk*). She called him מֹשֶׁה, “Moshe,” because מִן הַמַּיִם מִשִּׁיתִּיהוּ – “because I pulled him out of the water.” It is as if

Moshe is called “pulled out.” A child without a name, just a rescuee.

This requires explanation. Why did the Torah conceal the names of everyone involved in redeeming the Jewish people from Egypt?

Our Fearless Leader

The question is the answer. We are talking here about the story of the *Geulah*, and the *Geulah* was worked by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Himself. This is why no other names are mentioned.

By way of contrast, let's consider how most political revolutions take place. In most countries that underwent a major national revolution, you will find that at the center of the action stands a famous hero, or group of heroes, who bravely and fearlessly stood up against strong kings and dictators, thus dramatically redeeming the nation from its suffering. And their memory is then immortalized as the saviors and gallant heroes of the people.

Let's take American history as an example. George Washington, who was the founding father, raised the flag and publicly declared rebellion against the Crown. He was followed by a mass of people who announced that they will no longer pay taxes to colonial England: “No taxation without representation.” In the middle of the night, the armed rebellion began. They sunk ships and fought trained armies until in the end they succeeded in overthrowing British rule and establishing the United States of America. Until this day, George Washington is considered the founding father.

This is how revolutions usually take place.

The Exodus from Egypt was exactly the opposite.

¹ *Shemos* 1:17.

When the Torah tells us about the “national revolution” of our people, it says that there was an anonymous man who married an anonymous woman, and they had a child, and that child had a sister, and when the child grew up, he received a mission from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* to go to Pharaoh.

Hashem said to him, “Go, I will send you to Pharaoh, and bring My people the Children of Yisrael out of Egypt.” Moshe refuses, saying, “Who am I to go to Pharaoh?” “I am not a man of words.” “I stutter and don’t speak well.” *Hashem* promises him, “I will be with you.” “Go, and I will be with your mouth, and I will instruct you what to say.”

In the end, Moshe and Aharon take all the elders of Yisrael with them to Pharaoh and request that he release the people. On the way to Pharaoh, the elders slip away one after another, until Moshe and Aharon alone come to Pharaoh and present their request that he let the Israelites go.

And what was Pharaoh’s response?

“Who is *Hashem* that I should listen to Him and send out Yisrael? I don’t know Who *Hashem* is, and I also will not release Yisrael.”

Not only that, but Pharaoh decided to make the burden of slavery even heavier. He stopped supplying straw to his Jewish construction workers and still demanded the same number of bricks to be produced daily. He just oppressed them more.

Pharaoh thought they were just getting lazy, and that is why they wanted to go out to the wilderness for a few days of “worship.” So he tried to keep them so busy and so burdened that they won’t have time for this kind of “nonsense.”

Moshe sees what is happening, and says to *Hashem*, “Why did You make it worse for this

people? Why did You send me? Since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he worsened the condition of this people, and You surely did not rescue Your people.”

So goes the “dramatic” story of the “national independence movement” of the Jewish people.

Now, after it was made clear how helpless the people were and how powerless their leaders were, *Hashem* then said to Moshe, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. He will send them out because of My strong hand. Because of My strong hand, he will drive them out of his land.”

Now you will see – עתה תראה. Because now, after you saw that you can get nothing to happen on your own, that all your efforts just made it worse, now you will see clearly “what I will do to Pharaoh.” Only I, *Hashem*, will do it. “I, and not an angel. I, and not a messenger.” The *Geulah* of the Jewish people will come only from *Hashem* Himself.

So when the Torah tells the story of the Exodus, the leader of the redemption is nameless, as is his father and his mother and his sister and the one who saved him from drowning in the Nile. None of them is expressly named. If it would have been written that Amram went and married Yocheved, who gave birth to Yekusiel, or to Avigdor (these are some of the dignified names of Moshe), and it would have been written that Miriam stood there to watch over his floating cradle, and that Basya pulled him out of the water, we would have made some sort of memorial for their leading roles in the *Geulah*.

But the Torah does not write any of these names. Because when it comes to the *Geulah*-revolution of the Jewish people, no one plays a role. Only *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* came and took us out of *Mitzrayim* Himself. ●