



## Parshat Shemot- Acquiring Anonymity

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Sefer Shemot begins by recording the names of all of Bnei Yisroel who descended to Egypt and continues by recording the steps in the enslavement of our people. It then moves on to relate the birth of Moshe. Interestingly, however, it does not mention who the parents were or any name for this extraordinary baby.

First, it is important to note that the lineage back to Levi is significant, as the Torah records, "A man went forth from the house of Levi and he took a daughter of Levi." Levi was the son of Yaakov who had been groomed for a holy occupation of teaching Bnei Yisroel, and as such, he felt deep guilt for his role in the sale of Yosef. As the *Chikrei Lev* points out, Levi named his three sons in recognition of the exile that was precipitated by this sale. His daughter Yocheved also bears a name that will bring honor back to Hashem (Y-V *kavod*) to repair the desecration of His name incurred through the sale of Yosef. She was the midwife would "fear the Lord" and refuse to kill the newborn infant boys. And she was born just prior to entering Egypt proper, still free of the magnetic pull that the Egyptian culture and enslavement had on all who live there. She would conceive the cure for the

scourge of the future enslavement.

Rav Pincus explains the odd omission of names. This is the story of the redemption. We should not mistakenly think that Moshe was the redeemer. We must recognize that only Hashem is the true Redeemer. Even Pharaoh himself must come to recognize that this Hashem Whom he did not recognize is the true Master of the world. Do not think, continues Rav Pincus, that only in that generation were we enslaved in narrow, difficult places. Each of us has our own challenges and difficulties, our own *meitzorim/mitzrayim*, narrow straits. We too must recognize that our only true Redeemer is Hashem, and we need to cry out to Him for help just as our ancestors did in Egypt. But we have to be willing to make the changes necessary so that we are ready for salvation. This readiness to change was a major stumbling block for the majority of the Israelites. Only twenty percent actually left Egypt. Our redemption does not lie in wallowing in our misery, but in working to move forward from wherever we are.

Rav Dinner explains that Moshe was mostly

raised in Pharaoh's palace. The teaching of his biological parents could only have been minimal, whatever he absorbed in the two years before he was weaned. But during that limited time, they were able to give him a sense of his roots as a member of the tribe of Levi. He could sense that he had an exalted mission. That was enough to begin the journey that would ultimately lead him to become the leader of the Jewish people. Nevertheless, the later encouragement of his parents was necessary for Moshe to achieve his full potential says Rav Moshe Feinstein. Amram and Yocheved's names are not connected to Moshe until so much later in his life to teach us that parents need to encourage their children throughout their life. Even in adulthood, they can reach greater potential and should be encouraged to continue striving upward.

Rabbi Orlovec presents us with guidelines to help our children grow: Establish a close relationship before criticizing; offer positive advice when noticing negative behavior; and find times to praise more often than criticize. Let us pray that Hashem give us the wisdom to help our children achieve their full potential.

## The Book of Shemot- Part 1

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

Why did Hashem give us the five books of the Torah when He could have given us all the information in one book? Each *chumash* is a distinct unit with its unique theme. The Midrash in *Bereishit* tells us that on the first day of creation the word *ohr*, light, is mentioned five times corresponding to the five *chumashim*. Light enables us to see things the way they are. This is also what the Torah does for us. It gives us an understanding of life and guides us on the straight and true path. The Midrash explains that "Yehi *ohr*," corresponds to *Bereishit* because Hashem occupied Himself with the creation of the world. How can we understand this? The story of creation is only one chapter of the entire book! What does creation have to do with *ohr*? The Midrash continues, "Vayehi *ohr*" corresponds to *Shemot* because in this book the Jewish people came out from darkness to light. This too is puzzling. The Exodus only

covers a small segment of *Sefer Shemot*.

The sages call *Sefer Bereishit* by the name *Sefer Yetzirah*, the book of creation, because the entire book is about creation. Rav Tzadok Hachohen explains that Hashem created the world in order to bestow His light upon us and give of His goodness. We are meant to bring the world to its purpose by spreading *kavod shamayim* (Hashem's honor). Divinity is compared to light. The story of creation is the creation of beings who would absorb this light. Adam and Chava were the perfect vessels. But after Adam sinned, he lost that level of perfection. Most of the people who lived in the generations that followed either turned to evil or did not develop themselves enough to be able to absorb Hashem's radiance. The *avot* too still had to go through a process of selection. Avraham had Yishmael and Yitzchak had Esav. Only when Yaakov's twelve sons

proved worthy did an entire select group come together. Each son was unique but together they formed the nucleus of a nation that would bring the world to its destiny.

We can say the book of *Bereishit* deals with creation from beginning to end. First there was physical creation and then the formation of the people who were meant to bring this creation to its purpose.

The Ramban explains that the *vav* in "V'aila *shemot bnei Yisrael*," connects the two *chumashim*, *Bereishit* and *Shemot*. *Bereishit* speaks about the physical creation of the world and the *avot* who set the spiritual DNA for future generations. They planted the seeds and formed the roots of the Jewish people. *Sefer Shemot* is the outcome of the foundation laid by the *avot*. It is the tree that grew from these roots.

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We would think the exile ended with *yetziat Mitzrayim*, but in fact it did not. It was only when the Jewish people built the Tabernacle and the Divine Presence dwelt among them, that they were truly redeemed. A *merkava* is a vehicle that transfers something from one place to another. Very great people are the chariot of the Divine Presence. Wherever they go the *Shechina* goes with them. When we sanctify ourselves to the point where Hashem can dwell within us we've achieved redemption and the purpose of creation. The book of

*Shemot* concludes with the building of the *mishkan* and the fact that the presence of Hashem was there always.

The book of *Bereishit* ends with 70 people going down to *Mitzrayim*. The Ohr Gedalyahu explains that the number 70 represents the concept of totality, the full development of something. 10 is the basis of our counting. We need 10 for a minyan, for the Divine Presence to rest on the group. There are 7 *middot* that have to be perfected.  $7 \times 10 = 70$ . The 70

people that went down to Egypt correspond to the 70 nations of the world. Each nation has a different spiritual potential but they did not develop it in the way the Jewish people did. Our job is to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and to bring the nations closer to Hashem. By developing our potential to the fullest we can become vessels of light. When all of us as individuals do this, then the Jewish nation as a whole will be able to draw down the presence of the *Shechina* and bring the redemption closer.

## Inner Dimensions of Choseness

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

When Yaakov wanted to reveal to his children the secret of the end of time, the *Shechina* departed from him. He began to worry, thinking that perhaps one of his children had left the path of his tradition. The twelve tribes responded by reciting *Shema Yisrael*. They meant to say, "Just as you know in your heart that there is only one Hashem, we also know." Yaakov immediately said, "Blessed is the name of the honor of His kingdom forever." The Maharal explains that the ultimate redemption will happen when we prevail over Esav. Both Esav and Yaakov were people of spirit who yearned to fill a deficiency. Yaakov could fill it with *mitzvot*. Esav had nowhere to take it. Therefore, his desire turned destructive. Yaakov could see to the end. He could see what redemption actually was because his primary attachment was to spirituality.

To get past the outside to the inner reality of life takes an enormous amount of will power. Psychologist Victor Frankl observed that people who had an external sense of self fell apart in the concentration camps. Those with an internal sense of self held on. Most of us are a mixture of the external and the internal. Our identities move from here to there all the time. The ability to relate to this world while remaining true to our internal self is part of our struggle. Avraham went to the extreme and

gave everything to Hashem. Yitzchak too went to the extreme by giving himself up for Hashem. Yaakov achieved a balanced medium. The Michtav M'El'yahu points out that Esav took his portion in this world and Yaakov took the next world. When Yaakov came back from Lavan's house, Esav saw his wives, children, and animals. He asked, "Didn't we make up that I should have this world and you'll have the next? Why do you have all this?" Yaakov said, "Hashem gave me this as a means to an end, not to gain pleasure from it." All of this world's sweetness is a conduit to a closer connection to Hashem.

Yaakov looked at the world and saw the whole picture. This is what is meant that Yaakov's imprint is on the divine throne. He saw *emet*, the ultimate revelation of truth. But to simply tell it to someone isn't possible. One must live it. Therefore Yaakov couldn't reveal the secret of the *ketz* to his children. The tribes weren't entirely ready.

The Maharal explains that each tribe had a different function. The breakdown of the tribes follow the word *echad* (one). *Aleph* is Levi who had the unique role of transmitting the *mesorah*. The letter *chet* represents the 8 sons of the *imahot* Rachel and Leah. The letter *daled* represents the four sons of the maidservants.

Yaakov was *echad*, one, the unifying personality. The human body has twelve observable limbs, which correspond to the twelve leaders of the soul or the twelve main ways of knowing truth. This defined the tribes as the *shivtei kah*. Each of them saw Yaakov's sense of unity through his own lens. Levi drew them all together. This is why the *kohen gadol* wore the breastplate. Each gem paralleled a different tribe and had a different color. Each tribe had his own way of absorbing Hashem's light. When Yaakov said, "*Baruch shem kavod...*" he was blessing Hashem in the way He can be identified in truth through every prism in every situation. However, the tribes couldn't see this. They only saw a segment of the picture.

*Kedusha* means keeping separate from physical engrossment and focused on purpose. Yaakov was holy because he wasn't held down by any form of physical attachment. We are commanded in the Torah, "*Kedoshim tiheyu.*" We have the ability, like Yaakov, to elevate every aspect of this world to Hashem. This is the basis of our choseness. Yaakov wanted to reveal this truth, the ultimate end of things, so that the redemption would come. But he couldn't give the tribes what they didn't have yet. Thus Hashem is still somewhat unknowable. And wherever there's lack there is still exile.