



Parshat Shemot: Fundamentals of Hashem's Chesed

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The midrash says that at the time of the exodus, the Jewish people were at the 49th level of impurity. They didn't deserve to be redeemed. Yet Hashem appeared to Moshe and said He would take them out of the land. Rabbe Yochanan maintains that the angel Michael was the angel who delivered G-d's message because he represents *chesed* (kindness). Rabbe Chanina disagrees and says it was the angel Gavriel who signifies *din* (judgment).

The Shem Mishmuel explains that the Jewish people were in fact redeemed with both *chesed* and *din*. They didn't deserve to be saved. Hashem acted beyond logic with beneficence, much like a father's instinctual love for his son. Although the angels didn't protest during the exodus, they did put up an argument at the Red Sea. At that time, *chesed* transformed into *din*. The angels objected, "Both the Jews and the Egyptians worship idols, why are you preferring the Jews?" The Jews needed to be worthy of the miracles, and indeed Hashem waited until they jumped into the sea before he split the waters. Once they deserved the miracles, the attribute of *din* was activated in their favor.

Even *chesed* has to have some reasonable

basis. Otherwise it's misplaced. The Jewish people were at the 49th level of impurity. Yet at their deepest core, they were still holy. Hashem understood that this inner spark would emerge after the redemption. In exile, they were spiritually and physically enslaved. All they could think about was surviving. Therefore, Hashem sent the angel Gavriel who symbolized strict justice to punish the Egyptians. When the Jews could finally breathe freely, their latent holiness rose to the surface.

Hashem created the world with a combination of *din* and *chesed*. At first there was *din*. Hashem put limits upon himself (*tzimzum*) to make space for the world to come into existence. Then he poured forth his *chesed*. Similarly, the exodus was a kind of creation ex-nihilo. A holy nation arose from a band of shattered slaves. *Chesed*, Hashem's generosity, took us out of the 49th level and brought us to Sinai.

The Shem Mishmuel notes that the exodus will be a model for the future redemption. It too will be a melding of *chesed* and *din*. Hashem waits for us to be worthy. When we repent, we will be redeemed immediately.

When Moshe asked Paro to release the Jews, he increased their suffering. Moshe complained to Hashem, "Why did you send me?" Hashem responded enigmatically, "Now you will see that Paro will send them out and I will redeem them." Why did He send Moshe on a failed mission?

When Moshe first came, the Jews' hopes were raised. They began to think that perhaps they would be redeemed. But when Paro rejected Moshe's request, they reverted back to their old ways. There was a seeming accusation in heaven. Perhaps the Jews weren't worthy to be redeemed. When Moshe said, "You are preventing the nation from serving Hashem," Paro countered, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to him?" Then the mission changed from redeeming the Jews to defending the honor of Hashem's name. This was the basis of Hashem's *chesed*.

This will also be the foundation of the future redemption. It may very well be that the Jews won't deserve to be redeemed, but Hashem will perform miracles for the sake of His name. At the end of Avinu Malkeinu, we say "*Asei imanu tzedaka va'chesed*." Please perform for us justice and kindness.

Parshat Shemot: The Inner Inn Experience

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

In parshat Shemot, Rashi quotes a Gemara which describes an argument between Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Yosi. Rabbi Yehoshua held that Moshe deserved death for neglecting to circumcise his son Eliezer. Rabbi Yosi disagreed and claimed that Moshe wasn't guilty. Rather he had a perplexing problem. If he performed the *brit* he would have to wait three days before returning to Egypt. Therefore he concluded that his first duty was to fulfill Hashem's command and travel back to Egypt. Then he could attend to the circumcision. However Moshe still deserved punishment because when he arrived in Egypt he went to look for a lodging place before circumcising Eliezer. He should have done the *mitzvah* right away. The Gemara says that an angel in the guise of a snake swallowed Moshe from his head to his hips. Tziporah immediately took a sharp stone and circum-

life.

Why was Moshe so severely punished for delaying to do a *mitzvah*? Rav Leib Chasman explains that if one looks in the parsha at the section that recounts the story, we find something astounding. There are two people described there as deserving of death – the wicked king, Pharaoh and Moshe Rabbeinu, the *tzaddik* whom Hashem appointed to redeem the people. How do we reconcile this? *Chazal* say that Hashem judges righteous people like a hairs breadth. On Moshe's sublime level he was negligent in not doing the *mitzvah* as quickly as possible. Therefore the Torah says he was worthy of death.

Rav Wolbe writes that we learn a great lesson here. Moshe was engaged in a mission of cosmic importance. He was chosen to liberate

Yet all these critical aspects could not prevail over the performance of one of Hashem's *mitzvot*. If Moshe indeed exhibited a weakness in his personal service of Hashem, then Hashem was ready to cancel his entire mission. As sublime as our objectives may be, they can never justify committing errors to achieve them. Hashem doesn't overlook any failures even those of his faithful servants. This is diametrically opposite to today's society where people only care about the externals of public figures and not what they do in their private lives. The Torah's view is different. Being a great Torah leader is not about charisma or oratorical skills. It's about who you are as a person and what you strive to achieve to attain inner perfection and closeness to Hashem.



The Women of Egypt and the Desert #10

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The Gemara and the Midrashim call Paro's daughter, Batya, meaning the daughter of Hashem. The *yud* and the *heh* at the end of her name spell the name of Hashem. With this name, He reveals Himself as above all reality but still within this world.

What inspired her to extend her hand when the basket holding baby Moshe was clearly beyond her reach? She couldn't bear to see his suffering. She is an example of someone who exerted super human efforts and was helped from above. We learn from this episode that if we try our best, we often receive far more than anticipated.

Miriam was the leader of the Jewish women. Rashi says she taught the women Torah just as Moshe taught the men. Women have a different way of understanding and grasping Torah, hence they needed a woman to teach them. In the Zohar it says that parallel to the heavenly Torah academy for men, women will learn Torah from Miriam and Batya.

Miriam had enormous spiritual depth and vision. She waged battle against evil, which is what her name connotes. When she left Egypt there was so little time, yet she made sure to pack her instruments. Her faith was so strong that she was sure they would need it.

Tzipora was Moshe's wife. Tzipora means a bird. Her nature was to soar above the mundane. She was the perfect wife for Moshe. They were both people of great spiritual transcendence similar to each other and dissimilar to other people. Moshe elevated himself to the point that he was in a state of continued readiness to receive prophecy. He had to separate from his wife.

Miriam couldn't understand this because her level of prophecy was different than his. The conclusion Miriam reached wasn't that Moshe's prophecy was unique, but that there was something inherently lacking in his relationship. Consequently, she was stricken with *tzaraat*, a skin illness. Skin, the largest organ of the body, creates a separation between one person and another. When a person sees another in a diminished way, he becomes in a certain sense lifeless or unimportant.

Although Miriam clearly meant what she said for Moshe's benefit, she was punished severely. *Tzaddikim* are penalized for infractions as fine as a single hair. *Tzadikim* desire closeness and an intense relationship with Hashem that isn't blocked by any faults. Suffering purifies their flaws.

In the desert narrative, we read about Korach's wife. Korach had enormous potential. He could have been the *Levi Gadol*. The Levites had to go through a unique ritual which involved shaving off all their body hair in order to give them a feeling of being one unit. Korach's wife told her husband, "You're a nobody, you're just a number, there's no difference between you and the next Levi. Look how Moshe turned you into nothing. He did it to keep his own position. Why are you putting up with this?" She egged him on which ultimately led to their doom.

In marriage, a husband provides and the wife must take what he gives and turn it into something greater. When the wife sees her husband trying to provide, she feels beloved. When he sees his will actualized in the highest sense, he feels respected. This is how a marriage grows. Korach's wife corrupted her husband's desire to be something. She is the

epitome of an evil wife.

In contrast, On ben Pelet's wife didn't argue with her husband. She didn't disparage his dreams and desires. Instead she said, "Either way, whether Moshe or Korach leads, you won't come out on top anyway." It was clear to him that his wife was acting with his best interests in mind. He went inside the tent and she sat in the doorway blocking the entrance. That is how she saved him.

Man is compared to dough. The soul is water and the body is flour. The body is the wife of the soul. Our yearning self which is called *ruach* is meant to rule the nefesh, the part of us that's connected to this world. A good body takes what the soul offers, builds with it, and turn it into something. The soul says, "I want connection." The body actualizes it by performing *mitzvot*. The body is meant to uplift the soul, to give it credence and credibility, not to disparage it.

We've looked at three paradigms of great women. The woman who is known for what her husband becomes, the woman who is known for what her children become, and the woman who is known for what she herself becomes.

The influence of careerism is touching the observant community. In today's society, self-actualization is idealized. It's wrong to say, "Who I am to my family has nothing to do with my true self." From the Torah's perspective, these three women are in fact one. Your imprint, who you are, shines through in how you succeed in affecting others.