

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of Northwood United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT SHEMOT

DVAR TORAH: ENERGY FOR REDEMPTION

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai teaches us (Shabbat 118b) that if the Jewish people would just properly keep two Shabbatot they would immediately be redeemed. How does this work? Why does Shabbat have this seemingly magical power?

Another question: the Midrash tells us that when Yosef passed away, the Jewish people stopped keeping brit milah, wanting to imitate the Egyptians. The Egyptians' previous love for the children of Israel transformed into hatred and they began the process of subjugation, shibud Mitzrayim. What happened to the Jewish people when Yosef died? Why the change?

The Shem Mishmuel, in his first essay on our parshah, explains, by positing the following three assumptions:

1. Serving Hashem demands a high energy level – joy, simchah, and zrizut, energy – get up and go, the life force. We can often observe this high energy level in great tzadikim, serving Hashem energetically even when elderly – they're full of this boundless energy that makes it difficult for younger people to keep up with them.
2. Yosef was the man of energy – עוד יוסף חי – The Torah describes Yosef as “alive”. Yosef's energy was connected to his personal purity and modesty, for he protected the precious life force G-d gave all of us.
3. Yosef was a living model of energy to the Jews in Egypt, radiating it to his people.

After his death, the people didn't pick up the slack, and lapsed into a low energy life, and that manifested itself in their discontinuing brit milah. The Egyptians then, exploiting our weakness, very energetically began to enslave us: ויקם מלך חדש על מצרים אשר לא ידע את יוסף – a new king, with the power of renewal arose, who didn't know Yosef.

Galut, exile is associated with our lack of positive spiritual energy – תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב – as a result of our not serving Hashem with joy and a good heart – with energy, our enemies take control (Devarim 28:47).

This explains the power of Shabbat.

Shabbat, when we return back to our source of life, when each Jew receives a נשמה יתירה – extra soul power, is a source of spiritual energy. If the Jews, says Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, would only properly keep two Shabbatot, we would immediately have the energy for redemption. We could then reverse the process, moving from the lack of energy that brought about exile to the energetic level of service of Hashem that can bring about our redemption.

Shabbat Shalom!

SOURCE GUIDE: MOSHE - & MIRIAM

Moshe & Aharon first appear in the beginning of Shemot and, for almost forty years, worked as a team to lead the people of Israel through the desert. The following four sources should serve as food for thought about Moshe and Aharon's relationship:

A. Brothers:

<p>1. Midrash Rabbah Shemot 5:1 "Hashem said to Aharon, 'Go towards Moshe in the desert'" (Shemot 4:27). This is what the following verse refers to: "If only you would be given to me as a brother" (Shir Hashirim 8:1). What brother is this referring to? If you'll tell me it is one like Cain, isn't it written, "Cain came up against his brother Abel and killed him" (Bereishit 4:)? If you'll tell me it is one like Yishmael haven't we been taught that Yishmael hates Yitzchak? If you'll tell me it is one like Eisav, isn't it written, "Eisav hates Yaakov" (Bereishit 27:)? If you'll tell me it is like Yosef's brothers, isn't it written, "They hated him" and "They were jealous of him" (Bereishit 37:)? Rather it is like Yosef to Binyamin. "Nursing from the breasts of my mother" – It is like Moshe to Aharon, as it says, "He went and met him at the Mountain of God and kissed him" (Shemot).</p>	<p>מדרש רבה שמות ה:א "ויאמר ה' אל אהרן לך לקראת משה המדברה" הה"ד (שיר ח) "מי יתנך כאח לי." באיזה אח הכתוב מדבר? אם תאמר בקיין והוא כתיב (בראשית ד) ויקם קין אל הבל אחיו ויהרגו, אם תאמר כישמעאל ליצחק הא גרסינן ישמעאל שונא ליצחק, אם תאמר כעשו ליעקב הא כתיב (שם כז) וישטם עשו את יעקב, אם תאמר כאחי יוסף והכתיב (שם לו) וישנאו אותו וכתיב ויקנאו בו אחיו, אלא כיוסף לבנימין. "יונק שדי אמ"י - כמשה לאהרן שנאמר "וילך ויפגשוהו בהר האלהים וישק לו."</p>
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Here is the verse in Shir Hashirim the Midrash is based on:

<p>2. Shir Hashirim 8:1 If only you would be as a brother to me, nursing from the breasts of my mother. I would find you outside and kiss you, and they would not mock me."</p>	<p>שיר השירים ח:א מִי יִתְּנֶךָ כְּאָח לִי יוֹנֵק שְׂדֵי אִמִּי אֶמְצְאֶךָ בְּחוּץ אֶשְׁקֶךָ גַּם לֹא יְבֹזוּ לִי:</p>
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One of the main themes of the book of Bereishit is sibling rivalry. Cain killed Abel, Yishmael hated Yitzchak, and Eisav hated Yaakov. It takes four parshiot for Yosef and his brothers to unite. And, as Rabbi Mendel Farber points out, whereas Menasheh and Efraim and not jealous of each other, we do not see them working together. Moshe and Aharon are the first and central great brother-brother partnership in the Torah.

B. Meeting in the Desert

That loving partnership is expressed when the two meet in the wilderness (Shemot 4:27), but it is not a meeting of identical siblings, but of complementary but very different forces:

<p>3. Midrash Rabbah Shemot 5:10 "He (Aharon) went to meet him (Moshe)" – this is what is referred to by "Lovingkindness (<i>chesed</i>) and truth met; justice (or, righteousness) and peace kissed" (Tehillim 85:11). Chesed is Aharon, as it says, "He said to Levi: Your Urim Vetumim go to your man of chesed" (Devarim 33); and truth is Moshe, as it says, "My servant Moshe is not like those [he is trustworthy (the word <i>neeman</i> includes the root for truthfulness)]" (Bamidbar 12) ... Justice is Moshe, as it says, "He did God's justice" (Devarim 33); and peace is Aharon, as it says, "With peace and uprightness he walked with Me" (Malachi 2). "They (justice and peace) kissed" – each was happy with the others greatness.</p>	<p>מדרש רבה שמות ה: י וילך ויפגשוהו הה"ד (תהלים פה) חסד ואמת נפגשו צדק ושלוש נשקו חסד זה אהרן שנאמר (דברים לג) וללוי אמר תומיך ואוריך לאיש חסידך ואמת זה משה שנאמר (במדבר יב) לא כן עבדי משה וגו' ... צדק זה משה שנאמר (דברים לג) צדקת ה' עשה ושלוש זה אהרן שנאמר (מלאכי ב) בשלום ובמישור הלך אתי נשקו ... מהו וישק לו זה שמח בגדולתו של זה וזה שמח בגדולתו של זה ...</p>
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- See the continuation of that Midrash where Rabbi Azaryah identifies Moshe with chesed and Aharon with truth.
- See Rashi on Devarim 34:8, where the contrast between Moshe and Aharon is highlighted during their mourning periods.
- See also Sanhedrin 6b, where Moshe and Aharon are contrasted in conjunction with different approaches to dealing with interpersonal conflicts in the legal system.

C. Moshe & Aharon, Aharon & Moshe

Despite their differences, both in personality and roles, Chazal see them as equals:

<p>2. Tosefta Kritot 4:7 Rabbi Shimon said: The creation of the Heavens precedes that of the earth, in every place except for one, where it says, “On the day Hashem the God made earth and Heaven,” (Bereishit 2) to teach you that they are equal to each other. Avraham precedes the other forefathers, in every place except for one, where it says, “I will remember My covenant with Yaakov ...” (Vayikra 26) to teach you that they are equal to each other. Moshe precedes Aharon in every place except for one, where it says, “He is Aharon and Moshe” (Shemot 5) to teach you that they are equal to each other. Yehoshu precedes Kalev in every place except for one, where it says, “Except for Kalev son of Yefuneh the Knizi and Yehoshua son of Nun” (Bamidbar 14) to teach you that they are equal to each other.</p>	<p>תוספתא מסכת כריתות פרק ד:ז ר"ש אומר בכ"מ הקדים בריאת שמים לארץ במקום אחד הוא אומר (בראשית ב) ביום עשות ה' אלהים ארץ ושמים מלמד ששקולין זה כזה. בכל מקום הקדים אברהם לאבות במקום א' הוא אומר (ויקרא כו) וזכרתי את בריתי יעקוב וגו' מלמד ששקולין זה כזה שלשתן. בכל מקום הקדים משה לאהרן במקום אחד הוא אומר (שמות ה) הוא אהרן ומשה מלמד ששקולין זה כזה. בכל מקום הקדים יהושע לכלב במקום אחד הוא אומר (במדבר יד) בלתי כלב בן יפונה הקנזי ויהושע בן נון מלמד ששניהן שקולין זה כזה:</p>
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See the Torah Temimah on Shemot 6:26, who explores the seeming contradiction between this passage in the Tosefta and another in Megilla 3:13. He also deals with the most obvious difficulty: Doesn't the Torah say that Moshe was the most humble person and the greatest prophet that ever lived?

D. Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam

The picture above is incomplete. It is not just two brothers who led the Jewish people out of Egypt and through the desert, but two brothers and a sister:

<p>2. Michah 6:4 (21) Naftali will be placed on good land; his lot and inheritance will produce fruit that they will thank and bless over.</p>	<p>מיכה ו:ד פי העלתי ממצרים ומבית עבדים פדיתיה ואשלח לפניך את משה אהרן ומרים:</p>
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The Targum on that verse expands, probably inspired by Miriam's leading the women at the Yam Suf:

<p>2. Targum Yonatan on Michah 6:4 For I took you out of the land of Egypt and from the house of bondage, and I sent before you three prophets: Moshe to teach and give over the laws; Aharon to atone for the nation; and Miriam to guide the women.</p>	<p>תרגום יונתן על מיכה פרק ו פסוק ד (ד) ארי אסיקתך מארעא דמצרים ומבית עבדותא פרקתך ושלחית קדמך תלתא נביין משה לאלפא מסירת דינין אהרן לכפרא על עמא ומרים לאוראה לנשיא:</p>
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The three Divine gifts in the desert were in the merit of these three siblings: the miraculous well in the merit of Miriam, the clouds of Glory in Aharon's merit, and the manna in the merit of Moshe.

WOMEN WARRIORS BY RABBI AVRAHAM FISCHER

One word that is repeated throughout the saga of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt is לענות, “to afflict.” In the original prophecy to Avraham, Hashem said: וענו אותם -- *they shall afflict them* (Bereshit 15:13).

Then, when the Israelites: *were fruitful, and teemed, and increased, and became very, very strong; and the land became filled with them* (Shemot 1:7).

Pharaoh fears them as a potential fifth column. He declares that their rampant growth must be stopped, and initiates a policy of persecution. Again the word לענות appears: *And they appointed tax collectors over them, למען ענותו – in order to afflict them with their burdens* (11).

What is the aim of לענות?

To answer this, Chizkuni (R. Chizkiya ben Manoach, 13th century) quotes the oath that Lavan administered to Yaakov:

ואם תענה – *You will not afflict my daughters* (Bereshit 31:50).

This means that Yaakov would not deprive his wives of marital relations. Similarly, says Chizkuni, Pharaoh’s plan for Bnei Yisrael is to so exhaust them by their toils as to enforce celibacy upon them, and thereby impede their population explosion. In the Haggadah as well, the word ענינו is explained as “the disruption of marital relations.”

Hashem had promised, however, that Bnei Yisrael would become numerous in Egypt (Bereshit 46:3), and so

As much as יענו -- they would afflict them, so would they increase (12).

When an intensified workload is of no avail, Pharaoh commands the secret killing of the Israelite baby boys, who could grow up to be soldiers; the girls, he assumes, would not fight.

Again, Pharaoh is wrong. The midwives Shifrah and Puah save all the babies,

and the people increased and became very strong (20),

and Moshe, the liberator of Bnei Yisrael, is born (chapter 2).

Pharaoh sought to defeat Bnei Yisrael on the “battlefield” of fruitfulness. And it is the women, whom Pharaoh did not fear, who prove themselves the most stalwart of Israel’s warriors.

This issue is dedicated in memory of
Pesach Ben Avraham z"l

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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