

Shemot 5773

BS"D Parashat Sh'mot 5773

Part A: SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF TORAH

Sh'mot 1,12:

The more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites

There is a most surprising and indeed exhilarating and stimulating connection between the above quoted pasuk '*the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread*', and Sir Isaac Newton's third law of motion (25 December 1642 – 20 March 1727; an English physicist, mathematician and astronomer, considered by many to be the world's most influential scientist).

His Third Law states: When a first body exerts a force on a second body, the second body simultaneously exerts a force equal in magnitude and opposite in direction. For example: A rocket is at rest on its launching pad. When the thrust of its engines create a force on the ground beneath, an equal but opposite force will propel the rocket from the ground into the air.

Had the Egyptians been tolerant and respectful of the Jews and treated them as equals, we would have remained a small foreign entity in Egyptian society and would have quickly assimilated never to be heard of again.

The tyrannical, oppressive force that the Egyptians applied to the Jewish people with the intent to minimize their presence and influence, created an equal and opposite result, whereby we "*multiplied and spread*" causing the Egyptians to "*dread the Israelites*".

We find a similar phenomenon described in Tractate Succa 52a:

In the future the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring the Evil Inclination and slay it in the presence of the righteous and the wicked.

To the righteous it will have the appearance of a towering hill, and to the wicked it will have the appearance of a hair thread.

Both will weep; the righteous will weep saying, 'How were we able to overcome such a towering hill!' The wicked also will weep saying, 'How is it that we were unable to conquer this hair thread

The yetzer ha'ra (*Evil Inclination*) knows just how much pressure he needs to lead an individual to sin. For a sincerely righteous person the yetzer hara must exert a high degree of temptation, for a basically evil person a minimal degree of temptation is more than enough. In order to keep the equilibrium so necessary for the principle of reward and punishment, HaShem offsets the powerful yetzer hara force applied to a tzaddik by producing a yetzer tov of similar magnitude and opposite to the yetzer hara, as stated by Newton. To counter the soft yetzer hara sufficient to send a rasha into a irreligious spiral, the inner person produces a soft yetzer tov to the magnitude and in opposition to his yetzer hara.

In contemporary Eretz Yisrael, the magnitude of the pressure applied by the Moslems and Christians to expel us from the Holy Land is huge, and has produced a physical force and mental determination equal in their magnitude and opposite to the evil we are experiencing. We shall overcome the combined forces that seek to destroy what HaShem has created. And just as HaShem led our forefathers to witness the destruction of the evil Egyptians, and become His "chosen nation" at Mount Sinai, so too, we in the Promised Land will see the

destruction of the evil that surrounds us and reunite in the covenant between HaShem and His nation, as stated by our holy prophets.

Part B: THE GREATEST HUMAN DRAMA

From the book "With All Your Might"

At the heart of our parasha is one of the most emotionally charged human dramas in history, before which the greatest plays of Shakespeare pale. The story of the child with the Hebrew name Tuvia, who later became the Egyptian called Moshe.

But as is the way of the Torah, the words tell us little, with much more alluded to between the verses.

The following are only a few of the mysteries hidden in the parasha.

The Torah relates that Moshe went out one day "to his brothers and he saw their suffering, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew of his brothers." Moshe is so reviled by the scene that he kills the Egyptian.

1). Why was Moshe so shocked at the beating of a Jewish slave? Did he not know that millions of Jews were being beaten daily?

2). If indeed the conduct of the Egyptian taskmaster justified his being punished, why did Moshe not bring the matter before his adopted father, the Pharaoh? Why did he prefer to run away?

3). Of all people in the land of Midian, how is it that Moshe finds himself "by chance" in the house of Yitro?

4). At the scene of the mysterious burning bush, for a period of seven days, Moshe rejects Hashem's command that he return to Egypt. How does one argue with the Creator for even an instant, much less a whole week?

5). How does Moshe enter the palace – and attain an audience with Pharaoh– seemingly at will? And when he orders Pharaoh to free millions of slaves, in effect suggesting the undermining of the Egyptian economy, why does Pharaoh tolerate Moshe at all? Why does he not give the order to rid himself of this man?

6). At the first meeting with Pharaoh which transpired before the first plague, a full year before the death of the first born Egyptians, Moshe already warns Pharaoh that his own *bechor* (first born) will “die.” But Pharaoh had no *bechor*; his only child was his daughter Batya (or Bitya)!

I suggest the following but with reserve and apology if I am wrong.

We meet Moshe for the first time as a infant, when his real name – the one given to him by his parents– was, according to chazal, Tuvia. The next time he appears in the Torah he is an adult with the Egyptian name Moshe.

As a member of the royal family, being the adopted son of Batya, he was certainly well versed in the culture of Egypt in all its aspects. He undoubtedly completed the officer’s training course at “West Point” and he was the honored guest at the cocktail parties given by the movers and shakers of Egyptian society.

Don’t fool yourself into believing that Amram and Yocheved had visitation rights with the young Moshe, and at these opportunities his true father taught him *Yiddishkeit*. Moshe was culturally an Egyptian. He was the beloved “son” of Pharaoh, and as the Midrash tells us, Pharaoh would often hold him on his lap. Pharaoh, his daughter, and many of the older courtiers (and probably Moshe himself), were aware of Moshe’s background – he was a Hebrew who was adopted by the childless Batya.

With this in mind Pharaoh, who very much loved the clever and

handsome Moshe, was anxious to eradicate every semblance of Moshe's past from the boy's consciousness, and certainly anxious to hide from him the intolerable servitude of the Hebrew people. The way to do this was to distance Moshe from life's realities and as Rashi comments, Pharaoh appointed Moshe *al beito* – "over his palace, "whereby Moshe would remain far from matters of the realm, having to concentrate on the complex affairs of the royal court.

One day, the Torah relates, Moshe ventures out to see the hinterland. He perceives a scene which was totally unexpected – the mass oppression of the Jewish people as the basis of the Egyptian economy. He is overwhelmed when he sees a taskmaster beating a Jewish slave. Moshe's sense of outrage arouses him to punish the oppressor.

Moshe is distraught– not because he killed the man, but rather, he was traumatized at the knowledge that Pharaoh, the man he loved as a father, is capable of this inhuman treatment to a people who did only good for the Egyptian nation. It is like waking up one day to find out that your father was the commandant of the Auschwitz extermination camp.

Moshe could confront Pharaoh with the fact that he is now aware of the secret which the latter was holding back from him. But to do so would be to accuse the man who Moshe loved so much of heinous crimes; Pharaoh, who saved Moshe from death and provided him with the life of a prince. Moshe saw only one way out – to run away. Because to fulfill his moral obligation of standing up to Pharaoh and the entire Egyptian leadership was too awesome a task.

Moshe arrives at the home of Yitro. Who was Yitro? The Talmud (Tractate Sota) tells us that Pharaoh had three advisors: Yitro, Bilaam and Ei'yov. When Pharaoh brought up the matter of enslaving the Jews, Bilaam agreed, Ei'yov gave no opinion and Yitro RAN AWAY.

Hashem plans it that Moshe, the **RUNAWAY** from his responsibilities, finds himself in the home of the original runaway, Yitro. During the cold winter nights of Midian, while sitting around the fire, Moshe looks at Yitro and thinks to himself: if Yitro had not escaped his moral responsibilities, and had he rejected outright the proposal to enslave the Jews, there would have been no slavery. And Yitro, who knew Moshe as a child, looks at Moshe and thinks that Moshe is the only person in the kingdom who can influence Pharaoh, but Moshe ran away!

One day, Moshe is tending the sheep at Mount Chorev, and sees a wondrous sight – a burning bush which is not consumed. He draws closer and hears a voice. But it is not the voice of Hashem. It is the influence of this holy place which arouses Moshe's conscience. For seven days Moshe's conscience paralyzes him at that spot. To return and confront Pharaoh with the fact that he is a despot, or to let time run its course? At the end of seven days Moshe resolves his conflict and decides to return and help his Jewish family. At this point Hashem appears to Moshe, but only after Moshe's internal decision was to do the right thing.

Moshe returns to Egypt and to the palace; to the place of his childhood and to his beloved "mother" Batya, and to Pharaoh whom he dearly loves.

I picture the scene as follows: Moshe arrives at the palace gates, after being away (according to one opinion) for forty years. He requests of the guard to allow him entrance to the palace, to speak with Pharaoh. The sentry asks him if he has an appointment? Moshe says he does not, but requests the sentry to inform Pharaoh that "Moshe" is here. The sentry goes inside to Pharaoh's personal secretary telling him that a certain "Moshe" wants to see Pharaoh. The secretary probably answered that without a previous appointment no one can see Pharaoh. The sentry tells the secretary that the strange-looking man said to tell Pharaoh that "Moshe" wishes an

audience. The private secretary goes into the throne room and tells Pharaoh that a certain "Moshe" wishes an audience. Pharaoh jumps up and calls out to Batya to come immediately. "Moshe is back!" Moshe comes in. Pharaoh looks at Moshe and asks, "Where have you been all this time? Not a letter. Not an e-mail. Look. Your mother Batya who saved your life, look at her eyes which have not stopped crying out of longing for you." Then Pharaoh says to Moshe, "What do you have to say for yourself?"

Moshe looks at Pharaoh and at his beloved Batya, and with tears in his eyes calls out to Pharaoh *sh'lach et ami* – "let my people go!" Pharaoh descends from his throne and says, "Moshe, WE are your people!" Moshe answers, "The Israelite slaves are my people." And Moshe continues, "And if you do not send out the Jews, then Hashem will kill your first born son." But since Pharaoh has no son, Moshe was telling Pharaoh that if he does not free the Jews then he, Moshe, will no longer feel as a son to Pharaoh. Pharaoh cannot bear this threat from his beloved Moshe, but he also cannot free the slaves.

I cannot prove that this is in fact what transpired, but it must have been very similar. For it must have been Pharaoh's love towards Moshe which prevented the former from killing the man who would overturn the entire national order. And it had to be a person like Moshe, who was intimately associated with Pharaoh and the royal court, who could come before the royal court and not be overwhelmed by the grandeur of the ambiance.

It is the love which Moshe felt towards Pharaoh which propelled the awesome emotional outbreak recorded in our parasha when Pharaoh warns Moshe never to see his face again. The rejection by the person Moshe loves, and so much respected in the past, induces a fierce emotional reaction (11,8).

The emotional scenes between Moshe and Pharaoh end in a very surprising way. Chazal say that all the Egyptian army was destroyed at the crossing of Yam Suf except for one person who

was saved – Pharaoh himself. Pharaoh is saved by Hashem in deference to Moshe’s love for the man who so much loved Moshe.

Now, Moshe’s mission was to bring Pharaoh down to his knees, and agree to free the Jewish nation. But how can Moshe, who is eternally grateful to Pharaoh and Batya for everything they did for him, bring suffering to those he loved and respected so much?

Hashem has to cause a change of heart in Moshe regarding Pharaoh and all of the ministers and courtiers he knows so well. Moshe has to come from the heights of love to the heights of enmity and hostility. Hashem succeeds in bringing this about by sending Moshe to Pharaoh to plead for his people. But when Pharaoh refuses and indeed commands that the yoke of servitude be made heavier, Moshe sees the man for what he really is. Moshe is now in the mindset to bring punishment upon Pharaoh.

Many lessons can be learned from the above scenario, one of which is the following.

Anger is a quality which Hashem created for the use of Man at the appropriate time. The great prophet Shmuel, upon seeing Agog, the Amalekite king, took a sword and in rage deposed of him. King Shaul did not do so; he was willing to spare Agag’s life because the evil that was deeply ingrained in the heart of Agag did not enrage Shaul. And Moshe had to be taught to be angry at Pharaoh.

We get angry infrequently, even when it is justified. We anger when we are personally insulted, but in the face of crimes against Yiddishkeit we retain our “cool.”

If there was anger in the community at inter-marriage or divorce – real anger – one might think twice before taking the leap.

If we were angry at the evil of Islam and the Arabs who wish

to destroy Israel, we would have taken advantage of the great miracle of the Six Day War and rid ourselves of this curse.

If we were angry at anti-Semitism and at the galut, we would have all come to Eretz Yisrael by now.

My fear is that Hashem will have to move, as he did with Moshe, in order to set our priorities straight. There is the galut, and there is the land which Hashem chose for the Jewish nation. How much better it would be to come home on account out of love rather than out of anger.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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