

Shemos 2017

1.

Hashem is the decider

“A man went from the house of Levi and he took a daughter of Levi.” (2, 1)

"וילך איש מבית לוי ויקח את בת לוי."

This pasuk refers to Amram marrying Yocheved, Moshe's parents. The Gemara in Sotah (12a) asks; where did this man from the house of Levi go? Rav Yehuda bar Zevina says he went by using the advice of his daughter, Miriam. Amram was one of the gedolei hador (leaders of the generation). Once Pharaoh decreed that any boy who would be born would be thrown into the river, he divorced his wife in order that his children wouldn't be thrown into the river. Everyone else followed and divorced their wives. Miriam then said to her father that his decree was worse than Pharaoh's because Pharaoh's decree only affected the males, but your decree affected the males and the females because now no children will be born at all! Furthermore, Miriam said Pharaoh's decree only affected this world; however, your decree affected this world (because no one is having kids) and the next world (because no one is fulfilling peru uravu)! Additionally, Pharaoh's decree may be fulfilled (meaning they might not find a new born Jewish boy), but your decree will certainly endure! Following the advice of his daughter, he immediately returned and remarried his wife. Everyone else followed and remarried their wives. (להיכן הלך? אמר רב יהודה)
 בר זבינא שהלך בעצת בתו. תנא עמרם גדול הדור היה, כיון (שראה שאמר) [שגזר] פרעה הרשע כל הבן הילוד היאורה תשליכוהו, אמר לשוא אנו עמלין! עמד וגירש את אשתו, עמדו כולן וגירשו את נשותיהן. אמרה לו בתו אבא, קשה גזירתך יותר משל פרעה, שפרעה לא גזר אלא על הזכרים, ואתה גזרת על הזכרים ועל הנקיבות! פרעה לא גזר אלא בעולם הזה, ואתה בעולם הזה ולעולם הבא! פרעה הרשע, ספק מתקיימת גזירתו ספק אינה מתקיימת, אתה צדיק בודאי שגזירתך מתקיימת, שנאמר "ותגזר (אומר ויקם לך!) עמד והחזיר את אשתו, עמדו כולן והחזירו את נשותיהן.

We see from this Gemara the concept of listening to your own child if they have good advice. We also see a Gadol hadors humility of lowering himself to listen to a child. The Chofetz Chaim (al hatorah page 92) points out another fundamental lesson that we can learn from this episode. **Since Amram listened to his daughter, Moshe Rabbeinu was born! If Amram wouldn't have listened to his daughter then he would have stayed divorced and Moshe wouldn't have been born.** This can be compared to the case of Chezkiyahu Hamelech. The Gemara in Brachos (10a) says Chezkiyahu didn't want to get married because he saw prophetically that he would give birth to the wicking king Menashe. He therefore decided that it was better not to get married at all. Yeshaya Hanavi said to him why are you getting involved with the secrets of Hashem. What you are commanded to do you must do. You must get married, don't come up with newfangled cheshbonos (calculations). You have to fulfill Peru urvu, period, don't try to out-calculate Hashem! In the end, he got married and begot Yoshiyahu. Regarding Yoshiyahu the pasuk says that no king will be like him.

The practical lesson for us, explains the Chofetz Chaim is as follows. **We can't start jumping to conclusions about Hashem's ways. We only see with our eyes. We can't anticipate the future. We can't over analyze what the Torah says and do the opposite of what the Torah says.** This concept is discussed by Rabbi Friedlander (Sifsei Chaim middos veavodas Hashem chelek alef pages 201-202). Hashem told Shmuel, until when are you going to mourn over Shaul.

Hashem instructed Shmuel to demote Shaul from being king. Hashem says I despised him from ruling over the Jews. Fill up your horn with oil and go to the house of Yishai and I will show you his child, who is fit to be king. The pasuk continues and says Shmuel came to the house of Yishai and saw Aliav. Shmuel said he must be the one fit to be king. Hashem said don't only look at the outside. (ויאמר ה' אל שמואל עד מתי אתה מתאבל אל שאול ואני מאסתיו ממלוך על ישראל, מלא קרנגך שמן) ולך אשלחך אל ישי בית הלחמי כי ראיתי בבניו לי מלך, ויהי בבואם וירא את אליאב ויאמר אך נגד ה' משיחו, ויאמר ה' אל (שמואל אל תבט אל מראהו ואל גבוה קומתו כי מאסתיהו כי לא אשר יראה האדם כי האדם יראה לעינים וה' יראה ללבב.) (Shmuel alef perek 16) The Mishna in Avos (perek daled) quotes Rebbi who says do not look at the jug, but what is in it; there is a new jug filled with old wine, and an old jug that does not even contain new wine. As wine gets older it gets better similar to talmedai chachamim (Torah scholars) as stated at the end of mesechas Shabbos. **People see with their eyes, but Hashem looks into the heart.** Shmuel was at a high level. He was called a seer, a רואה. He was able to internally view people. Even so, when Shmuel internally viewed Aliav and thought he would be king, he was wrong. Hashem said he won't be the one. Shmuel's internal view was limited. That's why the pasuk says that Hashem is the only one who could fully see what's internally happening. He can see all of the internal blemishes. Since Hashem saw that Aliav had a slight anger issue beneath him, He didn't want Aliav to be king. Similarly, (footnote) there are doctors who could diagnose people just by looking. This is what the Navi was doing here. The Navi is a spiritual doctor. We can't jump to conclusions about the right path in a borderline area contradictory to the Torah because we have personal biases! Even shmuel Hanavi couldn't see the full picture! (We know it is very important to go to the doctor for physical issues. However, we need a spiritual doctor just as much as we need a physical doctor.)

The pasuk in Mishlei (19, 21) states "many designs are in a man's heart, but the counsel of Hashem, only it will prevail." "רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום." The Metsudas Dovid explains **sometimes we have many plans, but in the end none of them end up being fulfilled. However, whatever Hashem plans will come true. As the saying goes, 'Man plans and God laughs.'**

The Steipler (Berchas Peretz pages 23-25) quotes the aforementioned Gemara in Sotah and says an amazing idea. Pharaoh decreed that all of the boys should be thrown into the river because his advisors said a Jew who will redeem the Jews will be born. They said that this leader's potential downfall will be via water. Out of worry, Pharaoh decreed that all Jews should be thrown into the water, in an attempt to destroy this leader. In the end, pharaoh's daughter herself was the one who saved Moshe! She was the one who raised Moshe in Pharaoh's own palace! Pharaoh's decree was the reason for Moshe's survival. This shows us that **no matter what we do, whatever Hashem decrees will end up happening.** The Gemara in Sukkah (53a) quotes Rav Yochanan saying the legs of a person are the reason why a person goes in a different direction. Whatever Haman tried to do against us, really was for our benefit and ended up being turned against him. The main point is that all our tactics won't add or subtract from that which was decreed on Rosh Hashana (except through teshuva (repentance))! However, sometimes we strive and work hard and end up having success. This too was only because it was the will of Hashem! Sometimes the will of Hashem is that someone will be unsuccessful. The reason for this is in order that he will get more reward in the world to come. The Gemara in Yuma (35) says one won't be able to touch that which is prepared for his friend. We need to do what we are obligated to do, without coming up with other forms of logic that is contrary to a Torah viewpoint.

In the year 1892 (5652), the Russians decreed that the Yeshiva of Volozhin needed to have two hours of secular study daily. The decree came with an accompanying threat that if they wouldn't follow these rules, then the Yeshiva would be forced to close down. The Rosh Yeshiva, the Netziv, gathered many gedolim (great people) in order to ascertain what to do about the decree. Most decided to keep the Yeshiva open and have two hours of secular learning. The Beis HaLevi started crying and said we shouldn't compromise. We shouldn't change the way we have been traditionally running the Yeshiva. They therefore decided to close the Yeshiva. When the Chofetz Chaim heard this, he said that if they would have agreed to keep the Yeshiva open, they would have ended up studying secular topics all day. Because of this decision new Yeshivas throughout Lithuania and Poland resulted. One of the ways of spreading water is to block its path and then it will form another pathway to go. This is what the Gemara in Shabbos (79) says that Moshe correctly broke the Luchos. We could explain this by quoting another Gemara. The Gemara in Menachos (99a) quotes Reish Lakish who says sometimes not learning is the foundation. (אמר ריש לקיש פעמים שביטולה של תורה זהו יסודה.) Rashi says for example, going to a wedding instead of learning (see the Gemara in Kesubos (17a). We can't use our own logic and biases to make decisions. We need to follow and adhere to daas Torah (Torah knowledge). A letter quoted in Kobatz Michtavim (page 45) quotes the son of Netziv, Rav Chaim Berlin who said when my father didn't follow the decree, he told me **never make any drastic decisions without consulting gedolim (great people) first. We need to be careful to make proper decisions. The Mishna in Avos (perek alef) says 'appoint a Rabbi for yourself; acquire a friend for yourself.' They will without bias judge your situation.**

2.

Staying religiously strong

“And these are the names of the Children of Israel who were coming to Egypt; with Jacob, each man and his household came.” (1, 1)

"ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה את יעקב איש וביתו באו."

Nachalas Tzvi (page 133) is bothered by why the pasuk starts with the name of Israel and concludes with the name Yaakov. Also, why does the pasuk initially say “who were coming to Egypt” in the present tense, and then the pasuk finishes by saying “came” in the past tense? This can be explained by means of a parable. One who had great middos (characteristic traits) and was religious moved from a very religious location to not such a religious location. Even though he lived in an irreligious location for a long time, it's as if he still lived in the religious location because it wasn't recognizable that he changed anything about himself. If however, he originally wasn't learning Torah and didn't have proper fear of heaven and then left his location, it will not be recognizable that he originally came from a religious location. This is what this pasuk is saying. First the pasuk uses the name Israel when they first arrived in Egypt. However, afterwards their religious observance (at their high level) decreased; the pasuk therefore uses the name Yaakov. Additionally, because of their decrease of observance, the pasuk changes the tense from present to past in order to allude to the impossibility of recognizing their original location.

We need to learn Torah and fulfill the mitzvos properly. One who does this will drastically increase his odds of spiritually surviving galus. Additionally, we need to place ourselves in a good environment. We work like a car that runs on gas. We need strength to overcome

the challenges and vicissitudes of life. This strength comes from Hashem and from the Torah which fuels us and gives us energy. We are similar to electronics that run out of batteries and need to be recharged; we need to recharge our batteries by learning, davening, and keeping the mitzvos.

There was a group of workers who were building a very tall building. There was a man watching who saw them digging deep into the ground instead of building upwards. He inquired about what they were doing, and called them fools for building the wrong way! The workers said you're the fool! They explained the taller a building is, the bigger the foundation needs to be! We need a strong solid foundation in our avodas (service of) Hashem. It's better to have a deep tree with a few branches than a tree with many branches with very shallow roots because a shallow rooted tree with a lot of branches will fall over from the slightest wind (3, 17 Avos). The more we learn and create a foundation for ourselves, the more it will become a part of us and endure within us. This is the proper way to survive in galus. The pasuk says (Bereishis 46, 28) Yaakov sent Yehuda first to Mitzrayim. The Medrish (Bereishis raba 95, 3 and Medrash Tanchuma 11) says this was in order for Yehuda to set up a Yeshiva! They knew the only way to survive in galus was to first set up a Yeshiva. Many times people ask; how can one stay frum in America? The only way is to be learning in Yeshiva, attending Shul, and being around positive influences. "Make for me a Mikdash and my presence will dwell within it (בתוכם)." (25, 8)

"ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם." Many meforshim (commentators) are bothered by the plurality of the word within it (בתוכם)? The pasuk should be in the singular tense, since there is only one Mikdash. The Or Hachaim Hakadosh explains that the place that an individual sanctifies as a holy place for the presence of Hashem has to be amongst the Jews. The Elshach Hakadosh similarly explains that **the pasuk isn't merely referring to a physical Mikdash; rather, every person must create and make an individual Mikdash within himself. Meaning, even if we are not in a holy environment such as a Beis Medrash or shul, we must still strive to make that environment holy.**

Yosef Hatzaddik was able to spiritually survive even though he was in Egypt for 22 years because he always followed the proper path and constantly learnt Torah and talked about Hashem.

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.