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BRINGING A TASTE OF ISRAEL TO MONTREAL



TORAH תורה
מציון MITZION

KTM MONTREAL



THE TURNAROUND STORY

BY RAV ARI FAUST (ROSH KOLLEL)

Moshe has been rejected. Since appearing before Pharaoh to intercede on behalf of Bnei Yisrael, their workload has only increased. Then Hashem's message of reassurance communicated by Moshe to the people falls on deaf ears - they don't listen to him due to the "shortness of breath and heavy labour".

All that is left for Moshe to do is to return to Pharaoh, and for the one-on-one showdown between them to commence.

But there is an interruption in the narrative. Just after telling of Bnei Yisrael's desperation and Moshe's coming to Pharaoh, the Torah inserts a passage that seems completely unnecessary (Shemot 6:14-27):

These are the heads of the fathers' houses: The sons of Reuven, Israel's firstborn ... And the sons of Shimon ... And these are the names of Levi's sons after their generations...

The Torah inserts the lineages of Reuven, Shimon and Levi, before concluding: "That is Aharon and Moshe... They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to let the children of Israel out of Egypt; they are Moshe and Aharon." This passage is troubling: Firstly, why is it inserted here? In what manner does it supplement the storyline? Second, why does the Torah only list the houses of these three brothers while omitting the others?

Rashbam suggests that there are key characters from these tribes whom we will encounter throughout the desert years, who were the Torah not to tell us the lineages, we would not know who they were. This perhaps satisfies our second question, but certainly does not account for the placement of the passage here! Perhaps this is the reason that Rashbam cites another explanation (which he seems to favour) - uncharacteristically quoting a Midrashic tradition in his commentary:

"This is explained ... as a reference to the three tribes Reuven, Shimon, and Levi, whom Yaakov had chastised on his deathbed. At this point the Torah enumerates their genealogy to demonstrate their importance in the fabric of Jewish nationhood."

Before his passing, Yaakov blessed his children.

Three of the sons, however, were noted not for blessing but rather were chastised: Reuven for dubiously swapping his father's bed, and Shimon and Levi for their role in the killing of the people of Shechem. These families are noted here as a reminder of their integral role in the building of the nation. They may have been sidelined, but that didn't take away from their centrality. They may have been shamed, but that wasn't cause for despair.

This message comes at a moment when Moshe must have been feeling anything but empowered: He had failed - twice - the people had lost hope and now he was meant to stand before the more powerful person on earth. At this point he could have closed-up shop and given up: His people were hopeless and he was even more pathetic. He could have equated rejection with failure and simply quit.

But at this moment of turnaround, we are introduced to one of the central themes of Yetziat Metzrayim: dejection is no reason to turn away. Failure can be flipped into victory.

This theme is repeated throughout the narrative. At the burning bush, Moshe is told to throw-down his staff, which then turns to a snake. Hashem then tells Moshe to grab the snake at its tail, and it transforms back into a staff. Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Berlin writes (HaEmek Davar, Shemot 4:4):

"Note that initially this had been the tail of the snake - the lowly, bottom part. But in the hands of Moshe it became the [top of the staff,] the uppermost and important part. This is to teach ... that for Israel he was transformed from the tail to the head..."

Even the lowliest part of the lowliest creature can be transformed to the head of Moshe's staff and enact the Makkot.

As Moshe stands on the brink of desperation, a crossroads is open to him: One path to escape his mission, and the other path leading to Pharaoh and Yetziat Mitzrayim. It is at this point that we are reminded that rejection can lead to embrace, failure to success, lowliness to divine and that initial defeat can be transformed to victory.

PARSHA VA'EIRA
SHEVAT 03 5784
JANUARY 13TH 2023

CANDLE LIGHTING: 4:15 P.M.

HAVDALAH: 5:24 P.M.

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THE DAF PARSHA, AND ALL
LEARNING AT KTM DURING
THIS TIME, IS DEDICATED TO
THE SPEEDY RESOLUTION OF
THE SITUATION IN ISRAEL, THE
RETURN OF THE CAPTIVES, THE
HEALING OF THE INJURED, &
THE PROTECTION OF OUR BRAVE
SOLDIERS. MAY HASHEM LEAD
THEM TO VICTORY, AND THEN
HOME.

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YOU CAN'T FAKE THE REAL THING

BY DANIELLE WEINBERG

"...and Aharon's staff swallowed their staffs." (7:12)

You can't fake the Real Thing.

When Aharon's staff swallowed the staffs of the Egyptian sorcerers in front of the king it became clear who was authentic and who was not.

Jewish history has been plagued by other movements purporting to be the Real Judaism.

The most notable of these is undoubtedly Christianity with the doctrine of supersessionism, but there have been many others who have tried to authenticate themselves as the 'real' Judaism - including false messiahs and splinter groups.

There of course can be tension between remaining authentic and adapting to the times, but updates mustn't be mistaken for replacements. A cute story can illustrate this point: It's told that during the Ottoman

Empire, the Karaites attempted to gain recognition for themselves as the 'authentic Jews'.

They approached the Sultan, wanting to be recognized as the legitimate 'People of Israel', and that the Jewish People should be disenfranchised as being fakes.

The Sultan summoned a representative of both the Karaites and a Rabbi to appear in front of him at the royal palace. After hearing both their cases, he would decide who was the authentic "People of the Book".

Of course, as was the custom of the east, both the Karaite and the Rabbi were required to remove their shoes before appearing in front of the Sultan. The Karaite removed his shoes and left them by the entrance to the throne room. The rabbi also removed his shoes, but then he picked them up and carried them with him into the audience with the Sultan.

When the Sultan looked down from his throne he was struck by the somewhat strange sight of the Rabbi holding a pair of

shoes, and he demanded an explanation.

"Your Majesty," began the Rabbi, "as you know, when the Holy One, may His Name be blessed, appeared to our teacher Moses, peace be upon him, at the site of the burning bush, God told Moses, 'Take off your shoes from on your feet!'

"We have a tradition," the Rabbi continued, "that while Moses was speaking to the Holy One, a Karaite came and stole his shoes! So, now, whenever we are in the company of Karaites we make sure to hold onto our shoes!"

The Karaite turned to the Rabbi and blustered, "That's nonsense! Everyone knows that at the time of Moses, there were no Karaites!"

The Rabbi allowed time for what the Karaite had said to sink in, and then quietly added, "Your Majesty, I don't believe there is a need for more to be said."

You can't fake the Real Thing.



A NATION UNITED

BY MICHAEL SLOMINSKY

Over the years, Israel's wars have not only altered the geographical landscape but also reshaped national consciousness. When faced with external threats, a sense of unity has permeated diverse political factions in Israeli society. This war isn't an exception from this aspect. In this article I want to bring two similar stories from people that come from different political places completely.

The first story is about Yair Golan, former deputy chief of staff and former member of Knesset from the far-left Meretz party.

On the morning of October 7th, when he heard what was happening in the south, he immediately put on his old uniform and quickly ran from his home to help. On the way, he received a message about young

people from the party in Re'im who were trapped in an area infested with terrorists, and are hiding near the Kibbutz, not far from where he was. He immediately went to rescue them in his private vehicle. After he brought them safely to our forces, he began to receive more and more requests from parents whose children had spent time at the party, and he repeatedly entered the area of fire, alone and risking his life.

The second story is about Elchanan Clemanzon, a resident of Otniel in the south of Mount Hebron - a region whose settlements are generally more aligned with Israel's political right.

During Simchat Torah Elchanan, his brother and brother-in-law heard about the events in the south and together they formed an armed civilian rescue team that entered the inferno. They succeeded in saving dozens

of civilians, until a bullet from a terrorist hit Elchanan and killed him.

Both Yair Golan and Elchanan Clemanzon were among the first to respond to the terrorist attack by Hamas, and went into the line-of-fire almost immediately, without instructions and without hesitation to think if they would survive. They were not motivated by political desires at this time, but only the moral command of wanting to help their people stood before them.

After a year of difficult political debates in Israel, they and others proved to us that we are still a nation united.

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IN THE NILE AND ON THE BATTLEFIELD: SELF SACRIFICE IN MOSHE AND OUR CHAYALIM

BY DAVID WEINBERG

Among the many remarkable qualities that define our beloved IDF soldiers, none shines brighter than their incredible mesirut-nefesh – their unwavering self-sacrifice. They consistently place their lives in jeopardy for the greater good of our entire nation. In the wake of that black day over three months ago, we've witnessed and heard astounding accounts of heroic acts, both grand and humble, demonstrating profound mesirut-nefesh by these soldiers.

"...But with My Name 'Hashem' I did not make Myself known to them..." (Shemot 6:3)

According to our sages, Moshe Rabbeinu had ten names: Moshe, Yered, Chaver, Yekutiel, Avigdor, Avi Socho, Avi Zanuach, Tuvia, Shemaya, and Halevi. Of all these names the only one that God used was Moshe, the name he was given by Pharaoh's daughter, Batya.

Why, of all Moshe's names, did God use the one name given to Moshe by an Egyptian princess? What was so special about this name?

The name Moshe comes from the word meaning 'to be drawn', for Moshe was drawn from the water by Batya. When Batya took Moshe out of the river she was flouting her

father's will. Pharaoh's order was to kill all the Jewish male babies to stifle their savior. By rescuing Moshe, Batya was putting her life in grave danger. Because Batya risked her life to save Moshe, that quality was embedded in Moshe's personality and in his soul. It was this quality of self-sacrifice that typified Moshe more than all his other qualities, and for this reason Moshe was the only name that God would call him.

This is what made Moshe the quintessential leader of the Jewish People. For more than any other trait, a leader of the Jewish People needs self-sacrifice to care and worry over each one of his flock.

This can connect to another point:

Of all the places that Moshe's mother, Yocheved, could have chosen to hide Moshe, why did she choose the river? Why not in a tunnel? Why not hide him in a barn, or any of the other numerous possible hiding places?

Yocheved hoped that by putting Moshe into the river, the astrological signs would show that the savior of the Jews had been cast into the Nile, and Pharaoh would abandon the massacre of the baby boys. Yocheved was right. The Egyptian astrologers told Pharaoh the Jewish savior had been dispatched into the Nile and Pharaoh ordered the killing of the first-born male children to cease.

It was not an easy thing for Yocheved to put her son into a wicker basket and abandon him to the Nile. The Midrash teaches that before she placed Moshe into the water, Yocheved made a little canopy over the basket and said in sadness, "Who knows if I will ever see my son's 'chupa' (marriage canopy)?" Certainly there were safer places for a baby than a makeshift basket adrift in a river.

However, Yocheved chose a hiding place that may have not been the safest because it meant that she could save the lives of other Jewish children.

From two sides of the same event the quality of self-sacrifice was instilled into Moshe. By his real mother when she put him into the river, and also by his adopted mother when she drew him out from the river. If any quality epitomizes the essence of leadership, it is the ability to forget oneself and give up everything for the good of the people.

And so it is with our dear chayalim, echoing the essence of leadership through their remarkable capacity to forget self and sacrifice everything for the welfare of the people.

YERUSHALAYIM SHEL ZAHAV

BY TIFERET DISHI

Naomi Shemer was an Israeli poet, musician, and songwriter. She was awarded the Israel Prize for Hebrew song in 1983. Shemer wrote numerous songs, many of which became part of Israel's cultural heritage, such as - shirat ha'asavim, lu yehi, al kol eleh, and more.

One of the pinnacle moments for Shemer – was the song ירושלים של זהב that she wrote in 1967. Most of us know this song as it is today, four verses and a chorus, but the song was not built like that originally. The first version written by Shemer, had only three verses and a chorus; she added the concluding verse after the victory of the Six

Day War, effectively changing the essence of the song.

The story begins in the winter of 1967, with a request to Naomi Shemer from then mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kolek. Kolek wanted Shemer to write a song about the city of Jerusalem for the annual "Festival of Song". Naomi struggled and found it difficult to write the song. At the end she remembered that story she learned as a child about Rabbi Akiva gifting his wife Rachel a piece of jewelry, called by the Talmud a "Yerushalayim Shel Zahav". This gave her inspiration for the song.

Three weeks later, the Six-Day War broke out. During the war, Shemer found herself near El-Arish in Egypt alongside members of the Nahal troupe in the IDF. At the sounds of gunfire and battle, a transistor radio crackled, emitting the sounds of shofar blasts and the voices of soldiers who had met for the first time at the Kotel: "The Temple Mount is in our hands!"

Overwhelmed, Shemer took out her personal notebook and added a new verse to the song she had written:

"We've returned to the watering pits

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CONTINUED...

To the marketplace and the bustling centers

A Shofar sounds from Har Habayit

In the Old City”

The new verse expresses a transition from the destruction and yearning depicted in the original verses to an image of victory and redemption in the midst of the Six-Day War.

The responses didn't take long to arrive. A flood of letters from a wide spectrum of people inundated Shemer: From a traditional Jew, a 66 year old Jerusalemite; from a soldier in the Golan Heights; from a young girl who adored the song. This transformed **הבית** into a song that held a special place in Israeli culture.

We can see from the beginning of Shemer's masterpiece that it had an impact on the people. It instantly took a special place in the Israeli collective heart. Her words expressed the feel of Jerusalem before and after the war while capturing the feeling of Am Yisrael reflecting deep emotions and a tangible connection to the holy city.

Words have a special impact especially when it's talking about our home, our heart's center. Now more than ever our words matter. Our soldiers are still fighting, they've been fighting nonstop for 100 days, fighting for our home, fighting to free the hostages from captivity, they need our words. Our letters strengthen them, I know this from personal stories from friends that these

letters sometimes are the things that keep them going. Our tefilot to Hashem, the words of chizuk and comfort we give, all of these words mean something! They are important. We all need to continue spreading our voice and strength to our home, and pray that just as Jerusalem was returned to us while Naomi Shemer was composing her song, all our soldiers and hostages will return home safely.



THE TALE OF REBBI AKIVA AND RACHEL

BY YAAKOV JACKSON

Rabbi Akiva married Rachel, the daughter of Kalba Savua. Kalba Savua was one of the wealthiest men in Jerusalem at the time, yet when he heard about their betrothal, he took a vow prohibiting her from eating from all of his property. Why, you may ask? Well you see, Rabbi Akiva wasn't "Rebbi" Akiva then, just Akiva; he was an ignoramus, unlearned and unremarkable.

Despite this, Rachel went ahead and married Rabbi Akiva. In the winter, they would sleep in a storehouse of straw, and Rabbi Akiva would gather strands of straw from her hair. He said to her: If I had the means, I would place on your head a Jerusalem of Gold (a type of crown).

Elijah, the prophet, came and appeared to them as a regular person and started calling and knocking on the door. He said to them: Give me a bit of straw, as my wife gave birth, and I do not have anything on which to lay her. Rabbi Akiva said to his wife: "See this man, who does not even have straw. We should be happy with our lot, as we at least have straw to sleep on!"

Rabbi Akiva's wife knew about her husband's virtues but wanted him to know Torah as well, so she said to him: "Go and be a student of Torah." He went and studied Torah for

12 years before Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua. At the completion of the 12 years, he was coming home when he heard from behind his house that one wicked person was saying to his wife: "Your father behaved well toward you. He was right to disinherit you. Your husband is not similar to you, and he has left you in widowhood in his lifetime all these years." Rachel did not skip a beat, she said to him: "If he could listen to me, he would be there studying Torah for another 12 years!"

Rabbi Akiva said: "Since she has given me permission through this statement, I will go back and study more." He turned back and went to the study hall, and he studied there for another 12 years. Eventually, he came back accompanied by 24,000 pairs of students. Everyone went out to greet him, as he was by then a renowned teacher, and his wife too arose to go out to greet him.

That wicked person said to her: "And to where are you going?" This was to mock her, since she was excessively poor, she was not dressed in a grand manner, as fit to greet a great man. She replied: "He knows that I am in this state as a result of my dedication to him." She came to present herself before Rabbi Akiva, but the Sages tried to fend her off, as they were unaware of her identity. He said to them: "Leave her alone! Both my

Torah knowledge and yours are hers!"

According to the Gemara (Nedarim 50a-b), by this time Kalba Savua had come to regret the decision to disown his daughter, and upon hearing that a great Rabbi had come to town he called on him to ask to annul his vow. Rabbi Akiva asked him whether he would have made the vow to disown his daughter had she married a Torah scholar. Upon informing him that he would not have done so even if his son-in-law knew a single chapter or verse, Akiva identified himself. Released from his vow, Kalba Savua gave the couple half of his estate.

We can learn from this story the difference between the behaviour of a righteous person, who focuses on the good and shows gratitude for whatever he has been allotted in life, and the wicked, who increases negativity in the world by focusing only on what is missing in his life.