

RED ALERT!

VA'EIRA

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DIVREI TORAH

- There are divine messengers sent to redeem the Jewish people from slavery to freedom. Rabbi Shmuel Mohliver (1824-1898, Russia, one of the Zionist leaders in the Chovevei Zion movement) stated that this became a standard in Jewish history that would lead to the Mashiach ben Yosef and then the Mashiach ben David (Yehuda). Why do we need two? One commentator remarked smartly that one is to bring the Jewish people out of Exile, and the other Mashiach is to bring the Exile out of Bnei Yisrael. [I note another quip that the two divine messengers will have their names start with an ALEF and one with a MEM. Like Moshe and Aharon, and Mordechai and Esther, and Eliyahu and Mashiach.]

- What is the significance of something being called a MORASHA? Two items are labeled MORASHA: the Land of Israel and the Torah. An inherited item (a YERUSHA) is given to an heir, and the heir may do what he pleases with it. In contradistinction to a MORASHA, a Heritage, which is given to you, to guard, preserve, and transmit to your

descendants. When your father wills you a parcel of land, you may work it, sell it, or destroy it. Whatever you wish. But a heritage, like a piece of Eretz Yisrael or the Torah, is not completely yours, with no strings attached. You must preserve it and keep it in your family, transmitting it to future generations among the Jewish people. [On this note, we can be critical of Avraham's peace treaty with Avimelech, as well as Modern Israel's decision to give Gaza to the so called Palestinians in 2005!]

- After the Torah gives a short rendition of Moshe and Aharon's family, Rashi comments that they were equal in importance, a statement that does not sit well with me. Moshe stands out beyond all other prophets. Moshe was closer to Hashem than any other person in history. In their respective jobs in leading the nation of Israel, Moshe is not as close to the people as Aharon was. Aharon was beloved by all of the people. A successful leader must be both, near to Hashem and near to the people. When choosing a king, the king had to be handpicked by Hashem (via the prophet), and he had to be liked and chosen by the people as well. The same is true of other positions. When we choose a Chazan, he has to be M'RUTZEH LAKAHAL, liked by the people. A very important component to be successful.

- There is a factor that is often

overlooked in our view of Moshe. Why did Hashem orchestrate his strange upbringing? Why was he adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in the palace? I feel that this was a divine plan in his preparation for his career. He needed to know the ins and outs of life in the palace and in the royal family. He needed to have a perfect mastery of the Egyptian language as spoken in the palace. He needed to know the protocols and rules of palace life. To speak to the people, one needed to be more of an orator; therefore Aharon was a better choice. And he was loved by all. The people did not know Moshe. He left Egypt when he was twenty years old. He returned when he was eighty. No. The people did not know him at all. And for most all of his youthful years he lived in the palace.

- Why did Moshe ask only for a Shabbaton retreat in the desert and not for his real goal, freedom from slavery? For the majority of the first one hundred years of life in Egypt, the tribe of Israel lived a wonderful existence in Egypt. Initially Egypt was a haven, but then became home. After the nuclear family died, the Egyptian government changed under Pharaoh's leadership and started to enslave the Jews. Now, after more than 100 years later, they were a labor force of 600,000 men. If Pharaoh would free the slaves, Egypt would lose an immense work force

that would probably cripple the Egyptian economy. The divine plan was to punish the Egyptians with Ten Plagues. Each had a purpose and a design to hurt them. During that period of almost a year, the Jews were not working that hard at all.

- During the Plagues, Pharaoh thought he had the upper hand in controlling the slave population. Consider the Plague of the Wild Animals. Only the Egyptian cattle were harmed and killed, the cattle owned by the Jews were not touched. Pharaoh could have confiscated the cattle owned by the Jews. Pharaoh was so severely beaten by this time, he didn't think of it. His hold of his power and influence was virtually destroyed. He was able to keep his borders closed from any incoming or outgoing traffic, but the domestic issues involved in governing his country had gone beyond his reach. He was defeated, and he was at this point completely in the grip of the divine control. And he wasn't even aware of it.

- Bnei Yisrael were not well off either. The years of slavery had beaten them severely. Furthermore after the nuclear Patriarchal family had died, the people were assimilated and over time had begun to embrace the Egyptian idolatrous practices. But you cannot blame them. They had no real religious leadership. No prophets. No presence of the Almighty in their

midst. They had become a people of little faith. Physical suffering can do that to a person. Our Sages said that had Hashem waited any longer to redeem them, they would have been unredeemable. This is a sad state of affairs that would repeat itself again and again in Jewish history, even without suffering. In Russia, Jews suffered greatly with persecution and pogroms. Then under Communist rule, the spiritual identity of the Jew almost disappeared. In America, Jews prospered financially, and Americans were loving the Jews so much that many Jews lost their Jewish identity as well. It doesn't take much for the spiritual decline of the Jews in any country.

- The Midrash contrasts the extended families of Moshe and Aharon. Moshe married Yitro's daughter; Yitro being an idolater, and later a descendant was Yehonatan who became an idolatrous priest. In contrast, Aharon married Elisheva, a woman from a prestigious devout family and produced Pinchas, a zealot in the name of Hashem.

Questions by RED for Parshat Sh'mot

From the text

1. Name the four verbs that describe redemption? (6:6, 7)
2. The Land of Israel is described as a

Morasha, a heritage. (6:8). what is the other thing that is called a Morasha? (D'varim 33:4)

3. Who were the only two women mentioned in the shortened Jewish family tree? (6:20, 23)

4. How old was Moshe when he started his career as savior of Bnei Yisrael? (7:7)

5. Where in Egypt was there no Hail? (9:26)

From the Rashi

6. How were Moshe and Aharon to treat Pharaoh? (6:13)

7. Why did the Torah mention Elisheva's brother, Nachshon? (6:23)

8. Why did Aharon bring the Plague of Blood and not Moshe? (7:19)

9. Why did Aharon bring the Plague of Lice and not Moshe? (8:12)

10. How was the Hail a double miracle? (9:24)

From the Rabbis

11. What is the meaning of E-L SHA-DAI, the name Hashem used when talking to the Patriarchs? (Ramban)

12. Why does the Torah relate to us the names of Moshe's closest family members? (Hirsch)

13. Why would Hashem not forgive Pharaoh for his sins? (Ramban)

Midrash

14. When Pharaoh ordered his magicians to duplicate turning water into blood, from where did the magicians get the water?

Haftara - Yechezkel

15. What will happen to the sea monster (representing Egypt)?

Relationships

- a) Reuven - Carmi
- b) Gershon - Kehat
- c) Amram - Yocheved (2 answers)
- d) Elazar - Yitro
- e) Moshe - Gershom

ANSWERS

1. V'Hotzeiti, V'Hitzalti, V'Ga'alti, and V'Lakachti. I will take you out. I will save you. I

will redeem you. I will take you.

2. The Torah.

3. Yocheved and Elisheva.

4. 80 years old.

5. In Goshen

6. To treat him with respect.

7. To teach us that when we marry, we should check out our future wife's brother.

8. Because the Nile protected Moshe when he was cast into the Nile when he was a baby.

9. Because the Land hid the body of the Egyptian that Moshe had killed.

10. The Hail consisted of fire within the water (Ice). These two opposing parts of nature

made peace to fulfill Hashem's command.

11. Hashem would perform miracles without disrupting the normal course of nature. (Like

winning a war, or amassing wealth.)

12. Contrary to other religions, the leaders of the Jewish people were regular humans, not

supernatural beings.

13. Because Pharaoh committed too many sins.

14. They had to buy water from Jews.

15. Hashem will take it from the sea and throw it down in a desert where it will die.

Relationships

a) Father & son

b) Brothers

c) Husband-Wife, and Nephew & Aunt

d) Son-in-law, father-in-law

e) Father & son