



Moshe's Misjudgment

By Yehuda Gluck, 12th Grade

In this week's parsha, Parshas Shemos, Hashem appears to Moshe in a burning bush and gives him the task of leading the B'nei Yisrael out of Egypt. However, Moshe doubted that he could achieve such a mission. Moshe says to Hashem, "They will not believe me and they will not listen to me, because they will say, 'Hashem did not appear to you.'" (Shemos, 4:1) But Moshe was wrong. The Jewish people believed him. So the question is, why did Moshe doubt Hashem? And how could such a leader like Moshe Rabeinu falsely judge his people?

In Egypt, the B'nei Yisrael were generally very poor in their Avodas Hashem. They were unfaithful and they served idols. They weren't much different from their Egyptian rulers. The Jews and the Egyptians were so alike that the Torah expresses the Exodus as "taking a nation from the midst of a nation" (Devarim. 4:34).

In such a case, even the watchful eye of Moshe Rabeinu failed to detect the B'nei Yisrael's internal emunah in Hashem. It became hard to see the light of emunah when many things corrupted such a holy nation. This masked light of the Jewish people, their infinite belief in Hashem, was only known by Hashem, not Moshe. Chazal taught in Maseches Shabbos 97a, "Hashem knew that Israel would believe. He told Moshe, 'They are believers, the children of believers ... while you will lack faith in the future.'

Undoubtedly, the internal emunah is always present in the neshama. It is built-in to every Jewish soul, disregarding any path that one may have taken. If we judge people solely based on their external actions, then we won't be able to detect their inner Emunah. This was Hashem's message to Moshe: if you measure Emunah solely on what

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Burning Interests

By Mordechai Ostreicher, 11th Grade

The Torah tells us that Moshe was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Yisro when a Malach of Hashem appeared to him in a burning bush. Moshe saw the event and behold, the bush was burning in the fire and it was not consumed. Moshe said, "I will turn from my course and see the marvelous sight, why does the bush not burn?" Hashem saw that Moshe turned from his path to see the sight, and He called out to him from inside the bush and said, "Moshe Moshe". That conversation ultimately led to our redemption from Mitzrayim.

However, the entire narrative, from the moment that Moshe noticed the burning bush until Hashem spoke to him from inside, seems overemphasized. After Moshe saw that amazing sight, why does the Torah mention that Moshe said, "I will go look at the amazing sight?" Furthermore, why does the Torah introduce Hashem's charge to Moshe with the word, Hashem saw that Moshe turned from his path to see the sight, and he called out from amongst the bush? It seems that only after Hashem openly acknowledged Moshe's interest in the bush did He call out, "Moshe, Moshe," thus beginning the process of the Jewish People's redemption.

The Torah, which never uses pointless words, could have stated, "Moshe saw that the bush was burning and yet the bush was not consumed. Moshe turned to the marvelous sight, and Hashem called out to him from inside the bush and said Moshe, Moshe."

The Midrash Tanchuma expounds upon the pasuk, "Moshe turned from his path to see the sight." There is an argument regarding whether he took three steps or just raised his neck. Either way, Hashem said, "You pained yourself to look; I swear you

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Given by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz
on yutorah.org

Transcribed by
Joseph Cohen

Wearing Gloves and Having Hands in Pockets While Davening

Gloves:

- Mishnah Berurah: don't wear gloves, as it is like someone who is passing through and not paying attention to Hashem during prayer. As well as it is a sign of a Derech of Gayva.
- But while praying outside there is no Derech Gayva, but it may be as though you seem to just be passing through.
- Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach: wearing gloves in the cold to daven is 100% permissible and there is nothing wrong with it. All these rules of the Mishnah Berurah only apply to a workman's gloves or a derech chashivus gloves, which have no intention of keeping you warm. It is only to do your individual work and elevate your personal status, which is not preferable to do while standing before God.
- Be'er Moshe: It matters not whether you are wearing gloves for personal reasons to keep warm, it is without a doubt prohibited to pray with gloves on because it is not discernable for which purpose you are wearing gloves. And it is better to pray in solidarity than to pray wearing gloves. But if it is obvious that you are wearing gloves to warm you up then it is permissible.
- This concern of wearing gloves only applies during Shemoneh Esrei where you are Omed before the Melech. Everything else is not a problem.
- Maybe wearing gloves is a Bizui Mitzvah. On Psachim 57, it says when Yissachar the Kohen Gadol was banished, it was for wearing gloves while doing the Avodah. For two reasons, for having an unwarranted separation between his hand and the Korban making it pasul, as well as it is disrespectful to the Kodshim, it shows that you can't get your hand dirty. For these reasons the Kohen Gadol was punished with his hand being cut off in a later event and being banished.
- While wearing gloves and doing the Avodah it shows that you are greater, and that you don't want to dirty your hands with the Korban which would be a Bizui. But when you are praying and not doing any literal Avodah, it is not a Bizyaon or any problem when it is cold outside to put gloves on.

Hands in pockets:

- Shulchan Aruch: while praying your hands should be placed over your heart, because that is the position an eved takes before his rebbe. And don't place it below your waist because it is not as if you are standing before a king.
- It is most definitely disrespectful to have your hands in your pockets before the king.
- In modern times: the military never allowed the soldiers to place their hands in their pockets because it lacks respect.
- Mishnah Berurah: everything is like the minhag of the place to place your hands.

Conclusion:

When it's cold wearing gloves would seemingly be better than having your hand in pockets for Shemoneh Esrei.

SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Jared
Mark*

Unfortunately, the special period of Shovevim is not so known in our times. It's such a holy time filled with so much strength and power and should be a major aspect of our lives each and every year. This is a time filled with geula of the Jewish people on an individual and collective level. These are the parshios where the Jewish people are in the process of leaving Mitzrayim. Where they went from the 49th level of tumah to receiving the torah. It begins with this week's parshas Shemos, then onto Vaera, Bo, Bishalach, Yisro, and Mishpatim. Using the first hebrew letters of the names of these parshios we get our name "Shovevim."

It is no coincidence that this time period falls out during the darkest of the winter months. It's cold out, the nights are the longest of the year, and there are no Yomim Tovim in the near future. But that's the point. When it's the most difficult to see the light of Hashem in our lives, that's when we need the most strength. The most strength in a specific area of Yiddishkite which is the focus of Shovevim: shmiras einayim and shmiras habris - guarding one's eyes and bris milah.

Failure in these areas can lead a person to one of the most dangerous places mentally: yayush - giving up all hope. This is no place for a yid as it can lead to dangerous things. No matter how deep into dark places we get, we have to look at the Jewish people in Mitzrayim as the epitome of reversing one's fortunes. They went to the lowest place possible (the 49th level of tumah) and not only got out, but brought themselves to the highest of highs by receiving the Torah. This is comparable to a trampoline where the lower you go down, the higher you'll rise. So, whenever a person feels this scary feeling of yayush all they have to do is daven. This is the ultimate cure for yayush: When you call out to Hashem you are showing that no matter what, you are never completely lost with Him on your side. We see Yaakov take this advice; the first thing he does upon entering Miztrayim is say Shema, he davens as he knows he is entering a dangerous place.

A question a lot of people ask when discussing the coming of Moshiach is "How can we possibly be the generation to bring moshiach when the Vilna Goan couldn't, when Rebbe Akiva Eiger couldn't; what can we ever accomplish that they couldn't?" The answer is clear when we take a deeper look at our times. Women dressing immodestly, the internet; the challenges we have in our times are unlike anything that ever was. So when we overcome these challenges, when we put barriers to protect ourselves from these things, it is so incredibly precious to Hashem. We are zocheh to have these challenges to overcome and fly higher than anyone in history ever has. Hopefully we can all be successful during these days of Shovevim and show the Ribono Shel Olam what this generation is capable of and bring the Moshiach bemhaira beyameinu!

(Yehudah Gluck- Continued from page 1)

happens in the outer realm of action, then even the most perfect people, the greatest and most spiritual leaders like Moshe, can stumble and fail to act upon their inner emunah.

Chazal explains that the numerous signs were a punishment for wrongfully judging the Jewish people. The sign of Tzara'as (leprosy) was especially proper for the message that Hashem wanted to convey to Moshe. Tzara'as affects the skin, the external layer of the human body. This sign showed Moshe that there may be imperfections on the outside of a human being (their external actions), but that may not match their inner holiness, their inner fire, inner Emunah.

One shouldn't think that the Jewish people didn't have an inner Emunah based on how they were externally. They may have appeared to be in a dark place, but this was only external, as it is written, "Do not look upon me [dubiously] because I am dark; for [it is only] the sun that has darkened me" (Shir Hashirim 1:6).

Adapted from ravkooktorah.org

Baer Boczko

Boys That Loved To Swim

10th Grade

“Every boy that will be born - into the River you shall throw him!” (Shemos 1:22)

When Pharaoh first set out to eradicate the Jewish people, he wanted to keep his plan a secret. Therefore, he used the midwives to kill newborns while they were being delivered. After Pharaoh realized the inefficiency of that plan, he decided to murder Jewish children in public. The question is: why did he specify that only new-born infants be killed? Additionally, why were the babies killed only by drowning?

To answer the latter, Pharaoh chose drowning because the Egyptians thought no one who afflicted Bnei Yisrael with water would be punished; Hashem had promised that he wouldn't bring any more floods upon the earth after the Mabul (Sotah 11). But what about the question of why just new-born infants?

According to the Medrash, Pharaoh dreamt of a scale: all inhabitants of Egypt were on one side of the scale and a single lamb was on the other. Pharaoh's astrologers interpreted this to mean that a boy born in Egypt was the Bnei Yisrael's leader and would take them out of Egypt. Since the astrologers also told Pharaoh that the boy's death would come from water, Pharaoh decreed that all newborn males be thrown into the river (Midrash Divrei HaYamim LeMoshe; Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer ch 48). However, the astrologers didn't know whether the leader would be Egyptian or Jewish; Pharaoh therefore decreed that his people should also throw their new-born males into the river, which is why the Torah tells us earlier in this pasuk “Pharaoh commanded his entire nation.” How foolish to order tens of thousands of “pure Egyptian” children drowned just because of the astrologers' interpretation of a dream! This is an illogical fear: that Bnei Yisrael's leader who would take them out of Egypt be an Egyptian! But this was Hashem's doing, so the Egyptians would see and feel what it was like to have their new-born son thrown in the river. At that, they all rose up and nullified the decree which included the new-born males of the Jews.



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STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: YOSEF SCHAFLER

Rabbi Zalman Serebryanski, a senior chassid from Russia and dean of the Lubavitch Rabbinical College in Melbourne, Australia, once brought a girl to Rabbi Chaim Gutnick. "Please, help this girl convert," he asked.

Rabbi Gutnick listened to the girl's story. She lived in Balaclava, and from her youth had felt a strong attraction to Judaism. Whenever she heard stories of the Holocaust, she was deeply touched. She had been reading and studying about Judaism for a long time and now wanted to convert.

Rabbi Gutnick was moved by her sincerity. Nevertheless, he did not want to perform the conversion. The girl was still living at home with her non-Jewish parents. Would she be able to practice Judaism in her parents' home? Would her interest continue as she matured into adulthood? Since he could not answer these questions, he decided to let time take its course. If the girl was still interested when she was older, she could convert then. Rabbi Gutnick's refusal plunged the girl into deep depression, to the extent that she had to be confined to a hospital. The elder Reb Zalman, stirred by the depth of her feelings, continued to visit her from time to time.

After several weeks, he called Rabbi Gutnick, telling him of the girl's condition and asking him whether perhaps he would change his mind because of the strength of her feelings. Rabbi Gutnick answered that the reasons which had dissuaded him from performing the conversion were still valid. Nevertheless, he promised to write to the Lubavitcher Rebbe describing the situation. If the Rebbe advised him to facilitate her conversion, he would happily comply.

Reb Zalman told the girl that the Rebbe was being consulted, and her condition improved immediately. Rabbi Gutnick did not receive an immediate reply to his letter, but at a later date, at the end of a reply to another issue, the Rebbe added: "What's happening with the Jewish girl from Balaclava?" Rabbi Gutnick was surprised. The girl and Reb Zalman had both made it clear that her family was Anglican!

He and Reb Zalman went to confront the girl's mother. At first, she continued to insist that she was Anglican, but as the sincerity of the two rabbis impressed her, she broke down and told her story. She had been raised in an Orthodox Jewish home in England. As a young girl, she had rebelled against her parents and abandoned Jewish life entirely, marrying a gentile and moving to Australia. She had not given Judaism a thought since. She loved her daughter, however, and would not oppose her if she wished to live a Jewish life.

Once the girl's Jewishness was established, Rabbis Serebryanski and Gutnick helped her feel at home in Melbourne's Lubavitch community. She continued to make progress in her Jewish commitment, and today is a teacher in a Lubavitch school.

But Rabbi Gutnick still had a question: How did the Rebbe know she was Jewish? At his next yechidus (audience with the Rebbe) he mustered the chutzpah to ask. The Rebbe replied that, at Reb Zalman's urging, the girl had also written him a letter. "Such a letter," the Rebbe declared, "could only have been written by a Jewish girl."

Adapted from Chabad.org

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are worthy so that I will reveal Myself to you."

It is still difficult to understand. Moshe saw a display of miraculous proportions and looked. Why is that such a praiseworthy act? Doesn't everyone run to a fire?

Moshe Rabbeinu knew from the moment he spotted that bush that something extraordinary was occurring. He had two choices: approach the sight or walk on. If he neared the bush he knew he would face an experience that would alter his life forever. However, Hashem knew that Moshe had a very difficult conflict: his approach would require commitment and self-sacrifice. As Moshe took three steps that changed the course of history, Hashem, certainly aware how difficult the decision was, declared that such courage demonstrated that Moshe was worthy to be the redeemer of his children.

In many aspects of our lives, we encounter situations that may commit us to change. It may be a new charity we support, a new patient we see, or a new cause we undertake. They all require us to take three steps and look. If we walk away, we may not just be ignoring a burning issue. We may be ignoring another burning bush.

Daniel Lebowitz

10th grade

Different But Equal

This week's Parsha, Parshas Shemos, starts off with the following pasuk: "And these are the names of the children of Israel who were coming to Egypt." There is a simple problem that arises when reading this pasuk. The word הבאים is in the present tense. This makes it sound as if the Jewish people were just arriving at that time. In reality, however, they had already been there for a while. Why didn't the pasuk say "habau" - that they came in the past? The עיטורי תורה offers a suggestion based on the Midrash Rabbah that teaches how when an immigrant comes to a new country, in the early period following his arrival, he usually maintains his old customs. Upon becoming acclimated, he assumes resident status and adapts to the ways of the land. Throughout their stay in Egypt, the Jews regarded themselves as newly arrived immigrants; they had "just come." Not assuming resident status facilitated their determination to maintain their unique identity. In the merit of not changing their names, their language, and style of clothing, our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt. Perhaps we can take a lesson from this and try to minimize our assimilation with our generation's secular world. With this, we should be zocheh to a complete geula very soon.

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Time of Arrival

By Akiva Mehlman,
10th grade

In Parshat Shemos, we are introduced to Moshe and Aharon, the two brothers who led Bnai Yisrael out of Mitzrayim. In Parshat Vayeira it states, "These are Aharon and Moshe, to whom Hashem said, "Bring out Bnai Yisrael from Mitzrayim; these are Moshe and Aharon". Rashi, taking note of the reversal of their names from the first part of the pasuk to the second, quotes a Midrash saying, "There are places where it mentions Aharon before Moshe, and places where it mentions Moshe before Aharon to demonstrate that they are equal." The Medrash seems to be implying that Moshe and Aharon were on equal levels. To say this, however, is impossible. The Rambam writes that one of the fundamentals of Judaism is that Moshe was the greatest of all the prophets because he not only achieved the highest level of prophecy, but also was perfect in both the terms of intellect and ethics. If this is true, how can the Medrash say that Aharon and Moshe were equal?

Rav Ahron Soloveichik zt"l gives the following answer to this question. In Parshat Shemos, when Aharon met

Moshe in the desert and kissed him, the Medrash comments that Moshe represented Emes, truth, and Tzedek, righteousness, while Aharon represented Chesed, kindness, and Shalom, peace. Certainly Moshe was also dedicated to peace and kindness and Aharon was dedicated to truth and righteousness. However, the intent of the initial Medrash was to emphasize the special attributes of Moshe and Aharon.

Based upon this Medrash, we can now understand the comment of Rashi, which said that they were equal even though as the Rambam points out they were not equal because after all, Moshe, was the greatest prophet to ever live. Rashi is explaining that regarding the highlighted attributes of Aharon and Moshe, they were equal. Rav Ahron continues and says that, "a person cannot sacrifice truth on account of generosity and vice versa". Therefore, they were both equal in that they did not compromise one attribute for the other, but they also chose to focus and perfect other specific attributes. Have a great Shabbos!

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