

פרשת בא

The Parashiot that we read during these weeks are the ones that discuss the Jewish exile in Egypt, their redemption, and their receiving of the Torah. This begins with Parashat Shemot, and continues through Parashat Mishpatim. The opening words of Parashat Shemot are "ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה" – "these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt". The Hida ztl' says that the words "ואלה שמות" hints to a special Misvah. This is the Misvah of reading each Parasha "שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום" (reading the Pasuk twice and the Targum Unkelos once). There are many benefits, and much blessing from the Shamayim for those who observe the practice of reading the weekly Parasha in this manner. The words "ואלה שמות" stand for: "אדם לְקרא הַפּרשָה שְׁנַיִם מִקְרָא וְאֶחָד תַּרְגּוּם" – "a person is obligated to read the Parasha twice in scripture and one Targum".

The question is, why wait until this Parasha to hint to this Misvah? Why didn't the Torah hint to the Misvah in Parashat Bereshit, in the beginning of the Torah?! Hacham Baruch z'l' answered, that the Torah specifically chose to teach this lesson of שנים מקרא in Parashat Shemot because one may think that the only time it is necessary to read the Pesukim twice and Targum explanation once, is when the Torah is saying something that requires explanation. However when the Torah simply lists people's names there would be no need to read "שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום", because the Targum gives no commentary to their names! As a matter of fact, when we read names during "שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום" we end up just saying the name three consecutive times - there is nothing added by the Targum! For this reason the Torah chose this Pasuk of ואלה שמות ("these are the **names**"), to convey the message that even though the Torah is listing names they still *must* be read "שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום". There are mystical reasons and benefits for doing so.

Another explanation of why the Torah chose Parashat Shemot as the Parasha to teach the lesson of שנים מקרא is based upon a broader understanding of the importance of these series of Parashiot beginning with Parashat Shemot. In our

religion there are many seasons. There is the High Holiday season, Passover season, Hanukah, Purim, Shavuot, Omer, Etc.. Not many are aware of the season that begins with Parashat Shemot and runs six weeks through Parashat Mishpatim. This season is called "Shobabim".

"שמות וארא בא בשלח יתרו משפטים"-stands for the six Parashiot: "שובבים"-these weeks are very special and are extra conducive for doing Teshuvah, especially for sins pertaining to the Berit Kodesh. The Pasuk alludes to this season when it says "שובו בנים" "שובבים"-return o wayward sons". This is the time when we beg for forgiveness for not keeping the sanctity of our Milah, and for the various transgressions pertaining to its purity. There are many communities that observe special fasts, and read specific Tefilot during these weeks.

Why specifically these weeks?! What makes them such a special time to rectify these severe sins?! In order to understand, we must go all the way back to Adam Harishon. Adam had sinned by eating from the Eitz Hadaat, and because he did so he was punished with death for him and for all of his descendants. One may ask: "what did I do to deserve this punishment, after all I didn't eat from the tree?!" The answer is, you *did* eat from the tree. Adam was comprised of all the 600,000 Neshamot that the Jews are made up of. His body was full of holy Shemot, and each Part of his body benefitted from his eating and did not protest. So in reality we **were** there as a part of Adam, and we too ate from the tree and therefore deserve the punishment of Adam!

Hashem in his mercy gave the world several chances to rectify the sin of Adam Harishon, and bring the world back to perfection where there would be no more death. The first chance was in the generation of Noah, the generation of the Mabul. They had the chance to correct things but instead, they sinned grievously. They were full of immorality, and there was no purity of marriage. Instead of fixing the sin of Adam they actually made things worse!! The Pasuk says regarding them: "וירא ה' כי רבה רעת האדם"-"Hashem saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth". The Torah uses the word **האדם** instead of the more common word איש, to allude to their failed mission of rectifying the sin of אדם-Adam.

The next opportunity came in the generation of the tower of Bavel. They too could have fixed the sin of Adam, but instead made things worse by trying to build a tower to fight against Hashem. The Pasuk says regarding them: "וירד ה' לראת את העיר" "וירד ה' לראת את העיר"-"and Hashem descended to see the city and the tower

which the sons of man built". Here again the Torah uses the word **אדם**, to allude to the missed opportunity to fix the sin of Adam.

The next chance came to the generation of the Jews in the Egyptian exile. They now had to rectify the sin of Adam, *as well* as the sins of the generation of the flood, and the sins of the generation of the tower!

This time however, the Jews had success in this mission. The Torah describes the Jews stay in Egypt as being in a "כור הברזל" and "iron furnace" and Rashi explains this to mean (דברים פרק ד' פסוק כ') "a furnace used to purify gold". This means that as difficult as the experience was for the Jews to be in Egypt, it was really to purify them from their impurities and cause them to come out as beautiful and precious as gold! They went through the "furnace" of Egypt in order to make the rectifications for Adam, as well as the sins of the generations of the Mabul, and the sins of the generation that built the tower! We see this hinted in the decrees that Pharaoh made. First he said: כל "all boys born should be thrown in the Nile". This alludes to the Jews rectification of the sins of the generation of the flood. Pharaoh also commanded the Jews to build the cities of Pitom Raamses. This was to rectify the generation of Bavel's building a tower against Hashem. In the end, all the suffering and pain the Jews endured, enabled them to fix all the sins and to make these great Tikkunim! It was exactly like coming out of a fiery furnace pure and clean!

These Parashiot are the ones which discuss the story of the Jews exile and exodus from Egypt - the Parashiot where the Jews rectified the sins of those evil generations of the דור המבול whose sins were those of immorality, and פגם הברית (desecrating the holy Milah). It is therefore the perfect time for us as well to fix our downfalls in this area, and to beg Hashem for forgiveness for these severe sins.

We now begin to understand why the Torah chose Parashat Shemot to introduce the Misvah of "שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום". It is precisely through the reading of these Parashiot that we "tap into" this powerful opportunity of Teshuvah that the Egyptian exile represented. How does this work? How does the mere reading of the words of the Parasha help us access the powers of Teshuvah?! This can be explained with an idea from the holy Baal Shem Tov Zechuto Yagen Aleinu.

The Gemarah in מ' דף קידושין asks "תלמוד גדול או מעשה גדול"? "Which is greater, learning Torah or performing Misvot? The Gemarah answers תלמוד גדול שהתלמוד מביא "learning is greater because it leads to the performance of Misvot". The Baal Shem Tov asks; what is the meaning of the Gemarah's answer? How can learning be better because "*it leads to performance*", by saying this, the Gemarah implies that performance is really stronger?! (if learning is better because it will ultimately lead you to performing Misvot, doesn't that in itself show you that it is the performance of Misvot that is considered the "end goal", which is greater than anything else- including learning Torah?!). The Baal Shem Tov explains this Gemarah with a fundamental lesson in Judaism. It's not only about the physical actions of the Misvot that a person does, it's also (and perhaps more importantly) about a person's *desire* to do the Misvot, and doing whatever he is capable of doing to associate with the Misvah.

For example, it is impossible for a person today to do many Misvot, such as sacrificing Korbanot, going to the Bet Hamikdash, etc. If he is not a Kohen, than it is impossible for him to perform the various Misvot that are exclusive to the Kohanim. How is a person supposed to fulfill the 613 Misvot if so many of them have no application to him?! The answer is, with a person's desire, and his study of each Misvah, it is considered as if *he had actually done the Misvah!!* We say in the Tefilah: "ונשלמה פרים שפתינו"- "our lips should compensate for the bull offerings". By reading, and studying the laws of Korbanot it is as if we actually brought the Korban! (All those studying the Daf Yomi are now involved in the laws of sacrifices which are inapplicable in our times. We must know that through their study, they merit the performance of such rare and precious Misvot!). This explains the Gemarah. Learning Torah is greater; "שתלמוד מביא לידי מעשה"- "the learning leads to action", meaning the *learning itself* makes it as if you performed the actual Misvah! It is now understandable why learning is better than the action of performing Misvot- learning actually *encompasses* the performing of Misvot!!

This helps explain the Gemarah (שבת דף לא') that brings the story about a Goy, who approached Shammai and requested that Shammai convert him "while he stands on one foot". When Shammai heard this he chased the man out with a stick! The Goy then approached Hillel, and requested to be converted while standing on one foot. Hillel agreed, and told the man "whatever you dislike, don't do to your friend. This is the entire Torah and everything else is details- go learn".

What is the meaning of Hillel's converting the Goy based upon one statement?! Surely Hillel's conversion was complete, but we all know how serious and thorough conversion must be! How are we to understand Hillel's actions?! Is this the *only* thing one must know in order to become a full fledged Jew!?

The explanation is, that this Goy was actually very learned. He knew about a concept called Gilgul (reincarnation). If a person fails to complete his quota of Mitzvot that he needs to fulfill in his lifetime, he must go through the unpleasant experience of "coming back" down to this world in order to try again to complete all the Mitzvot. (This is dangerous because he also runs the risk of failing and making things worse!). The Goy was asking Shammai and Hillel to convert him on "one foot", meaning to convert him and teach him how to complete his life's mission in "one lifetime" (similar to a trip that has several "legs"- the first leg being the first stop - so too this Goy was sincere in his desire to convert and wanted to learn how to complete *all* the Mitzvot in his one current trip down to this earth!). Shammai felt this way too difficult for the Goy, so he chased him out. Hillel however felt that through his lesson, he can indeed teach the Goy how to complete *all* the Mitzvot in his current lifetime. How is it possible to fulfill all the Mitzvot in one lifetime? The first step is to love every Jew. "כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה"- "every Jew is connected". The stronger the love we feel for our fellow Jew, the closer we are connected. If a person loves every Jew, he then associated himself with the Mitzvot that they all perform. When a friend he loves does a Mitzvah, he himself benefits! This was the first piece of advice Hillel had for the Goy. In order to connect to the many Mitzvot that we must accomplish in our current lifetime, love every Jew and don't do to them what you wouldn't want done to you. In this way you will get credit for all the Mitzvot that they do. There is however Mitzvot that at certain times *no* Jew can do. What about those? How do we connect with those Mitzvot?? By learning their laws and the Torah associated with them. This is what Hillel was saying "everything else go learn". To get credit for all other Mitzvot you must go learn about them, and you will get credit for performing them, and through both loving your fellow Jew and learning Torah you will have accomplished *all* the Mitzvot, and have no need to come back down as a Gilgul!

We now finally understand why the Torah chose Parashat Shemot to teach us about reading the Parashah מקרא שנים. These are the weeks that we read and study about the Jews in Egypt and their redemption and receiving of the Torah. By reading and learning these Parashiot that speak of the Jews' rectification of the grievous sins of the generation of the flood-(פגם הברית), and rectifying the various other sins as well, we actually "tap into" the power of their purification in the "כור הברזל"-fiery furnace as well!

This explains why the Pasuk says "ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה" - the words "הבאים מצרימה" literally mean "**coming** to Egypt". Why does the Torah use the word coming instead of **came** to Egypt?! We now understand that the Torah was conveying this message, that when we read these words at this time, it is as if we are *now coming to Egypt* in order to rectify what needs to be rectified. These are the weeks especially suitable for purifying oneself from these sins, and through the reading and study of these Parashiot and the proper Teshuvah and repentance, one can establish himself as holy, even in a generation such as ours! Hence this is the perfect Parasha to teach us the significance of reading the Parasha "שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום".

With this understanding of what the exile in Egypt- the fiery furnace- accomplished for us, we better appreciate the mockery Hashem made with the Egyptians. The Pasuk says: "ולמען תספר באזני בןך ובן בןך את אשר התעללתי במצרים" "And that you may tell in the ears of your son and grandson, the mockery I made of Egypt". They thought they were enslaving, and subjugating us by torturing us, when in reality Hashem arranged that they prepared us to be rulers over them! **! ישתבח שמו לעד**

Why was it that the Egyptians felt the need to enslave us?? Pharaoh had told his advisors "הבא נתחכמה לו" - "come, let us deal wisely with them". Pharaoh was afraid that the Jews would dethrone him, but what would give him such an idea?! The Jews were good, law abiding citizens. What would make Pharaoh feel threatened by them?! The answer is found in an episode in Parashat Noah. After the flood, Noah had drunk wine and became intoxicated. His son Cham found him naked in his tent due to his drunkenness. Some say Cham castrated Noah, and some say he sodomized him. When Noah awoke, he cursed Cham and said: "עבד עבדים יהיה לאחיו" - "cursed be Canaan, a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers".

The children of Cham were: Kush, Misrayim, Put, and CANAAN. Noah cursed the fourth son of Cham- Canaan. The reason being, since Cham prevented his father from having more children so that he could get more inheritance (at that time the only ones in the world were Noah and his three sons, Shem, Cham, and Yafet. The more children Noah would continue to have, the less each brother would get!) Cham prevented Noah from having a fourth son, therefore Noah cursed Cham's fourth son Canaan.

If we analyze the curse of Noah we find that he cursed Canaan- "עבד עבדים" - "slave of slaves". Meaning, Canaan would be a slave to his brothers who themselves

would be considered slaves! We find that all of the Cham's children had the status of slaves, and Canaan was the slave of slaves.

One of Cham's children was Misrayim. He was the one who established the land of Egypt. This is what Pharaoh was afraid of. Pharaoh was the king of Egypt-Misrayim. He knew that his country and kingdom were really slaves. Who were they slaves to? The descendants of the other sons of Noah. Who was the most important son of Noah? Shem. The Jews descended from Shem, and it was *this* that worried Pharaoh. He knew that in reality the Egyptians were slaves to the descendants of Shem (the Jews) on account of the curse of Noah. The Pasuk in Tehilim 105 says; "ויבא ישראל" "the Jews came to Egypt and Jacob dwelled in the *land of Cham*". Pharaoh tried to preempt this curse of Cham by instead enslaving the Jews, and in this way prevent the Egyptians from becoming slaves to them.

What Pharaoh did not realize, is that not only would his plan fail but he actually would *assist* the Jews in becoming masters over his people! He enslaved them, and persecuted them, thereby purifying them from the sins that had to be rectified! Not only that, but Pharaoh actually raised Moshe, the savior of the Jews in his own palace!! His daughter Batya found Moshe as a baby, and Pharaoh agreed to raise him! Look at the wonders of Hashem! The one who was trying to destroy us, actually helped us through his own hands! Like we read in the Hagadah of Pesah; "שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו" "in every generation they try to destroy us but Hashem saves them from their hands" the emphasis is on the word **מידם** "from their hands". Hashem causes us to be saved from their *own hands*. They themselves- while trying to harm us - end up helping us defeat them! How fortunate are we that our Hashem not only saves us, but sends the salvation through our enemies themselves!

May we merit to utilize these precious weeks of **שובים** (this year is a leap year, and in a leap year we add 2 more weeks corresponding to Parashat **Terumah** and **Tesaveh**, thus giving us **שובים-ת"ת**), and return to Hashem with a complete heart. Let us remember the extreme value of the study of Torah in that it is as if we are actually performing the **Misvot** we study! May we merit forgiveness for our sins of **הברית** (defiling our holy **Berit Milah** through improper thought, site, and action), and merit the purity which will lead us to see the salvation of Hashem with the coming of **Mashiach** speedily in our days Amen.