



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM
THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

The Blessing of Antisemitism

הָיָה עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב וְעֲצוּם מִמֶּנּוּ. (שמות א, ט)

The people of the Children of Yisrael were greater and mightier from us. (*Shemos* 1:9)

The *Beis Halevi's* commentary on the Torah explains our verse as follows:

Pharaoh wished to harm Yisrael, but it is a very shameful thing to harm a people baselessly, for no reason. So he decided to act smartly. He presented the Jewish people's wickedness to his ministers, the advisors of the kingdom. He spoke of the negative qualities of their hearts, and claimed that they are not trustworthy, neither as regards the country's affairs in general nor as regards individual Egyptians.

This is what Pharaoh meant when he said to them, "The people of the Children of Yisrael are greater and mightier from us." "Mightier" refers to wealth and acquisition of possessions. Pharaoh claimed that the Jewish people's wealth was "*from us*," in other words, from the Egyptians. They steal and swindle the Egyptians, they charge us interest, etc. Therefore, Pharaoh suggested הבה נתחכמה לו פן ירבה והיה כי תקראנה מלחמה ונוסף גם

הוא על שונאינו – "Let us deal smartly with them, lest they increase, and when a war will happen, they too will join the enemy," since their hearts are not faithful to the country, and they are against the state in general.

We see that Pharaoh, in order to harm the Jews, depicted them in the eyes of his countrymen as evil and corrupt people. Jews steal our money and swindle us, etc etc. So there is good reason to treat them harshly. About this we recite in the Haggadah: וַיַּרְעוּ לָנוּ מִצְרַיִם, which, translated according to the commentary of the *Beis Halevi*, means as follows: "The Egyptians made us out as evil people."

And this is what the non-Jews have been saying about us throughout the generations.

סָחִי וּמְאֹס תִּשְׁיַמְנוּ בְּקֶרֶב הָעַמִּים – You have made us repulsive and disgusting in the midst of the nations.¹

¹ *Eichah* 3:45.

This verse is why the anti-Semites hurl at us the epithet of “dirty Jew.”

But there is a hidden blessing in this curse. There is a story about the Baal Shem Tov that once a Jew came to him and said he was afraid of a non-Jew who keeps calling him “dirty Jew.” The Baal Shem Tov calmed him and assured him that he has nothing to

fear from this guy. If this guy sees the Jew as “dirty,” it will cause him to distance himself from the Jew, and not attack him.

This way of looking at Jews strengthens the separation between Yisrael and the nations, and this is a blessing. ●

Crying Without Words

וַיִּזְעָקוּ וַתַּעַל שְׁוַעְתָּם אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים מִן הָעֲבָדָה. (שמות ב, כג)

They emitted an outcry and their scream rose to G-d from the labor. (*Shemos* 2:23)

It says in the *Zohar*¹ that שוועה, “screaming,” is different from זעקה, “outcry.” What’s the difference? “screaming” is prayer with words, and “outcry” is a pleading outburst without words. The *Zohar* goes on to say that “screaming” might go unanswered, but not “outcry.” The wordless outcry is stronger.

Why?

Screaming with words is a prayer that needs to ascend to Heaven. There might be obstacles on the way that prevent it from reaching Heaven, and it might thus go unanswered. But a wordless outcry doesn’t need to ascend to Heaven at all, because about a situation like this it says עמו אנכי בצרה – Hashem says, “I am with him in his distress.”² When a person is in trouble, Hashem is right there with him. So to speak, Hashem is within the person’s heart, and there is no need for the prayer to ascend to Heaven at all. This is why a wordless

outcry cannot go unanswered.

This teaches us an important principle. A person doesn’t need to go far in search of a special *tefilah*, an effective means of prayer. Everything is inside his heart already. A person’s heart is built for drawing close to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* by means of *tefilah*. It’s only when his heart becomes marred, and there are other, extraneous things in his heart, that the need arises to go looking for this closeness in other ways.

There is a story that took place in the time of R. Chayim of Volozhin, about a *tzaddik* who worked wonders by means of his *tefilos*. R. Chayim sent sick people to him so he would *daven* for them, because he thought that his *tefilos* were effective.

The *tzaddik* would stand perfectly still when he *davened*. He did not *shuckle* at all. When he was asked why he *davens* this way, he answered with a parable:

There was a king who wanted to build himself a palace. He called in an architect and asked him to

1 *Shemos* 19b.

2 *Tehillim* 91:15.

לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורג זצ"ל
ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

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draw up a plan for the construction of the palace. The architect was very exact in his work, and in the end, when the king asked him what his fee is, he told the king to take a certain number of gold pieces, and place them in the corner of one of the rooms, and they should fit in exactly in this corner.

They took the gold pieces, tried to place them in the specified corner, and couldn't get them to fit. They were greatly puzzled by this. But then they checked the corner and found that there was a little dirt left there,

without which the gold coins would have fit exactly.

The *tzaddik* then explained to them that this is how the heart is. By nature, it is built in such a way that all the feelings and emotions of *tefilah* will be in it, with perfect exactness. You don't need to move around and sway. You don't need to do external things to arouse your heart to the proper feelings of prayer. Only someone whose heart is sullied by extraneous things that shouldn't be in it needs to find other ways to arouse in his heart the feeling of closeness to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* when he *davens*. ●

PARSHA TOPIC

Victimizing

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל עַמּוֹ הֵנָּה עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב וְעֲצוֹם מִמֶּנּוּ וְגו' וְהָיָה כִּי תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה וְנוֹסֶף
גַּם הוּא עַל שְׂנְאֵינוּ וְנִלָּחֵם בָּנוּ וְעָלָה מִן הָאָרֶץ. (שמות ב, כג)

He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the Children of Yisrael are greater and mightier than us... and it will be when war takes place, that they too will join with our enemies, and battle us, and go up out of the land." (Shemos 2:23)

Who's the Underdog?

Pharaoh delivered a national address to Egypt, as stated in the *pasuk*. He warned about the strength of the Jewish people and the potential danger it poses to "national security."

We need to grasp his technique.

There are victimizers and there are the victimized. The victimizer is the bad guy. He seeks to harass, damage and even kill the victimized. The victimized is the poor, suffering underdog. He is the one whom the victimizer seeks to oppress and wrong.

How does the victimized party hold up? The very knowledge that he is victimized, the feeling that he is poor and unfortunate, gives him the strength to carry on and bear his suffering.

Let's say Reuven lends his friend Shimon \$200 and

then Shimon denies ever having received the money. What does the poor lender say to himself? Okay, I lost \$200, but at least I know that I am in the right and the other guy is a thief. The very knowledge that he is a victim of injustice fortifies him with inner strength.

In the terrible Holocaust, this was one of the things that kept the Jews going. The feeling that they are the victimized ones, and the Germans are persecuting them for no reason at all. The whole time they lived with hope: the day will come when everyone will see who was in the right. The whole world will recognize that we were victimized.

Now we come to Pharaoh's devilish plan.

Pharaoh wanted to beat down the Jewish people and grind them into the ground. He wanted to put them in a true state of physical and spiritual *galus*. If he just took them and started to cruelly enslave them, the

galus would not have been unbearable, because the Jews would always feel victimized. They would know very well that they are in the right and the Egyptians who are oppressing them are no-good. This very knowledge would have invested in them tremendous inner strength and fortitude. They would have continued hoping for a better future.

So what did Pharaoh do? Like it says in the *Haggadah*: וִירְעוּ אוֹתָנוּ מִצְרַיִם – “The Egyptians made us out to be evil.” They claimed that the Jews are wicked, malevolent people, bereft of any redeeming qualities, as the *Beis Halevi* explains the verse.

Pharaoh delivered an address to the Egyptian nation and said to them: You see those Jews walking around among us? They are laughing at us. They have a nefarious trick up their sleeve. Don't trust them. They are just waiting for the day when they can kick us out of our own country. “When war takes place, they too will join with our enemies, and battle us, and go up out of the land.” Who will “go up out of the land”? Us! They are plotting to evict us from our own beloved Egypt by siding with our enemies!!

Then Pharaoh continued on with his rant, possessed by the fever of a true demagogue: We took Yosef, that Jew, out of prison, and appointed him as viceroy. And you know what he did? He collected all the money of Egypt to himself (the ultimate “Jewish banker”). Then he settled his own family on our land, in order to support them at our expense. They are persecuting us. They are taking advantage of us. One day they will grab our little children and slaughter them just because they want to use their blood for something. Watch out!!

You probably heard the story cited by *Chazal* about the Jewish slaves in Egypt who built a building, and it was missing a brick, and an Egyptian took a Jewish baby and put it into the wall in place of a brick.

Anyone who hears such a story is outraged. What an injustice! Because you are missing a brick, you put in a child instead? That is so barbaric!

But it didn't look that way to the Egyptians. I wasn't there, obviously, but according to what *Chazal* say, this is how I imagine the scene:

Pharaoh had said to his people: Watch out, because if they stop working for a moment, we are goners. Our

children will die first. The Jews will slaughter them all. Just don't let that happen. Don't let a Jew stop working, no matter what, because there's nothing more dangerous than that!

Then they noticed there was a brick missing, and it might interrupt the course of work that the Jews were engaged in. So the Egyptian foreman said to himself: Oh no, I bet they are about to start their rebellion. This is their chance. They planned it all out in advance that there will be a brick missing, and they will use the opportunity to get into position. They are going to kill me first, and then the rest of us... So he grabbed a Jewish child, and with a big, wicked grin on his face, put the child into the wall. Then he harangued the Jewish workers: Tomorrow, no more tricks. Got it?

They turned the victimized into the victimizer. They made the Jews into a people of oppressors.

Hitler Too

Hitler too. He wrote a book with a whole brilliant philosophy about how the Jewish people are actually the victimizers of the human race. So any act he did to eradicate the Jews was, in his view, an act of saving the whole world.

Let's see how his philosophy went.

First of all, we need to know that every sin in general, and murder in particular, starts with denial of G-d. Hitler was a big proponent of the theory of evolution. And evolution denies the Divine origin of the world.

One of the main principles of evolution is that every population has its strong members and weak members. The stronger get stronger at the expense of the weak. It's the jungle mentality. Let's say you have a whole herd of antelope. Some are stronger than others. The herd develops by the weak ones naturally dying out due to sicknesses or because the stronger ones kill them. The process of the world's growth and development is based on eliminating the weak and advancing the strong.

Now, who is against this approach? A moral person with a conscience. The conscience says that if someone is weak, instead of killing him, you should help him and strengthen him. If he is ill, hospitalize him, treat him, and thereby save him, so he will continue to live.

Who are the proponents of the moral, conscientious

approach? You guessed. It's the Jewish people and their Torah. So the Jews are destroying the world. They are the enemies of humanity's betterment. Nothing is more damaging to the world than conscience.

So for this reason, Hitler built a whole system whose express purpose was the annihilation of the Jewish people. His goal was to "rescue" the world.

This is why his approach was brilliant. He made the Jews into bad guys, into victimizers. Only thanks to this did he succeed in building concentration camps and killing so many Jews. It was by declaring that they are victimizing the entire human race, and it is therefore permissible for anyone to kill such a dangerous enemy.

Why They Failed

Pharaoh did not succeed in what he set out to do, and neither did Hitler. Although they managed to convince their own people that the Jews are victimizers, the Jews themselves knew and know very well who the real victimizers are.

However, sometimes a person gets all mixed up in his own conscience and doesn't know anymore who is the oppressor and who is the victim. This is relevant to us today.

A few weeks ago, a Jew got up and killed dozens of Arabs in Me'aras Hamachpelah, in Chevron. I am not here to express an opinion whether he was right or wrong. That's not my subject. I just want to say that after he did what he did, from a political perspective, the whole system changed direction, it switched around completely, and this involves two subjects.

The first subject is that we all live here in *Eretz Yisrael* with the feeling that we have an army and police force that "protect" our lives.

I, for instance, live in Ofakim, and there are two ways to drive to Bnei Brak from Ofakim. I can go via Ashkelon, or I can go via Kiryat Gat, which takes me by the Arab city of Rahat.

Usually when I wanted to drive to Bnei Brak, I didn't hesitate to go via Rahat. I said to myself: Even if there

will be Arab disturbances and riots, there is an army and police presence there, so I don't need to worry.

The second subject is the political aspect. A month ago, every time an Arab made a terrorist attack in which Jews were killed and wounded, or every time an Israeli soldier was taken hostage, it was like a knife in the heart for the government. Everyone said to the Prime Minister: How can you make peace with these Palestinians?! They are terrorists, murderers! In other words, politically speaking, the government wanted things to be as quiet as possible, so they can make peace with the Palestinians.

Today, after the massacre in Chevron, someone who understands what is going on can see that the situation is now completely reversed.

Maybe this is a little extreme, but today I am worried about driving via Rahat, because maybe the government doesn't really want to protect Jews, due to what happened.

Similarly, every time there is a tragedy, the Prime Minister gets up and moralizes: See what you did, you extreme Rightists? There is a person over here who is a little bit nice, one can sit down together with him and talk about peace. And you, with your violence, messed it all up. You caused the Arabs to be violent back to us.

To state the point strongly, from a political perspective, every tragedy serves the interests of the government.

What does all this mean to us?

I see it as an outcry from Heaven: For forty years, you relied on your army. Maybe now you will recognize once and for all Who is actually protecting you.

We need to realize that if *Hashem* doesn't protect us, we have no protection. **אם ה' לא ישמור עיר שוא – שקד שומר** – "If *Hashem* doesn't guard a city, the guardsman kept watch in vain."¹

It's a voice from Heaven. If only we would listen to it and get the message, because if not, who knows where it will lead. ●

¹ *Tehillim* 127:1.