

DAF TSAFON

18 January 2025 Parashat Shemot
18 Tevet 5785 ArtScroll 292 Hertz 206



This week we start the second book of the Torah, Exodus. The Book opens with the rise of the new Pharaoh and his harsh decrees against the Jewish people. "And a new King arose who did not know Joseph" [Exodus 1:8]: In a fascinating twist, Rashi expresses two opinions in the verse, the first, that it actually was a new administration that arose. The other opinion is that it was the same Pharaoh who knew Joseph, but who had a change of policy and imposed the terrible decree of slavery upon the Jewish people.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) asked, "Why should we care about this? What difference did it make to Chazal, whether it was a new king or the same king with a new policy?" Rabbi Feinstein's answer is one worth thinking about. According to the opinion that it was a new king –

we can readily understand that a new king will have new policies. We see this all the time in politics – when there is a change of government, there is a change in policy. However, the opinion that it is the same king with new policies is teaching us a lesson.

The Torah is showing us the depths to which a human being can sink. Here we have a king indebted to his advisor (Joseph) like no other person before him. Pharaoh had an advisor that literally saved the entire country. Not only did he save the country but made it prosperous as well. This very king can turn on the immediate descendants of this advisor and tell them "Sorry, I changed my mind. We have a new policy".

It is important for us to know that this happens. We should not think to ourselves "No one could be so low to do such a thing. No one could be such a snake, such a traitor".

The Torah wants to teach us just how ungrateful and unreliable human beings can be. Just look at Pharaoh.

Rabbeinu Bechaye quotes a Midrash on this pasuk: "Whoever denies the favours done for him by his friend will in the end deny the favours done for him by the Almighty". The Midrash derives this principle from Pharaoh, about whom it first says, "who did not know Yosef" and about whom it later says, "Who is God?" [Exodus 5:2]

However, this idea is not only found with Pharaoh, it is found with us as well. The Torah relates later in the Parasha that "Moses went out and saw an Egyptian striking a Jew. He killed the Egyptian who was striking the Jew. The next day, Moses encountered two Jews fighting and asked the aggressor why he is beating his friend. The aggressor turned to Moses and asked him "Are you going to kill me like you killed that other guy?" Moses responded, "I see the matter is known!" (Exodus 2:11-15)

The Midrash says that the Egyptians had a system whereby the taskmasters would lord over the Jewish policemen to force them to get the other Jews to do work. Every single morning, at the crack of dawn, the Egyptian taskmasters woke the Jewish policemen to get the other slaves to start working. This particular Egyptian taskmaster saw that the wife of the policeman he was waking up was a beautiful woman. After he sent the Jewish policeman out of the house, he came back and had relations with the man's wife. It was still before dawn and the woman, in the dark, thought she was having relations with her husband.

When the Jewish policeman came back to his house he noticed the Egyptian leaving. When the Jewish policeman asked his wife if the Egyptian had done anything to her, she admitted that she had relations with him, thinking that he was her husband. When the Egyptian realized that the Jew found out what he had done, he started beating him and wanted to kill him.

This is the context of the story in the Torah of the Egyptian beating the Hebrew. Moses, upon seeing this, knew through Divine intuition what the Egyptian had done to this man's wife and what he was trying to do now to destroy the evidence of his crime. Moses realized that for the crime of adultery as well as for attempted murder, the Egyptian was deserving of death and therefore Moses took the law into his own hands in killing him.

The Jewish person whom Moses rescued in this story was named Datan. The next day, when Moses went out, he saw this very same Datan beating up another Jew. Moses chastised Datan and said, "You wicked one, why are you hitting your fellow man?" Datan turned around and taunted Moshe, "Are you going to kill me like you killed the Egyptian?" Datan then went to the authorities and reported that Moses killed an Egyptian taskmaster. Moses was thus forced to flee into exile to save himself. Can we imagine a more ungrateful person than Datan? Moses saves his life, and he turned around and causes Moses to have to flee the country!

Pharaoh and Datan were the "worst of human personalities" – totally ungrateful to those whom they should have owed a tremendous debt of gratitude.

Shabbat Shalom

Haftarah

ArtScroll 1146 Hertz 225

ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE Isaiah XXVII, 6-XXVIII, 3 and XXIX, 22, 23

Isaiah foresees the invasion of the Northern and Southern kingdoms by the Assyrians. Yet, he asserts, the Divine punishment will not be as severe as that metered out to Israel's enemies. In days to come, once the people have purged their sins by abandoning idolatry, they will be restored to their homeland. Exiles from as far north as the Euphrates and south as the Brook of Egypt will worship the Lord on the holy mount in Jerusalem. (Compare God's promise that Israel will worship Him at Mt Horeb, after they have been delivered from Egypt.)

Isaiah denounces the drunken nobles of Samaria (the capital of the Northern Kingdom) as well as the priests and so-called prophets of Judah whose morals are no better and who mislead the people. Their mockery of Isaiah's rebuke will be matched by the barbarous accents of the Assyrian invader. In spite of this iniquity there will come a time when the people will acknowledge God's sovereignty and sanctify His name.

מזל טוב

Wedding anniversaries

Arnold and Marilyn Conyer
Mark and Sandra Hepner

מזל טוב

Bat Mitzvah anniversary

Silvia Kossard

**Our congregation acknowledges the following
yahrzeit anniversaries and wishes long life to those
who are commemorating a yahrzeit
during the coming week.**

חיים ארוכים

Robert Berman
Fortunae' Golan
Keri Klinger

Harold Phillips
Harav Yosef Ravia
Ferdinand Schwartz

Charles Slucki
Kurt Suransky

father of Arlaine Berman
grandmother of Mironne Golan
daughter of Ron and Suzie Klinger,
sister of Ari Klinger
father of Lindsay Phillips
uncle of Ezra Ravia
father of Paul Schwartz,
grandfather of Mark Schwartz
brother of Miriam Gelbart
father of David Suransky