

FASCINATING INSIGHTS

by Community Contributor

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שמות פרשת שמות

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The Days Of שובבים

The days of שובבים (Shovivim) begin this week. שובבים is an abbreviation for the 6 weeks of שמות וארא. בא בשלח יתרו משפטים. During this period we can rectify the trait of Yosef-קדושת הברית. In fact, this period is 6 weeks long and Yosef corresponds to the 6th Sefira-יסוד. Is it any surprise that in Parshas Shemos we are told that they had 6 children at a time as children are produced from the Bris!

These weeks are a time of Teshuva, says the Zohar, and as it says שובו בנים שובבים; return wayward children. The term שובבים is rooted in שובה; to return.[1] This is hinted to in the first Pasuk of Shemos-בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה, as the end letters spell מילה. Furthermore, the last letters of the next words-תשובה! spell-מצרימה את יעקב איש וביתו !

The Parshiyos of these weeks speak about our stay in Mitzrayim, a place of impurity-ערות הארץ as well as our eventual departure from there, culminating with Matan Torah. It is in these weeks that we work on קדושת הברית, on leaving ערות הארץ (Mitzrayim). The Mishna says שש מעלות למקואות[2]; there are 6 levels to Mikva. Another meaning is that these refer to the 6 weeks of שובבים, which can purify us.[3] In fact, שובבים forms an acronym for שפע ברכה והצלחה בכל מעשה ידיהם; flow of blessing and success in all areas.

Time To Think

It says ויאנחו בני ישראל מלך מצרים; the king of Mitzrayim died and the Jewish people groaned.[4] The Sefas Emes is bothered why the Pasuk is seemingly out of order as the Jewish people were working hard before the king died. So why doesn't it say that they groaned first and then he died?

To think, reflect and digest life is essential to living a proper life. A famous Baal Teshuva related how he became religious. He said that he was once traveling to America from Israel and forgot to bring

books to occupy himself on the flight. That left him with his thoughts on an 11 hour flight. It was in these 11 hours that he realized that Hashem is reality and decided to begin to live his life according to His will.

Throughout the enslavement in Mitzrayim, the Jewish people were kept busy in order that they should have no time to think. Along comes Moshe and says to Pharaoh, [5] **שְׁלַח אֶת עַמִּי**; send out my nation. That is to say, stop keeping my people's thoughts, eyes and hands too occupied to think, as is alluded to in **יָדַיִם, מַחְשְׁבוֹת, עֵינַיִם**; eyes, thoughts and hands.[6] What is Pharaoh's response? I will keep them even busier, as now they will have to collect straw.[7]

Nevuchadnetzar was no different as he had us marching down to Bavel without stopping. Only once we reached Bavel (**שָׁם יִשְׁבֻּנוּ** ; **עַל נַהֲרוֹת בָּבֶל**); there we sat, then [8] **גַּם בָּכִינוּ**; we cried. Only once they sat did they cry because they now had time to reflect and think.

The Gemara tells us that a **פְּסִיעָה גְּסָה**; large step removes 1/500th of one's eyesight. However, it can be restored at Kiddush on Friday night.[9] During the week we run to work, from one errand to another and so on.[10] This causes us to lose our vision of reality as we lose sight of life's priorities. Along comes Shabbos and it's time to stop our running, selling, buying.... We think and reflect, thereby acquiring the proper view.[11] We focus on Hashem and use this **שְׁבִיתָה** (stopping) for [12] **תְּשׁוּבָה**. Now that I have time to reflect, I can start to see reality again, my eyesight is restored. We need to live with **אִשְׁתָּמָם כְּשֶׁעַה חֲדָה**; silence for a while.[13]

In preparing for Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol had 7 days of solitude.[14] Sometimes we need to do the same- each person according to what he needs- whether it be by isolating ourselves at times from people, gadgets and the like. In this way we can prepare ourselves properly for Kedusha. It can be a few minutes before davening, learning, eating or the like to refocus our mind, getting present and realigning our priorities. We can reflect on our day by writing and thinking about it. It is not for naught that our early ancestors such as Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov among many others chose to spend their lives as shepherds. It afforded them plenty of time to think.

In the census in Parshas Pinchas, a family named **יִשְׁבִּי** is listed as being from **יִשְׁשָׁכָר**. **יִשְׁבִּי** is rooted in **יָשַׁב**; to sit and reflect.[15] That is a person who learns, a true **יִשְׁשָׁכָר**. In a Sefer Torah we find a space between each Parsha. Rashi[16] says this is telling us to reflect between each Parsha and section.

If one puts a cup in water but doesn't submerge it, then only the external part gets wet. For the internal part to get filled, total submersion is needed. To be changed internally, we need to submerge ourselves in that we think and reflect. This is just as it says **וַיִּבֶן בְּדַבָּר וַיִּבְחַן**; contemplate this matter and gain understanding.[17]

When the king of Mitzrayim was alive, he saw to it that the Jews shouldn't have a moment to think. Only after he died did they groan, since they now had time to think about the pain.

[1] Yirmiyah 3:14. The days of **שובים** are days of Teshuva in general and specifically for the Bris.

[2] Masechta Mikvaos 1:1

[3] We also see in other places that 6 is getting closer to Kedusha. The Gemara (Shabbos 35b) says **שש תקיעות תוקעין ערב שבת**; on Friday afternoon we sound 6 Shofar blasts to announce the impending arrival of Shabbos. The Mishna Brura (150:12. See Zohar in Vayakhel 206:1) writes that we shouldn't make more than 6 steps for the Bima. The throne that Shlomo made had 6 steps (Melachim 1, 10:19, Divrei Hayamim, 2, 9:18. See Devarim Rabba 5:6).

[4] Shemos 2:23

[5] Shemos 5:1. R' Shimon Sofer tells us the word **נחש** is rooted in **חש**; rush, as in **וחש עתדת למו**; future events are rushing at them (Devarim 32:35). This is because the Satan tries to rush us, not letting us think properly.

[6] Technology- cell phones, computers and the like- can keep us so busy that we don't have time to think.

[7] Shemos 5:7-9

[8] Tehillim 137:1. Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski tells of a time when his father opted to take the train which took many more hours to get to his destination than necessary. Why? So that he would have time to think. See Mesilas Yesharim, chapter 2.

[9] Brachos 43b. The Rema (271:10) tells us that when one begins Kidush, he should look at the candles. This can heal the eyes that dimmed through a **פסיעה גסה** (Mishna Brura 271:48). Being that we light two candles, what is the sum of two times 500? (250) **נר**! This refers to the 1/500th that is restored.

[10] As someone once said, "Many are too busy with life to live it."

[11] "The whole week we are human *doings*. On Shabbos, we are human *beings*."

[12] To this we can apply (Megila 21b, Rashi) **תרי קלי לא משתמע** (simple meaning- two people may not read the Torah simultaneously for the congregation, because it is difficult to hear two speakers at the same time)- we can't hear two voices at once. We have so much noise and voices in our heads. Being in solitude and reflecting can help us enormously in our Avodas Hashem.

[13] Daniel 4:16

[14] Yoma 2a

[15] Bamidbar 26:24. See Ohr Hachaim, 26:23.

[16] Vayikra 1:1. We can be so busy running from shiur to shiur and sefer to sefer that we don't find time to let it seep in internally and change us.

[17] Daniel 9:23