

THE REST OF THE STORY!

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

At the end of this week's Parsha, Emor, the Torah relates the story of the Blasphemer. He is called, "the son of the Jewish woman, who was also the son of the Egyptian man... his mothers name was Shelomith daughter of Divri, of the tribe of Dan". (24:10-11) Who was this "Blasphemer"? What's the story with the "Egyptian father"? Why did he utter a curse and deny Hashem?

Sit back, relax, and read while I tell you "the rest of the story".

Our story begins in the year 2388, sixty years before the Exodus. Moshe, having been raised by Basya the daughter of Pharaoh, knew that he was a Jew, the son of Amram and Yocheved, and that his brethren were enslaved beneath the oppressive might of Pharaoh and Egypt. However, following his adopted mother's instructions, Moshe did not reveal his true identity to anyone. From his gilded perch within the royal palace, Moshe contemplated the plight of his birth nation and attempted to lighten their burdens without compromising his true identity. With that in mind, Moshe postured himself as the most subservient of Pharaoh's grandchildren winning Pharaoh's love and trust. As Moshe grew to manhood, Pharaoh gave him greater and greater administrative responsibilities till he was appointed as chief administrator in charge of Pharaoh's entire slave labor force. From his new position, Moshe passed innovative regulations such as, "allowing the Jews to rest on Shabbos"; rationalizing to Pharaoh that they would work much better with a day off to rest their weary and beaten bodies.

The slave labor was supervised by both Egyptians and Jews. Each Nogesh- Egyptian overseer was in charge of ten Shotrim- Jewish captains, who were in turn responsible for ten Jewish slaves. Moshe, wishing to maintain his secret identity, restricted himself from having direct contact with the Jewish captains or the slaves. However, desiring to know as much as possible about the plight of the Jews, he spent time "hanging out" with the overseers and listening to their "bragging" accounts at embittering the lives of their Jewish captains and slaves.

The Medresh tells us that the Jewish captains would often take the beatings intended for the slaves on their own shoulders and backs by assuming blame for whatever the overseers might have contrived against their slaves. In reward for this courage and self-sacrifice, the 70 elders, the Sanhedrin, were eventually chosen from among the Jewish captains.

For the most part, Pharaoh gave his overseers free reign to abuse and misuse the Jews. However, wanting to retain a pure Egyptian genetic superiority (sound familiar?) he forbade, under the penalty

of death, any sexual contact between Egyptian and Jew. This was a source of continuous complaining and frustration by the overseers against their jobs. Because Moshe spent so much time with the overseers, they learned to trust him and speak openly in his presence.

One day, while hanging out around the Aloe Vera Juice dispenser in the overseer lounge, Moshe heard one Nogesh complaining that if he attempted to start up with a Jewish woman, she immediately threatened to tell Pharaoh and have him killed. The friend to whom he was complaining told him that he knew of one woman, the wife of a Jewish captain, who flirted with everyone, chatting and greeting all the other slaves and overseers. She was so friendly that she was called "Shlomit". He felt that she was one Jewish woman that would welcome an overseer's attention and favors. The overseer resolved to follow up on his friend's information.

Moshe recognized the overseer's intentions and was concerned for the Jewish nation. Moshe understood that the Jews had a delicate relationship with Hashem and that the courage and purity of the Jewish women was a major contributor in maintaining that relationship. He therefore resolved to pay closer attention to the Egyptian overseer, even if it meant that he would have to mingle with his Jewish brethren and possibly be recognized as a Jew. As the verse says, "Moshe matured and he went out to his brethren." (Shemos: 2:11)

The daily routine involved the overseers waking up their ten Jewish captains at the crack of dawn, who in turn would wake up their ten charges for the day's assignment. The overseer who was resolved to seduce Shlomit woke up her husband, and when he had left the house to assemble his slave force, the overseer seduced and impregnated Shlomit. Shlomit's husband, sensing something wrong, returned to his home just as the overseer was leaving. The overseer saw that the husband had seen him and hurried away. The husband confronted Shlomit, who admitted to having had relations with the overseer, but claimed that in the darkness of the early morning she mistook the overseer for her husband. The overseer, threatened by the husband's knowledge, demoted the husband from captain to slave laborer and began to beat him with the intent of killing him. It just happened to be the same day that Moshe decided to "go out to his brethren", where the Pasuk [verse] tells us, "and he saw an Egyptian man hitting a Jewish man." (Shemos: 2:11).

Moshe checked to make sure that there were no witnesses, and as Rashi explains, he also saw that nothing positive would come from the Egyptian, and he killed the Egyptian overseer burying his body in the sand. The husband who Moshe had saved was Dattan, brother of Aviram, of the tribe of Reuven.

Moshe assumed that Dattan, one of the Shotrim and true heroes of the Exodus, would be grateful for having being saved; but in truth, Dattan perceived the entire incident from a totally different perspective. Keep in mind that Dattan, as a Jewish captain, was totally committed to protecting the Bnai Yisroel, and if necessary, willing to sacrifice his own life. Dattan had serious reservations regarding Moshe. "What will be when the dead overseer is discovered missing or dead? The

authorities will embark on a reign of terror until the murderer is apprehended, or until some courageous soul admits guilt in order to save the rest! It would have been far better if Moshe had allowed the Egyptian to kill me! At least the others would have been safe from their vicious revenge! Instead, this do-gooder Moshe, who's been raised with a silver spoon in his mouth, finally awakens to discover that he has a conscience. Despite his good intentions, he is a loose cannon - and he will continue to put all of us in danger!"

Dattan shared his fears with Aviram his brother, who agreed with Dattan. However, before concluding about Moshe's potential danger, they decide to test him. The next day they staged a mock fight between the two of them in order to see how Moshe would react. As the Torah tells us (Shemos: 2:13-14), Moshe fell right into their trap by attempting to stop the fight. Dattan then said to Moshe, "Who made you our prince and judge! Are you going to endanger all of us through your impulsiveness and lack of judgment, in the same way that you did when you killed the Egyptian and saved me?!" Concluding that Moshe was a mortal danger, Dattan and Aviram turned Moshe in to Pharaoh, thereby staying any need for additional punishment. As we all know, Hashem saved Moshe who then fled to Midyan for the next 60 years.

Back at the Dattan residence, Dattan dealt with Shlomit with dignity and righteousness. Accepting his wife's assertions that the entire "seduction" had been a case of mistaken identity, Dattan maintained her as his wife, raised her son as his own; however, because she was technically an adulteress, he did not engage in marital relations with her. Over time he married a second wife and had sons of his own. As things returned to normal, Dattan and Aviram's enmity toward Moshe grew greater and greater with every passing year and every instance of oppression.

After 60 years of exile, in the year 2448, Moshe was sent back to Egypt to redeem the Bnai Yisroel. Approaching the Jewish captains who were considered the elders of the nation, Moshe gained their support - except for Dattan and Aviram. They forewarned the others that Moshe had not changed, and he was destined to make it worse rather than better!

Moshe had his first confrontation with Pharaoh, and so it was! He made it worse for the Jews, not better! Upon leaving Pharaoh's presence, Dattan and Aviram were waiting to hurl their proven accusations at Moshe and Aharon. (Shemos: 5:20-21) "All you've done by going to Pharaoh is give him a sword with which to kill us!"

The ensuing year of plagues and miracles proved to the masses of Jews and Egyptians that Moshe was the Redeemer, and soon enough Moshe lead them out of Egypt. However, in spite of the seemingly divine proof of Moshe's mission, Dattan and Aviram continued to distrust and hate Moshe. However, neither Hashem nor Moshe judged Dattan and Aviram harshly. It was clear that their enmity had been kept private and had been founded upon their concern and love for the Bnai Yisroel.

In the second year of the desert, the rebellion of Korach and his cohorts occurred. Korach

challenged Moshe and Aharon's claim to leadership and Moshe devised a test to prove their divine appointment. All of a sudden Dattan and Aviram joined with Korach against Moshe and Aharon! Moshe attempted to reason with Dattan and Aviram showing them that their concerns were not the concerns of Korach, (Bamidbar: 16:12) but they refused his overture of conciliation and remained a part of Korach's rebellion. The next morning, in an awesome display of divine support for Moshe and Aharon, the earth swallowed up the entire families of Korach, Dattan and Aviram. Everyone died, except for Dattan's adopted son, the son born to Shlomit from the Egyptian overseer! Once this occurred everyone began to wonder about his background, and his personal history came to the surface. The one fact that he wasn't told was that Moshe had been the one who killed his "father".

After the shock wore off, the man (he was at least 61) attempted to pitch his tent on the site of Dattan's former dwelling, among the tribe of Reuven. However, the elders of Reuven told him that he wasn't from Reuven and couldn't live in their camp. He then turned to his mother's tribe, Dan, who told him that "tribehood" was determined by fatherhood not motherhood and he couldn't live within their camp either. He then went to Moshe for a Halachik ruling, and Moshe ruled in favor of Dan, forcing the man to pitch his tent outside of the Jewish encampment among the "mixed multitude" of Egyptians who had attached themselves to the Bnai Yisroel at the time of the Exodus.

Among the mixed multitude were members of this man's family from his father's side. Hearing the bitter and angry tale of Moshe's ruling regarding his "non-tribal" affiliation they said to him, "What?! You went to Moshe for a ruling about your situation? Don't you know that it was Moshe himself who killed your father? You couldn't get a fair judgment from Moshe, he's too involved!" Immediately, the man, in anger and frustration, cursed and denied G-d, for which he was punished with the death penalty. Now you know "the rest of the story".

Good Shabbos.

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