

WHAT ABOUT OUR MORTGAGES?

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 130, The Issur of Entering a Church. Good Shabbos!

A Birth Announcement Is Not the Place To Brag

In this week's parsha, there is an interruption during the narration of the story of the Exodus where we find a listing of the genealogy (yichus) of Moshe Rabbeinu. The verse tells us, "And Amram took Yocheved his Aunt for a wife, and she bore him Aharon and Moshe..." [Shemos 6:20].

Rav Moshe Feinstein makes an interesting observation:

In last week's parsha, when the Torah first talks about the birth of Moshe, it merely says "And a man came from the House of Levi and he married the daughter of Levi" [Shemos 2:1]. In last week's narration, Moshe Rabbeinu's parents were two nondescript individuals whose names are not even recorded. In this week's parsha we have a full disclosure of who they were. What is the difference?

Rav Moshe Feinstein explained that when a child is born, parents are rightly proud that they have given birth to a baby. However, the reality is that the parents have given birth to nothing more than a bundle of potential.

A new baby is wonderful. It is a miracle from Heaven. However, at that point, to go around crowing "I've given birth to this wonderful child" is ridiculous. At birth, the child only represents hope. We do not know what the parents will do with this child - with all of this potential.

At the time of his birth, even though Moshe was a very special baby, he was nothing more than a bundle of potential. However, eighty years later, standing in front of Pharoah, Moshe's potential has come to fruition. He has already risked his life to save another Jew, he has joined with his brethren to suffer their yoke -- he has matured into a Moshe Rabbeinu [our teacher]. It is at this point that the Torah tells us that the parents can step back and be proud of their accomplishments. Now we can see the final product - the child - that was produced through the pain and suffering of the parents.

To make a big fuss at the time of birth is out of place. At that point the baby is nothing more than

potential.

A Grandfather Can Make A Difference

In a similar topic, there is a very interesting Sforno in this week's portion. The Sforno is bothered that by Reuvain and Shimeon, the Torah only mentions their names and the names of their children; but by Levi the Torah mentions the names of four generations!

The Sforno suggests the following reason: In the case of Reuvain and Shimeon -- they and their children were righteous, they were something special. However, the grandchildren and great grandchildren were not as special. However by Levi, all four generations were special -- he, his children, his grandchildren and his great grandchildren -- Moshe and Aharon.

The Sforno says that the reason why even Levi's great grandchildren were outstanding was because Levi lived an exceedingly long life. He was the last of Jacob's sons to die. Yosef died at age 110, but Levi died at 137.

Not only did he have a chance to raise his children; Levi even had a chance to raise his grandchildren (Amram's generation).

I once heard in the name of a great Rosh HaYeshiva that we see two interesting points from this Sforno:

First, we see what a grandfather can accomplish. We think of Amram as the Gadol HaDor -- what greater influence do Moshe and Aharon need? However, we see that a grandfather can add an additional dimension even to the house of an Amram. The extra 27 years that Levi lived beyond Yosef made the difference on the personality of Amram -- and ultimately on the personality of Moshe and Aharon.

Secondly, Targum Yonasan ben Uziel says that Yocheved was 94 years old when Levi died. We can speculate that Amram must have been younger than Yocheved (she was his Aunt), perhaps 20-25 years younger. That would make him, say 74 years old (approximately) when Levi died. This means that the extra 27 years of Levi's life -- that made all the difference in Amram's life (over that of his cousins from the other tribes whose grandfathers died when they were younger) came well into his adult years. Amram was benefiting from the presence of his grandfather when he was well past 50.

In America today we think that when someone reaches 40, there is nothing more to grow, nothing more to learn -- one is over the hill! This Sforno is telling us that when Amram was already a middle-aged man -- perhaps even into his sixties -- he was affected by having his grandfather Levi in the house.

We thus see two things -- what a Zeida (grandfather) can contribute and that a person can still grow

and develop even when he is older in life, past middle age.

"But What About Our Appliances and What About Our Mortgages?"

The verse says "...And you will know that I am the L-rd who brings you out from under the sufferings of Egypt" (tachas sivlos Mitzraim) [Shemos 6:7].

The Chidushei HaRim and the Kotzker Rebbe both say a very interesting thought. The words of the verse mean something else. 'Sivlos' doesn't mean suffering, rather it comes from the expression "I can be 'sovel' this", meaning I can take it. (I have the patience.)

The Chidushei HaRim says that the first step of redemption is for the people to say, "I can't take it any more." As long as one can be complacent in the Exile, redemption can never occur.

"I bring you out from the 'sivlos' Mitzraim" means that G-d implanted in the Jews the concept of "No more! We have had enough of this rotten Galus!" Up until this point they were 'sovel' it. They bore the burden; they felt they could take it. The Geulah doesn't come to one who can take it.

Our Sages say, "no slave ever fled Egypt" The simple interpretation is that Egypt had a great security system -- guards, walls, and dogs -- all the things that ensure no slave could get out. Rav Gedaliah Schorr quotes a different interpretation from one of the Chassideshe Rebbeim: No slave ever left Egypt, because they had a great propaganda machine. Each slave thought -- this is okay, there is nothing better on the outside world.

When people have such a slave mentality, that it is not so bad and they can take it, Geulah will never come. Geulah can only come when one gets fed up with the Galus. This has to be the first stage of the Geulah.

I saw a Chassideshe story about Reb Nochum Chernobler. Reb Nochum was once in an inn and he arose at midnight to say Tikun Chatzos. (These are prayers that holy Jews say at midnight, imploring G-d to bring the Messiah and end the Exile). The innkeeper, a very simple Jew, heard Reb Nochum reciting Psalms in the middle of the night and went down to him and asked him "What are you saying?"

Reb Nochum explained, "I am saying Tikun Chatzos that the Master of the World should end our bitter Galus and that we should all go to Eretz Yisroel, and it should be finally over".

The innkeeper was impressed. He went back upstairs, woke up his wife and told her, "You know, there is a Jew downstairs who is praying that the Galus should end and that we should all go to Eretz Yisrael."

His wife turned over and said, "Go to Eretz Yisrael? What is going to be with the farm? What is going to be with the cows? What is going to be with the horses?"

The innkeeper was bothered by his wife's questions. He went back to Reb Nochum and said, "But Reb Nachum -- what will be with the farm and the cows and the horses?"

Reb Nachum said to him "You're worried about the cows and the house and the barn? -- And when the Cossacks come and the Tartars come and they pillage and plunder -- then you're happy? Is that what you want? G-d will take us to Eretz Yisrael -- no more Cossacks, no more Tartars!"

Again the innkeeper was impressed. He ran back upstairs and related Reb Nachum's response to his wife.

The wife said "Go tell Reb Nachum that G-d should take all the Cossacks and all the Tartars to Eretz Yisroel and we'll stay here with the farm and the cows and the horses!"

This is what it means -- "One is 'sovel' the Galus". If one doesn't leave the 'sivlos' of Egypt -- if one can still tolerate it -- then Redemption is still far away.

Today we may not have barns and cows and horses. But we do ask -- what's going to be with our appliances, and what's going to be with our mortgages, and what's going to be with the great life that we have. If we are still attached to all this, the Geulah will not come for us. We have to reach the level of saying, "We've had it! No more bitter Galus!"

When that is how we feel, **then** the Geulah **will** come, may it be speedily in our day.

Personalities & Sources:

Rav Moshe Feinstein -- (1895-1986) Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem, New York.

Rav Ovadiah Sforno -- (1470-1550) Classic Chumash Commentary; Italy.

Targum Yonasan ben Uziel -- Aramaic paraphrase of the Chumash

Chidushei HaRim -- Rav Yitzchak Meir of Ger (1799-1866); founder of Ger Chassidim, Poland.

Kotzker Rebbe -- Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk (1797-1859).

Rav Gedaliah Schorr -- (1910-1979) Rosh Yeshiva Mesivta Torah Vodaath; Brooklyn.

Reb Nochum of Chernoble -- Reb Menachem Nochum Twersky (1730-1787); Ukraine Chassidic Rebbe.

Glossary

Gadol HaDor -- Great(est) of the Generation

Zeida -- grandfather (Yiddish)

Galus -- Exile

Geulah -- Redemption

Tikun Chatzos -- Established (prayer to be recited at) Midnight

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