

MANIPULATION OF THE DATES OF EXILE

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Rabbi Frand on Parshas Va'eyra

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 401, Hierarchy of Brochos. Good Shabbos!

Manipulation of the Dates of Exile

The pasuk [verse] states, "And the children of Kehas were Amram, Yitzhar, Chevron, and Uzziel. The years of Kehas' life were a hundred and thirty- three years." [Shemos 6:18]. Rashi points out that although the Torah speaks of a 400-year exile of the Jews, we learn from this pasuk that these years did not occur entirely in the Land of Egypt. Rather, the exile began with the birth of Yitzchak.

The proof that part of the 400 years occurred outside of Egypt is that Kehas himself was born in Canaan. We know from the verse that Kehas was the father of Amram, who was the father of Moshe. Were we to add together the full duration of the lives of Kehas, Amram, and Moshe, they would not total 400. So when we consider the overlapping years of their lives, the fact that Kehas was born in Canaan, we know that the duration of the exile in Egypt was certainly much less than 400 years.

Rav Elya Meir Bloch makes an interesting observation. G-d issued a decree that Avraham's descendants would need to be in exile for 400 years. G-d, in His wisdom, knew that in order for the Jewish people to experience the purification process that was necessary for receiving the Torah, they needed to spend 400 years in "exile." But He was also infinitely knowledgeable in the status of His nation. He knew that, as things turned out, if they were to spend 400 actual years in Egypt, they would have never been able to emerge from exile. As it was, they had sunk so low spiritually that they could not remain in Egypt for even a moment longer.

The "400 years" were like a sliding scale. They could have begun much earlier. They could have

begun much later. G-d "decided" when the 400 years began, based on the spiritual status of the Jewish people. As it turned out, the clock started when Yitzchak was born.

Rav Bloch says that in our current long exile, there have been periods -- in our times and in times before us -- that people have said that one time or another is the time that the Redemption will come. There have been great people who have recorded dates and have claimed that "this will be the year" when the Messiah would arrive. These great individuals have ostensibly been "wrong" because Moshiach did not arrive at the specified times.

Rav Bloch says that they were not necessarily wrong. Just like the Egyptian exile was to last 400 years, but it was up to G-d to decide when to start the counting, this exile too has a fixed duration. But the exact time when G-d will decide to start the count and therefore when it will end, really depends on us. If the Jewish nation merits for Moshaich to come at a certain point, he will come at that point and the calculation of the appropriate duration will "work out". Likewise, if things become so bad -- like they were in Egypt -- that G-d must bring Moshiach to rescue us before it is too late, then too, the appropriate duration will "work out".

If other conditions had been met, each of the suggested dates had the potential to meet the criteria for both Moshiach and for the duration of the current exile. The Talmud quotes the pasuk in Yeshaya, "The smallest will increase one thousand fold and the youngest into a mighty nation, I am HaShem, in its time (b'eetah) I will hasten it (achi'shenah)" [60:22]. The Talmud points out that there are two designated times for redemption: Redemption "in its time" or redemption which "I will hasten". That does not mean that even the designated time (b'eetah) will be a sliding scale. The "b'eetah" of the Egyptian exile would have been after 400 years of slavery in Egypt, but G-d hastened that redemption. [Sanhedrin 98a] Our redemption too, we pray will be hastened. But even if it will not, it does have an absolute stopping point based on its pre-ordained duration.

The prognostications throughout the generations or the times in our history when people felt the time was "ripe" for Moshiach were not necessarily incorrect times for his coming. For some reason, however, the generation was not worthy. Just like G-d manipulated the dates of the Egyptian exile, he has the ability to manipulate the dates of our present exile as well.

Moshe Rabbeinu Did Not Learn The Lesson of The Frogs

There is an interesting Baal HaTurim in this week's parsha. In his cryptic and enigmatic fashion, the Baal HaTurim always provides food for thought. The Baal HaTurim points out regarding the phrase "and raise up (v'ha'al) the frogs on the land of Egypt" [Shemos 8:1] that there is only one other occurrence of the verb v'ha'al in the Torah. The other occurrence is just prior to the death of Moshe's brother: "Take Aaron and Elazar his son and bring them up to Hor HaHor" [Bamidbar 20:25].

What is the connection between raising the frogs and raising up Aharon to Hor HaHor? The Baal HaTurim references a passage in the Talmud that praises the frogs of Egypt for being prepared to jump into the ovens to obey the command of G-d. The Gemara states that the frogs that jumped into

the hot ovens were miraculously saved as a reward for their self-sacrifice in sanctifying G-d's Name. [Pesachim 52b]

The Baal HaTurim states that Moshe and Aharon had an opportunity to sanctify the Name of G-d. When obtaining water for the thirsty nation at Mei Merivah, they should have spoken to the rock. By hitting the rock instead of speaking to it they made less of a Kiddush HaShem. As a result of that, they died. This is the connection. Why did Aharon have to die on Hor HaHor? Because he failed to learn the lesson of the frogs and make a supreme Kiddush HaShem, as they did.

However, in last week's Parsha, when Moshe complained to G-d that he was not doing anything to rescue Israel, G-d answered, "Now you will see what I shall do to Pharoah" [Shemos 6:1]. The Talmud infers: NOW you will see what I shall do to Pharoah, but you will not see what I will do to the 31 kings of Canaan -- because you will not be there. [Sanhedrin 111a]

The question is obvious. This is not the time or reason for Moshe losing his chance to enter Eretz Yisrael. Moshe did not lose the ability to enter Eretz Yisrael because he questioned G-d's ability to save the Jews at the start of the Exodus story. How do we reconcile this statement of the Talmud with the explicit pasukim which trace Moshe's inability to enter the Land of Israel to his sin of "failing to sanctify G-d's Name" at Mei Merivah?

I saw the interesting insight into this contradiction. It was, in fact, Moshe Rabbeinu's questioning of G-d in last week's parsha that sealed his fate. The Rabbeinu Yonah says that there is one sin for which there is no atonement -- namely the sin of desecrating G-d's Name. If a person makes a Chillul HaShem, not even Yom Kippur, not even suffering will atone. Only death atones. But even though there is no atonement for Chillul HaShem, there is one mitzvah that can counteract it: the mitzvah of Kiddush HaShem (sanctifying G-d's Name).

Even if a person has severed his relationship with G-d by making a Chillul HaShem, there can nevertheless be a rebirth in that relationship through Kiddush HaShem. We are uncomfortable using the terminology, but it is as if one who has died spiritually (as a result of desecrating G-d's Name) is now "born again."

This is why the frogs lived. They jumped into the hot ovens that should have made them die, but by virtue of the Kiddush Hashem that they accomplished, they came back to life.

This is the message of Chazal: Moshe Rabbeinu's fate was sealed when he challenged G-d to do more, at the end of Parshas Shemos. However, at Mei Merivah he had the opportunity to erase that sin and to create a Kiddush HaShem. Had he done that, he would have been granted "rebirth". A new Moshe Rabbeinu, so to speak, would have emerged -- uncontaminated by the decree of "NOW you will see what I will do to Pharoah". That new Moshe Rabbeinu could have entered into Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe Rabbeinu failed to accomplish that Kiddush HaShem at Mei Merivah. He failed -- as the Baal HaTurim writes -- to learn from the frogs what Kiddush HaShem can accomplish. Therefore, he

remained with the unfortunate decree that he could not enter the Land of Israel.

[Editor's Note: As we find many times, our Biblical heroes are judged by the strictest of standards, such that even slight deviations from ideal perfection are counted as a desecration of G-d's Name. Perhaps a better way to view this is as a failure to achieve the level of sanctification of G-d's Name that would have been appropriate for people of their stature.]

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
Technical Assistance by [Dovid Hoffman](#); Yerushalayim.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Va'eyra are provided below:

- Tape # 039 - Shabbos Emergency: Who Do We Call?
- Tape # 082 - Astrology: Is It For Us?
- Tape # 130 - The Issur of Entering a Church
- Tape # 177 - Magic Shows: More Than Meets the Eye
- Tape # 223 - Learning in Kollel: Is It Always Permitted?
- Tape # 267 - Do Secular Names of G-d Have Kedusha?
- Tape # 313 - Converting a Church Into a Shul
- Tape # 357 - Birchah Hamotzi
- Tape # 401 - Kadima B'brachos -- Hierarchy of Brochos
- Tape # 445 - Shoveling Snow on Shabbos
- Tape # 489 - Denying Jewishness
- Tape # 533 - Shin Shel Tefillin & Ohr Echad
- Tape # 577 - Davening For Non-Jews
- Tape # 621 - Kosher Cheese Continued - Cottage Cheese and Butter
- Tape # 665 - Checking Out Families for Shidduchim

New! Yad Yechiel Institute is on-line! Visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org>! For information via email, you may also write to tapes@yadyechiel.org.

Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from:

[Yad Yechiel Institute](#)

PO Box 511

Owings Mills, MD 21117-0511

Call (410) 358-0416 for further information.

Also Available: Mesorah / Artscroll has published a collection of Rabbi Frand's essays. The book is entitled:

Rabbi Yissocher Frand: In Print

and is available through your local Hebrew book store.
