

THE TORAH

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Shemos

The Torah's Standard of "Hakaras HaTov" [Gratitude]

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #840 - Baby Naming - Whose Privilege? Good Shabbos!

They're here! ALL NEW Commuter's Chavrusah Sh'mos 26 is now available on CD, to enlighten, inspire and perhaps amuse you with such fascinating topics as:

"The Shomer Shabbos Vs The Non-Shomer Shabbos Doctor - Revisited" "Hashgacha Pratis - Divine Providence - Does It Apply To Everyone?" and "Kol Isha - Listening To A Female Vocalist on the Radio"

THE FULL SERIES 18 HAS NOW BEEN ADDED TO OUR MP3 LIBRARY FOR DOWNLOAD. TO DOWNLOAD PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE WWW.YADYECHEL.ORG

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE FOR RABBI FRAND'S CURRENT WEEKLY SHIUR ON MP3 IS AVAILABLE. SEE OUR WEBSITE WWW.YADYECHEL.ORG AND CLICK ON THE "NEVER MISS SUBSCRIPTION" BUTTON FOR DETAILS

For complete listings of all the new offerings, log onto our secure site at <http://www.yadyechiel.org> and select the "Timely Offers" button, or send e-mail to tapes@yadyechiel.org , or call us at 410-358-0416.

And while you're there, don't forget that the entire Yad Yechiel Library, featuring the complete collection of Rav Frand's shiurim, is also available for viewing online. At <http://www.yadyechiel.org>, you can browse through a comprehensive listing of 26 years of weekly shiurim, view Parsha Perceptions, Halacha Tapes,

Hashkafa Tapes and Theme Sets. Plus, you'll find order information on this easy-to-navigate site.

Yisro's daughters arrived home early after Moshe Rabbeinu rescued them and watered their cattle. The Torah describes the scene: "And they came to Reuel their father and he said, why have you come home early today? And they said 'An Egyptian saved us from the hands of the shepherds and he also drew the water for us and watered the sheep'." [Shemos 2:18-19]

An amazing teaching of Chazal gives insight into showing gratitude from a Torah perspective. The Medrash cites the analogy of someone who was bitten by a certain serpent, who then went down to the river to wash his wound. At the water, he saw a child drowning and rescued him. The child later told him, "If not for you, I would be dead." The rescuer corrected him: "It was not I who saved you but the serpent that bit me. If not for him, I would have had no need to run down to the river and discover that you were in danger."

The Medrash uses this example to explain the dialog between Yisro's daughters and Moshe. When they thanked Moshe for saving them from the shepherds, Moshe said "It was not I who saved you. It was the Egyptian man I killed, which ultimately caused me to flee Egypt. Had it not been for him, I would not have come along here to see your plight." That is why they told their father "An Egyptian man saved us from the hands of the shepherds."

This insight is an example of "Without Torah there is no derech eretz (etiquette)." [Pirkei Avos 3:17] Every society has a concept of "Hakaras HaTov" - a person must show appreciation. However, we see here how far the concept of "Hakaras HaTov" goes. The Torah extends it all the way back to the Egyptian man who was the indirect cause of Moshe's having to flee Egypt.

The reason for such seemingly far-fetched linkage is our belief in the concept of Hasgocha Pratis [personal Divine Providence]. If the Almighty arranges that a certain person should receive a favor in a certain fashion, it is because it is all part of His "Grand Plan". As part of the "Grand Plan" that Yisro's daughters should be rescued from the shepherds by Moshe, there had to be the prior story involving the Egyptian man. This is the extent of the idea of "Hakaras HaTov" in the Torah's eyes.

An example of a great person's Hakaras HaTov is evident in the following story:

There was once a young man who learned in the Chevron Yeshiva, who was accustomed to come to the Mirer Yeshiva to hear the mussar talks of Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz. When the young man became engaged to get married, as a courtesy, he sent an invitation to Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz to come to his wedding. The young man did not really expect Rav Chaim to come as he was not really a student of the Mirer Yeshiva, he only sat in on the mussar talks of the Rosh Yeshiva.

But Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz did indeed come to the wedding. The groom told the person making the announcements that they must give Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz an honor (e.g. - reciting one of the Sheva Brochos under the Chupa) as was befitting the Rosh Yeshiva of the Mirer Yeshiva. Rav Chaim sensed what was happening and he told the student, "If you give me an honor I am going to walk

out." However, the groom felt that there was no way he could not give the Mirer Rosh Yeshiva an honor and he did so. And Rav Chaim did in fact walk out of the wedding hall.

After the wedding, the groom asked Rav Chaim why he decided to come to the wedding altogether (for a young man who was not enrolled as a student of his yeshiva) and why he refused to accept the honor he was given. Rav Chaim told him that every time he saw that this student made a special effort to come from the Chevron Yeshiva to the Mirer to hear his lectures, it gave him added incentive to give a powerful "mussar schmooze". He felt that he had added Divine Assistance (S'yata d'shmaya) because he saw how much his lectures were appreciated. Thus, he came strictly for Hakaras HaTov to the young man, not to get any kind of honor. That is why he walked out when they tried to honor him for coming.

Modesty Is Key Criteria of Jewish Leadership

Moshe Rabbeinu and the Almighty engaged in an extended dialog regarding whether Moshe is the proper person to take the Jewish nation out of Egypt. Rashi explains that this dialogue went on for seven days with Moshe resisting and the Almighty insisting that he take the mission. Moshe argued "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should take the Children of Israel out of Egypt? G-d responded, "I will be with you and this is the sign that I have sent you: When you take the nation out of Egypt, you will worship the L-rd on this mountain." [Shemos 3:11-12]

This is a difficult pasuk to translate, even at the level of simple interpretation of Scripture (p'shuto shel mikra). What kind of sign would the fact that they will worship G-d on that mountain be for Moshe? Moshe was looking for a sign at present that he was the appropriate person for the job. G-d responded with a seemingly unrelated detail that would not happen until a future time.

The Meshech Chochmah explains that the biggest proof that Moshe was the right man for the job is because he said "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" It was precisely Moshe's attribute of extreme modesty that qualified him to be the leader of the Jewish people.

Today we speak of different qualities that a person must have in order to be a leader: He is a good communicator, he is a good organizer, he is very bright, he is good at delegating authority, etc., ...all the lists that people speak of when they enumerate the qualities of good leaders in the secular world. We see from this pasuk that in "our world" the biggest factor that Moshe had going for himself was that he felt "Who am I to go before Pharaoh?"

The Meshech Chochmah explains the continuity of the pasukim with this idea. The Almighty despises people who are haughty and He loves people who are humble. "This is the sign..." means "You know why I chose you? It is for the same reason I chose this mountain (Mt. Sinai)."

There is a famous Medrash that all the great mountains wanted to be the peak on which the Torah was given. Har Sinai did not say anything in the campaign to become the site of Revelation. The Medrash emphasizes that Har Sinai is not such a high mountain and that is the reason the Almighty chose it. It is because the Almighty appreciates humility and abhors haughtiness.

Rav Tzvi Pessach Frank had been a Dayan [Judge] in the Beis Din of the Edah HaCharedis of Jerusalem since 1907. When the post of "Rabbah shel Yerushalayim" became vacant (in the 1930s or 40s), a delegation came to Rav Tzvi Pessach and began telling him all the issues and problems that faced the Jews of Yerushalayim at the time. They made no mention that they were there to offer him the job. They just enumerated the problems. After sitting through the meeting for an hour or so, listening to all the problems he told the delegation "I know the problems already. Why are you telling me all this?" At that point they told him "We want you to become the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem." He reacted with surprise, "Why are you coming to me?" The delegation responded, "We are looking for a person who when offered the job asks 'Why are you coming to me?'" This is the criteria that makes you fit to be the leader of the Jews of Yerushalayim!

The same was true of Moshe Rabbeinu. Among all his other attributes the criteria that made him most fit to be the leader of the Jewish people was the great modesty that prompted him to react "Who am I that I should go before Pharaoh?" This is something the Almighty admires. Leadership of the Jewish people is invested with a tremendous amount of power. As we know, power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely. When choosing a leader - if one wants to make sure that he does not abuse his power - the key is that the person should be humble. This is what distinguished Moshe Rabbeinu from all other people on the face of the earth.

This is precisely what the Almighty told him. The proof that you are the leader is that you say "Who am I that I should go before Pharaoh?" This is the very same reason that G-d chose Mt. Sinai to be the place where the people will in the future serve Him upon that mountain - Mount Sinai too was the humblest of all the mountains.

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 Shemos are provided below:

- Tape # 038 - Husbands at Childbirth
- Tape # 081 - Cholov Yisroel: Necessary or Not in America?
- Tape # 129 - Giving English Names
- Tape # 176 - Shalosh Seudos in Shuls: Is There a Problem?
- Tape # 222 - Disposal of Shaimos
- Tape # 266 - The Laws and Customs of Chupah
- Tape # 312 - The Do's and Don'ts of Naming Babies

Tape # 356 - Turning Offender Over to the Secular Authorities
Tape # 400 - Sh'nayim Mikra V'echad Targum
Tape # 444 - The Deaf Mute In Halacha
Tape # 488 - Marrying Cousins
Tape # 532 - Learning On Shabbos -- A Good Idea?
Tape # 576 - Davening With Shoes
Tape # 620 - Kosher Cheese: What Is It?
Tape # 654 - The Woman Mohel; Laser Milah
Tape # 708 - Your Child as a Shabbos Goy?
Tape # 752 - Saving Your Life - How Far Must I Go?
Tape # 796 - English Names Revisited
Tape # 840 - Baby Naming - Whose Privilege, Father or Mother?
Tape # 884 - Sh'mos -- The Corrosive Effect of Non-Kosher Foods
Tape # 928 - The Heinous Crime of Mosair
Tape # 971 - Kissing People in a Shul — Mutar or Asru?
Tape #1015 - Ma'avir Sedrah - Why? When?
Tape #1059 - "How Do You Get Called Up to the Torah?"
Tape #1102 - Dressing Jewishly: Is There Such A Thing?
Tape #1145 - Shomer Shabbos Vs Non-Shomer Shabbos Doctor -- Revisited

Tapes, CDs, MP3s or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.