

A MIRACLE FOR ENCOURAGEMENT / CARING FOR EACH OTHER

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: CD #g28 – The Heinous Crime of Mosar. Good Shabbos!

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Yocheved Miraculously Becomes Young Again For Good Reason

The *pasuk* says, "And a man went from the House of Levi and he married the daughter of Levi" [Shemos 2:1]. Rashi quotes the Gemara [Sotah 12a] that Amram had separated from his wife Yocheved because of his fear of the decree "All male children shall be thrown into the Nile" [Shemos

1:22] and he was now remarrying her based on the advice of his daughter. Miriam complained to him "Your decree is worse than that of Pharaoh. Pharaoh's decree was only directed at the male children and your decree impacts both male and female offspring." Amram, thus, was now marrying Yocheved for the second time. Rashi further explains that when this happen Yocheved became like a young woman again (even though she was actually 130 years old) as indicated by the fact that the Torah calls hers "the daughter of Levi."

I saw an interesting observation in the sefer Abir Yosef. Hashem does not perform miracles capriciously. He only makes miracles which serve a purpose. Why, then, was it necessary for Yocheved at this point to become a young woman again? It does not suffice to answer that she needed to become young again to become pregnant and have Moshe Rabbeinu. The reason this answer is insufficient because Moshe Rabbeinu was only three years younger than his brother Aharon. Yocheved was 127 when she gave birth to Aharon. That itself is miraculous. Maharal explains that indeed all of the Jewish reproductive activity in Egypt was miraculous. Women gave birth to sextuplets on a regular basis. So if Yocheved had a child at 127 and was fertile at that age, there was no need for the additional miracle that she became "young again" at the age of 130! What then is the point of the miracle that Chazal stress that Yocheved became like a young woman before the birth of Moshe Rabbeinu?

The Abir Yosef suggests that it is true that Amram was convinced that he should marry Yocheved again and he was convinced that he should try to have more children. However, that did not remove the terrible anxiety and fear that he and everybody else must have felt that "all male children will be thrown into the Nile." Even if he was going to take Yocheved back, he needed the oomph, desire, courage, and get up and go under those circumstances to have a baby. Who knew what was going to be? He had to be in a state of mind to have the exuberance in those trying times to father another child. How did the Ribono shel Olam help him do that? By marrying a young woman! If she had been the same old woman who he divorced beforehand then "okay, second time around" but he would not have had that same *cheshek*, that same desire.

The "*Simchas Chassunah*" [Joy of a Wedding] is always dependent on the status of the woman. For example, if the woman has never been married before, there are seven days of *Sheva Brochos*. However, if she has been married before, the Sheva Brachos are shorter. When a person is happy, he is obviously more receptive to take on new challenges than when he is depressed and disheartened. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gave Amram the exuberance, drive, and desire to take on the challenge of those traumatic times by miraculously making the woman he was (re)marrying into a young woman once again. This put him in a better frame of mind and gave him the encouragement to father another child... who was destined to be the savior of Israel.

Why Was Moshe Willing To Blow His Cover?

The *pasuk* says, "It happened in those days that Moshe grew up and went out to his brethren and saw their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man, of his brethren" [Shemos 2:11]. The Medrash interprets the words "and he saw their burdens" to mean he saw that they did not have a day or rest -- they were working seven days a week. At this point, of course, Moshe was still a "step-son" to Pharaoh, raised in the palace of the king. According to the Medrash, Moshe went to his stepfather and told him that it was in the national interest to give Pharaoh's slaves a day off once a week. He argued, if you do not give your slaves a chance to rest up one day a week, they will die from being over worked.

Pharaoh accepted Moshe's suggestion and they were granted one day a week off. The Medrash says that the day they took off was Shabbos and they used to spend their time reading *Megillos* and certain chapters of *Tehillim* (e.g. -- *Mizmor shir l'Yom haShabbos*).

The sefer *Ikvei Erev* wonders why Pharaoh agreed to Moshe's suggestion. Wasn't it his agenda to kill them all off? He ordered all the male children to be thrown into the Nile and his grand plan was to get rid of all these people! Pharaoh was part of the "great tradition" of solving the Jewish problem by eradication of the Jews. So how is it that Pharaoh was receptive to Moshe's argument "if you work them seven days a week you will kill them all out?"

The *Ikvei Erev* suggests that Pharaoh's plan regarding the Jews evolved. Originally, he wanted to wipe them all out. That took time -- "All the males shall be thrown into the Nile." In the meantime, the Jews were "fruitful, teemed, increased, and became strong..." and Pharaoh had thousands, hundreds of thousands and maybe millions of slaves. Once free labor became the norm, the idea of killing them all out became less appealing. Eradication of this free labor pool would be a major shock to the Egyptian economy. Moshe Rabbeinu realized that and he knew that Pharaoh's lust for money trumped his hatred of the Jews. This is the nature of people. Free labor was too much for him to part with.

Originally, before he became accustomed to the free labor, he decreed, "throw the newborn males into the Nile". However, now a few years later, when he saw the economic boon the free labor was providing his economy, he put his philosophical and racial hatred aside and was receptive to suggestions that would enhance the productivity of his source of free Jewish labor.

This leads us to another observation. If we see one thing from this whole incident, it is that Moshe Rabbeinu had an influence on Pharaoh. The fact that they received a free day was only by virtue of the fact that Moshe had an "in" in the palace and could use his privilege to convince Pharaoh to give the Jews a day off.

Subsequently, Moshe sees an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man... and he kills the Egyptian and hides him in the sand. The Alter of Novardok asks a question: Why didn't Moshe make a calculation

-- there is one Jew here who is being beat up by an Egyptian. If I go ahead and save the Jew I will blow my cover. Pharaoh will be so angry that he will probably banish me. Is it not worthwhile to let this Jew get beaten up and even killed, because of the larger picture that this will enable me to protect my "cover" and retain my privileged status with Pharaoh which has already proven beneficial for the Jews at large (by gaining them a "day off")?

The Alter of Novardok answers that Moshe did not make this calculation because when he saw that this Egyptian was beating up a Jew and no one was coming to the Jew's aid, he looked at a reality that would have doomed *Klal Yisrael* -- namely, the reality that one Jew does not care about the fate of another Jew. The Alter interprets "and he turned this way and that and saw that there was no man..." to mean that Moshe looked in all directions and he saw that there was no one willing to come to the assistance of this suffering Jew. If the Jewish nation is in a mindset of "every man for himself" then there will never be a *Geulah* [redemption]. The only way there will be a *Geulah* is when every Jew cares for every other Jew.

Taking the larger perspective, in an approach that would make *Geulah* possible, Moshe Rabbeinu needed to make a statement: I am going to stand up for another Jew. Even if this costs me my position and my power of influence with Pharaoh, it is worth it because the only way *Klal Yisrael* will get out of *Galus* [exile] is when one Jew cares for another. By killing the Egyptian and making this statement and having thereby to flee from the house of Pharaoh, Moshe sent a loud and strong message: We must all feel for our fellow Jews. Because he took that action and impressed the Jews with that message, the Jewish people eventually merited redemption from Egypt.

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- CD# 176 - Shalosh Seudos in Shuls: Is There a Problem?
- CD# 222 - Disposal of Shaimos
- CD# 266 - The Laws and Customs of Chupah
- CD# 312 - The Do's and Don'ts of Naming Babies
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