



Shemos 5777

January 20, 2017

A Taste of Torah

Drawing a Name

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Names are a description of essence. The name one is given at birth, teach our Sages, is bestowed with an element of Divine inspiration. Were we to know what our name truly represents, we would be able to get a handle on what our life's mission is. It is thus not uncommon for the Torah to describe the background behind a person's name; the Torah is telling us a great deal about that person through this information.

Which is why Moshe's name is so puzzling. The Talmud tells us that there are ten different names ascribed to Moshe, each one revealing another aspect of his greatness. But Moshe is the name that stuck, the name by which the Torah refers to him, the name by which the world has known him since time immemorial. What is the origin of the name? The Torah tells us that Pharaoh's daughter, after pulling him from the Nile River where he lay in a basket, named him Moshe, "*ki min hamayim mishisihu*," "for from the water I drew him." (Shemos 2:10) The word Moshe is drawn from the Hebrew word *mishisihu*.

There is a great deal of discussion regarding how an Egyptian princess knew Hebrew; some say Moshe is the Hebrew translation of the Egyptian name she bestowed upon him based on his being taken from the water, while others say her Jewish slaves informed her of the appropriate Hebrew name she desired to give him. Yet other sources say that Moshe's mother, Yocheved, gave him the name, and the princess adopted the name, as well, as it fit her experience with Moshe. Regardless, we are left with a burning question: Why is the name of the greatest prophet to ever walk the face of the Earth named for

a seemingly minor event in his life, having been drawn from the water?!

The Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Yehuda Loewe; 1526-1609) explains that Moshe's being pulled from the water was, in fact, a major, formative event in his life. Water, says the Maharal, has no specific form; it is simply a mass whose shape is determined by the vessel in which it is placed. Water thus symbolizes *taava*, human desires and lusts, for on their own, one's cravings serve no constructive purpose whatsoever. One needs to impose one's control upon those lusts to ensure they are "shaped," that is, used for a positive purpose. When *taava* is used in such a fashion, it loses its independent, shapeless identity and becomes part of the greater goal it is being used to achieve.

Body and soul are a classic manifestation of this dynamic. The body, left to its own devices, will pursue its physical needs and desires and accomplish nothing. The soul is placed in the body to provide the opportunity for the body to achieve greatness by being the vehicle through which the soul's mission in this world can be achieved. When the body submits completely to the soul, allowing the soul to impose itself upon it, ceasing to exist as an independent entity, it realizes its true potential as it becomes an extension of the soul.

Moshe, says the Maharal, achieved a level where his body was completely subjugated to the soul. The *taava* aspect of Moshe, the lusts and desires of the body, were totally eradicated as independent, formless, pointless entities; they melted into his soul. Moshe was thus the human who

Stories For The Soul

Never Give Up!

Rabbi Moshe Leib Sassover (1745-1807) had spent considerable time and energy collecting for the needy but had not met with much success. He was tired and dispirited, and he resigned himself to having failed in his mission.

As he walked along, he met two policeman dragging a man. As the trio approached, Rabbi Moshe Leib realized that the man was Jewish, and he asked the fellow why he was being taken to jail. The man replied that he was a thief by profession, and he had been caught by the police.

Rabbi Moshe Leib tried to reason with the man, imploring him to abandon his life of crime. "Don't you see? You've been humiliated, beaten, imprisoned... Do yourself a favor and try a more honest line of work!"

The thief laughed at Rabbi Moshe Leib and said, "Rabbi, I didn't succeed this time, but I'll keep trying! A Jew never gives up!"

Rabbi Moshe Leib got the message. He turned around and resumed his efforts at collecting funds for charity.

The Jewish People were enslaved and treated horribly by the Egyptians. But they did not give up hope that one day they would be redeemed, and they clung to their identity as Jews through thick and thin. It was this perseverance that allowed them to survive, thrive and ultimately be redeemed.

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Kollel Happenings

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AT FEB 1 T4T

Join Ben Figa, Assistant City Attorney for the City and County of Denver and previously Deputy Legal Counsel for the Office of Governor John Hickenlooper, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore the limits of corporations. February 1st, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What is the largest space in the Torah scroll mandated by halacha?

A: Usual spacing in a Torah scroll is one of the following three: a one-letter space, a nine-letter space and a space which leaves the remainder of the line blank. A unique space of four lines is left blank between the end of one book of the Torah and the start of another. As there are five books of Torah, there are a total of four such four-line blanks. According

to many authorities, *bi'dieved* (*ex-post facto*), the scroll is valid if this break was ignored, as long as there is at least part of a blank line.

(Sources: Yoreh De'ah 273:1 and Pischei T'shuva ibid.)

This week's question: How is it possible for one to skip *Ya'aleh Viyavo* during *shacharis* on Rosh Chodesh and not be required to repeat the prayer?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Yosef Caro- Bais Yosef Part IX

Following the passing of the Mahari bei Rav, Rabbi Caro became the leader of the Safed community. He had already completed his monumental work, *Bais Yosef*, in 1542. As mentioned in an earlier column, Rabbi Caro had begun this work in 1522 in Adrianople, and he published it from 1550-1559.

Bais Yosef was a commentary on the *Arba'ah Turim*, written by Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher (1275-1340; his father was the famed German Torah leader Rabbeinu Asher, known as the Rosh). *Arba'ah Turim*, "the Four Rows." The work is known colloquially as "the Tur," and Rabbi Yaakov himself is known as "the Ba'al HaTurim," the author of the Tur.

Written by Rabbi Yaakov in Spain, it was a basic code of Jewish Law of his time, and it is divided into four sections (hence the name): *Orach Chaim*, focusing on daily life including prayer and its attendant commandments such as tefillin and tzitzis, blessings, Shabbos and holidays; *Yoreh De'ah*, focusing on areas of common prohibitions such as kashrus, idolatry, and usury; *Even Ha'ezer*, focusing on laws of marriage and divorce; and *Choshen Mishpat*, focusing on jurisprudence. The Tur collected many of the opinions of the earlier halachic decisors such as the Rif, the Rambam, and the Rosh, to name a few. The Ba'al Haturim himself often offers his own opinions and decisions on matters being presented.

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Continued from front side

was completely removed from *taava*, manifested through water. Moshe was totally withdrawn from the water! When Pharaoh's daughter took the basket out of the Nile, she realized that this child possessed the unique ability to withdraw from all physicality that was an end unto itself; he was thus named Moshe in recognition of this trait. It was this special capacity that made Moshe the greatest prophet of the Jewish People, for it is the body, when it exists as an entity unto itself, that comes between man and G-d; when the soul shines through and

the body fades away, man and G-d can connect.

While no one else can achieve Moshe's heights of prophecy, we can, to the best of our abilities, try to emulate what became his defining characteristic: the ability to impose a form upon what are otherwise destructive, fruitless drives and cravings. We, too, have the potential to impose our will upon our physical selves, living a life that can transform baser elements into something very different, something far greater and loftier.