

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך,
יום השביעי שבת לה'

SHABBAT LASHEM

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בס"ד



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

SHOSHANA ROTHSTEIN
SHEVET AVICHAI

As an English teacher, one of the tools I use to help my students access difficult texts is a popular pedagogical theory called reciprocal reading. This theory posits

that students must assume different roles whilst reading to ensure they become active in the process of decoding the new information they are encountering. One of these roles is predictor, which requires students to use information they already know to articulate what they expect to come next.

As we return to the familiar, oft-told stories of *Sefer Shemot*, it is important that we engage with the Torah as active readers. Each time we read these *perashiyot* again, we have the opportunity to develop our understanding and appreciation of them, if we are open to it.

Sefer Bereishit ends with Yosef's death, preceded by his request to his brothers that his bones be taken out of Egypt when the Jewish people leave (50:24-26). Before beginning our study of *Sefer Shemot*, I asked my year 7 cheder class to use these *pesukim* to predict how it might start. The answers ranged from sensible (baby boys being thrown in the Nile, slavery) to the unlikely (Yosef returning as a zombie). Understandably, however, none of my students predicted how *Sefer Shemot* does actually start:

"These are the names of the children of Israel, who came down to Egypt with Yaakov. Each man came with his household: Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, Yissaschar, Zevulun and Binyamin, Dan, Naftali, Gad and Asher" (*Shemot*, 1:1-4).

This is information we are given in *Bereishit* (47:1). Why does the Torah repeat it? And why is it so important that it serves for the opening of the entire *sefer*?

Additionally, for a *parasha* that initially seems so concerned with names, there are very few to be found in the opening events: a new king (1:8), midwives who have different names in the *pasuk* and in *Chazal* (1:15 and Rashi there), a man and woman from *beit Levi* (2:1), an unnamed son and his sister (2:2, 2:4), Pharaoh's daughter (2:5) and a

wet nurse (2:7), to name but a few. The cast of characters populating the opening of *Shemot* are strangely and consistently anonymous.

There is a second, seemingly unrelated, question that also glares at us from the *pesukim*. Pharaoh declares he is worried about the Jewish population increase (1:10). When enslaving the Jewish people fails to stem this (1:11-12), he begins killing the baby boys. Surely, 'it does not require great genius to realise that the goal of limiting reproduction is poorly served by reducing the number of males in a given population!'

Perhaps the key to both these questions lies in Pharaoh's concern. He wasn't worried about a big Jewish population, but one with an identity, a 'national character and vision' that might motivate them to fight against Egypt (1:10). Pharaoh wanted to strip the people of their identities and nationhood – their names. Yet the Jewish people resisted this: they retained their Jewish names which contributed to their redemption (*Vayikra Rabbah*, 32:5). The *Midrash* in fact explains that this is the very reason the names of the tribes are repeated at the start of *Shemot*: because their names are related to the *geula* (*Shemot Rabbah*, 1:5).

Further, to prevent a sense of national identity, Pharaoh needed to target what he saw to be the 'pool of potential leadership': the men. As ruler of a society that boasted few female leaders, Pharaoh was not worried about the women; he assumed they would easily assimilate. Therefore, he focused on murdering the baby boys.

However, it is clear that Pharaoh underestimated the Jewish women. The female midwives ignored his commands (1:17) and even actively helped sustain the baby boys (*Sota*, 11b). Miriam assumed a position of leadership when challenging her father's decision to separate from her mother, pointing out it was more damaging to the nation than Pharaoh's decree (*ibid.* 12a). And it was in the merit of the righteous women that entire nation was redeemed (*ibid.* 11b).

These elements of the *geula* and how it would come about are embedded in the very first, seemingly irrelevant, *pesukim* of *Shemot* – if only one is looking.

**SHOSHANA IS IN SHEVET AVICHAI AND WAS SCANIT
ON GIMMEL MACHANE 5782**

London	In 16:02	Out 17:11	Cambridge	In 16:01	Out 17:13	Oxford	In 16:08	Out 17:20
Manchester	In 16:04	Out 17:19	Nottingham	In 16:02	Out 17:16	Birmingham	In 16:08	Out 17:20
Leeds	In 16:00	Out 17:15	Liverpool	In 16:07	Out 17:22	Bristol	In 16:15	Out 17:26
Thaxted	In 16:01	Out 17:13	Brighton	In 16:08	Out 17:18	Jerusalem	In 16:20	Out 17:36

SHLICHA'S CORNER: WOMEN IN TANAKH II - SHIFRA AND PUAH



In the world, there is a struggle between the wicked, who do evil, and the forces of good, who are looking for all the ways to spread goodness in the world and influence it in the right way. The struggle between these forces is described in our *parasha* - *parashat Shemot*. This is when we encounter *Am Yisrael* for the first time as a nation, where *Am Yisrael* are described as multiplying with all their might - an action that results in the settlement of the world, as the Torah says: 'And the children of Israel grew and prospered and multiplied and became very strong, and the earth became filled with them.'

At the same time, a new and evil king arose in Egypt who is described as ungrateful: 'And a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph,' who sees all the good that *Am Yisrael* are spreading in the world and decides to act against them in order to minimise the good that they are spreading. Pharaoh decides to torture and enslave *Am Yisrael* with hardship and backbreaking labour. Against this decree of Pharaoh, *Am Yisrael* decide to give back kindness, and not only do they refuse to succumb to this decree, but they continue to multiply and spread their light in the world even more: 'And as they would torture [Am Yisrael], so would they multiply and spread out.'

Faced with this reality, Pharaoh decides to punish *Am Yisrael* with a more painful punishment, and orders the midwives to kill the male babies born into *Am Yisrael*. Shifra and Puah, who, according to the sages, are Yocheved and Miriam, decided not to follow Pharaoh's cruel command, and instead let the babies live. But not

Following the success of Winter Machane, our dedicated machane correspondent got in touch with Daniella Donoff to see how her experience of Machane went. Dani was one of the sganit on H-Course, our Y12 Winter Machane that focuses on leadership skills. What was your overall impression of machane?

Machane was a massive success! For me personally, this was my favourite Winter Machane I have ever been on, it was honestly crazy from the minute I got to the coach stop on the way to precamp, until 10 days later when I left the Bayit but I wouldn't have missed a minute of it!!! I was lucky enough to have an incredible tzevet with me on H-Course and a great group of Chanichim. We had so many impactful moments as a machane that I will remember forever.

How did your first time as *sganit* go? Did you have any expectations of what it would be like?

As someone who normally is part of technical tzvatim, I was definitely nervous to return to a Hadracha role - however being *Sganit* was one of my favourite tafkidim ever! I love organising things and running things in a technical way so *Sganit* actually felt more like a technical role to me than Hadracha (so I felt right at home!).

only did they decide not to kill the boys, but, after they had helped the mother and the child at birth, they supported the baby physically and mentally. Shifra was responsible for feeding the baby with food and water, and Puah was responsible for the embrace and warmth, for the emotional support. Shifra and Puah worked to save the babies, while making great sacrifices and risking their own lives, as they know that eventually they will have to give an account before Pharaoh. Such great kindness causes the awakening of Hashem's grace on *Am Yisrael*, and we see this in the verse: 'And God was kind to the midwives, and the people multiplied and became very strong.'

**"A NEW KING
AROSE IN EGYPT,
WHO ACTS AGAINST
AM YISRAEL TO
MINIMISE THE GOOD
THAT THEY ARE
SPREADING"**

In this case too, the greatness and grace that is revealed in *Am Yisrael* inspires the Egyptians to delve deeper into the power of evil and fight against the good in the world. Pharaoh passes a new decree: 'And Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying: "Every son who is born - to the Nile throw him!"'

The goodness and kindness of Shifra and Puah, together with the increasing evil of the Egyptian kingdom, brings Hashem to his mercy to fulfil the covenant of the *avot*: 'And God heard their cry, and God remembered his covenant with Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov. And God saw the children of Israel, and God knew.'

This is the beginning of the redemption of Israel, after which *Am Yisrael* will come out with greatness, great wealth and will begin their journey as a nation. All this, due to the acts of Shifra and Puah who, with great bravery and immense kindness, saved the babies.

May we also be blessed with a lot of goodness and kindness in the world.

MY MACHANE EXPERIENCE:

What was your favourite activity on machane?

My favourite activity was our Rosh Reveal on the first night - we held a fake Bar Mitzvah party for the mystery Rosh Machane and Abi and I made a speech about the 'Barmitzvah Boy' which kickstarted the whole of Machane off!!! One of my other favourite activities was running a 'How To' session about being on a Technical Tzevet, opening my chanichim's eyes up to other ways that they can continue their Bnei Akiva journey.

Can you give me a personal highlight of machane?

My highlight of machane was on the last night after dinner, when H-Course was learning our camp song for the first time, the atmosphere of overwhelming ruch was incredible, even our fake camp song was wild!

**TO FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR MACHANOT,
PLEASE CONTACT ANOUSHKA AT CAMPS@BAUK.ORG**

TORAH FROM AROUND THE WORLD

MONSIEUR CHOUCHANI | ????- 26TH TEVEIT 5728

A long haul now, for our first trip across the Atlantic! First, we catch a flight from Tunis-Carthage Airport [TUN] to *Aeropuerto Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas* [MAD], and then on from Madrid to Carrasco International Airport [MVD] in Montevideo. From there, it's an hour and a half on the coach from *Aeropuerto Nuevo* to Gral. Artigas Y De La Merced. Cross the road and head down 17 Metros to the Israelite Cemetary of La Paz...

Monsieur Chouchani is a man shrouded in mystery. No one knows his real name, where or when he was born, or even if he was 'observant' in the traditional sense. He would appear and disappear across multiple continents like an apparition. His reported appearance was that of a vagabond; he was dirty and ugly, usually dressed in an unkempt way and frequently insulted and berated those who engaged in conversation with him. Elie Wiesel, who paid for his gravestone, had it engraved with the words 'לִידְתּוֹ וְחַיֵּינוּ סְתוּמִים בְּחִידָה', 'his birth and life are sealed in enigma.' But everyone who met this man was struck by his immeasurable intellect and ability to deliver his wisdom.

He would often mention that his birthplace was Marrakech or Vilna or Calcutta or Florence or myriad other places, and know in such depth all details of these locations such that any one of them, or none, could be correct. Some have theorised that, recognised as a child prodigy, his father used him to make money. Chouchani, however, rejected this so strongly that he ran off as a child, in line with a statement he later quoted from Nietzsche: 'Life is worth nothing, save as an instrument of knowledge.' His notebooks, now housed in the National Library of Israel, contained almost cryptic scrawlings on the Torah, Talmud, *halakha*, *kabbala*, ethics, *chassidut*, maths and physics. It is possible that he then went on to study under Rav Kook, who wrote that Chouchani was 'one of the most excellent young people... sharp, knowledgeable, complete and multi-minded.'

At some point in the 1930s, Chouchani moved to Strasbourg and purportedly learnt French in just two weeks, by memorising a dictionary. After the war breaks out, he is arrested twice. On the first occasion, he escapes by claiming he is a Muslim. The Grand Mufti was called to verify whether that was true, and after three hours discussing the *Qur'an* and Islamic theology in great detail, he is declared 'a holy Muslim' and set free. A second time, he is arrested and claims to be a mathematics professor. He gives over a mathematical problem based on such complex equations that the officer who arrested him, himself a professor of mathematics, lets him go.



After the war, Elie Wiesel came across Chouchani and for the next three years, became his disciple. Wiesel records a few sentences that give a vague impression of the incredible erudition and wisdom (and forerunning of postmodernism) of his ideas, when Monsieur Chouchani was asked by some of Wiesel's students on questions ranging from the Torah and the Zohar to international politics and the atomic bomb:

'All themes, brought up by chance, were in reality linked to a centre... Cain's act contains within it that of Titus. The sacrifice of Isaac prefigures the holocaust, the song of David calls to that of Jeremiah: The Torah is whole and everything is in the Torah. Why is the first letter of *Bereishit bet* and not *alef*? Because man is too weak to begin: someone else has already begun before him. Jacob had chosen exile in order to permit Moses to choose liberty. Whoever turns and looks at the summit of the mountain known that the beginning prepares the end and that man can act upon his creator, who also studies Torah.'

Emmanuel Levinas also met with Chouchani at around the same time. Initially, Levinas had refused to engage with this '*clochard*' as he called him, but was eventually persuaded. Levinas met with Chouchani for an entire night and, according to legend, at dawn Levinas remarked 'I cannot tell what he knows; all I can say is that all that I know, he knows.' Levinas proceeded to study Talmud with Chouchani for the next five years, as did other select individuals such as André Neher and Manitou (see Shabbat Lashem *Parashat Lekh Lekha*) until Chouchani disappeared from Paris.

In the late 1950s, Monsieur Chouchani left Europe and the Middle East for Montevideo, where he said there were no 'big world problems.' It is reported that Chabad emissaries sent to Uruguay would carry words of greeting between Chouchani and the Lubavitcher Rebbe; Chouchani asked that they bring him a *tallit* and *Shas* from the Rebbe, which they did. In 1968, while giving a shiur to Bnei Akiva chanimim and their parents in Durazno sviva, he died of a heart attack and was buried in the *tallit* sent to him. Among his personal effects was found a letter he had received from Albert Einstein.



WHAT'S GOING ON?

- We wish a **HUGE** thank you to all of our amazing **madrachim** who helped make **Winter Machane** happen! We **appreciate** the time given by all of our volunteers to our movement.

- **London SBM** started again this week! Join us each **Thursday** from 7pm at Kinloss.

- **Lishmah** returns for bogrot and sixth-form women this **Tuesday 17th January**, with **sushi** and a **shiur** from **Rebbetzin Shalvie Friedman**! Visit tinyurl.com/LishmahBA to sign up and join this **dynamic makom torah** for women!

- **Bnei Akiva** will be sending a delegation to **March of the Living** over 16th-20th April 2023. If you are interested, please contact Gidon at mazkir@bauk.org.

- **Israel Machane** applications are still open! To view the brochure or sign up visit bauk.org/israel.

- To give any **comments** or **suggestions** to Bnei Akiva, please visit bauk.org/feedback

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ANY OF THESE EVENTS, PLEASE CONTACT BEN AT CHINUCH@BAUK.ORG

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STUDENT BET MIDRASH

בית מדרש STUDENT BET MIDRASH

Kinloss January 2023 Parashat Shemot

19:00 Maariv
19:15 Chavruta/Chabura time
20:00 Dinner - Special Chinese Buffet
20:30

Keynote - Prof. Nechama Price - Director of YU's Graduate Program for Advanced Talmud Studies (GPATS) and Senior Lecturer in the Bible and Judaic Studies departments at Stern College. Currently serves as a Yoetzet Halacha to many communities in New Jersey.

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