



Parshat Shmot

For the week ending 23 Tevet 5760
31December 1999 & 1 January 2000

Overview

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shemot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov.

Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and

finds and adopts him, although she knows he is

find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother Yocheved to be his nursemaid. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mt. Sinai), Moshe witnesses the burning bush where Hashem commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael, the land promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being

perform three miraculous transformations to validate

into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker Hashem tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but Hashem assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

Insights

HAPPY NEW SHABBAT!

N year. Such unrealized expectation!

This year, that question will be amplified a thousand times.

And what will most people be doing? Immersed in a sense of deep introspection on what the coming millennium portends? I doubt it. Deep introspection of the bottom of a large Scotch is more likely. Many, with the help of legal or not-quite-legal substances, will try and escape from anything which resembles even mild contemplation. The more athletic amongst us will, of course, be experiencing the deep significance of the new millennium by jumping into fountains from London to Lagos.

Why will the world react to what it considers the most significant moment in a thousand years with total superficiality and escapism?

reading the book of Shemot. In English the second book of the Torah is called Exodus, but in Hebrew,

of something defines its essence. When G-d created the world, He brought each animal before Adam, and

were not imaginative. They were definitive. Adam gave expression to the essence of each and every creature through its name. The name is the pipeline to the spiritual essence above. The name is the root and the summation of essence.

Great events connect us to our essence. When someone gets married, is born or dies, we step back and take stock of our entire lives. Great events, whether they really are great or we merely perceive

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them as great, bring us to introspection. The secular has to look forward to its lines under its eyes, cosmetic surgery and heart disease. The Jew, when confronted with great events, sees how everything in this world leads beyond this world.

world is drowning its sorrows in various kinds of

anesthesia, the Jewish People will be doing what it has been doing for the last three thousand years basking in the light of the Shabbat candles, making blessings over wine and bread, and ushering in a day of rest and tranquility with quiet faith. Shabbat Kodesh. The Holy Shabbat.

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 27:6 - 28:13, 29:22 - 23

DESTRUCTIVE SALVATION

After 210 years of Egyptian bondage, G-d finally redeemed us with unparalleled miracles. Surely G-d could have wrought miracles two centuries earlier and saved a lot of trouble.

Both the Egyptian bondage and its subsequent Exodus were promised to Avraham long before they occurred. The slavery and oppression were part of G-d's plan. When the soul of the nation becomes soiled, G-d allows our oppressors to teach us what a weak little nation we are.

Yeshaya foresees the time when the People of Israel will repent. When we return to live a life of Torah, G-d will exact justice on our enemies and gather the exiled Jews home to Jerusalem.

THE VIEW FROM WITHIN

for another mitzvah, one line for another line, another one for another one, pettiness here,

With the above words ever to the Jewish People the prophet rebukes those people in whose eyes Torah law is mere semantics one *mitzvah* for another *mitzvah*. Such people view Torah study as mental gymnastics one line for another, nothing but pettiness.

It would be impossible to appreciate the beauty of the Bayeaux tapestry just by looking at a square inch of it. Likewise, the beauty of the Torah can only be appreciated by seeing the

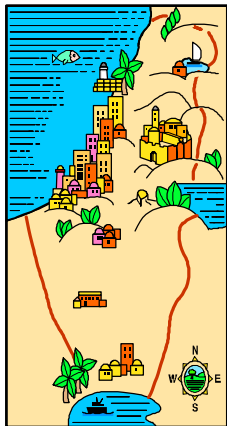
the Torah. They have viewed only a tiny corner of it from the outside. And still they dare to mock it.

If we engage in proper Torah study and plumb its depths, then we will be able to see the Torah as one beautiful tapestry.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

KIRYAT SEFER



(*Shoftim 1:12*)

As the Jewish People under the leadership of Yehoshua began their conquest of Eretz Yisrael, the Tribe of Yehuda headed by Kalev ben Yefuneh reached the city of Kiryat Sefer in its efforts to drive out the Canaanites from the city. He took this attractive niece. Othniel ben Knaz, who conquered the city and won the hand of his extraordinary niece.

ascribes a different sort of triumph to Othniel. During the mourning period following the passing of Moshe, 1700 halachic interpretations received from him were forgotten. It was Othniel who, through his scholarly talents, restored them to his people and won the hand of Achsah.

The city today bearing the name Kiryat Sefer is about a half-century old, becoming the third largest charedi community in Eretz Yisrael. Right next to it is an area designated to house an Ohr Somayach housing project in the very near future..

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