

Parshas Shemos

This week, Parshas Shemos is the first Parsha of the second Chumash of Torah. The theme of the weekly Divrei Torah, since Parshas Bereishis has been seeing today's world events from the Toras and drawing from Torah to derive power and strength to get us through these challenging times.

Since the Torah is not a history book but a book of lessons, whenever something historical is recounted, it is for practical, Hashkaphic, and Halachic reasons. Therefore, the early part of the Parsha, which tells us about the enslavement of the Jews, must have additional insight beyond history.

Let's analyze the progress of the pesukim; we see the following:

- 1) The posuk describes the proliferation of the Jews (having six children at once) with the word Vayishritzu, which shares the root of creepy crawlers, so we are told the nation became strong.
- 2) A new king had to arise (according to Rashi, whether it was an actual person or someone who decided to change the laws), who decidedly forgot Yosef, who brought on new regulations. (And earlier, we know that the Pharaoh was even more robust and wealthier than a standard king because the people and their land were nationalized and state agents. They had sold themselves to work in exchange for food during the famine.
- 3) Then he told the people to observe that another nation lives among

them, which was accurate and easy for people to agree on, and created doubt in the people's minds to be able to create an us versus them successfully, which would ease the nation into enslaving the Jews.

- 4) Then, the pharaoh created a conspiracy theory that in the event of war, the Jews wouldn't fight alongside the Egyptians and, more so, would kick the Egyptians out of their land.
- 5) So, Pharaoh establishes officers to burden the people with work and to build something practical, like storage houses in Pison and Ramses.
- 6) Then, the posuk says that as brutal as the Egyptians were, the Jews increased and grew more robust, and society fully turned on the Jews. The "us and them" was concretized, the posuk says, and the Egyptians were disgusted by them, which devalued their lives so much (like Sheratzim reference in point 1) that they would be able to kill them. (According to Mepharshim, the Jews lived in harmony with the Egyptians, so it took cleverness- as referenced in the posuk and time, to get the Egyptians to turn their backs on the Jews.)
- 7) Then we are told of how bad the Egyptians made the lives of the Jews- but no death yet, until.
- 8) Pharaoh commands the dissidents Shifra and Puah to start to kill the baby boys. The simple explanation by Rashi was to quell the opportunity for the saviour to be borne (as the astrologers predicted). Still, it was so that there was no progenitor for the Jews by wiping

out the boys. There were women for the Egyptians, which would solidify a complete integration into Egyptian society and remove the Jews from history.

As I have written about, these steps to the devolution of society are entirely the script for the free world today over the past couple of years. As well we see that the tropes spread by antisemites are the same, and the creation of conspiracy theories is still the case.

There are two lessons I would like to highlight. First, if the Torah tells us that the result of the hardships listed in the Torah is that we were redeemed, then that same conclusion applies to us. Just as the prophecies of Yeshayahu and others came true about the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, their prophecies of Mashiach must be true.

The second lesson references the first Mitzvah after the Aseres Hadibros, which are the laws of a Jewish slave and how to treat them. The Torah there references the fact that we should learn what not to do to a Jewish slave from the Egyptians. Specifically, just as the Egyptians logically justified their enslavement of the Jews (by validating their conspiracy theories and that there was a 'disgusting' nation among them), so too it is possible that we can go ahead and use logic to justify our actions against another person (specifically in the case of a Jewish slave, who is enslaved because they committed a crime for which they cannot repay you could feel like he deserves poor treatment). What the Torah tells us, and something that makes us different, is that logic; if it contradicts Halacha, we don't follow it. We must follow

the Torah to understand compassion and how to treat one another. Linking to what I stated above, therefore, by following the Torah, we will usher in the Mashiach, as promised by Hashem.

Good Shabbos!