

Parshas Shemos

This week's Parsha, Shemos, begins the second of the 5 books of Chumash. If we connect it to the 5 faculties of spirituality in the soul, it corresponds to Ruach, which connects emotions to the person as a manifestation of their existence. Alternatively, it can correspond to Chaya, which relates to a person's intellectual capacities as a means of cleaving to Hashem. Both apply to the Chumash of Shemos, as the redemption from Egypt is recounted there, and the redemption was completed with the giving of the Torah, the instrument with which we can realize the entirety of the purpose of creation, which is to connect to Hashem in a manifest way and make a dwelling in this abode. Because Chumash Shemos includes the giving of the Torah, which connects both our emotional and intellectual faculties to Hashem.

The beginning of Shemos, where Egyptian society devolved to enslave their Jewish neighbours, follows, as I've written in past years, a script that takes time. In the early Pesukim, Pharaoh degrades the Jews and the 'disgusting' neighbours, resulting in the later enslavement, and that Pharaoh was able to command the people to enforce the laws of killing the baby boys. The fact that Shifra and Puah neglected to follow Pharaoh's command shows that in that society, there were representatives (Shifra and Puah, who oversaw the birthing in Egypt, as if they managed a

'hospital') who Pharaoh commanded to kill the baby boys on the birthstone. But they weren't punished for not listening; rather, Pharaoh asked them their reason, that is, he gave them a chance to have an explanation (which they said the Jewish women are unlike the Egyptians and take care of themselves). If I were to modernize the exchange and the scenario, it would follow much of recent Jewish History, in which high-ranking Jews hold government positions and can enforce laws in solidarity with the government. But the critical piece here, and connected to Pharaoh's original conspiracy theory about the Jews, which was that they live among us (and are not us) and if we are called to war, the Jews may side with our enemy, and turn against us. That is, because the Jews are not part of us, their allegiances can be questioned and acted on. This is playing out now in our time. Meaning Jews around the world are being punished for Israel, which the haters like to claim are separate issues, but in fact they are not, and our haters connect them as one and the same, and justify their actions in the diaspora, because the Jews are not part of them. There is no protection of Canada, Australia or any other country that one would expect and demand by any other race or creed. I bring this up simply because the story of Shemos is our story. We are in Golus, and life is good; we can become Chas Vishalom satisfied with the Gashmiyus. Even though around us, our host nation is seething and slowly

bringing the yoke of tyranny and suffering.
As the posuk describes the work
(interpreted as physical), it was back-
breaking and emotionally taxing. Then,
redemption.

The Torah models for us what will happen
at the end of days, when we too will merit
leaving our comfortable Golus, even
though around us is backbreaking work.
The Parsha recounts specific historical
incidents but omits hundreds of years to
reach the most important point in the
trajectory: the beginning of redemption.

For us, this means that we will also go out
of our Golus, as the Haftarah delves into.
That is, the Jews succeeded in Egypt, as
we do in Golus now, but this is realized
only when we are redeemed. In the case
of Egypt, it was the giving of the Torah,
which is the merging of the upper and
lower worlds, and the ability to make the
mundane and physical holy. This is also
the ability of our bodies to connect
emotionally and intellectually to Hashem,
especially through the Torah. All that work
is to bring us to our Geula, where it will be
realized, and ultimately to transform the
physical world into a dwelling place for
Hashem.

On that note, may the dream be realized,
may our prayers for redemption be
realized, so that we can experience the
ultimate and final redemption now.

Good Shabbos