



From the desk of  
**MORDECHAI MALKA**  
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel  
Founder and President of Or Hamelech Institutions  
Member of Chief Rabbinate of Israel



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## Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad \* Batei Hora'ah \* Religious Services \* Marriage Licensing \* Kashrut \* Mikvaot \* Eiruvim

### TORAT

### Parashat Shemot

### HAMELECH

#### Required Repetition

"And these are the names of the children of Israel who are entering Egypt: with Yaakov, each man and his household came... All souls descending from Yaakov numbered seventy, and Yosef was in Mitzrayim."

Anyone who has been following the recent *parashiot* knows that Yosef was in Mitzrayim before the rest of his family. Why is this reiterated here?

Similarly we can ask on the *pesukim* from next week's *parashah*, "These were Aharon and Moshe whom Hashem instructed to take Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim... They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt; that was Moshe and Aharon."

Here, too, we can ask: Why does the Torah tell us that which is well-known? And why is the order of Moshe and Aharon reversed from one verse to the next?

#### Mordechai's Message

Life is full of challenges. Sometimes we see someone who is nice and friendly, but then he gets appointed to a position of authority. Suddenly he is bossy and arrogant and has no tolerance for those on a lower social level. For decades we knew him to be friendly and amiable, and now it is beneath his dignity to have anything to do with those whose income comes in fewer digits or whose vehicle of transportation is older than an infant and not polished daily.

When Queen Esther, at first, was reluctant to approach King Ahasverus to plead on behalf of her people, Mordechai sent back the following message: "Do not fantasize that because you are in the palace that you will escape the fate of all the Jews. For if you are silent at this time, relief and salvation will rise for the Jews from a different source, and you and your father's household will be lost. Who knows if for a time such as this, you achieved royalty?"

He was impressing upon her that when a person is in a position of power, he is to use it for the good of his people. It was given to him as part of his mission.

#### The Unattended Banquet

Yes, life is full of challenges.

There was once a prince who wanted everyone to be happy. He decided to run his country differently from how his father had run things. The first thing he decided to do when he took over was to make a grand banquet, inaugurating the new policy of subject satisfaction. His mother advised against it, but he paid no attention. Instead he spent millions seeing to a perfect lavish feast, but entry was reserved for the truly content. Anyone with a single worry or concern was denied entry.

No one showed up. The prince then understood that everyone has challenges in life and that is what life is all about.



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### Growing Up

From the start, life is not easy. Babies are born without teeth. They suffer a great deal of pain when the teeth start coming in. A baby's digestive system sometimes also causes him discomfort.

A child grows up and wants everything for himself and he has to learn how to deal with competition: in the home, in the classroom, on the street, in the workplace.

Family life presents its own set of challenges. First, finding a marriage partner, building a home together, raising a family. There are many challenges along the way. Some are shared by many and some are unique to one's personal circumstances. There are issues of health and bringing in income, dealing with neighbors and co-workers, etc.

Life was never meant to be easy. The reason for all these difficulties is to give a person the opportunity to grow and develop and achieve greatness. The greater a person is, the more *nisyonot* (challenges) he will have. (Suka 52a)

This is the way of the world. Someone who is interested in developing his muscles, for example, may practice weight-lifting. He begins with five or seven kilo, and once that becomes easy, he moves up.

There can be different levels of brain-teasers, too, or crossword puzzles or Sudoku. Someone who wants to develop skills in any area usually starts at a relatively simple level and gradually moves up.

The same with life in general, in areas that really matter. Hashem is constantly challenging us, in order for us to grow.

### Do Not Delay

Naturally, a person pushes things off to a later point in time, when things will hopefully be easier to cope with. Hillel, however, teaches us (Avot 1:14), "If not now, then when?" and (ibid. 2:4) "Do not say, 'When I am less bogged down, then I will learn,' because maybe you will never find the time."

Shaarei Teshuva (II:26) says not to push off spiritual endeavors, because there will always be distractions. He adds, that once a person achieves his first goal in financial security, he only becomes thirsty for more, convinced that he *needs* it. As the saying goes, "Someone who loves money never has enough of it (cf. Kohelet 5:9)."

Meiri (Avot ibid.) adds that not only should a person not push off Torah learning and Mitzvah performance in lieu of pursuit of pleasure. He must also make sure that his career and involvement in securing a livelihood not take over his life to the extent of overriding spiritual endeavors. Rather, he should make sure that Torah learning is the primary part of his daily schedule and he should program his work schedule around it. Someone who sets up his life in this manner will see success in all of his endeavors, both spiritual and material.

Sefer HaHinuch (#419) similarly stresses: A person should not push off Torah learning for a more convenient time, because such a time may never surface. You never know what hardships tomorrow may bring. You may find yourself preoccupied for much longer than you could have imagined. You may wake up one day and



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wonder how you wasted away so much of your life. So it is worthwhile waking up sooner rather than later. Find time today to make Torah learning a considerable portion of your daily activities. If you accept the yoke and make the conscious effort and decisive decision, you will see that Heaven will come to your assistance and ease your burden. Tasks which used to take hours will be sorted out almost on their own. You will enjoy a peaceful life and a very rewarding afterlife. You only stand to gain if you heed this advice of mine.

### Alarming Revelation

In the future, Hashem will bring the *yetzer horah* (evil inclination) and slaughter him in the presence of the righteous and the wicked. All assembled will weep. The righteous will see the *yetzer horah* as a large mountain. The wicked will see it as a mere strand of hair. *Tsadikim* will cry and exclaim, "How were we able to overcome this great mountain!"

The wicked will cry and shout, "How were we unable to overcome this mere strand of hair!"

HaKadosh Baruch Hu will similarly be astonished, *kivayachol*. (Suka 52a)

### Our Avot Were Challenged

Besides for everyone's regular challenges, Avraham had ten special challenges. For example, he was thrown into a fiery furnace because he held on tenaciously to his beliefs.

Thereafter, he was ordered to leave his hometown to go to a land where he will find fame and wealth and begin to father a family. He

arrived at the Promised Land and found famine instead of prosperity. He did not despair. He went down to Egypt and his wife was confiscated to be given royal treatment by the king. Then, a family feud erupted between his shepherds and those of his nephew. In an effort to save that nephew from captivity, he entered a world war and almost single-handedly took on four world powers.

As if that was not enough, the son he finally had from his maidservant had to be sent away, together with the boy's mother. Then he was asked to perform an operation upon himself at his tender age of 99. He finally had a beloved son from Sarah, and he was asked to offer him as a sacrifice. Quite a challenging life, no? But rewarding, for eternity.

Yitshak did not have things so easy either. Remember, he was the sacrifice, at age 37, and he went willingly. He waited twenty years to have children, and those twin boys did not exactly get along so well with each other.

Yaakov Avinu had a particularly trying life. *Nisayon* after *nisayon*. He fled from his bloodthirsty brother's seething wrath, had to contend with a conniver of a father-in-law / employer, his daughter was kidnapped and defiled by the son of Chamor, his two brave sons wiped out the city, arousing the wrath of surrounding nations; his young, cherished wife perished in childbirth. His favorite son disappeared and was missing for more than two decades.



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### Yosef Hatsaddik

What about Yosef? His brothers sought his demise. Instead, they settled on selling him. He was brought to a foreign land, bought, tried and tested by some of Egypt's finest testers, and imprisoned for twelve years. Finally, he was released and given authority, which also has its own set of challenges.

"And Yosef was in Mitzrayim." Our Sages explain: He was the same righteous Yosef. The very same Yosef who shepherded his father's sheep remained in his righteousness throughout his travails in Egypt, including his rise to power.

Rambam (Dei'ot 6) says that it is totally normal to be influenced by one's environment, to adopt societal norms. In Egypt, societal norms included immorality, but Yosef took no part in it. He held on to his religious upbringing. Though only a young boy of seventeen, he did not forsake the path of his righteous forefathers. Even after he rose to power, he did not let that get to his head. He did not pay back his brothers for what they had done to him. He used his position of power to be benevolent to the people and provide them with food. And to spread awareness of Hashem and to reduce temptation to sin (by instituting Brit Milah even amongst Egyptians). He used his authority to assist his father and brothers to make a smooth and comfortable transition to their new surroundings.

### Moshe and Aharon

What do we know of Moshe and Aharon? These were the leaders of the nation which escaped the inescapable clutches of Mitzrayim. These were the leaders of the elite nation, the nation which

proved itself to be most cherished by the Creator of the universe. Miraculous wonders were performed with their hands. The Torah was given through Moshe. Nonetheless, they remained humble. Both said, "Who are we?" I.e., what are we worth. After all his greatness, Moshe is identified as the humblest man on earth.

"Hu Aharon U'Moshe... Hu Moshe V'Aharon." They remained humble and righteous throughout. Each was so concerned for the other one's honor. Neither wished to step on his brother's toes. Moshe did not want to accept the leadership if his older brother would feel slighted. Aharon, on the other hand, was genuinely delighted at his younger brother's appointment, and eagerly accepted the job to be his right-hand-man.

That is why their names are reversed in the two back-to-back *pesukim*. Each one was always eager to have the other one go first.

### Do You Remember Yoseleh?

A few weeks ago, we brought here the story of Reb Yosele of Slutsk. We will not repeat it here. We will just mention that he underwent tremendous *nisyonot* until he got to where he got to, from being the town clown to becoming the town Rov. Everyone can grow, and *nisyonot* are there to help us grow.

May Hashem help us focus on what is really important in life, and may He help us internalize this principle that challenges are opportunities and tools for growth.

Fondly,  
Mordechai Malka