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Parshat Shemos

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**PUSHING THE ENVELOPE**

*By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky*

This week's portion introduces us to Moshe Rabeinu, the messenger of Hashem who redeems the Jewish nation from Egypt. We are told of Hashem's proposal to Moshe to lead the Jews out of Egypt, and how Moshe refuses the opportunity. First Moshe responds, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" (Exodus 3:11) After Hashem assures him of his ability Moshe asks, "When I go to the nation and they ask me, 'what is His name?' what shall I say?" (Exodus 3:14)

Hashem responds again. Then Moshe respectfully demurs, "But they will not believe me, and they will not heed my voice, they will say 'Hashem did not appear to you!'" (Exodus 4:1) Again Hashem responds by giving Moshe two miraculous signs that he, when challenged, should in turn show to the Jewish nation. And again Moshe is hesitant. "Please my L-rd," he cries, "I am not a man of words, for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of speech." Once again Hashem rejoins, "Who made a mouth for man or makes one deaf, or dumb, sighted or blind? Is it not I, Hashem!" (Exodus 4:10-11)

Hashem patiently responds to each of Moshe's excuses with a clearly defined rebuttal. Except when Moshe makes what proves to be his final plea. After exhausting all of his excuses, Moshe, seems desperate to absolve himself of the task and declares, "Send the one whom you usually send!" (Exodus 4:13) According to Rashi, Moshe was referring to Ahron, who prophesized to the Jews even before Moshe and throughout the time that Moshe was hiding in Midian.

Suddenly, the conciliatory answers cease. "The rage of Hashem burned against Moshe." Hashem declares to Moshe that Ahron is elated with the decision. "Ahron is going to greet you with joy in his heart!" (Exodus 4:14). There are no more protestations. Moshe journeys back to Egypt and into eternity. The question is obvious. What did Moshe finally say that inflamed the ire of Hashem to the extent that the Torah tells us that His "anger burned"? Hashem responded calmly to each of Moshe's previous justifiable issues. Why did Hashem only become angry when Moshe evoked the concept of using Ahron, the one who normally and previously did the prophesizing?

*As a result of lower-level mismanagement, poor earnings, and low morale, the Board of Directors dismissed the CEO of a major corporation who had served faithfully and successfully for many years. His wisdom and experience, however, were well respected in the industry and the new boss looked to the former executive for introductory advice. "I can't tell you much," said the seasoned executive, "but I will give you something." The older boss handed the neophyte executive two envelopes. One of them had a large #1 written on it, the second was marked #2. "Young man," began the former CEO, "when you are challenged with your first major crisis open envelope number one. If things have not calmed down after a few days, then open envelope number two." After a brief turnaround, things began to fall apart. Soon a crisis erupted, the employees were disgruntled, and chaos began to reign. The Board of Directors was once again looking to make major changes, and the unseasoned executive's job was on the line. As hard as the young executive tried to calm the situation, it was futile. He locked himself in his office and opened the first envelope. In small but clear typewritten letters were the words, "Blame your predecessor." He followed the advice but the results were short-lived. The following weeks were not productive. In fact, things were getting worse. It was time for the second envelope. The young CEO opened it. When he saw the message typed on the small piece of paper, he knew his time had come. It read, "Prepare two envelopes."*

The Bechor Shor explains that as long as Moshe's hesitations engendered reasons that entailed his own perceived shortcomings, Hashem responded with a clear and precise rebuttal. But when Moshe exclaimed, "send the one who used to go," and did once again not offer any reason for his own failing but shifted the responsibility to his brother Ahron, Hashem became upset. And at that point, "the rage of Hashem burned against Moshe."

When challenged with difficult tasks we must face the mission presented to us and deal with our own abilities. By shifting the responsibility to someone else, even if we feel he is better suited, we may be inviting wrath. Because when we are asked by Hashem to perform, then there is no one better to do the job.

## **Heroes in Parshas Shemot**

*By Yanki Goldman*

Sefer and Parshas Shemot introduce us to the beginnings of the Israelites' enslavement in Egypt, a time marked by suffering, oppression, and fear. Amidst this darkness, we are introduced to true heroes—individuals who rise above personal safety, societal expectations, and fear to stand for justice and righteousness. These heroes do not accept the status quo; instead, they act with courage and integrity, even at great personal risk.

The first heroes we meet are the midwives, Shifra and Puah. Tasked by Pharaoh with the horrific command to kill all newborn Jewish boys, they defy his orders, choosing morality over blind obedience. Their quiet rebellion, driven by their awe of God and their commitment to life, sets the stage for the survival of the Jewish people. These women demonstrate that heroism does not always require grand gestures; often, it is found in the small, defiant acts of standing up for what is right.

Another hero emerges in Pharaoh's own household—his daughter. Upon finding an abandoned Jewish baby in a basket along the Nile, she defies her father's decree to drown all male infants. Not only does she save the child, but she adopts him, raising him as her own in the very palace that sought his destruction. Her act of compassion and courage demonstrates the power of individual choice, even when it goes against the norms of one's family or society. By saving Moses, she unwittingly becomes a catalyst for the redemption of the Jewish people.

Moses himself is the ultimate hero of this parsha. Though raised in privilege as a prince of Egypt, he feels the pain of his people and acts to defend them. He steps in to protect a Hebrew slave being beaten by an Egyptian taskmaster, displaying a deep sense of justice. Later, he intervenes in a quarrel between two Hebrews, showing his commitment to unity and peace among his people. Even in exile, Moses's heroism persists as he helps Jethro's daughters fend off shepherds who attempt to harass them. Moses's actions reveal a fundamental trait of a hero: the willingness to act when others are in need, regardless of personal risk or reward.

These figures in Parshas Shemot teach us that heroism often arises in moments of challenge and crisis. Heroes are those who choose courage over fear, justice over convenience, and righteousness over passivity. The midwives, Pharaoh's daughter, and Moses remind us that no matter our position in life, we have the power to make choices that align with our values and create positive change in the world. Their choices inspire us to confront the challenges of our own lives with bravery and integrity, knowing that even small acts of heroism can lead to extraordinary outcomes.

The question we must ask ourselves is this: When the moment arises and something must be done, do we, will we, rise to the challenge?

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## **Remove Your Shoes: The Place You Stand Upon Is Holy Ground**

*By Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

I would like to begin my remarks by sharing a true story that I experienced. Some time ago, I was in Europe for the summer as a scholar in residence on a tour of different European cities. One of the countries we visited was Hungary. The tour arrived at the banks of the Danube River in Budapest, at what is called "The Shoe Memorial." A very famous sculptor created a formation of metal shoes secured to the ground along the Danube.

Up until 1944, Adolph Hitler had a peace treaty with Hungary. That is why the Hungarian Jews were not directly affected by the Holocaust until 1944. Jews in Poland and Germany and all over Europe were already rounded up for execution several years earlier, but Hungarian Jews initially escaped exportation because of Hitler's peace treaty with Hungary.

In 1944, Hitler broke the peace treaty, and it became open season on Hungarian Jews, who were deported to concentration camps in 1944 and 1945. Adolph Eichman was in charge of exporting and exterminating Hungarian Jewry. When the treaty was originally broken, there was a Fascist group in Hungary called the Arrow-Cross, which could not wait for Germany's exportations, and they started killing Jews themselves in Hungary itself.

They would line up Jews on the banks of the Danube River and mow them down. The Jews fell backwards into the river giving rise to the famous quote – the Blue Danube literally turned red! But before the Arrow-Cross murderers did that, they made the Jews take off their shoes. Shoes were precious in those days, and they wanted to salvage the Jews' shoes for themselves.

To commemorate this horrible genocide, the above-mentioned sculptor went ahead and fashioned a twenty-foot section of the embankment with various shoes – of men, women, and children.

Our group went to this very moving site. I pointed out the irony that even though this was not the intention of the Arrow-Cross, “The place where we are standing is a *makom kadosh* (holy place).” Why did I call it a holy place? It is because any Jew who is killed simply because he is a Jew is a *kadosh*. He has died *al pi Kiddush Hashem* (as a martyr who sanctifies G-d’s Name). In this week’s *parsha*, regarding a holy place, the *pasuk* says “Do not draw near, remove your shoes from your feet for the place which you stand upon is holy ground.” (Shemos 3:5). It is ironic. In this particular place, by the banks of the Danube River, the Jews took off their shoes. I was not suggesting to our group that they should take off their shoes. But I made the comment that there is something else that we can learn from that incident where Moshe Rabbeinu was told to take off his shoes at the Burning Bush:

We all know the story. Moshe Rabbeinu saw a burning bush – one of the iconic images of the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The *pasuk* says, “And Hashem saw that Moshe turned to draw near and investigate...” (Shemos 3:4) Both the *pasuk* and *Chazal* make a big deal of the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu went to check it out. But let us ask: What is the big deal here? Wouldn’t anyone seeing a burning bush that was not being consumed try to get a better look and check out what was happening? Of course they would! People run to view a burning building which defies no laws of nature. Here, a miraculous event was transpiring. Certainly, any person would want to go and investigate the matter!

The Sforno on that *pasuk* makes the following comment: “He went to see what was happening – *l’his’bonen ba’davar* (to contemplate upon the matter). Moshe was not just interested in the sight. *L’his’bonen ba’davar* means he wanted to comprehend “What does this mean? What is the significance of the phenomenon I am witnessing?” Moshe understood that he was being sent a message. The *Ribono shel Olam* was making an open miracle, which He does not do on a daily basis. “What is the *Ribono shel Olam* telling me?”

That was the greatness of Moshe Rabbeinu. He saw something noteworthy and it immediately prompted him to ask himself – What is the *Ribono shel Olam* trying to tell me? The *Ribono shel Olam* was trying to tell Moshe that this burning bush, which was not being consumed, was going to represent the history of *Klal Yisrael*. We went down to Mitzrayim and the Egyptians tried to eradicate us, but we survived. This is something that has been going on for the last three thousand years. Whether it was the Egyptian exile, the Babylonian exile, the Greek exile, or the Roman exile; whether it was the destruction of the *batei mikdash*, whether it was the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the decrees of *Tac’h v’Ta”t* (1648/1649), or whether it was the Holocaust, they have tried to eradicate us just like in Mitzrayim. **BUT THE BUSH WAS NOT CONSUMED.** That is the defining visual icon of *Klal Yisrael*. They can keep trying to burn us, but the bush will not be consumed. This is the message that Moshe Rabbeinu took out of this incident.

This tour in Hungary that I accompanied took place in July 2014. The previous March, there was a conference of European rabbis, who held a ceremony at the site of this Shoe Memorial, commemorating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the deportation of Hungarian Jewry.

The Kalover Rebbe (Menachem Mendel Taub, 1923-2018) was present at that ceremony. The Kalover Rebbe was a Hungarian *rav*, who was deported to Auschwitz. He survived the war and then became a Rebbe of Kalover Chassidim in Yerushalayim. He spoke at that ceremony commemorating what had happened there seventy years earlier! The Kalover Chassidim have a *niggun* which many people may have heard. It is actually a Hungarian tune, without Jewish origin, but it has been adopted by Kalover Chassidim. The Kalover Rebbe got up at this anniversary commemoration and sang this *niggun*. It was incredibly moving that there were a group of young boys, ten- or eleven-year-old Hungarian boys, *cheder* boys with long *payos*, singing this song together with their Rebbe.

If there was ever an embodiment of “the bush could not be consumed,” this was it! Seventy years earlier, the Fascists tried to eradicate Hungarian Jewry, along with the rest of world Jewry. And here we were, seventy years later. The old Kalover Rebbe sang that song with a local choir made up of the sweetest looking boys. At the end of this Hungarian song, the Kalover Rebbe and these little *cheder* boys launched into a soulful rendition of “*Yibaneh haMikdash bim’hera b’yamenu*” (May the Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days).

It was so moving that even some of the Gentiles present broke into tears. The significance of that site is the *pasuk* in this week’s *parsha*: “Remove your shoes from upon your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground.” Here, after everything we experienced, *kinderlach* are learning Torah in Budapest.

That is what the *pasuk* means “And the bush was not consumed.”

**“All the people who descended from Yaakov's loins were seventy people; but Yosef was in Egypt” (1:5)**

Why is it necessary for the Torah to enumerate exactly how many people came to Egypt? Chizkuni writes that “this posuk was written in order to relate the wonders of Hashem that they came to Egypt with 70 people, but within the span of 210 years they increased to 600,000 strong men, not including the elderly, women, and children.” The Torah wants to draw our attention to the exponential population growth that happened during the exile so that we can recognize that it was a great miracle.

**“The woman conceived and bore a son; she saw that he was good, and she hid him for three months” (2:2)**

How did Moshe's mother see that “he was good”? Rashi comments that their entire house filled with light when Moshe was born. Why did a special light accompany Moshe's birth? Moshe's primary achievement was bringing the Torah to the Jewish people. The Torah is the source of light in our lives, as we say right before Shema every day when we ask Hashem to “enlighten our eyes in your Torah.” It illuminates our thoughts and actions by showing us how to live. Thus, it was only appropriate that Moshe's presence would bring a special illumination to his family's home.

**“Now it came to pass in those days that Moshe grew up and went out to his brothers and looked at their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man of his brothers” (2:11)**

Moshe only took note of the suffering of the Jewish nation after he went out to them because if a person is not looking to help, he will not be able to see difficulties. It was only once Moshe became focused on how to help his people that he was able to really appreciate their plight and then he could try to assist in some way.

**“The shepherds came and drove them away, and Moshe rose and saved them and watered the flock” (2:17)**

Seforno notes that the Torah does not say that Moshe fought back against the shepherds. He saved the girls from their bullying, but he did not punish their assailants. He writes: “Since both sides of this fight were not Jewish, he did not try to punish them or correct their ways by means of rebuke. He only stepped forward to rescue victims from their attackers.” Our focus as Jews should not be to actively improve or educate the general society around us. Of course, we should model appropriate behavior and allow that to be a lesson for the world around us. But primarily we should work on improving our own community and being the best that we can be.

**“Hashem saw that he had turned aside to see, and Hashem called out from the midst of the bush and said: Moshe, Moshe; and he said: Here I am” (3:4)**

Why did Hashem repeat Moshe's name when He introduced himself for the first time? The Toras Kohanim in Parshas Vayikra says that the repetition of a person's name by Hashem is an expression of love. From His very first communication to Moshe Rabbeinu, Hashem wanted Moshe to be aware of this love. Rabbeinu Bachya says that the simple explanation for the name being repeated is because Hashem's voice is so powerful that Moshe heard a resounding echo even though his name was only said once. Rabbeinu Bachya also cites the explanation of the Midrash that anyone whose name is doubled in the Torah exists in two worlds, both this one and the next. With His first words, Hashem encouraged Moshe Rabbeinu by informing him that he would do a great job. This enabled Moshe to approach his task with the self-confidence that he would be able to earn a great share in the World to Come when he fulfilled his new responsibilities.

**“Hashem grew angry at Moshe, and He said: Is there not your brother, Aharon, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is even coming to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart” (4:14)**

The Gemara (Shabbos 139a) teaches that as a reward for being happy in his heart, Aharon earned the reward of wearing the choshen, the special breastplate worn by the Kohen Gadol, on his heart. As Rabbeinu Bachya explains, Aharon felt no jealousy in his heart for the elevation of his younger brother into a leadership role, so his heart was rewarded in kind. The rewards of Hashem always fit the good deed that was done. We find this idea as well in the story of the death of Queen Izevel (Melachim II 9:35). After her death, the dogs ate her body as a punishment, but they left her head, feet, and hands untouched. Rashi cites the explanation of Chazal that she had used these limbs to dance at weddings, so they were spared from punishment as a reward for the mitzvah that they had performed. Here too we see how Hashem always matches the reward to the person's good deed in a very precise way.

*By Rabbi Mayer Friedman*

## "Rav" On

*By Sheldon Stern*

The main theme of Sefer Bereishis is what Robert Plant called "Communication Breakdown." It starts with Adam Harishon telling his wife that she can't even touch the Eitz Hadas and it ends with Yosef's brothers' "white lie" that their father requested his prodigal son not to take revenge. But there are also important sub-plots. In Parshas Vayishlach Yaakov and Eisav reunite and each offers their unique perspective. Eisav says, "Yesh Li Rav." I have a lot", which implies I could always stand a little more. Yaakov, on the other hand, says, "Yesh Li Kol." And that says it all. What's interesting is that Eisav's predilection continues to rear its ugly head as we enter the second book of the Torah.

In verse 1:7 Paroah the ingrate cuts the teeth for all future anti-Semites by telling his people that the Jews are a threat and so, of course, "Memphis we have a problem." The ubiquitous Jewish problem. Now if we examine Paroah's words two things stand out. The potentate didn't say that the Jews were "stronger than them" rather they're stronger "from us." Maaseh Avos Siman Labonim is an essential concept of the Torah but perhaps we can extend it to its converse. When Yitzchok's fields thrived the Plishtim accused him of depriving them. Lavan's sons did the same thing when Yaakov's flocks increased despite Lavan's machinations.

We can attribute this to "zero-sum game theory". People think it must be at someone else's expense if another succeeds. But that's Kefirah. Hashem's resources are unlimited and He can, and often does, spread His beneficence without limit. But there's also a psychological element at work. When we see someone thriving we're loath to attribute it to his industriousness, ingenuity, integrity, or inventiveness(thank G-d for synonyms I could go on.) Instead, we try to convince ourselves that he has connections with the higher-ups. I had a classmate in dental school named Brian Stearn. He became an orthodontist and hit it big immediately after graduating advertising his practice in the NYC transit system. His parents were influential dentists and hooked him up with some unions that gave him exclusive contracts with their members. But that's none of my business. Hashem takes care of each person according to his needs. When I met Rabbi Plutchok I was blown away and I talked him up. One fellow commented, "Plutchoks no big deal. He has a photographic memory like Eytan Feiner. If I had that type of brain I'd be way bigger than them." Right, and if I was 7'8" I would have been a great basketball player.

So we see that jealousy is part of the human condition and it leads us to minimize what others accomplish. But there's something more insidious in the verse. Paroah could've simply said that they're stronger than us, but he added that our ancestors were more numerous. What was he trying to convey with this additional point? Before Yosef introduced his brothers to Paroah he instructed them to say that they were shepherds. That always struck me as strange, given that he was simply advising them to tell the truth. Yosef was brilliant, to put it mildly. He understood Paroah. If Yosef was elevated to prime minister then Paroah would also want to put his brothers into his and the nation's service. Therefore Yosef told his brothers to impress on the emperor that their only gesheft was husbandry. And it was a great strategy as it allowed the Jews to be sequestered in Goshen far from the maddening crowd. However, as our Parsha begins we're told that the Israelites proliferated and became exceptional. My father had an album of WWI songs, aimed at bolstering the war effort(the US entered in 1917.) One of the songs was called, "How you gonna keep them down on the farm after they've seen Patee?" Napoleon gave the Jews of France an opportunity to become upwardly mobile and the same conditions prevailed in England, but it came at a cost, abandoning their faith. So Jews in Egypt left the 'shtetl' and came to the cities and the Midrash tells us that they were wildly successful but their Yiddishkeit was eroding. And this is what Paroah alluded to when he said "Rav." The secret to enslaving Israel is to tap into their inner Eisav, as alluded to by "Rav."

But how did Paroah understand this? We'll answer that question in typical Jewish fashion: by asking another, "Why did Hashem reveal the Ketz to Bilaam?" The answer is that only a Goy can truly appreciate the greatness of a Jew. Time to play Jewish Family Feud. with our host, Steve Harvey, "We've asked 100 Orthodox Jews for the sine qua non of Judaism." Depending on the breakdown of the group you'll get any number of answers. All of them are wrong. But if that same question was posed to 100 Gentiles there would be one answer, "They'll name a certain Rabbi who treated them with respect." The Potoker Rav came to my office from 1990 until his passing in 1995. I would ask my dental assistant to take x-rays on him but each time she would demur saying, "I can't touch him, he's holy." She didn't know that he knew Shas by heart. I didn't tell her. I didn't tell her anything about him, but she knew because his Kedusha radiated. So Paroah recognized that the essence of a Jew was that he was a Jew, but he was smart enough to realize that there's something within the Jew that makes him want to succeed in Eisav's world. To borrow from "Old Blue Eyes", "If I can make it there I'll make it anywhere." Paroah put this to his advantage and the rest as they say is Jewish history.

The problem is that Eisav's influence can be very subtle. The Jews didn't become Hellenized overnight. How do we immunize ourselves from alien cultures? There's no simple answer, but Torah is always a great start. And I'm talking about meaningful Torah study. Someone approached Rav Yisrael Salanter and said that he only has an hour a day to learn so should he use that hour for conventional study or Mussar. The founder of the modern Mussar Movement told him he should study Mussar because he'll discover he has more than an hour to learn. Sage advice.

## **We Shouldn't Ignore this Lesson from Egypt**

*By Rabbi Berel Wein*

Nothing human is ever permanent. Perhaps the only exception to this rule is human nature itself, which, seemingly, has never changed from the days of the Garden of Eden until today. So, we should not be surprised by the narrative of the Torah in this week's portion.

The Jewish people have been in Egypt for centuries. They have lived off the fat of the Land in Goshen. They were highly respected, apparently affluent, and thought themselves to be secure in their land of exile. The memory of their leader Joseph, who was the savior of Egypt, still lingered in their minds, and also in the minds of the general Egyptian public. But Joseph was gone already for centuries, and as the Jewish people multiplied and continued to succeed within the Egyptian population its government, through the Pharaoh, began to look askance at them. They were no longer fellow citizens or loyal subjects, but, rather, were now seen as a dangerous and insidious minority that, because of its birthright and success, could endanger Egyptian society.

There now arose a new era, different from the centuries that preceded it. When the Talmud teaches us that there arose a new Pharaoh, one of the opinions is that a new attitude towards the Jews, one of suspicion and jealousy was apparent. The Jews were now seen as being an internal enemy, a disloyal section of society, an existential threat to the pharaohs of Egypt specifically, and to Egyptian society generally.

The Midrash seems to indicate that the Jews were not sensitive enough to realize how dangerous the change of attitude towards them was, in the general Egyptian society. When Pharaoh requested volunteers to come forth to help him in his great building projects, we are taught that the Jews came en masse to help build those symbols of might and wealth of ancient Egypt. The Pharaoh then, and undoubtedly with the help and acquiescence of much of Egyptian society, removed from the Jews their voluntary status, until suddenly they found themselves slaves and servants of Egypt, and no longer merely sojourners in the country.

And there were Jews who were willing to cooperate with the governmental authorities in policing the Jewish slave society. Eventually, these Jews also found themselves to be the victims of the Pharaoh and his cruel decree. It is no wonder that so many Jews – according to various opinions of the rabbis of Talmud and Midrash – never were able to extricate themselves from Egypt, even when Moshe successfully led the Jewish people out of Egyptian bondage, and out of Egypt itself.

There is, undoubtedly, a pattern that the Torah introduces which will apply to all later exiles of the Jewish people throughout the world. The end of an era always occurs suddenly and unexpectedly, illogically, and shockingly. The story of the end European Jewry that occurred almost a century ago is a sobering reminder of this pattern of exile. Jews should be wise enough to realize that ignoring the lessons of history is a truly fatal course in life.

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## **It's Good to Cry**

*By Rabbi Moshe Peretz Gilden*

At the close of 210 years of Jewish enslavement and backbreaking work by the Egyptians, Hashem (G-d) gave ear to their cries. He remembered the covenant with their Patriarchs to take them out of Egypt. "The children of Israel groaned because of the work and they cried out; their outcry because of their work went up to Hashem" (Shemos/Exodus 2:23).

One of the tenets of the Torah's text is its brevity. It contains not so much as an extra letter; any words that would appear to be extraneous is an indication of a message explained by the Oral Torah, as contained in the Talmud and Midrash. The verse above mentions "because of their work" twice. Why?

The Or HaChaim (commentary on the Pentateuch of the Kabbalist and Talmudist Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, 1696-1743, Rabbi in Leghorn, Italy and Jerusalem) elucidates that this offers an insight into the nature of Divine mercy. The enslaved Jews groaned and cried out simply because of the burden of their work, the physical pain they were forced to endure, not in prayer with the hope of redemption. But Hashem does not always require a direct prayer for salvation. The anguished cry of a suffering Jew is not ignored. Although intended as an expression of pain, to Hashem it is heard as prayer.

After almost two millennia of golus (exile) and the bloodshed that has accompanied it, the Torah sages of recent generations have told us that the challenges of recent decades are the "birth pains of the Mashiach (Messiah)", indications that our ultimate redemption is near. The Shabbos Mussaf (Sabbath Additional Service) liturgy contains the promise that our final deliverance will resemble our earlier exodus. We look at the suffering the Jewish nation faces on every corner of the globe and in our anguish we cry, we wail, we moan. And we pray – for the redemption we know is immanent and for the end of our nation's suffering. And our tested faith is reinvigorated knowing that in addition to hearing our prayers, Hashem, in His infinite mercy, heeds every Jewish tear and considers each one another prayer that helps bring our salvation ever closer.