

פרשת שמות

שמות ה:יט-כג

וַיִּרְאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־כַּבֵּן לְאֹמֶר לֹא־תִגְרְעוּ מִלְּבַנֵיכֶם דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ:
וַיִּפְגְּעוּ אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת־אַהֲרֹן נֹצְבִים לְקִרְאתָם בְּצֵאתָם מֵאֵת פַּרְעֹה: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם יִרְא
יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֲשֶׁר הִבְאִשְׁתֶּם אֶת־רִיחֵנוּ בְּעֵינֵי פַרְעֹה וּבְעֵינֵי עַבְדָּיו
לְתַת־חָרֵב בְּיָדָם לְהַרְגֵנוּ: וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי לְמָה הִרְעַתָּה לְעַם הַזֶּה
לְמָה זֶה שְׁלַחְתָּנִי: וּמֵאֵז בָּאתִי אֶל־פַּרְעֹה לְדַבֵּר בְּשִׁמְךָ הִרַע לְעַם הַזֶּה וְהִצֵּל
לֹא־הִצַּלְתָּ אֶת־עַמְּךָ:

The officers of the children of Israel saw them in distress, saying, "Do not reduce [the number] of your bricks, the requirement of each day in its day." They met Moses and Aaron standing before them when they came out from Pharaoh's presence. And they said to them, "May the Lord look upon you and judge, for you have brought us into foul odor in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants, to place a sword into their hand[s] to kill us." So Moses returned to the Lord and said, "O Lord! Why have You harmed this people? Why have You sent me? Since I have come to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has harmed this people, and You have not saved Your people."

Elie Gelman- Class of 2022: Modern commentary

- These pesukim are taking place right after Moseh and Aharon go and visit Pharaoh to tell him to let them go. Pharaoh becomes angry with them and orders the Jews to make their bricks without being provided straw. Now the Jews themselves will have to go and gather the straw. This causes the Jews to complain to Moshe and Aharon that they caused them to be doing more work. Moshe criex out to Hashem and asks him why did he harm the Jews and not save them.
- Rabbi Kahn explains that this decree that made the Jews gather their own straw has a deeper meaning. He says that Pharaoh knew that forcing the jews to gather their own straw would cause them to have to work and gather the straw on their only day off, Shabbat. He then quotes Rebbe Dovid of Lelov that explains when the Jews were in exile the thing that kept them together was Shabbat. Now without Shabbat the Jews would fall apart overtime. Rabbi Kahn concludes by saying that this decree of the straw was very similar to a decree that Pharaoh made earlier, the decree of throwing the Jewish baby boys into the Nile River. Both of these decrees had the same goal, destroy Jewish identity.

(Rabbi Ari Kahn received his rabbinic ordination from Yeshiva University. He is Director of Foreign Student Programs at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, where he also is a senior lecturer in Jewish studies. He is a renowned speaker, and has lectured worldwide. Having authored hundreds of articles on the weekly parsha and holidays with a readership in excess of 10,000).

- I really enjoyed this commentary because I like how Rabbi Kahn expanded and found a deeper meaning in the decree of the straw and how he showed the similarity between the two harsh decrees.

Rena Schwartz: Class of 2020 -Medieval commentary- Chizkuni

:Summed up, these pesukim describe the reaction of the Jewish people to Moses's first request's resistance by Pharaoh- mainly the increased amount of work to the Jew's days.

Chizkuni (Hezekiah ben Manoah 1250-1310 France)

“to what purpose did You worsen (the people’s plight)?” ולמה זה שלחתיני, “and if so, for what purpose have You sent me? ”Did Moses then not know from what G-d had already told him that Pharaoh would not be responsive? G-d had told him explicitly in Exodus 3:19, that Pharaoh would not consent to let the Israelites go? Moses had thought that while Pharaoh would not consent to let the Israelites go, at least he would lighten their burdens. This is why he added in frustration that instead of a marginal improvement in the Israelites’ sorry state, it had now worsened dramatically due to his intervention! This is why he added (improperly) “and You have certainly not saved Your people!” He quoted G-d as having said: “I’ll descend and save it.” G-d responded that “now you will see,” as from now on I shall commence applying pressure to him via My plagues.” They will soon feel a drastic reduction in their suffering.

- Why did Moshe think that one attempt at freeing his people would save them altogether? He didn't, but he thought he may assuage some of their concerns, relieve them a little pain. Instead, there is more work- Hashem didn't help. This is why Moshe is angry.

Gabri Kupferman: Alumni Class of 2019 (presently studying at Midreshet Torah V'Avodah)

This excerpt from the greater story of the Exodus is a perfect example of Moses' deeply personal connection with the Hebrews, and his feeling of responsibility for them. He has only known of his true lineage for what seems like a brief period of time, and yet the moment he sees the consequences that Pharaoh is imposing upon the Hebrews, he immediately turns to G-d and tries to find a way

to improve their situation, regardless of how disrespectful it sounds. He will stop at nothing to ensure the continuity and salvation of the Jewish nation and even goes as far as killing a taskmaster who hit one of his brethren even before he knows that he is a Jew (Exodus 2:11-12). Moses is the paradigm of a Jewish leader in Tanach, and through his actions, it is easy to see how important it is for a leader to be an advocate for the nation, and to hold them on his shoulders with their sins, hardships, wins, losses, and everything in between, and that is exactly what he does. Moses goes above and beyond to provide for and protect the Jewish people despite their constant complaints. He truly loves the Jewish people, and that is the mark of a true leader.

Daniella Schneider- Class of 2023: Why was Moshe afraid to be the messenger?

As the first book of the Torah ends, the journey of the escape from Egypt begins with Moses. Moses is sent down the Nile in a basket, later to be found by the daughter of Pharaoh and brought up as her own. He is then forced to run away and fend for himself after killing an Egyptian beating a fellow Jew. Moses takes a job as a shepherd and encounters none other than Hashem at the burning bush. God chooses him to save the Jewish nation.

At first Moses isn't up for the job thinking no one will listen to him. God allows Moses to face Pharaoh with his brother by his side. The two go to Pharaoh and ask him to "let their people go". After their offer is turned down and the conditions becoming harder for the Jews, Moses returns to God and complains. "למה זה שלחתי" Why have you sent me?

I've learned before that Moses was only being humble when he kept asking why he was the one chosen for this job of freeing an entire nation. Although, I would like to propose a different reason. Moses witnessed first hand what it was like for the Jews in Egypt- perhaps he was afraid. Not afraid that he wouldn't be listened to but what would happen to him if he stood up for the Jews. After all, if the Egyptians were able to enslave an entire nation, they could do the same to him. On top of that, Moses was already afraid to return there after killing an Egyptian.

About the Author: Daniella Schneider is a ninth grader at Robert M. Beren Academy. She enjoys getting good grades and eating food.



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Shemot: Building Blocks to Slavery

In this week's Parasha, the tides have turned on Bnai Yisrael. Yosef passes away, and a new king arises who "does not know Yosef" (Shemot 1:8). As a result of the decrees of the new Pharaoh, the Egyptians make Bnai Yisrael's lives "bitter with hard service" (Shemot 1:13). The Midrash in Shemot Rabbah 1:11 explains how the Hebrew word for hard service, "B'Farech," can be split into two Hebrew words "B'feh Rach," with a soft mouth. The Midrash explains that Pharaoh gently persuaded Bnai Yisrael to help him in making bricks. According to the Midrash, while the brick-making was voluntary on the first day, by the second day, the taskmasters had turned this work into slave labor. *How did Bnai Yisrael go from being an exalted people to an enslaved people in Egypt? Does this Midrash remind you of any other time periods in Jewish history? In what way?*