



אור בישראל

A LIGHT FROM WITHIN ISRAEL פרשת שמות

י"ח טבת תשפ"ה 18.1.25

1 Congratulations! We've finished the Book of Bereshit (Genesis) and we're beginning to read Shemot (Exodus), the second book of the five books of Torah. It's called "The Book of Exile and Redemption" because it describes the journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom. In this book, we transform from a family into a nation.



3 After all the brotherly wars and leadership disputes in Bereshit, the Book of Shemot presents the leadership trio that will lead the people in the desert for forty years - the siblings Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam. This is a different leadership model, one of brotherhood and cooperation. Together it's possible. The story that appears here this week tells us about compromise and cooperation of this kind.



2 This week we meet Moshe for the first time. The great leader of the Jewish people enters the stage of history as someone who is "slow of speech" and "slow of tongue." Being able to speak impressively in public isn't the main thing - what matters is our essence and personality.



4 The women in this parsha lead the plot: Yocheved, Moshe's mother, gives birth to him and hides him; Miriam, his sister, watches over him in the basket on the river; and the Hebrew midwives "refuse orders" and, contrary to Pharaoh's commands, keep the Jewish babies alive. Our sages said about this: "In the merit of righteous women, Israel was redeemed from Egypt - and in their merit, they will be redeemed in the future."



A STORY FOR SHABBAT

GIVING TO OTHERS WHAT YOU WANT FOR YOURSELF

The Bar Mitzvah boys from Maalot were deeply disappointed. Due to Covid, many of their Bar Mitzvah celebrations had been canceled or postponed. Former Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau joined a Zoom meeting with the boys who had missed out on their big day, and shared the following story with them: "I was born in Poland and during the Holocaust I lost both my parents and many of my relatives. After the war, I made aliyah at the age of eight along with my older brother, Naftali. I was an orphan and Holocaust survivor. My uncle, Rav Mordechai Fogelman, a rabbi in Kiryat Motzkin, raised me. He also prepared me for my bar mitzvah, and I spent many months practicing reading Parashat Shelach, my bar mitzvah parasha. In my uncle's synagogue there was a Jew, called Reb Moishеле, who would read from the Torah every Shabbat morning. The gabbaim forgot to tell him that he wouldn't be reading from the Torah that day because it was Yisrael Meir's Bar Mitzvah. Imagine the scene: On Shabbat morning, the Sefer Torah is taken out of the ark, and I go up to the bimah on one side, while Reb Moishеле goes up on the other... What would happen now? One of the gabbaim tried to explain: "Moishеле, you aren't reading from the Torah today- the bar mitzvah boy is going to read." To which Reb Moishеле responded, "But no one told me." The gabbai continued: "It's true, and we apologize, but we're telling you now." I could see how insulted Moishеле looked. He almost started crying as he said, "All these years I've been volunteering to read from the Torah and now-when the synagogue is packed with guests who have come to celebrate the bar mitzvah of an orphan and Holocaust survivor-now you are asking me to leave the bimah?!" I was already standing there wearing my tallit, but when I saw how upset and heartbroken he was-I decided to give up my Torah reading. I went over to the other side of Reb Moishеле and whispered in his ear: "Reb Moishеле, I'm still young. I hope to have many more opportunities in my

life to read from the Torah. I don't want to take this special honor away from you." I came down from the bimah and Reb Moishеле was the one who read my bar mitzvah parasha that day." Rabbi Lau concluded his conversation with the bar mitzvah boys with these words: "As a bar mitzvah boy who was now obligated to keep all the mitzvot, this was the first mitzvah I fulfilled-giving up my Torah reading. I saw a Jew in distress, standing in front of a synagogue filled with people, a Jew for whom reading from the Torah was his main source of pride and joy, and I decided that his honor was more important than mine. So, I want you to remember: You never lose by giving up what you want to make someone else happy."

Food for Thought

This is a story about someone who was willing to give up something very important and precious to him. Try to think of opportunities in your daily life where you too can give up something, even if it's very small, to make someone else feel good.





FROM THE DIARY OF A CHEMED STUDENT

I'M SURROUNDED BY SUPERHEROES

My name is Gaby Tito. I'm in the ninth grade at Ulpana Alma in Ashdod.

I have a big heart and a huge imagination, but living in Israel makes me feel tiny in a world full of giants. Let me explain. You see, I moved from Canada four years ago. When walking on the streets in Canada, you're most likely walking next to an ordinary person. Sure, there are a few people here and there that have done great things but for the most part everyone's average like you and me. Here in Israel, I get the feeling that I'm surrounded by superheroes, whether they are soldiers protecting us by serving in the IDF, front line medical workers, teachers who devote all their time to their students, or righteous Torah learners. The list can go on forever. I never thought feeling small could feel so good. As long as I'm living in the Promised Land (Eretz Yisrael) I wouldn't change that feeling for the world. It's an honor and a privilege to live here. There's so much to aspire to and look forward to in my life in the future.



FROM THE DIARY OF A SHLICHA

Shani Goren, an educational shlicha at the "Weizman" School in Chile, writes to us:

"How do you get children to love the Hebrew language when they live far from Israel?" I asked myself this when I arrived to teach at our school. I knew it wouldn't be simple - after all, you know how difficult it can sometimes be to distinguish between the letters Samech and Sin, or to remember when to write with the letter Kaf versus Kuf! I decided to do something different. Instead of just sitting and learning from the book, we turned Hebrew lessons into a real adventure! How? We created a unique learning center where every lesson is like a game. We have an art corner where we create in Hebrew, a digital corner with computer games in Hebrew, a reading corner full of fascinating books, and a games corner where we play board games - everything in Hebrew! In grades 1-3, instead of just reading and writing, we sing, dance, draw, and play - all in Hebrew! For example, when we learned about animals, we didn't just read about them - we also imitated them, drew them, and invented songs about them. The most amazing thing was how I saw how the children began to not only understand Hebrew, but to really love it! When I see students playing during recess with a game we invented in class, or singing a Hebrew song on their way to the playground, I know we've succeeded. So the next time you enter a Hebrew lesson, remember - we're not just learning a language, we're creating a special connection with our amazing language!



Around the Shabbat Table

- Have you ever felt a special connection to the place where you live as Gaby describes?
- How does being surrounded by heroes make you feel?
- What makes us connect to something new that we are learning? How can we turn something difficult into something we love to do?



דף הפרשה מוקדש לעילוי
נשמת החיילים הקדושים
מיכאל בן חמו ואייל טויטו הי"ד



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