

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE**SHEMOT****Haftarah: Yirmiyahu 1:1 – 2:3****JANUARY 5-6, 2018 19 TEBET 5778****DEDICATION: In memory of Mr. Dave Bibi – David Ben Farha**

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EDITORS NOTES

In our class on Wednesday night we looked at the amazing Batya, daughter of Pharaoh who saves Moses and in essence becomes his adoptive mother. She is the daughter of the king who upon seeing the baby in the basket is struck by compassion and must do the right thing regardless of her father's decree. If we would have imagined anyone going against the edict of the ruler, it wouldn't be his own child. She takes the child as her own and in response Hashem rewards her by naming her Batya, the daughter of Hashem. Setting aside the discussion of gilgulim /reincarnation, one can see so much about battling social injustice and a willingness to go against the government, the ruler and what was acceptable to society.

But prior to the story of Batya rescuing Moses, we see in the first perek how the midwives when ordered to kill the baby boys by Pharaoh refused to do so. The verse says that they feared Elokim. Although some midrashim say that these midwives were Yocheved, the mother of Moses and Miriam the sister of Moses, the Talmud suggests they were righteous Egyptians who were willing to ignore the order of the king.

As the second perek begins we are told of a man from the house of Levi who marries the daughter of Levi. These are none other than Amram, the father of Moses and Yocheved, the mother of Moses. Do we need to know that they married? The midrash fills in the blanks. They were married and separated when the decree came down from Pharaoh to kill all the baby boys. They were reluctant to bring a child into the world to see that child killed. So what brought them back together? Their daughter Miriam was not willing to follow the party line. She chastised her own

parents as the Rashi tells us: Your decree is harsher than Pharaoh. Whereas Pharaoh only issued a decree against the males, you in essence issued a decree against the females as well for none will be born. With that they renewed their vows and Moses was born.

Here we have four women, Shifra and Puah, the midwives, Miriam and Batya who are not willing to let things be and stand up for what's right regardless of the possible consequences.

And as the story continues, we see Moses stepping up to kill the Egyptian beating a slave, and then to break up a fight between two Israelites and finally to save the daughters of Yitro from the Shepherds. If we ask where he learned this from, we can say his stepmother Batya, his mother Yocheved or his sister Miriam.

The opening chapters of the book of Shemot/Exodus form a wonderful lesson, so pertinent in our own times and a nice tribute to the women who were our ancestors and who are our wives, mothers, sisters and daughters.

Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

Harry Potter's invisibility cloak just got one small step closer to reality thanks to Israeli scientists.

Israeli technology never ceases to amaze us!

Scientists from Ben-Gurion University have developed a new method that deflects and scatters light away from a "cloaking" chip surface so that objects laid upon it can't be seen.

While researchers have said that they still need to "overcome the significant challenge of developing a prototype," such a cloaking chip could be used as an extension of current technologies such as radar-absorbing paint used on stealth aircraft, local optical camouflage or electromagnetic wave scattering.

Who needs Harry Potter then when we have Israel?

**Summary of the Perasha
 Nathan Dweck**

This week we begin Sefer Shemot. Shemot can be divided into two parts. The first 6 parshiot which generally discuss the Exodus and the last 5 parshiot

which generally discuss the building of the Mishkan. The first part of Sefer Shemot largely discusses the enslavement, the 10 macot, keriat yam suf, and matan Torah.

Shemot- The enslavement begins. Moshe is chosen as a leader.

- 1- Benei Israel grows in size. A new king institutes hard work for the Jews and tells the midwives to kill the newborn boys
- 2- Moshe is born. He is put in a basket in the water. Batya takes Moshe from the water and raises him.
- 3- Moshe kills a Mitsriy and is forced to run away to Midyan. There he meets Yitro and marries his daughter, Sipora. Hashem hears the cries of Benei Israel in Mitsrayim.
- 4- Hashem appears to Moshe from a burning bush and tells him to go to Paroah and save Benei Israel. Moshe does not want to go.
- 5- Hashem gives Moshe signs so the people should trust in him. After much hesitancy and deliberation with Hashem Moshe accepts the task
- 6- Sipora circumcises her son. Moshe returns to Mitsrayim and tells Benei Israel that Hashem appointed him to redeem them. The people believe in Moshe.
- 7- Moshe goes to Paroah to request a 3 day holiday in the desert. Paroah responds by taking away the straw and making the work harder. Moshe complains to Hashem.

In this week's parasha Yosef and all the brothers have passed away and the slavery begins. Perek 1, pasook 10 tells us "va'yakom melech hadash asher lo yada eht Yosef", a new king arose who did not know Yosef. And this new king began to afflict and enslave the Jewish people as a period of 210 years of slavery begins. And Rashi on the words va'yakom melech hadash quotes the famous machloket. One opinion says it was really a new king and the other explains it was not a new king but rather the same king with new decrees. And according to the opinion that it was really a new king how could it be that he didn't know Yosef? After all, Yosef saved the world from one of the greatest famines of all time. Yosef was responsible for bringing unimaginable wealth to Mitsrayim as people came from all over trading all their money and land for a little bit of food to stay alive. How could it be that this new king did not know Yosef? And we can learn from here an amazing lesson about the psyche of human beings. This new king didn't know Yosef because he didn't want to know Yosef (as Rashi alludes to later in the pasook). He didn't want to have to be grateful to Yosef and the Jewish people. Rather, he wanted to enslave them and thus it was convenient for him not to know Yosef and not to acknowledge what Yosef did for Mitsrayim.

And this phenomenon exists not only by Paroah but by all of us. We all have things in our lives that our convenient for us not to remember or acknowledge. Our mind does not acknowledge these truths or conveniently forgets them because we want to feel good about ourselves and acknowledging certain truths may require us to change our actions. How is it that there can be atheists in the world? The reason is because it is convenient to believe there is no G-d because then I don't have to live the life that he asks of me. We all, to different extents, deny to ourselves that Hashem wants certain things from us. And the realization of this point and how the mind works hopefully can help us be more honest with ourselves about what Hashem really wants from us.

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"Moshe thought, 'Let me turn aside now and see this great sight.'" (Shemot 3:3)

Our parashah has in it the episode of the Burning Bush. Moshe was grazing his sheep and he saw the burning bush, and Hashem appeared to him for the first time. Rabenu Bahya zt"l explains that Moshe Rabenu experienced three important revelations. At first he saw a fire which at first seemed natural and common. This he saw with his regular physical senses. But, when he saw that the fire didn't burn out, he came closer to see if perhaps the wood was different or perhaps the fire was different. As a result of looking at the fire he became inspired; his mind elevated to see an angel of Hashem. After this his mind was further elevated; he saw the Shechinah, which is the Presence of Hashem. Since this was Moshe's first prophecy, Hashem wanted to teach him one step at a time how to elevate his mind, to strengthen his mind to receive prophecy, and view the Shechinah.

Rabenu Bahya's view needs further explanation. Why was Moshe elevated by viewing the fire? According to the explanation, he went to look at a physical and natural occurrence. Since the bush was not consumed, he looked to see if the wood was different or the fire was different. How was the viewing of a physical happening the cause of a spiritual uplifting of his mind? So much so that he was able to see an angel?

The conclusion must be that there was no such thing as Moshe just looking at something. When he would look at something "natural" in this world it was cloaked in a spiritual experience. All the things in this world are a testimony on the wondrous acts of Hashem. The world, the Heavens, the stars, all speak the glory of Hashem. When he looked at nature his intent was to heighten his understanding of the creation Hashem did. It was a spiritual

experience. Therefore, when becoming inspired by the fire, he was able to see Hashem's angel.

This is a lesson for us how to look at nature. We should intend that we look "for the sake of Heaven," because this could lead us to cling to Hashem.
Rabbi Reuven Semah

This week we begin the book of Shemot, which tells the story of the enslavement of the Jewish nation and their ultimate redemption. If we study the events, we will see that they sometimes defy logic. For example, Pharaoh made a decree that all Jewish boys must be thrown into the Nile, because his stargazers told him that the savior of the Jews would see his downfall in water. As we know, Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh, saved Moshe from the water and actually raised him in Pharaoh's very palace! Not only that, but you would expect that even if she would defy her father's decree, she would at least try to hide it and keep it a secret. But instead, she named him Moshe, which means "I drew him from the water," as if she was announcing to everyone that she broke the law and went against her father. And who was brought in to nurse him? Yochebed, Moshe's own mother!

Hashem made the events happen this way in order to demonstrate that He is in total control, and nobody can do anything against His will. The Gemara (Megillah) says that Moshe had many names, but in the Torah he is only referred to by the name that was given to him by Batya. This can serve as a constant reminder of this concept, that our redemption from Egypt came in ways that are somewhat illogical and unnatural. Rather, everything occurred through the direct intervention and hashgachah of Hashem. So it will be with the ultimate redemption that we are all waiting for. Hashem will perform wonders and miracles greater than we can even imagine. May we see it speedily in our days, Amen. Shabbat Shalom.
Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Repeat After Me

"I just can't seem to memorize this speech," Sarah complained.

"You have just got to keep repeating it," Deborah suggested. "Whenever I have to memorize something, I find I have to go over it about a hundred times before I get it."

"I must have read it fifty times already, and it still isn't sinking in," Sarah grieved.

"Just reading it won't work," replied her friend. "You must repeat it out loud for it to penetrate your brain."

Memorizing anything takes a lot of work and a great deal of concentration. Reading something silently – even numerous times – may not yield success in memorization. However, articulating the

words over and over again is like hammering a nail centimeter by centimeter into a piece of wood. This is true of a simple poem or even the most mundane phrase. And when it comes to principles of faith, to the words and ideals you would like to imprint on your soul, repetition – especially aloud – is necessary for successful indoctrination.

David Hamelech said, "I trust in the Lord; out of great suffering I spoke" (Tehillim 116:10). Some explain this to mean that faith becomes ingrained in a person's soul only when words of faith are spoken on a regular basis. During the day, busy as you may be, you should continue to utter words of faith:

"This could only take place if Hashem willed it."

"This beautiful tree was created by Hashem."

"Hashem is in control."

The fast-paced, modern, high-tech world we live in has many deterrents and obstacles which hinder people from developing true faith in Hashem. Once you have clarified for yourself that you are one of those who does believe in our Creator, you should start driving the point home to yourself by constant repetition out loud. This technique will not only help you remember this most important fact of life, but will also drive it into your heart so that your belief is solid and unwavering. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR **The Greatest Praise of All**

The Torah in Parashat Shemot tells of the heroism of the midwives of Beneh Yisrael, who defied Pharaoh's edict ordering them to kill all newborn boys among the nation. These midwives are identified by the names "Shifra" and "Pu'a," but the Gemara teaches that in truth, these women were none other than Yochebed and Miriam – the mother and sister of Moshe Rabbenu. They were given these names, the Rabbis explain, in commemoration of their efforts on behalf of the babies they delivered. Not only did they refuse to kill the infants as Pharaoh had ordered, but they did just the opposite – they helped the newborns in any way they could. The name "Shifra," which means "beautiful," alludes to the midwives' work to make the infants healthy and good-looking, and the name "Pu'a" refers to the cooing sound which the midwives made in order to calm the babies and make them happy.

It might seem strange, at first glance, that the Torah chose to refer to Yochebed and Miriam by these names. After all, according to tradition, these women were great spiritual figures, who reached the level of prophecy. A person is eligible for prophecy only after achieving outstanding spiritual heights. If Yochebed and Miriam experienced prophecy, then by definition,

they were exceptional spiritual giants. Why, then, would the Torah give them names that commemorated their efforts on behalf of Beneh Yisrael's newborn babies? The name Shifra and Pu'a allude to things like administering medicine, changing diapers, rocking babies to sleep, and playing with them to keep them relaxed and happy. Why does the Torah choose to refer to Shifra and Pu'a specifically by pointing to these menial tasks, if they were outstanding spiritual figures? Is this not demeaning to women of such stature?

The answer, quite simply, is that no, this is not demeaning at all. The greatest praise that can be given is that somebody cared for and raised children. Whereas modern society belittles the value and importance of motherhood, of devoting oneself to raising and educating children, Judaism regards it as the greatest of all undertakings. The Torah specifically refers to Yochebed and Miriam by these names because their efforts on behalf of the infants of Beneh Yisrael are even more precious than their great achievements as prophets.

We must never find it demeaning to devote time and energy to the sacred task of caring for children. Tasks which contemporary society finds demeaning, such as preparing food, dressing and bathing children, playing with them, changing diapers, and everything else that goes into raising happy, healthy and confident children, are all great achievements. For Jews, the greatest praise is that they succeeded in this role – in the role of raising and caring for their children and preparing the next generation of Torah Jews.

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Rabbi Wein

IS JERUSALEM STILL IN PLAY?

We have been told time and again over the past 70 years that Jerusalem – its borders and sovereignty – is one of the most contentious issues that will have to be settled before there can be a legitimate peace between Arabs and Jews here in the Land of Israel. In fact, the diplomatic experts have always contended that this issue is so complex that it must be left as the last piece of a negotiated settlement between the parties. Only after they have agreed on all other matters and created an atmosphere of trust and peaceful intent that will allow the status of Jerusalem to be finally determined, will an agreement be realized.

In theory, there may be merit to this contention. However in practice, regarding the facts on the ground, the issue has long ago been settled. Jewish Jerusalem has expanded and developed in a manner that borders on the miraculous over the past decades. The building cranes have never left the city and the infrastructure of the metropolis has been enhanced over and over again. Jerusalem now possesses the largest population that it probably ever had in all of its long glorious and turbulent history.

The vast majority of its inhabitants are Jews and even though many different faiths and beliefs are present in the city and are free to operate according to their conscience and rituals, any visitor to Jerusalem will agree that Jerusalem is a Jewish city. On the Sabbath and Jewish holidays much of the city is transformed into one large synagogue and meeting place and the Jewish atmosphere pervades all areas of the population, whether or not they themselves are observant or even Jewish.

The United Nations in 1947 voted to make Jerusalem an international city under United Nations rule. The fact that no international city has ever proved to be successful as a solution to territorial or ideological differences seemed not to have been taken into consideration, when this ill-conceived idea was advanced. The idea of an international city was backed by the Vatican and other Christian groups.

Jerusalem, after the War of Independence, was a divided city as the Jordanians occupied the eastern and northern parts of the city and continued a sporadic war against the Jewish citizens and civilians living in the Jewish neighborhoods. Jordan had no intention of making Jerusalem an international city and in 1967 made war against Israel with the express hope of conquering the entire city and driving out its Jewish population.

It failed in this effort and lost its control over parts of Jerusalem, which now became a united city under Jewish rule. The government offices of the state of Israel are all located in Jerusalem as is Hebrew University, the Israel Museum, the Israeli parliament, the residences of the president and the prime minister of Israel, and the national archives and library with its treasured books and manuscripts.

Israel long ago declared Jerusalem as its official capital. The nations of the world still somehow hoped that Jerusalem would not be part of Israel and refused to move their embassies from the Tel Aviv area to Jerusalem. They piously stated that this was a matter for final settlement in negotiation with the

parties involved. Unfortunately, such negotiations have never been taken seriously by the Palestinians and any proposal regarding Jerusalem, no matter how favorable it may have been towards the Arabs, has been rejected and ridiculed.

A crack in this wall of wishful thinking, unrealistic expectations and the inability to grant to the Jewish people its ancient capital, has now occurred. The United States has announced that it will move its embassy to Jerusalem and recognize Jerusalem as the legitimate capital of the state of Israel. This has been followed by other nations also now agreeing to move their embassies to Jerusalem.

I believe that part of this change of policy is due to the fact that these nations recognize that it is not so much that the Palestinians or Moslems want Jerusalem for their own as it is that they just don't want the state of Israel and the Jewish people to have it. I think that this is the only explanation as to why the peace negotiations over Jerusalem have gone nowhere and are likely to continue to go nowhere.

The attitude is that: 'it is not so much that I want it, as it is that I am determined that you shall not have it.' So, until this changes, there is very little wriggle room on this issue. The facts on the ground have pretty much already decided the matter. In a practical sense they are irreversible and just as the Lord's prophets foresaw, He has seen fit to rebuild Jerusalem and once again reestablish it as the Holy City.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks God Loves Those Who Argue

I have become increasingly concerned about the assault on free speech taking place throughout the West, particularly in university campuses.[1] This is being done in the name of "safe space," that is, space in which you are protected against hearing views which might cause you distress, "trigger warnings"[2] and "micro-aggressions," that is, any remark that someone might find offensive even if no offence is meant.

So far has this gone that at the beginning of the 2017 academic year, students at an Oxford College banned the presence of a representative of the Christian Union on the grounds that some might find their presence alienating and offensive.[3] Increasingly, speakers with controversial views are being disinvited: the number of such incidents on American college campuses rose from 6 in 2000 to 44 in 2016.[4]

Undoubtedly this entire movement was undertaken for the highest of motives, to protect the feelings of the vulnerable. That is a legitimate ethical concern. Jewish law goes to extremes in condemning lashon hara, hurtful or derogatory speech, and the sages were careful to use what they called lashon sagi nahor, euphemism, to avoid language that people might find offensive.

But a safe space is not one in which you silence dissenting views. To the contrary: it is one in which you give a respectful hearing to views opposed to your own, knowing that your views too will be listened to respectfully. That is academic freedom, and it is essential to a free society.[5] As George Orwell said, "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear."

John Stuart Mill likewise wrote that one of the worst offences against freedom is "to stigmatise those who hold the contrary opinion as bad and immoral men." That is happening today in institutions that are supposed to be the guardians of academic freedom. We are coming perilously close to what Julian Benda called, in 1927, "The treason of the intellectuals," in which he said that academic life had been degraded to the extent that it had allowed itself to become an arena for "the intellectual organisation of political hatreds." [6]

What is striking about Judaism, and we see this starkly in this week's parsha, is that argument and the hearing of contrary views is of the essence of the religious life. Moses argues with God. That is one of the most striking things about him. He argues with Him on their first encounter at the burning bush. Four times he resists God's call to lead the Israelites to freedom, until God finally gets angry with him (Ex. 3:1-4:7). More significantly, at the end of the parsha he says to God:

"Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Why did You send me? Since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and You have not rescued Your people at all." (Ex. 5:22-23).

This is extraordinary language for a human being to use to God. But Moses was not the first to do so. The first was Abraham, who said, on hearing of God's plan to destroy the cities of the plain, "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" (Gen. 18:25).

Similarly, Jeremiah, posing the age-old question of why bad things happen to good people and good things to bad people, asked: "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?" (Jer. 12:1). In the same vein, Habakkuk challenged God: "Why do You tolerate the

treacherous? Why are You silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?" (Hab. 1:13). Job who challenges God's justice is vindicated in the book that bears his name, while his friends who defended Divine justice are said not to have spoken correctly (Job 42:7-8). Heaven, in short, is not a safe space in the current meaning of the phrase. To the contrary: God loves those who argue with Him – so it seems from Tanakh.

Equally striking is the fact that the sages continued the tradition and gave it a name: argument for the sake of heaven,[7] defined as debate for the sake of truth as opposed to victory.[8] The result is that Judaism is, perhaps uniquely, a civilisation all of whose canonical texts are anthologies of arguments. Midrash operates on the principle that there are "seventy faces" to Torah and thus that every verse is open to multiple interpretations. The Mishnah is full of paragraphs of the form, "Rabbi X says this while Rabbi Y says that." The Talmud says in the name of God himself, about the conflicting views of the schools of Hillel and Shammai, that "These and those are the words of the living God." [9]

A standard edition of Mikraot Gedolot consists of the biblical text surrounded by multiple commentaries and even commentaries on the commentaries. The standard edition of the Babylonian Talmud has the text surrounded by the often conflicting views of Rashi and the Tosafists. Moses Maimonides, writing his masterpiece of Jewish law, the Mishneh Torah, took the almost unprecedented step of presenting only the halakhic conclusion without the accompanying arguments. The ironic but predictable result was that the Mishneh Torah was eventually surrounded by an endless array of commentaries and arguments. In Judaism there is something holy about argument.

Why so? First, because only God can see the totality of truth. For us, mere mortals who can see only fragments of the truth at any one time, there is an irreducible multiplicity of perspectives. We see reality now one way, now another. The Torah provides us with a dramatic example in its first two chapters, which give us two creation accounts, both true, from different vantage points. The different voices of priest and prophet, Hillel and Shammai, philosopher and mystic, historian and poet, each capture something essential about the spiritual life. Even within a single genre, the sages noted that "No two prophets prophesy in the same style." [10] Torah is a conversation scored for many voices.

Second, because justice presupposes the principle that in Roman law is called *audi alteram partem*,

"hear the other side." That is why God wants an Abraham, a Moses, a Jeremiah and a Job to challenge Him, sometimes to plead for mercy or, as in the case of Moses at the end of this week's parsha, to urge Him to act swiftly in defence of His people.[11] Both the case for the prosecution and the defence must be heard if justice is to be done and seen to be done.

The pursuit of truth and justice require the freedom to disagree. The Netziv argued that it was the prohibition of disagreement that was the sin of the builders of Babel.[12] What we need, therefore, is not "safe spaces" but rather, civility, that is to say, giving a respectful hearing to views with which we disagree. In one of its loveliest passages the Talmud tells us that the views of the school of Hillel became law "because they were pleasant and did not take offence, and because they taught the views of their opponents as well as their own, indeed they taught the views of their opponents before their own." [13]

And where do we learn this from? From God Himself, who chose as His prophets people who were prepared to argue with Heaven for the sake of Heaven in the name of justice and truth.

When you learn to listen to views different from your own, realising that they are not threatening but enlarging, then you have discovered the life-changing idea of argument for the sake of heaven.

[1] I first wrote about this ten years ago in my book, *The Home We Build Together* (2007), in the chapter entitled "The Defeat of Freedom in the Name of Freedom," 37-48. The situation has become significantly worse since then.

[2] See on this, Mick Hume, *Trigger Warning: Is the Fear of Being Offensive Killing Free Speech?* London, William Collins, 2016.[3] See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/10/10/oxford-college-bans-harmful-christian-union-freshers-fair>.

[4] Jean M. Twenge, *iGen*, Atria, 2017, 253.

[5] I salute the University of Chicago, Princeton and other universities, that have taken a strong stand in defence of free speech on campus; and Professor Jonathan Haidt and his colleagues at the Heterodox Academy, founded to promote intellectual diversity in academic life.

[6] Julian Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, Transaction, 2007, 27.

[7] Mishnah, Avot 5:17.

[8] Meiri to Avot ad loc.

[9] Eruvin 13b.

[10] Sanhedrin 89a.

[11] See Pesachim 87a-b for a remarkable passage in which God criticises the prophet Hosea for not coming to the defence of his people.

[12] Ha'amek Davar to Gen. 11:4.

[13] Eruvin 13b.

Rav Kook on the Perasha True Humility

Why did God choose a sneh, a thorn-bush to reveal Himself to Moses?

A Cure for Fever: The Talmud (Shabbat 67a) prescribes a peculiar procedure for those suffering from a high fever. The patient is advised to take a thorn-bush, and each day make a cut in it using an iron knife. When cutting the bush, he should trim it near the ground, and say: "Thorn-bush, thorn-bush! The Holy One did not let His Presence reside in you because you are the greatest of all trees, but because you are the lowliest."
What do thorn-bushes have to do with fevers? What is the purpose of this strange procedure?

Circumstantial and True Humility: Rav Kook wrote that there are two forms of humility. The first type could be called 'circumstantial humility.' Due to infirmity, poverty, or some lack of talent, intelligence, social standing, etc., a person may feel vulnerable and insignificant. However, this is not genuine humility. Should circumstances change, newly-found strength or wealth or prestige may very well delude one into believing in his own prominence and self-importance.

True humility comes from a different, more objective source: awareness of our place in the universe. This humbleness is independent of the vagaries of life's circumstances. It is based on recognition of our true worth, on insight into the essence of the soul, and a clear understanding of the nature of reality. Unfortunately, the fickle nature of the human mind allows us to be easily deluded into ignoring anything beyond our own egocentric world. How can we escape such delusions?

This trap may be avoided by recognizing the transitory nature of circumstances. Poverty, sickness, and so on, have the power to make us aware of our intrinsic vulnerability. Awareness of our inherent potential for weakness leads us to properly evaluate our true worth, and thus attain genuine humility.

The Lesson of the Thorn-bush: By all criteria, the thorn-bush is a lowly and unimportant plant. It grows in barren locations, providing neither food nor shade for others. It even rejects interaction with other living things by means of its prickly thorns. Yet, precisely because of its isolation, the thorn-bush may deceive itself into believing in its own greatness. Therefore, the Sages advised cutting the bush down to its very roots. We trim away all the superficial aspects, leaving only the bush's essential worth — its roots, its connections to the rest of the universe. God placed His Divine Presence on the sneh not because of its

sense of self-importance, but because of its innate lowliness — the spirit of true humility which remains after the bush has been trimmed to the ground. The thorn-bush procedure recommended by the Talmud enables the suffering individual to recognize the purpose of his illness: attainment of sincere humility. This trait is the remedy for all strange fevers and delusions. (Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, 121)

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL "So said Hashem: My first born son is Israel" (4:22)

This all-important declaration is now being proclaimed to the nations. To the wealthy and powerful and technically advanced nation of Egypt, this statement was a stunning affront. The despised Hebrews, with whom the Egyptians could not eat together "because it was an abomination to Egypt" (Beresheet 43:32), were now announced as the choicest of the nations.

In view of the fact that this statement is in the Torah, we understand that it chiefly is intended for Israel to know. Whether or not the nations hear this message, every Israelite must hear it and gain the knowledge that Israel is Hashem's first born son.

But for Pharoh (and for the nations in general) it was not easy to concede that Israel was the chosen nation, and that the G-d of Israel (named Hashem) was the sole Deity. Egypt was a very important and powerful country, with its own gods; and any claim of superiority over Egypt and over its gods would meet violent reaction. "So said Hashem (the G-d of Israel): My first born son is Israel". These two principles were the most unwelcome words to Pharoh's ears, and to the ears of the nations, "Hashem has chosen you as His particular treasure" (Devarim 14:2).

Not only is the nation collectively called "My son", but every Israelite is a son of Hashem. "You are sons to Hashem your G-d" (Devarim 14:1). "Beloved (Chavivim, plural) are Israel, for they are called sons of the Almighty" (Abot 3:14). "Is He not your Father?" (Devarim 32:6). The relationship denoted by "son" and "father" is the attitude of love. The son seeks to cause pleasure to his father, especially when he knows the extent of the father's love. Because all of Hashem's love is for Israel alone therefore Israel's love is for Hashem alone: "And you shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart" (Devarim 6:5).

The concept of Israel as Hashem's son requires also that Israel should consider Hashem as their Father. "Is He not your Father?" (Devarim 32:6). To this concept of Hashem as Father, the sons of Israel afterward added the concept of Hashem as King. Quoted from "A Nation Is Born" by Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT'L