

PARSHA WITH

Rabbi Shmuel Brazil



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תשפ"ה רב בראזיל פארשא שמוס RAV BRAZIL PARSHAS SHMOS

DO FIRES HAVE TO BE SO DESRUCTIVE?

The wild fires in Southern California are still raging and are out of control. What is the message Hashem is sending to us besides helplessness?

In this *mamar* I want to talk about the fires of Yosef and Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Yosef played a major role in bringing Yaakov and his entire family down **into** *Mitzrayim* and *Sefer Bereishis* ends with his burial. Yet *Sefer Shmos* begins with the repeat of Yosef's death. Furthermore the Parsha speaks about the birth of Moshe *Rabbeinu* and it is Moshe who redeems them and takes them **out** of *Mitzrayim*. It is as if the Torah repeats Yosef's death in order to connect it to Moshe's birth the redeemer of Am Yisrael **from** *Mitzrayim*.

As the nation leaves *Mitzrayim*, both Moshe and Yosef have a long awaited rendezvous as it is Moshe who retrieves Yosef's coffin from the bottom of the Nile River as the *passuk* says **וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת עֲצֻמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ**. It is as if there is a spiritual bond between the two, both in the *galus* and *geulah* from *Mitzrayim*.

Another similar characteristic amongst them is they share a relationship with a thorn bush. The entire revelation to Moshe when he was chosen by Hashem to redeem *Yisrael* from *Mitzrayim* is through a thorn bush. In the *berachos* given to Yosef by Moshe *Rabbeinu*, Moshe adds a seemingly unrelated fact that his first encounter with Hashem was in a thorn bush **וּרְצוֹן שִׁכְנֵי סִנֵּה**. This seems to reflect that Yosef also has a relationship with that thorn bush. This is reinforced by the marriage of Yosef to **אֲסֵנֶת** the daughter of Dina fathered by Shechem which has in her name an allusion to **סִנֵּה**. Yosef was to live the total of 120 years equal to Moshe but was cut short ten years as a punishment for hearing his father being described as an "eved" to him 10 times during Yehudah's pleading with Yosef for the return of Binyamin, and Yosef did not protest. Why is the allotted number of 120 years equal with these two leaders? Furthermore, at the crossing of the Red Sea both of them contributed together to the miracle of it splitting into twelve divisions as *Chazal* comment on the *passuk* **הַיָּם רָאָה** וַיִּנְסוּ.

We will add one more similarity that is fascinating based on an explanation of a *passuk* from Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa. **רַבּוֹת מַחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּלֵב אִישׁ וְעֵצַת ה' הִיא תְקוּמָה**. Many thoughts and plans lie in the heart of Man but the counsel of Hashem will become the reality. Rav Bunim explained the *passuk* that Hashem will orchestrate the results that He desires by using the exact plans of Man, yet the outcome will be the opposite of the goal's plan even though free *bechirah* was left intact. We find two such examples with Yosef and Moshe. The brothers hated Yosef because of his dreams of superiority and control over them. They devised a plan to rid of him for good and sell him to *Mitzrayim* so it will be impossible for Yosef as a slave to fulfill these dreams. Yet we find that by selling him to *Mitzrayim* they facilitated the fulfillment of dreams. It was there with Hashem's plan he rose to power and the famine in *Eretz Yisrael* caused the brothers to come to *Mitzrayim* and unknowingly fulfill his dreams.

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The same happened with Moshe *Rabbeinu*. The Egyptian astrologers saw that a savior of the Jewish Nation will be born on a certain date and decreed that all babies who was born that day should be thrown into the Nile. That day Basya the daughter of Pharaoh went to bathe and found Moshe in a basket and took him into her palace and raised him. Incredible Ironic! The savior of the slaves was raised in the same house of the identical individual who made the decree to kill him. What is a deeper understanding to this seemingly duel relationship between Yosef and Moshe?

To understand their deep connection let us bring what the Ori Veyishee writes on this topic. Hashem appears to Moshe with a supernatural burning bush which its fire does not consume it to ash but rather gives life and insight and in which the Shechina dwells. The reason being, a heavenly fire does not consume in contrast to natural fire which only exists by devouring and destroying its fuel in its path and transforming them to more fire.

The revelation to Moshe at the thorn bush was conveying to him his first profound understanding of Torah which is called **אש**, a heavenly fire **סנה** and the word **סיני**. The physical body needs physical food in order to create energy (fire) for the body to function. If you do not feed the body it will self destruct. Not so with Torah which is called *Aitz Hachayim* true eternal life unaffected by the *Aitz Hadaas* which brought death into the world. Moshe *Rabbeinu* experienced this first hand when he was learning with Hashem for forty days and nights and did not need to feed his body at all for nourishment in order for his physicality to function and to stay alive. The fire of Torah which Moshe merited to see in the **סנה** does not consume and destroy but the opposite it enlightens sustains and nurtures.

The Medrash says (Shmos Rabba 2,5) that Hashem appeared to Moshe in **הסנה** which is gematriah **120** conveying that he will live 120 years. The message given to Moshe is not a notice on the length of his life expectancy but rather the quality and level of life – a **הסנה** life of *Aitz Hachayim*. When Moshe died it wasn't from old age or physical deterioration of his body. Rabbeinu Bachya writes that Moshe was on Har Sinai three periods each forty days to the sum total of 120 days which later corresponded to a life of 120 years. Moshe lived every day with the fire of the **סנה** empowered by his *neshamah* not by his **גוף**. His death was a decree from heaven that he should live until he died but it had nothing to do with the physical fire of the body consuming itself and withering his physical functions. Moshe merited to live in the **צל שדי** the shadow of the *Shechinah*, **צל** being gematriah **120**. Moshe was sustained from his *neshamah* in *shamayim* as opposed from his *neshamah* in his body.

When one wishes someone with the *beracha* **עמו"ש** you should live to a 120 the *beracha* is not what we think. Who lives that long and if they did what kind of quality living can that be called locked up in a facility that you give someone that *beracha*? Rather the *beracha* intended is that you should merit to a 120th quality of life, by being nurtured by the fire of the *Aitz Hachayim* displayed in the **סנה** and not the natural fire that consumes the body and constantly seeks and craves physical pleasures.

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לנביא lived such a life and to prove it, the *gematriah* of his name is also 120. His life was not that of a "consumer" focusing on his physical fire that brings about destruction but rather a spiritual one. He left this world ascending to *shamayim* in a fiery chariot.

Now we can understand how Yosef as well, relates to a life of *הסנה*, an individual who was driven by a heavenly fire, a 120th caliber Yid who would have also lived to 120 if it wasn't for being punished as we mentioned above. In everyone there dwells also the fire of one's *Yetzer Harah*. The more one feeds his bodily cravings the greater the physical fire consumes. The fire of *Gehenom* is derived from his personal created fire accumulated by listening to his consuming *Yetzer Harah*, only thousands of times hotter. Yosef didn't allow the fire of his *yetzer harah* to subjugate him to listen to it. Yosef lived with the fire of the *Aitz Hachayim* which does not consume the vitality of the body. Instead the heavenly fire of Torah extinguishes the natural fire that consumes the spirit and builds a strong relationship with Hashem instead of destroying it.

Both Moshe and Yosef share the *kedusha* of Shabbos. *Chazal* teach that Yosef kept Shabbos before it was given in the *passuk* *וטבח טבח והכן*. We also see that Moshe Rabbeinu also had a special relationship with Shabbos. The Medrash says (Shmos 1,28) that Moshe saw that the *Yidden* were severely overworked so he came before Pharaoh to give them a day off every week. When he agreed Moshe chose Shabbos as the day of rest. The Tur (281, 1) writes that this is the meaning of *שמח משה במתנת חלקו* which we recite in the Shabbos *Shacharis Tefilla*. That when Moshe brought down the *Luchos* to Yisrael and saw on the *Luchos* the mitzvah of Shabbos, he rejoiced over his choice of Shabbos as the day of rest.

The *gematriah* of their names *משה יוסף* add up to *אשר* 501. The letters that follow *אשר* are *שבת*. The word of *אשר* means authorized as in the word *אישור* and it also means happiness like in the word *אשרי*. Together it means "authorized happiness", that only Hashem's opinion who is the author of the universe can tell us the bridge we have to cross to get there, not man's definition since that always changes week to week. If you take the *gematriah* of *אשר* with its inner letters *אלף שין ריש* it will equal *ואתם הדבקים ביהו' אלהיכם חיים כלכם היום* (Devarim 4,4) there cannot be any other worldly cause that that can bring one to this state of *simcha* from *deveikus*.

In the word *אשר* one finds the word *אש* and also the letter *ריש* which symbolizes the head. When one lives with the fire of *סנה סיני* Torah, Hashem gives His approval of the happiness that stems from the location of the *neschama*. Deriving pleasure from the bodily fire of the *yetzer harah* will only bring one a short lived "fix" but cannot bring those feelings and sensation of fulfillment and *אשר*. Shabbos in contrast brings with it the fire from *Olam Habah* the *Ohr Haganuz*. The source and nature of this fire is eternal, loving, all embracing, and holy. Moshe and Yosef were nurtured with this heavenly fire by relating to Shabbos the eternal light of *Olam Habah*.

Chazal say that in the *parsha* of *והארץ השמים* and *ואשר* the word *אשר* appears three times. Likewise in the *parsha* of *Para Aduma* it also contains three times the word *אשר*. The Ohr

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Zaruah writes that whoever says ויכולו three times receives atonement for his *aveiros* (Parah Adumah). A Yid who enjoys the spiritual Shabbos to the point of "אשר" he is living above nature basking in Hashem's light and therefore merits that his sins that came about from the natural fire become extinguished with the fire coming from Shabbos. Three times the word אשר adds up to אשר לילה (Bamidbar 9,16). Even in the darkness of our *galus* one is able to still contact the אש of the *neshamah yesairah*.

Now we can understand why Yosef and Moshe were given the merit to see Hashem orchestrate events in the highest level that of allowing full *bechirah* from Man to plan and execute the strategy and nevertheless the outcome will be ironically the very opposite of one's intention. When one is on fire with the heavenly fire he draws on the *Hashgacha* of Hashem in his life even to the extent of making the impossible possible. Pharaoh's fire was destructive and consuming but it was no match to the heavenly fire of the סנה. When *Moshiach* will come we will be full of שחוק as it is written אז ימלא שחוק פינו. The word שחוק and צחוק are interchangeable. Right under Pharaoh's nose the savior of *Yisrael* was raised by him on the very day that he ordered that every baby born, whether it be Egyptian or Jewish, must be killed. All Pharaoh's planning and efforts of the Astrologists to reach their goal was directly foiled by none other than the same person who made the decree in the first place. Hashem must have a sense of humor if He can get us to laugh.

At the beginning of Bo this idea is reinforced of the ridiculing of Pharaoh. למען תספר באזני בני ישראל את אשר התעללתי במצרים One must relate to his offspring how I mocked Pharaoh. The Eretz Tzvi writes at the end of our *parsha* that Pharaoh decided to cease giving to *Yisrael* any more grain to make bricks but rather they had to gather the grain themselves and nevertheless still come out to the same tally of bricks just as before. This was an impossible task to achieve and beyond any human *bechirah*. Pharaoh hoped that this would do them in and they will therefore sink into the 50th level never to exit again. What he didn't realize was that just like *Mitzrayim* removed *Yisrael's bechirah* from this new insane demanded task, Hashem also removed their *bechirah* not allowing them to fall into the 50th level and therefore they were redeemed seconds before they descended into the 50th level. It was Pharaoh with his impossible decree who unknowingly actually saved the *Yidden* from sinking into the fiftieth level and gaining redemption from the *galus*.

Can't wait for the final *geulah*. The Syrian Regime of over 50 years fell completely apart in 12 days. Unimaginable! The אכז"ר will have no bounds שחוק.

Gut Shabbos,

Rav Brazil