

TORAT HAR SHMUEL

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OCHEN NODA HA'DOVOR

The Rashi on Shmos 2:14 is classic, and one that all must take to heart, especially now on the eve of the Geulah. Rashi explains that when Moshe Rabbeinu became aware that Dason & Aviram informed on him following Moshe killing the Egyptian, the age old question Moshe had was simultaneously answered. Moshe always wondered why it is that Bnai Yisroel were slaves, the Egyptians their masters, and the rest of the 70 nations of the world lived peaceful lives. Once Moshe Rabbeinu determined that Dason and Aviram advised Pharaoh regarding how the Egyptian was killed, it all made perfect sense. The root of the problem was loшон hara & rechilus - evil speech.

There is a strong question that many overlook on this Rashi. How can Moshe Rabbeinu draw a conclu-

sion regarding the slavery of an entire nation based on the actions of two people? The answer is provided the Chofetz Chaim. The reality is that every nation is real estate based. That means that if a person is born in France, they are a French citizen. If they choose to leave France, move to Germany and become a German citizen, they are welcome to do so provided they go through the necessary steps. It really doesn't matter to France or Germany. This citizenship concept is consistent around the world.

The Jewish nation is different, a reality that raises the eyebrows of the other seventy nations. We are NOT real estate based, but FAMILY based. Our nation can be compared to a tree. The roots are Avrohom, Yitzchak and Yakov. The trunk represents the twelve tribes while each branch represents a member of Klal Yisroel. We're responsible to make sure that our branch grows leaves based on the Mitzvos and Chasodim we perform. We must also make sure that our branch grows fruit - the next generation - and that said fruit is nurtured properly.

What Moshe saw was that “the tree” was diseased by what Dason and Avirom did. The oppressive slavery was a direct consequence of actions – speech – such as theirs. When Moshe returned prior to the Geulah, how did he know that the disease had been eradicated?? He told Klal Yisroel that prior to leaving, they will ask the Egyptians for their gold and silver, and indeed, they will give it to us. How long before this actually occurred did Moshe Rabbeinu tell the people it would happen? One year!!! He wanted to see if anyone would tell this to an Egyptian and thereby place our nation in danger. No one said a word. This demonstrated to Moshe that the disease precipitated by Dason & Avirom had been eradicated and they were worthy of the Geulah.

One needs to understand the essence of the difference between nationality founded on one's right to be associated with a real estate oriented location somewhere in the world, and nationality founded on the "family" concept described above. What secures citizenship from generation to generation is the location of one's residence. The key question is where do they live?? Since being a member of a family is not founded on the principles of real estate, there has to be something else that ties one generation to the next. Simple lineage alone does not work as is proven by today's high rate of assimilation. The sad reality is that in the United States, unless a Kiruv movement is successful bringing one closer to Torah and their Jewish herit-

age, a family that is not observant, not affiliated will disappear from their Jewish roots and heritage within 3 generations. If today's society has proven anything about us, it's that "membership", being born of a Jewish mother is not enough to sustain and grow our population.

The additional element needed to secure our future is acknowledgment and active participation and validation of our Mesorah, our heritage. The Chasam Sofer teaches why the Jews who were at the 49th level of impurity were still worthy of being redeemed. They held onto to 3 identifying characteristics that were founded in the Mesorah they received - their names, their language & their clothing, ("Sh'mom, Leshonom, Malbushom"). The question that we can ask is why these three characteristics are so important. What Mesorah did these three characteristics emanate from and who established them as the Mesorah to hang onto. The Chasam Sofer explains that Yaakov Avinu established this Mesorah and this is how he and his family conducted themselves during their 20 years with Lovon. Indeed, when Yaakov returned home, the Torah states "Vayovo Yaakov Shalaym" - "and Yaakov came (home) complete". The word Shalem stands for Sh'mom, Leshonom, Malbushom, indicating his steadfast dedication to these values, and the Mesorah they would become. By Yaakov's ancestor's hanging on tightly to these three ideals, even at the forty ninth level

of Tumah, they were worthy of redemption, not only because of the intrinsic value of these ideals, but maybe even of greater importance their association with their Patriarch, Yaakov through maintaining these values. Messorah is what saved them.

It's one thing to raise our children with the knowledge of Torah and how to observe Mitzvos. Our goal, especially today, needs to be greater. There has to be a sense of pride in what we know and how we live our lives - a pride that demonstrates our love for Hashem Yisborach and our ongoing desire to be an integral part of our destiny. This pride is the greatest antidote against the temptations of the secular society we live in.

Our everyday speech is one of the three elements identified above. It's much more than the fact that we spoke lashon ha'Kodesh, Hebrew, and the rest of the world spoke in another language. How a person speaks goes a long way toward understanding who they are. We live in a time where so much communication is exchanged via email or text message. It's interesting to note that decades ago research was done in order to understand how much of the communication process is achieved in the words one uses. What the research determined is that seven percent of the communication

process is in the words. The other ninety three percent is divided between the tone of one's voice and the non-verbals, the expression on their face, hand gestures, etc. So when one chooses to text or email, beware that they are placing one hundred percent of the communication process on an entity – words – which should only comprise seven percent of the process. Much of the process, if not all, becomes remarkably depersonalized. Our people, our nation never communicated like this in the past. Indeed, we were known and held in high esteem for our ability to communicate, to teach, to inspire, using our voices, our hands and facial gestures. It's what has kept our Messorah alive and well. Understanding how sensitive we need to be in choosing our words properly is part and parcel of bringing the Geulah today, much the way it played a major role in Egypt centuries ago. May Hashem bless us with the strength and ability to learn and represent His Torah with the same pride and joy as our ancestors before us. May the words we choose to achieve this goal inspire others in helping to achieve our ultimate destiny as "The Chosen Nation".