

א ב י ס ל ת ו ר ה !

January 17, 2025

THE PARSHA NEWSLETTER
OF MAIMONIDES SCHOOL

ל"ז טבת תשפ"ה · שמות

The Importance of a Name and Individuality

By Marc Muzin '28

This week's פרשה starts off by saying by listing the names of the יעקב's sons who came to Egypt.

רש"י asks the obvious question: Why do the פרשה's opening sentences go into the seemingly unnecessary detail of listing the sons of יעקב by their individual names? To this he answers "להודיע חיבתם". The reason for the individualized listing is to tell of ה' love for בני ישראל, and therefore, identifies them by his individual name. The important lesson from this is that each person has a special role and mission in life, and was created for a clear purpose.

Other מפרשים take on a different approach. The literal translation of the word "שמות" means "names". However, in תנ"ך, the word "שמות" can also be used to refer to a person's reputation. As proof of this famous פסוק in קהלת which states "טוב שם משמן טוב" - to mean "a good name is better than good oil".

In fact, the שפת אמת quotes a מדרש רבה, which refers to the story of עזריה and חנניה, מישאל, they refused King נבוכדנצר's decree for idol worship and were sentenced to be burned in a hot furnace. On the outside, however, the heat of the furnace was so intense that the people who had thrown them into the furnace were burned to death instantly. Miraculously, of מישאל, חנניה, עזריה emerged unscathed.

The שפת אמת cites the מדרש רבה which states that עזריה and חנניה, מישאל, who had "only" a good reputation in their favor, did better than נדב and אביהו (sons of אהרן), who had been anointed with שמן (משכן) (sanctifying oil of the משכן).

Further elaborating on the contrast between those with the "שם טוב" and those with the "שמן טוב", the שפת אמת explains, that עזריה and חנניה, מישאל were "self-made men." That is, they reached a high stature in their עבודה only through their own effort and striving. And in the merit of that effort, they emerged safe and sound from the furnace. By contrast, נדב and אביהו had been granted high status by ה' — as symbolized by their being anointed with oil. Notwithstanding this initial advantage, they ended their lives in disgrace — with their נשמות burned the day the משכן was inaugurated.

Further elaborating on this, the שפת אמת says that the יעקב's children (אבינו) שבטים went to Egypt to extend the light of קדושה (sanctity) to the world. Even though the אבות had been on an extraordinary spiritual level — "למעלה מן הטבע", their spiritual achievements had an inadequate impact on the world as a whole. Hence, the need for the שבטים to come and make the world aware of ה' Presence. There is a similar parallel to שבת. שבת is also a context of extraordinary קדושה, but that קדושה is not only reserved for שבת. On the contrary, the שפת אמת tells us, what שבת is all about — is to activate this sanctity and apply this to our weekday activities as well.

As you can see there are a few very important lessons from the פרשה which we can integrate into our daily

lives. Despite the seemingly mundane aspects of our daily lives, and although we may not realize it initially, we are all placed in this world for a very specific and important purpose. Despite our backgrounds and initial advantages or disadvantages we are born with, we all have the capacity to achieve the highest levels “שם טוב”.

As we all anxiously await the safe return of our hostages, we are reminded of the importance and value of every single individual life. May the קדושה of this שבת, permeate into our everyday lives, and carry us through the coming weeks.

The Burning Bush: Faith and Resilience

By Hodaya Sapir '25

In פרשת שמות, after the Egyptian king died, בני ישראל were still in slavery, so they cried out to G-d. Soon after, ה' showed משה the burning bush. וַיֵּרָא מִלְּאֲנַחְדָּה "and a messenger of G-d appeared to him (משה) in a blazing flame from the bush and he looked and behold, the bush was aflame yet, the bush was not consumed (שמות ג:ב). Why was the bush burning without being consumed and what does this signify?

רש"י explains that the words "בְּלִבְת־אֵשׁ" means "in the heart (לב) of the fire". From this translation, we can connect the heart of the fire to the human heart. This is the first message G-d communicated to משה. He is telling him that to connect to G-d one must reveal the fire burning in their heart. As משה progresses as a leader, and the fire burning in his heart strengthens, his connection with ה' grows. We see this when ספורנו explains that at the burning bush, משה is only seeing an angel. However, after the תורה was given, ה'

expanded the powers of משה's prophetic visions to see G-d face to face.

The כלי יקר explains that it was a small bush burning and not a big one because the bush represents בני ישראל, as they were enslaved and weak. He goes on to explain that the thorns of the bush represent פרעה, since he withstood all of the מכות.

חזקוני explains that the burning bush is a metaphor. The fire represents our enemies (the Egyptians) and the bush represents בני ישראל. Even though מצרים tried to wipe out בני ישראל they were never successful in burning them down, just like how the bush refuses to be consumed by the fire. In other words, you can never get rid of the Jews.

As Jews, part of our struggle is always having enemies. No matter what we do, someone will try to burn us out—but we have something that they do not. Unlike our enemies, we have the fire of ה' burning in our hearts. At hard times, it is important to remember that we have ה' to cry out to from the constant fire in our hearts.



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A BISL TORAH
is published weekly
at Maimonides School,
Brookline, Massachusetts

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