

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vaera

28 Tevet, 5782/January 1, 2022

Vol. 13 Num. 18 (#519)

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Andrew Gann
for the refuah sheleimah of his sister, Malka bat Freda

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated for the yahrtzeit of Elish bat Mordechai and Pessel z"l,
grandmother of Agnes Miller

To Feel and to Act

Rabbi Chaim Metzger

How did Bnei Yisrael react to the news that they would leave Egypt? One might assume that they simply heard the news and happily waltzed off into the desert after Moshe. Indeed, despite the fears and doubts Moshe expressed at the "Burning Bush" (Shemot 3) the elders and Bnei Yisrael immediately believed, bowing down to G-d. (4:31) But then Pharaoh refused to let them go, and increased their workload significantly to the point that the Jewish officers appointed to oversee the slaves complained to Moshe for harming them, giving Pharaoh a sword with which to kill them. (5:21)

Moshe then questioned G-d, "Why have You done evil to this nation? Why have You sent me? Things are only getting worse and I have not saved Your nation." (5:22-23)

Our parshah begins with Moshe relaying G-d's expanded message of hope and the future redemption to Bnei Yisrael, but they were unable to hear the message because of their lack of a chance to breathe from the hard labour Pharaoh had forced upon them. (6:9) We don't hear another word from the Jews until Parshat Beshalach, when they complain to Moshe, "Are there not enough graves for us in Egypt that you took us out into the desert to kill us? Why did you take us out of Egypt?" (14:11) So how did the Jews react during the Ten Plagues? Did the Jews ever recover from their doubts?

While we don't see Israel's reactions,

we do see several reactions on the Egyptian side.

First, we see Pharaoh – ever indecisive about whether he properly fears G-d and will free Bnei Yisrael, or doing everything he can to maintain control. He hardens his heart, refusing to face the facts which could change his worldview, the bet-hedging agnostic at his finest.

Next up are the Egyptian magicians and advisors to Pharaoh, who - after being unable to duplicate the plague of lice - admit that it is the 'finger' of G-d and that G-d is truly in control. (8:15)

By the time we reach the plague of hail we see the Egyptians divided into two groups: 1) those who fear the word of G-d and seek protection for their property (9:20) and 2) those who ignore the warning of G-d. (9:21)

Finally, we see Pharaoh's own servants turn to him before the impending plague of locusts, asking, "Until when do we have to be ensnared? Send them to serve Hashem, their G-d, or before you know it, all of Egypt will be destroyed." (10:7)

In truth, we can see a similar split among the Jews. Yehoshua and Yechezkel both described the Jews as worshipping idols in Egypt, to the end. (Yehoshua 24:14, Yechezkel 20:3-8) On the other hand, the omission of any verbal opposition, and the biblical description of Jews cooperating with Moshe (Shemot 12:27-28), suggests that the Jews did believe. Perhaps Bnei Yis-

rael was composed of many individual groups containing a wide range of reactions and perspectives. Some were certain of G-d's redemption, others vacillated due to doubts, and others were terrified of G-d and followed for fear of what could happen if they sinned.

But if that truly is the case, what made Bnei Yisrael worthy of being saved and becoming G-d's nation? What differentiated them from the Egyptians?

First, Bnei Yisrael are the descendants of ancestors who held a special connection to G-d, and with whom G-d made a covenant. (ibid. 6:3) Second, Bnei Yisrael had called out to G-d while they were slaves. (6:5) Third, G-d wished to send a message to the world with this Exodus. (Yechezkel 20:9) Lastly, despite the differing levels of belief amongst Bnei Yisrael, all of them joined together in the first Korban Pesach in Egypt. Each and every one slaughtered sheep representing Egypt's god (Shemot Rabbah 16:2), spread its blood on the doorposts of their homes, roasted it over a fire, and sat down to eat it on that very night, exactly as G-d had commanded them. (12:28)

We may not see a verbal reaction from the Jews from the beginning of Parshat Vaera until Parshat Beshalach, but the Jews, no matter their doubts, came together as one nation in service of G-d. This, despite all of the differences, is what defined Bnei Yisrael.

cmetzger@torontotorah.com

OUR BEIT MIDRASH

ROSH BEIT MIDRASH	RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER
SGAN ROSH BEIT MIDRASH	RABBI JARED ANSTANDIG, RABBI YEHUDA MANN
AVREICHIM	RABBI STEVEN GOTLIB, IDAN RAKOVSKY, RABBI CHAIM METZGER
SEDER BOKER DIRECTOR	RABBI MOSHE YERES
WOMEN'S BEIT MIDRASH	MRS. SHIRA METZGER
ISRAELI CORRESPONDENTS	RABBI ADAM FRIEDMANN, RABBI JONATHAN ZIRING
CHAVERIM	EITAN MARKUS, DANIEL SHEINIS, NATAN SNOWBELL, ELI WELTMAN
CHAVEROT	ORLY AZIZA, ARIELLA MARKUS, YEJIDE OMOTOSO, KINNERET WITTY



An affiliate of
Torah MiTzion and YU

Find Toronto Torah online at
tiny.cc/torontotorah

We are grateful to
Continental Press

Summary

In the previous chapter, Yehu murdered Achaziah, King of Yehudah. When Ataliah, the queen mother, heard of this, she assassinated all of the males related to the royal family, making herself the ruler. However, Yehosheva, sister of Achaziah, secretly saved one son of Achaziah – Yoash – and hid him away. He remained hidden in the Beit HaMikdash for six years. (1-3)

In the seventh year, Yehoyada the Kohen Gadol arranged to present Yoash as the true king and to overthrow Ataliah. He called the royal guards to the Beit HaMikdash, made them take an oath of loyalty, and then showed them the hidden heir to the throne. (4)

To protect the king during the revelation, Yehoyada divided the guards into thirds, station them in the palace, the Temple, and the Sur-Gate. [See Radak regarding the identity of the Sur-Gate.] Those in the Temple were to surround the king to protect him. They were given weapons by the priests, and they surrounded the king. (5-11).

With this in place, they anointed Yoash as king, giving him the crown and other royal insignia and declaring, “Long live the king!” Ataliah heard the noise and quickly realized what had happened, prompting her to tear her clothes and declare, “Conspiracy, conspiracy!” Yehoyada then instructed that she be taken to be killed outside the Temple, which she was. (12-16)

Yehoyada made a pact between G-d, the people, and the king. The people destroyed their idols and altars to Baal, and executed the leading priest of Baal. The officers and people then took Yoash to the palace and rejoiced at the downfall of Ataliah. (17-20)

Insight

Rabbi Yigal Ariel (*Mikdash Melech: Iyunim B'Sefer Melachim*, summarized [here](#)) contends that while Ataliah is clearly presented as absolutely evil, several motivations can be suggested from within her perspective, to explain why she killed the entire royal family:

- Power: An unbridled desire for power that pushed her to do everything possible to grab the throne.

- Fear: As Yehu had killed the royal family of Achav in Yisrael, to whom she was related, Ataliah was afraid she too would be killed. She thus eliminated all members of the Davidic kingdom who might have joined forces with Yehu to kill Ataliah as the last relative of Achav.
- Despair: perhaps she simply gave up hope and went on a rampage, killing her family. While she did become the ruler by killing her family, she knew this would be short-lived as she would have no heir.
- Revenge: Yehu had killed Achav and his family, as well as Achaziah, because of G-d's command. G-d wanted kings who carried on the Davidic legacy, unlike the house of Achav. As the royal family was the heir to this legacy, she may have blamed them for the rebellion of Yehu in Yisrael.

In light of this last suggestion, it is fitting that the rebellion against Ataliah and the anointing of Yoash was coupled with a religious revival.

jziring@torontorah.com

Click Underlined Lines to Open Zooms. Clickable links also at www.torontorah.com/letslearn
Many classes are off this week—but the opportunities below are ON!

Monday-Thursday

10:00 AM - Noon: Adult Seder Boker with Rabbi Moshe Yeres on Zoom at <http://tiny.cc/sederboker> (men)

Shabbat Dec 31-Jan 1

After 8:00 AM shacharit R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah from the Parshah, Clanton Park

After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah

Sunday Jan 2

9:00 AM R' Zev Spitz & R' Yehuda Mann, Semichat Chaver Program, Clanton Park (men)

Monday Jan 3 Rosh Chodesh

8:30 PM R' Moshe Yeres, Talmud Shabbat (Chap. 15), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/talmud>

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Divorce in Modern Israel, Shomrai Shabbos: Main Shul (men)

Tuesday Jan 4

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 10), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

Wednesday Jan 5

6:15 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Beitzah, Shaarei Shomayim and ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/beitza>

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah Chabura, Clanton Park

Thursday Jan 6

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 23), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Beitzah, at BAYT (Gruda BM), email ymanntorontorah.com for ZOOM options (men)

8:00 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Gemara Bava Batra, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/torontowbm> (university women)

Friday Jan 7

10:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, R' Mordechai Torczyner, R' Yehuda Mann, Bava Batra Perek 2 *advanced* In-person at 159 Almore Ave (*vaccinated-only*), on Zoom at <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>