

half years. A woman may undertake to organize a *hesed* project which will require tenacity to complete successfully. A student may commit to a course of study which, when completed, will lead to a title such as doctor or attorney. In every case, the commitment requires consistency and hard work over the long haul.

Can you make that commitment, or will you continue to dream of a magic solution? (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

### Securing our Borders

“The tongue is like a security guard at the entrance to the mouth, which we can compare to a secret government facility that must be protected from unauthorized visitors. The tongue stands guard and inspects any food that appears at the entrance. Working in conjunction with the sense of smell. It seeks to recognize food that is rotten or harmful.”

Our Torah and its teachings protect us from outside forces that could compromise our dedication to Hashem. Prayer and connecting to Hashem is Securing our Borders and ensuring our legacy as a nation. (Norman D. Levy, based on Rabbi Miller’s teachings with permission from Simchas Hachaim Gedola Bais Yisrael)

### Old Shoes

Rav Yechezkel Abramsky z”l related a story concerning Rav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor z”l, one of the greatest Torah luminaries of the previous generation. The young man who was destined to be the Rav of Kovno and the *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah leader of his generation, lived in abject poverty. He was so poor that he could not even afford a pair of shoes. Without something to cover his feet, he was relegated to stay at home and study Torah. One of the students of the yeshivah was about to get married. He hailed from a well-to-do home, and his parents outfitted him properly for his wedding day. Since he was the same age, height and build as Rav Yitzchak Elchanan, the budding *talmid hacham* asked the *hatan* if he could have his old shoes. The young man looked at Rav Yitzchak Elchanan with derision and said, “If you would get a job and earn some money, you would not have to beg from others. You would be able to purchase your own shoes.”

Years elapsed, and that poor yeshivah student became one of the generation’s greatest *halachic* arbiters. Rav Yitzchak Elchanan’s fame spread throughout Europe and beyond. One day, he took a trip to Vilna. In his valise was the manuscript from one of his volumes of Torah responsa, which he was about to print. When word spread that the distinguished Rav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor was visiting Vilna, the town came out in force. Businesses closed; everything came to a standstill. According to historical reports, twenty thousand Jews came forth to greet him! Indeed, the mayor of Vilna prohibited Rav Yitzchak Elchanan from returning to his city. Apparently, the honor accorded the Torah giant exceeded even that bestowed on the Czar – which did not speak well of the Czar. Among those who came to pay homage to the Rav was the *hatan*, who was now one of the wealthiest men in Vilna.

When the wealthy man heard that Rav Yitzchak Elchanan sought a sponsor for his volume of responsa, he offered to cover the entire cost of printing, binding, and dissemination. When Rav Yitzchak Elchanan took one look at the would-be benefactor, he immediately recognized that he was none other than the *hatan* who years earlier had refused to give him his old shoes. The Rav said to him, “You came twenty years too late. Twenty years ago you could have had the privilege for a pair of old shoes!” (Peninim on the Torah)

*The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition*

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לְאָה בַּת בְּהִיָּה

בס"ד

## Congregation Magen Abraham

479 Monmouth Road - P.O. Box 444

West Long Branch, New Jersey 07764

(732) 870-2225



SHABBAT SHEMOT ☆ שַׁבַּת שְׁמֹת

Haftarah: Yirmiyahu 1:1 - 2:3

**JANUARY 17-18, 2020 21 TEBET 5780**

Friday Minhah: **4:39 pm**

Candlelighting: **4:39 pm**

Evening Shema after: **5:37 pm**

These times are applicable only for the Deal area.

Shaharit: **6:17, 6:40, 9:10 am**

Morning Shema by: **9:08 am**

Shabbat Minhah: **4:20 pm**

Shabbat Ends: **5:38 pm (R"Y 6:10 pm)**

Shabbat Class after Haddalah

Sunday Minhah: **4:45 pm**

**For mid-winter break, the 8:10 minyan for Shaharit on Shabbat will combine with the other minyanim.**

### A Message from our Rabbi

”וַתְּחַיֵּן אֶת־הַיְלָדִים”

“They kept the infants alive.” (Shemot 1:17)

The midwives defied Pharaoh. The *Midrash* says that not only did they not fulfill Pharaoh’s decree, but they even provided for the new mothers. They collected food and money from the rich families and gave them to the poor ones. This is the meaning of the words in the *pasuk*, “They kept the infants alive” (*Shemot Rabbah* 1:15).

The *Midrash* is coming to answer a seeming redundancy in the *pasuk*. It says they disobeyed and they also kept the babies alive. Aren’t these two statements two sides of the same coin? The *Midrash* quoted above gives us the answer in revealing a fascinating subplot to the story. Pharaoh had instructed the midwives to kill the male babies, but they disobeyed and they even went further. They made sure to sustain the babies, and their families as well. They provided money, food, and resources to families who needed it. Indeed, they kept the infants alive in the fullest sense.

For disobeying Pharaoh’s orders to kill the babies they had an excuse and a justification. They were not prepared to commit murder just because Pharaoh ordered them to do so, and they had the luxury of being able to excuse their actions by telling Pharaoh that the Jewish mothers consistently gave birth before they arrived. But, for their second initiative, providing material sustenance, they would have had no justification if Pharaoh found out. This second initiative sprang from their immense

fear of Hashem, which is why they were rewarded with the *Kehunah* being given to their descendants.

The *Ohr Hahayim* adds that the nation had amazing growth due to the efforts of the midwives, because Hashem aided them in their efforts to fund this project by providing them with the necessary wealth and resources.

Rabbi Zvi Kusheievsky says we can learn two important lessons from this. First, we must rid ourselves of the mindset that the more we share with others, the less we have for ourselves. On the contrary, Hashem helps those who share their resources. As the *Rambam* writes: Nobody becomes poor from giving *sedakah* (*Rambam Hilchot Matanot Aniyim* 10:3). Second, we can free ourselves from the shackles of the “I just need to do what’s necessary” mentality. The midwives could have done only what was necessary by saving the children and leaving it at that. They went beyond and that was their true greatness. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

### Sorry for the Delay

”וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו... וַיָּשָׁב אֶרְצָהּ מִצְרָיִם... וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן וַיִּפְגְּשֶׁהוּ ה'”

“Moshe took his wife and sons...and returned to the land of Egypt...and it was on the way, at the inn, that Hashem encountered him.” (*Shemot* 4:20,24)

Seven days elapsed while Hashem maintained His dialogue with Moshe *Rabenu*, attempting to convince him to go to Egypt to serve as the first leader of *Klal Yisrael*. Moshe demurred for various reasons. His unparalleled humility and consummate respect for his brother, Aharon *Hakohen*, were his primary reasons. Ultimately, Hashem said, “Either you lead them out, or they will forever remain slaves to Pharaoh.” Moshe relented and agreed to go. The Torah relates that Moshe took his wife and sons and set out for Egypt. Along the way, they stopped to rest at an inn. It was at this inn that an angel was dispatched to kill him for not circumcising his son. It is not that Moshe was opposed to performing the circumcision. Rather, he was simply delaying the *Berit Milah* because of a dilemma that confronted him. If he were to perform the circumcision before he left for Egypt, he would be putting the life of his infant son in danger, because the first three days after the *Milah*, travel could cause a serious health issue. However, to delay Hashem’s commission/mandate for three days was not an alternative. One does not delay Hashem. He planned on doing the circumcision enroute, at the inn, but he tarried while making arrangements for his lodging, rather than immediately arranging for the *Milah*.

Imagine, Moshe was the one selected to lead the Jews out of Egypt – no one else! Without Moshe, there was no liberation. Yet, because he tarried at the inn, thereby pushing off his son’s *Milah* for a few moments, he was about to lose his life. What about *Klal Yisrael*? What about the redemption? This is incredulous!

Apparently, *zerizut*, alacrity in executing a *misvah* is much more than a good quality. It is an inherent component of the *misvah*. A *misvah* carried out leisurely or at one’s convenience is **not** a *misvah*. One is not serving Hashem. He is serving himself. *Zerizut* means that a person takes charge of a situation. He is not bogged down by place, circumstance, or person. Our world is filled with countless excuses for acting indolently. We are subject to the whims and fancies of others. This is true, however, only if we allow ourselves to fall prey to the curse of a “situation” or matters “beyond our control.” A *zariz* neither seeks alibis, nor does he permit the act of deflecting blame to deter him from overcoming the challenges in life. Whenever we push off until

tomorrow what we should be doing today, we are deferring to the *yesser hara*, evil inclination. We are no longer carrying out Hashem’s command; rather, we are serving the *yesser hara*. (*Peninim* on the Torah)

### Excuses, Excuses

”וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ וַיִּרְבוּ וַיַּעֲצְמוּ בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם”  
“And the Children of Israel were prolific and teemed and became exceedingly great and powerful; and the land was filled with them.” (*Shemot* 1:7)

It would seem, at first glance, that the blessing of fertility and success that Hashem gave the Jews turned out to be in reality a curse. We see that their very greatness intimidated Pharaoh. Had they not been so numerous and powerful, surely Pharaoh would not have imposed the harsh labor and the other cruel decrees. However, can it be imagined that Hashem would give his people a curse disguised as a blessing?

There is a story in the *Midrash* about the Roman emperor Hadrian, who hated the Jews. Once, his imperial procession passed a Jew who saluted him and said, “Hail, O mighty Emperor!” When he heard this, Hadrian immediately ordered that the Jew be beheaded for having the audacity to greet the emperor.

A short while later, he passed a second Jew who, having seen what had just happened, remained silent as the emperor went by. Hadrian ordered his soldiers to behead the second Jew, this time for his insolence in failing to greet the emperor.

One of Hadrian’s ministers had the boldness to ask him, “I don’t understand. If a Jew greets you, you have him executed. If he fails to greet you, you have him executed. What is a Jew supposed to do?”

The emperor answered, “Don’t tell me how to treat these people whom I hate so passionately. I’ll execute whomever I want to.”

In the same way, Pharaoh’s hatred of the Jews was beyond any sense or reason. Whether they were great or small, powerful or weak, he would have found some excuse to make their lives difficult. Therefore, it is wrong to think that Hashem’s blessing was in any way a curse.

Nevertheless, it may sometimes seem so on the surface, because our enemies use Hashem’s blessings as excuses to hate us. However, there should be no doubt in our minds that whenever Hashem gives us a blessing, it is genuinely a blessing. The fact that people like Pharaoh seize any excuse to abuse and oppress us does not change this; Hashem carries out His plan despite them and His ultimate purpose will be achieved no matter what they do or say. (*Kol Dodi* on the Torah)

### Magic Solution

The action in a casino is intense. The finish of a close horse race is heart-stopping. The tension in a card game blots out notice of the outside world.

Gamblers take their games very seriously.

However, when you think of gamblers, you must consider that they work very hard at finding an easy way out. They prefer a one-time big win to daily doses of a workingman’s salary. They don’t want to struggle to accumulate enough money to buy a dream purchase; they expect to win it in a dream situation. It is the long shot bet or the winning ticket that they hope will fill their pockets with the wherewithal to acquire that which takes others years to earn.

It is nice to dream, but it is not commendable to be lazy. You must commit to your dream with fortitude and resolve to persevere until it is achieved. A man may take on the obligation to finish *Shas* (the *Talmud*) at the rate of one page a day for seven-and-a-