Chazal teach us that Pharaoh summoned three advisors to seek their counsel regarding his “Jewish problem”. Bilaam advised Pharaoh to deal harshly with Bnei Yisrael, Iyov remained silent, and Yisro ran away.

The punishment of Bilaam appears to be appropriate using this guideline of measure for measure. Bilaam advised that the helpless babies of the Jews be killed, and he was ultimately killed by the sword. Yisro was rewarded according to his silent acquiescence.

THE FIGURES SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

Ozna’im LaTorah speaks of an incident of a non-believer who approached Rabbi Eliezer Gordon, the head of the Beis Din and Rosh Yeshiva of Telz, with the following challenge: The Midrash Rabba on this verse explains that the great increase in the population of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt resulted from each woman giving birth to six children each time. Though he believed that the Jews experienced an unusually large population growth, he refused to believe that the Midrash was statistically accurate.

Rabbi Gordon responded with the following analysis: We find the number of firstborn males listed in the Book of BeMidbar (3:43) as a bit over 22,000. The total number of males between the ages of twenty and sixty at that time was slightly over 600,000 (ibid. 2:32). Further, the firstborn males include all of those from one month old and up. If there were 600,000 between the ages of twenty and sixty, we can safely double that number to include those under twenty and those over sixty. This gives us 22,000 firstborn males for 1.2 million! If we divide the entire population of 1.2 million by 22,000 (the number of firstborns), we get approximately 55. This means that there was only one firstborn for every 55 males. Finally, if we consider that in the course of a lifetime the average woman might have given birth nine or ten times, then statistically we find that the Midrash is on target when it says that each woman had to give birth to six children per live birth.

Statistically we find that the Midrash is on target when it says that each woman had to give birth to six children per live birth.

The non-believer had no response to the words of Rabbi Gordon. Though the verses do not explicitly list the population breakdown as the Midrash does, the Torah gives ample information to strengthen our belief in the veracity of the words of the sages. Additionally, the verse itself, when discussing the amazing increase in the number of Jewish people in Egypt uses six words, “וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁרֶץ וְיִצְוָה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשַׁדַּק מֵעֶזֶּב בֵּית חֲרוֹן וְלֶאָב משָׁם מָשָׁל מֵעֶזֶּב בֵּית חֲרוֹן,” hinting to the fact that six children were born at one time.

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SILENCE IS NOT AN OPTION

“Come let us deal wisely with them.” Shemos 1:10

There were three in that plan [to destroy Bnei Yisrael through the decree of throwing into the river every son that is born]. They were Bilaam, Iyov, and Yisro. Bilaam, who devised the plan, was slain. Iyov who silently acquiesced, was afflicted with sufferings. Yisro, who fled, merited that his descendants would sit in the Chamber of Hewn Stone (in the Beis HaMikdash where the Sanhedrin met). -- Sota 11a

The rule of reward and punishment is that a person is dealt with in the same manner in which he acts. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 100a) tells us that if a person distributes charity with an open hand, Hashem delivers more resources to him with a generous and open hand. Punishments are handled in a similar vein. A woman who acts as a sota, being disloyal to her husband, adorned herself for sin. Accordingly, part of her punishment is that she is disgraced (see Gemara Sota 8b). Shimson followed his eyes as he pursued Delilah, so the Plishtim later blinded him (ibid. 9b). Vash ti abused the young Jewish maidens and attempted to degrade them as they served her, so she herself suffered a dismal downfall (see Gemara Megilla 12b).

Chazal teach us that Pharaoh summoned three advisors to seek their counsel regarding his “Jewish problem”. Bilaam advised Pharaoh to deal harshly with Bnei Yisrael, Iyov remained silent, and Yisro ran away.

The punishment of Bilaam appears to be appropriate using this guideline of measure for measure. Bilaam advised that the helpless babies of the Jews be killed, and he was ultimately killed by the sword. Yisro was rewarded according to his silent acquiescence.
efforts. He was willing to forfeit his prestigious position of honor and authority, as he
decided to present the unpopular advice to Pharaoh to spare the Jewish children. He
was forced to flee, having lost favor as a royal confidant. As a result, he was
rewarded with the honor of having his descendants sit as illustrious members of the
Sanhedrin (see Gemara Sanhedrin 106a).

The illustrious Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik (Gri’z) directs us to analyze
the situation of Iyov. He wanted to advise against having the children killed, but he
calculated to use a strategy of silence in order to remain an effective spokesman and
to be available to speak up at a later occasion to save the Jews, if necessary. Why,
then, was he punished, and why with personal suffering?

As Iyov suffered the agony of his afflictions, he cried out. He must have
wondered, “What is the purpose of my cries? Does it help at all when I moan and
wail? The pain is the same after I call out as before!”

Yet, the fact is that when one is experiencing pain, he
calls out, whether or not his screams will have a
noticeable effect. At the moment when one is
experiencing an intolerable condition, it is not a time to
calculate nor to plan strategy. Iyov must have then learned his lesson. When Pharaoh
considered the decree to have the children tossed into the Nile, Iyov certainly should
have cried out and not remained silent. The fact that he was able to remain silent
directly led to his having to suffer personal torment and pain, for this is the way in
which he learned his lesson, measure for measure.

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A LESSON IN COMPASSION

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The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 1:32) reports
that when Moshe witnessed the pain of his brothers,
he wept and called out, “Woe for me on their
account! If only I could even give my own life
that they should be spared of their troubles!”
Moshe also personally assisted many Jews in
their hard labor.

Shemen Tov presents a parable to illustrate
this situation. Once, hostilities broke out
between two countries. One of the kings decided
to go personally and gather intelligence from the
enemy country in order to determine its
weaknesses, so that he could thereby defeat it and
its population. The king disguised himself as a commoner and successfully infiltrated
into enemy territory. His mission continued until he attempted to return to his
country. He was stopped by the border patrol who then recognized him as none other
than the enemy king! He was hotly pursued, until he managed to elude the guards
and entered the house of a Jew who lived near the border. The king begged the Jew
to hide him until the search was over. He was put into a bed and covered with thick
blankets and pillows. The soldiers soon arrived at that very house and conducted a
thorough search, including an inspection of the beds and all furniture. Luckily,
however, the king went undetected and was ultimately saved.

When the war ended, the king wanted to repay the Jew who saved his life. He
told him to name any reward he wished, but the Jew declined the offer, saying that he
had only one request. “Just tell me,” the Jew asked, “how did you feel and what
were you thinking at the moment the border guards were searching the bed in which
you were hiding?” When the king heard that the Jew did not wish any monetary
payment, but rather wanted to hear the humbling words of the king, he became filled
with rage and commanded that the Jew be put to death. The royal edict was final:
To the gallows at dawn!

Nothing the Jew could say would change the king’s mind. Early the next morning,
the noose was set around the neck of the Jew as the king watched. As the rope was
tightened and the sentence was about to be carried out, the
king suddenly called out: “Stop! Release him immediately!”
The king approached the Jew and explained, “I have
fulfilled your request and given you your reward for saving
my life. To explain to you my feelings at the moment when death seemed to hover
over me was impossible. I had no choice other than to act in a cruel fashion in order
to put you into a similar situation for you to experience it for yourself.”

The Midrash is, in fact, telling us that Moshe’s feelings for his fellow Jews were
not removed or developed from a distance. Just as the king knew that certain things
can only be perceived through personal experience, so, too, Moshe’s awareness was
one of true, personal concern.

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Certain things can only be perceived through personal experience.
REMARKABLE REWARDS

Yisro extended an invitation to Moshe in which he used the phrase “let him eat bread”. Or Yahal explains that this is a reference to the hope that Moshe would possibly marry one of his daughters, for we find that the term “bread” connotes a wife, as in Bereshis 39:6. In the Gemara (Sanhedrin 104a), Rabbi Yochanan points out that although Yisro had ulterior motives in bringing Moshe to his home, nevertheless, it was in the merit of this gesture of inviting Moshe that Yisro later had descendants who were worthy of being judges among the Jewish people and of sitting among the members of the Sanhedrin. Had not Yisro extended this call of hospitality to have Moshe join his family to eat, Yisro would have remained a gentile forever, and his descendants would never have earned this singular distinction. This expression of chessed on the part of Yisro earned him the privilege of becoming the father-in-law of Moshe.

And if all this were not enough, we are also told that of the several names by which he is called, the name Yisro specifically refers to the fact that due to him an expression of chessed on the part of Yisro earned him the privilege of becoming the father-in-law of Moshe. This expression of chessed on the part of Yisro earned him the privilege of becoming the father-in-law of Moshe.

EARNING ASSISTANCE FROM ABOVE

Moshe received his charge from Hashem to go to Pharaoh and to demand that the Jews be released. He immediately went and gathered the elders, encouraging them to have hope that the time had come for salvation. These leaders had full trust in Moshe and his mission. At that point, Moshe and Aharon approached Pharaoh.

The Saba of Kelem wonders that we might have expected Moshe and Aharon to go first to Pharaoh even before going to gather the elders and speaking to them. Their very approach to the palace was replete with miracles. This alone was considered to be an act of treason and treacherousness against the king.

Yet, Yalkut Shemos (#176) describes how lions surrounded the palace, and how Moshe and Aharon nevertheless survived tremendous threats and overcame great obstacles upon coming to speak to Pharaoh without advance permission. Upon surviving this ordeal, Pharaoh himself was impressed with Moshe and Aharon, and this is why he acquiesced to speak to them. He even looked into his book of kings to check whether the Jews were listed as a people led by a special king. With all this, Moshe and Aharon should have gone to Pharaoh first, and after having succeeded in this feat, they would have had a better chance to impress the Jewish elders into believing that they had been sent by Hashem and that the time had come to respond to the call for redemption.

The lesson here is that until the Jews had demonstrated that they were ready for Hashem’s assistance, Moshe and Aharon, as the leaders, would never have been able to approach Pharaoh on their behalf. The first step in earning guidance from the heavens is for a person to make the first move by declaring his trust in Hashem. It was essential that the elders declared their allegiance by announcing that they believed, as this set the necessary foundation for fulfillment of the promises that Hashem had made to the forefathers.

This is also true in areas of one’s personal avodas Hashem. Without self-confidence and the belief that one is prepared and ready to achieve success in any area, assistance from above is premature.

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**Rashi** is explaining that a human being, when seeking revenge, conceals his intentions of harm so that his victim should not escape. Hashem, on the other hand, Whose power is without measure, teaches the offender and warns him in order to bring him to do teshuvah, for there is no way to escape the hand of Hashem.

The **Ta’z.** in his sefer on Rashi, *Divrei David,* explains this concept using a verse that we say every day in the *Shemoneh Esrei* : "פַּלְפַלְפַל קֵלֶלֶל קֵמַמָּת פְּרַעְיֶה - ‘O God of vengeance, God, O God of vengeance, appear.’ “(Tehillim 84:1) The word vengeance is surrounded by two names of God. כְּלָל refers to the attribute of kindness (חסדים) of Hashem, and כְּלָל refers to His attribute of mercy. The attribute of mercy that follows Hashem’s vengeance is easily understood – that Hashem has compassion while He is punishing, so there will not be a complete destruction. However, what is the כְּלָל that presents itself before the vengeance? This is to tell us that before Hashem punishes a person, He reveals to him that He will bring upon him retribution, in order for the person to do teshuvah. We should recognize the compassion of Hashem in order for us to come closer to Him.

**Halachic Corner**

On Shabbos, one is permitted to tell a gentile to do a permissible action even though it will result in a prohibited melachah being performed, if it is required for Shabbos. The outcome would be a prohibited act, but it is only an unintended result of a permitted act. This is called a p’sik reisha, and is allowed under the circumstances. For example, if something necessary for Shabbos was left in the car that is within an eiruv, one may ask a non-Jew to open the door, even though the light will go on as a result. Another example would be telling a non-Jew to turn on the hot water even though this will result in cold water entering the water heater and being heated. This heating of additional water is merely a p’sik reisha, and is consequently permissible when done by a gentile, if it is for the needs of Shabbos. (Rema O.C. 253:5)

A Jew may not open a refrigerator door on Shabbos if the refrigerator light will go on. This would be a p’sik reisha, an inevitable result of the opening of the door. Therefore, one should unscrew the bulb before Shabbos, or tape the switch that controls the light, so that the light will not go on when the door is opened. If one forgot to unscrew the bulb or tape the switch before Shabbos, it is permissible to tell a gentile to open the refrigerator door. This is permitted because the resulting melachah – the light being turned on – is only a p’sik reisha, which is permitted when done by a gentile. The gentile may also be asked to close the door, because the resulting melachah – extinguishing – is merely a p’sik reisha. Some newer models of refrigerators have a fan that goes on automatically when the door is opened. A solution to this would be to tape down the release button on the door to prevent it from being activated on Shabbos. It is appropriate when shopping to ask if a particular model has Shabbos Mode or can be made Shabbos compliant.

Questions for Thought and Study

1. Which edict came directly from Pharaoh? Why? See Ohr HaChaim 1:15
2. How was the pregnancy and birth of Moshe unusual? Why? See Sotah 12a
3. What happened to the maidservants who went with Pharaoh’s daughter down to the river? See Ba’al HaTurim 2:5
4. From which of the forefathers (磋ּמְקָה) was Yisro descended? Which trait did he inherit from his family? See Sotah 12a
5. Why does the Torah say Moshe’s name twice in Pasuk 2:21 when describing Moshe’s marriage to Tziporah? See Ohr HaChaim 2:21
6. Why did Hashem show Moshe only two of the three signs that he would ultimately show Bnei Yisrael? See Ramban 4:3

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Hebrew Theological College’s Gourmet Torah at Shalotts Bistro will take place this Thursday, January 23, 12:35-1:15. Rabbi Ephraim Goldman will speak. Complimentary appetizers as well as a discounted menu available for shiur participants. Men and women invited to attend. For more info: Rabbi Joshua Zissel, 847-982-2500 or jzissel@htc.edu.

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Young Israel of Skokie for a cooking demonstration by Chicago’s own Sharon Matten, author of the new cookbook, “Shabbos Under Pressure”. This Sunday, January 19, 2020, at Young Israel of Skokie, 8746 East Prairie Road, Skokie. Doors open at 7:00 PM. Demo starts at 7:30. We will be raffling off 3 pressure cookers at the end of the evening. There is an admission fee that entitles you to a cookbook and a raffle ticket. For more information contact morahtami1211@yahoo.com.

The DeZimrah Institute seeks to train future Baalei Tefillah to lead Shabbos davening with niggunim that will inspire the entire kehillah to join in the Tefilla B’Shira experience. Join world-renowned Cantor Benny Amar on Sunday morning, February 23, 2020, at Congregate Or Torah, for a workshop on “How Your Tefillah Can Bring the Kahal to the Next Level”. If you are interested in this unique opportunity, please call Julie at 847-877-8000 or email Dezimrah@gmail.com.

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RCCS Chicago is once again hosting the Yaakov Yisroel Topper Ice Hockey Tournament on Sunday, February 9th, at the Fifth Third Arena! This free family-friendly event is open to all, and will feature exciting hockey games, entertainment for kids and refreshments. Come enjoy the atmosphere and cheer on your favorite team. Visit www.rccschicagohockey.org.

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Answers:
1. Pharaoh directly told the midwives to kill the Jewish male babies. Pharaoh did this so that the edict would be secret and the Jewish women would not be forewarned to hide their pregnancies.

2. The pregnancy and birth of Moshe was painless for Yocheved. Yocheved (and all other wholly righteous women) were not included in the curse of Chava that pregnancy and birth should be painful.

3. Hashem sent the רוח (angel) Gavriel to kill all the maidservants, as they tried to convince Pharaoh’s daughter not to take the basket. One was left alive, as it was not appropriate for the princess to travel back alone. (See Sotah 12b)

4. Revel (Yisro, according to most commentaries) was a descendant of Ketura, who was married to Avraham. He had inherited the trait of welcoming guests from his forefather Avraham.

5. The Torah is making a special point that this was not a match made by Yisro, but Tzipora was preordained by Hashem to be Moshe’s wife.

6. Ramban gives two explanations. First, Hashem only showed Moshe the signs of the snake and tzaara as to show Moshe that he had slandered Bnei Yisrael and deserved to be punished for it. Secondly, Hashem wanted to show that He could change的表现 (nature). He did not show him the water turning into blood as there was no water in the desert, where he was shepherding the sheep.

Prepared by Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand, Editor, and Mrs. Naomi Sambor, Managing Editor
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