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# בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
SHEMOS

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
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## FOCUS ON THE GOAL

**P**arshas Shemos begins with Pharaoh explaining to his advisors why it is important to enslave and mistreat the Jewish people. In introducing this episode, the Torah states that the Jewish nation had grown, "and the land was filled with them."<sup>1</sup>

In his analysis of this *Passuk*, the Netziv (R' Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, 1816-1893) points out a grammatical inaccuracy.<sup>2</sup> Translated literally, the *Passuk* states, "And the land became filled to them," implying that they filled a land different from the one they originally occupied. The Netziv explains that indeed the Torah is hinting to us the direct reason why *Klal Yisrael* was subjugated.

Understood simply, it seems that Pharaoh was nervous at having such a large foreign presence within the borders of *Mitzrayim*. Therefore, to combat the possibility of war with the *Bnei Yisrael*, he had them enslaved. But the Netziv explains that this is only the 'cover story'. The truth is, there was a strong spiritual motivation that Hashem had to enslave the Jewish people.

After the last of the *Shevatim* died, some of the Jewish people decided that they wanted to be more like their Egyptian neighbors. No longer would they consign themselves to the land of Goshen, rather, they would live amongst the Egyptians, as neighbors and friends. Over time, their Jewish identity was slowly being eroded, and if drastic steps were not taken, they would have assimilated into Egyptian society, and be lost forever.

Therefore, in order to prevent this terrible tragedy, Hashem implanted animosity in the hearts of the Egyptians, goading them to view the Jewish people as outsiders, essentially forcing Jewish identity on the Jewish people. Thus, the slavery was in actuality a great blessing to the Jewish people, as it kept them from losing their identity altogether.

Indeed, the Netziv adds that history repeats itself, and whenever we find the nations of the world attacking us, it was preceded by heightened assimilation.

It is important for us to not lose sight of the special mission entrusted to the Jewish nation. The more we appreciate our unique duty, the more we will be able to resist the false allure the world may offer us.

1 *Shemos* 1:7

2 *ibid.* s.v. ותמלא הארץ

**The slavery was in actuality a great blessing to the Jewish people, as it kept them from losing their identity.**

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It's important to be a part of the world - to use the tools this world gives us to help us serve Hashem. On the other hand, it's so easy to get caught up in silly things, to lose focus, and forget what are our actual goals. What can we do to keep ourselves from falling into unimportant diversions?

In order to travel from one place to another, a person has to know where they are trying to go. Otherwise, they may veer off the correct road, and not even know it! Similarly, the first thing a person must know is where they are trying to go in life.<sup>1</sup> What are we doing here, and what's the best way to get there? The greater understanding and clarity a person has in this regard, the greater the impact will be when it comes to making decisions.

It is very important for people to have downtime. However, there are many different things one can do during that time, and some can negatively impact our spiritual growth. By reviewing our purpose, and knowing with clarity what are life's mission is, we can better gauge what we allow ourselves to get involved with.

1 *Mesillas Yesharim* Chap. 1



**You've rebuilt so many of the yeshivos that were destroyed in the war.**

**But what about Kelm - the yeshiva so dedicated to Mussar as a way of life?**

- Question posed by Chazon Ish to R' Y. S. Kahaneman, *Ponevezher Rav, Legacy of Majesty & Dignity*, pg. 88

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# HOBBIES AND HABITS

Jeremy Scott\* cleared his throat, and started his speech. "Thank you all for coming, a *Simcha* is only a *Simcha* when it is shared with friends and family.

"Before we start the *Siyum*, I'd like to give some background as to how I was able to finish all the *Sedarim* of *Mishnayos*. You see, like many of you sitting here, I was always very busy - busy with my family, my job, and so on. Whenever I had a moment to myself, I felt I needed to relax, as I was so stressed. I took up various hobbies, little things that I could use to fill the time when I wanted to unwind.

"Now, I hate to admit it, but one or two of these were not very good for me, spiritually. They weren't terrible, but they had a way of inserting themselves into my life, involving me in ways I didn't originally intend to be involved, and generally throwing me off track. Instead of keeping the regular *Chavrusah* that I had, I found that I was involving myself more and more with these hobbies.

"Then, disaster struck. A very close friend of mine became very ill. I went to visit him, and he said something that really stuck. He looked me in the eye, and said, 'Jeremy, I'm afraid I'm about to leave this world. And looking back, there were so many opportunities right in front of me! Yet, what did I accomplish?'

"It really shook me. I realized, then and there, that I have a goal, a mission in life. And though it may be important to unwind, I shouldn't let the world enslave me. So I decided that when I have free time, I'll learn *Mishnayos*. They are generally easier to learn, and I can pick them up and put them down without a lot of mental preparation.

"My friend, thankfully, is fully recovered. And, I'd like to think, I'm recovering from my unhealthy habits as well. With that, let's begin this *Siyum*."

**I realized, then and there, that I have a goal, a mission in life. And though it may be important to unwind, I shouldn't let the world enslave me.**

*\*Name has been changed, based on a true story.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- A mission of *Klal Yisrael* is to teach the entire world how to properly serve Hashem.<sup>1</sup>
- A Jewish person's *Mitzvah* or *Aveirah* affects the entire universe, raising or lowering the spiritual nature of all of creation.<sup>2</sup>
- Simply learning and keeping the Torah is enough to show the nations of the world how to appreciate Hashem.<sup>3</sup>

1 *Seforno* on *Shemos* 19:6 ש.ו. ואתם תהיו

2 *Derech Hashem*, Part 2, Chap 4:9

3 *Shem MiShmuel Chayei Sarah* 7:15