

The Torah Sparks

SHABBOS COMPANION

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

The Egyptian exile begins. The Jewish midwives defy the laws of Pharaoh and keep the children alive. Moshe - the future leader of the Jewish nation - is born. He is ultimately saved by the daughter of Pharaoh, and grows up in the palace. G-d remembers the promise to save the Jews from Egyptian bondage, and He appears to Moshe at the burning bush. Moshe and Aharon announce the news of redemption to the suffering Jewish nation..

QUICK VORT

When someone is going through a hardship, a difficulty, a nisayon, sometimes the kneejerk reaction is to want to run away from the situation, rather than to embrace the situation.

Yosef HaTzadik teaches us that it is THROUGH the Nisayon, it is THROUGH the "mitzrayim," that truly makes a person into the great being that he can be.

Rashi says the chiddush of the words ויוסף היה במצרים - even though we know he was there - was that despite being in this place of negativity, he was עומד בצדקו, he stayed firm in his righteousness.

With the words ויוסף היה במצרים, perhaps we are being taught that instead of trying to run away from the difficulty, the chiddush here is that Yosef embraced it.

Yosef was conscious that he was in Mitzrayim. He fully embraced it, and excelled.

Let us do the same!

PARSHAH STATS

124 Pesukim **1763** Words **6762** Letters **0** Mitzvos

GEMATRIA

The numerical value of ויוסף היה במצרים (and Yosef was in Egypt) is 564, which happens to be the same as שינוי מקום (plus the 2 words).

The concept of שינוי מקום means to change one's place.

It didn't matter where Yosef was, he always remained Yosef HaTzadik.

If he was in Eretz Yisroel, surrounded by his family and kedusha, he was righteous. And if he was in the depths of Egypt, surrounded by impurity, he still remained righteous. What an inspiration!

CHASSIDUS

The Belzer Rebbe said on the words מאד מאד ויעצמו (they became very strong) that the Jewish people, despite being subjugated by the Egyptians, were able to STRENGTHEN themselves with the midda (attribute) of ובכל מאדך, and found the courage to THANK Hashem for everything that happened to them.

In our lives too, we must strive to find a way to connect to the notion of מאדך. To be thankful and grateful for who we are, for what we are, and for everything that we have.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to Rabbeinu Ephraim, the Baal HaTurim, and the Levush, the word שמות stands for שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום!

The Torah highlights that Moshe Rabbeinu - the Jewish leader - was born from a union of two human beings. This is in stark contrast to the crazy claim that Yeshu was the son of the Lord.

Rashi points out that either the new king in Egypt was literally a new king, or it was the same king who changed his views on the Jews.

INSPOGRAPHIC CORNER

SAD REALITY

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"GOOD LEADERS CREATE FOLLOWERS, BUT GREAT LEADERS CREATE LEADERS."
(RABBI J. SACKS ZT"L)

Forward Progress

A simple rule with game-changing results



Forward Progress is a fascinating rule in the National Football League (NFL) which states that the play is ruled dead at the spot where forward progress toward the opponent's end zone stops. What this means is that even if the player is driven back a few yards by the defender, the play is ruled dead where the initial contact was made.

This rule offers an advantage to the offense, because provided that the player makes a play and gains yardage, even if the defender pushes him back, he will not lose the yards that he originally gained.

What an incredible message for life. You see, so often we are scared of progressing and moving forward in life because we are afraid that we will be pushed back.

We are afraid that if we attempt to move forward and take a step in the right direction, that maybe things won't work out. Maybe our attempt will fall short. Maybe we won't get there. Maybe we won't accomplish what we set forth to accomplish.

But remember, the National Football League got their "Forward Progress" rule from the Ultimate rule book of life.

And the rule in life of Forward Progress states that if we move forward, if we step in the right direction, if we attempt what might seem uncomfortable, and if we challenge ourselves to progress and grow, then NO MATTER WHAT, we have moved forward and made progress. But I didn't get the job. I didn't get the promotion. I gave in to my Yetzer Hara at the last minute. And so on.

Guess what? Jewish wisdom teaches us that it is not the results which reflect whether or not we made progress in life. Rather, it is our willpower and effort that we apply, which truly enables spiritual progress in our lives.

Are we growing people? Or are we just seeking mediocrity? Are we pushing ourselves? Or are we just basking in whatever is comfortable at the moment?



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One of the all time favorite quotes I've heard is the following: The difference between try and triumph is a little bit of umph!

Are we living with umph? Are we trying and striving and yearning to progress? If yes, then NO MATTER WHAT, progress will be made. We have to try, but try with umph. We have to take a step in the right direction and attempt the journey forward.

Many times, the Yetzer Hara will stop us in our tracks right then and there. He will push us back. He will send voices in our heads of doubt and confusion. He will tell us we are not really good enough or great enough.

The rule of Forward Progress, however, teaches us that even though - in the moment - it seems like perhaps you've been pushed back several yards, know that in reality you gained several yards; in reality, you moved forward, not backwards!

Parshas Shemos discusses the beginning of the Jewish people's dramatic era of slavery and subjugation to the Egyptians. From an external point of view, it seemed as if we were being pushed backwards, failing, and losing spiritual yardage. If you were to turn on the game and watch in real time, it would have looked like we were being tackled for a loss.

But from a deeper perspective, though, the push back and set back was really a set up for a greater comeback! Without our time in servitude to Egypt, we would not be ready for a relationship with Hashem as the Chosen Nation. Without the birth pangs, there is no newborn child. Our Sages equate our time in Egypt to a pregnancy, and the Exodus as our birth.

So yes, it seemed like we were moving backwards, when in reality we were experiencing Forward Progress; we were actually moving in the right direction!

I'd like to close with a teaching from Rebbe Nachman. In Torah 74, he teaches: והתחלת התקרבות הוא התרחקות - *the beginning of closeness is distance*. The way I understand this is that precisely where a person feels far and distant from HaShem is where he can begin his journey towards closeness to Him. Remember, if we are trying to honestly and sincerely grow, then no matter what, Forward Progress tells that we are indeed moving forward in life!

*Have a holy Shabbos!
R' Ori Strum*

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