

## THE MISSION OF A LIFETIME!

### PARSHAS YISRO

Moshe and Tziporah had two sons. Moshe named his first son, Gershom, because Moshe was a stranger in a strange land. Moshe named his second son, Eliezer, to commemorate the miracle of when Hashem saved him from Pharaoh's executioner.

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l (Chofetz Chaim On the Torah) asks two questions. Firstly, Moshe should have named his first son Eliezer since chronologically Moshe was first saved before he became a stranger in the land of Midian. Secondly, what was the objective of naming him Gershom, indicating that Moshe was a stranger there?

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l answers, that when Moshe arrived at Yisro's house, Yisro had not yet converted to Judaism. Obviously Yisro's deeds were not yet completely refined. Moshe was concerned lest he learn from or be influenced by Yisro's actions. That is why he called his first son's name Gershom. Moshe

wanted to make a constant reminder for himself that he was a stranger in a strange land. Moshe wanted that reminder so that he should not learn from Yisro's deeds and certainly not learn from the deeds of the people of Midian. "Now, I am a stranger in a strange land", thought Moshe. "In the future I will return to my source, dwelling with the Holy Presence of Hashem". This naming was a vivid reminder to Moshe to be heedful of his actions. He could draw the strength to maintain his holiness by remembering that he was only in Midian temporarily but eventually he would reside with Hashem.

We find a similar idea expressed by the **Shelah** in Parshas Va'era. The **Torah** (Shmos 6:14-16) says, "The sons of Reuvein...", and then the Torah lists the

*"And her two sons of whom the name of one was Gershom, for he had said, 'I was a sojourner in a strange land.' And the name of the other was Eliezer, for 'the G-D of my father came to my aid, and He saved me from the sword of Pharaoh.'" (Shmos 18:3-4)*

sons. Then the Torah says, "The names of Shimon ..." and then the Torah states, "And these are the names of the sons of Levi ..." The **Shelah** questions why the Torah changed the wording when it listed the names of Levi's sons. The **Shelah** says something very fascinating. Through Divine inspiration, Levi

knew that his descendants would not be subject to the suffering of the enslavement, as the other tribes were. Yet, Levi wanted to show empathy for the Jewish people who would suffer from the pain of slavery. Thus, he named his children with names that would help him focus on the suffering that the Jewish people would soon undergo in Egypt. He named one son *Gershon* because the Jewish people were strangers in Egypt. He named the next son *Kehas* because the teeth of the Jews, *kahu*, would rot from suffering. The third son he named Merari, from the word *mar*, "bitter", because the Egyptians would embitter the lives of the Jews. (Talelei Oros by Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rubin)

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l (Chofetz Chaim On the Torah) closes with a beautiful parable. Imagine that

you travelled thousands of miles to a different country, to purchase precious merchandise at their fair. This merchandise was not found in your country. Upon your return home, you would sell the merchandise at a nice profit. The money that you would earn would support your family for the year. Now, imagine that while you were at the fair, involved in negotiations to buy the merchandise, someone approached you. That fellow wanted to show you a fascinating article in the newspaper or invited you to join him in a game. You would tell him in very strong terms to leave and stop annoying you. Every minute that you would waste talking to him would cause you a financial loss. You came, thousands of miles from home, leaving your family behind, to be able to provide for them for the year. You would have no time to waste on trivial,

inconsequential things like reading newspapers or playing games.

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l says that each of our souls was under Hashem's throne. Our souls came to this world, for a short while, from millions of miles away, to learn Torah and to acquire mitzvos. That "merchandise" will be needed to support us for eternity. The *yetzer hara* tries to distract us from our mission, with inconsequential things. Every moment that the *yetzer hara* distracts us, he prevents us from earning all that we could. We must firmly send the *yetzer hara* away, telling him not to distract us from our life's mission.

With this in mind, we should consciously decide how much time, if any, we want to spend on things like reading newspapers & playing or watching games as versus learning Torah & doing other mitzvos. Each of us must determine if it's a relaxation to help us do more mitzvos? Or is it a distraction?

**We can use different methods to help us stay focused on our mission.**

**Let's think how we can prevent the *yetzer hara* from distracting us from our important mission in life.**

**Our mission in this world is to attain as many mitzvos and as much Torah-learning as we can.**

**Those merits will sustain us for eternity.**

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