Rabbi David Fohrman: The last thing we were talking about was Moses' name, right. Miriam and is

that right? That's the last thing we were talking about? Okay, so let's pick up from there. We were

doing this sort of access through the rear-view mirror thing, and we were looking at of the first few perakim (chapters), we are going to look through the first four chapters of Exodus with an eye towards

the exodus of Egypt, unfolding backwards as we go through the Joseph story. we were going backwards through Joseph's life

In particular -- remember

Now, as part of this, we are at a stage in the rear-view mirror where we're focusing in an expanded form

on the selling of Joseph, and in particular on the role of Reuben in the selling of Joseph. This is what we

were talking about last week. In essence, what we've just seen last week, is two iterations of Reuben's

role in the exodus of Egypt story. Those two iterations were on the one hand, there was a corrupted

form of Reuben and then there was an exalted form of Reuben. Okay, I don't know if I used those terms or not, but --

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:01:43.)

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right, a perfected form of Reuben and then -- sort of corrupted form of Reuben

and a perfected form of Reuben. Reuben himself was the one who, as we talked about before, who saw the suffering of his brother, but failed to actually manage to free his brother as much as he wanted to because someone thwarted him. That someone thwarted him was someone who had to do with hearing. Probably Simon and the language here borrows from Genesis, "asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho v'yichaneno aleinu v'lo shamanu," we saw his pain but we did not listen. After which Reuben says "halo amarti lachem al techeta'u b'yeled," I was telling you don't sin against the child. This was Reuben sort of talking and Rueben's plan getting short circuited by the not listening.

Immediately after this, of course, Simon is taken prisoner.

Why Simon?

It's as if Joseph, who overhears

this all, comes to understand that Reuben was on his side but Simon stood in the way. So here is Reuben

thwarted by Shimon. my mother suffering.

Reuben the seer, remember Reuben's name. "Ra'ah Hashem b'anyi," God has seen Simon the hearer, "shamah Hashem ki sn'uah anochi." The seer saw. Reuben saw

but Simon would not hear. So that's "asher ra'inu tzaras nafsho v'hischanein aleinu v'lo shamanu. Al

kein ba'ah aleinu hatzara'ah hazos." That's why this suffering has come to us. I did my whole thing with

Mitzrayim and tza'ar with you, right? The name, tza'ar, Mitzrayim, water torture, we did all this.

So that is Reuben. Again, by the way, the incipient greatness of Reuben, not completely actualized, but the potential greatness of Reuben here, is as I mentioned to you before his particular construal, I don't know if that's a word, of his mother's name. The way he construes his mother's name. If you were the child of your mother and your mother was named for ra'ah Hashem b'anyi.

Audience Member: Your mother named you.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Your mother named you.

"Ra'ah hashem b'anyi," that God has seen my

suffering. So if name says something about destiny, so what you would think your destiny is? If I am

named for, my mother has seen my suffering? That God has seen my suffering and God has seen my mother's suffering and now I am supposed to be the bechor (firstborn) because my mother gave birth to me first and I'm being abandoned and disregarded because father thinks that the child of Rachel should come first even though he was born afterwards. It's a terrible affront to my mother's honor.

Now God has declared, has put in motion a situation through my brothers that my brothers standing up

for my dignity have stripped my brother of his coat and our throwing him in the pit. So if I look to my

name, what do I think that destiny is telling me? Basically, this is the greatness of Reuben because there's

two ways of doing this. One thing he can do is he can say, this is my chance for revenge. God wants

me to avenge my mother's honor, but that's not the way he sees it. The way he sees it is that, I need to see the suffering of anybody in pain, the way God saw my mother's suffering and right now, I see the suffering of my brother.

So, that's Reuben. Reuben is someone who had great ideals, but was thwarted. In service of those great ideals he made, what we called last week, a kind of bargain with the devil. The bargain with the devil was where he felt that he had to deceive his brothers in order to win Joseph's freedom so he's the one who tells them, "Hashlichu otoh ha'boirah", cast him in the pit and we talked about how in doing so, he was playing off the brothers' psychology of seeing Joseph as the other, seeing Joseph as a kind of like a snake, throwing him to a bunch of pits with snakes, don't touch him, don't even get close to him, it's too dangerous, just don't kill him even with your hand. He's doing this because he wants him alive so don't kill him with your hands, put him alive into the pit is a way of getting him alive in the pit, but it's also a way of dehumanizing Joseph.

Then in our story of the backwards generation of the exodus from Egypt, we've seen a corrupted form of Reuben. The corrupted form of Reuben is Pharaoh, who uses Reuben's words - Reuben's words were,

"Hashlichu otoh ha'boirah", cast him into the pit. Those words become, in Pharaoh's words, which are,

"Ha'ye'oirah tashlichuh" and this is earlier up here.

So, what happens is that this is a corrupted form of Reuben. This is someone who's actually using Reuben's words, not to save Jews, but actually to kill them and not just kill one Jew, but to kill many Jews by throwing them in a pit except the pit is not a pit without water, it's a pit with water and it's the huge Nile.

Then immediately after that, we meet Reuben again but this time the Reuben we meet is not the corrupted form of Reuben, it's the exalted form of Reuben, the perfected form of Reuben. What I mean by perfected form of Reuben - it's the Reuben who not only has good ideas but who actually manages to succeed in those good ideas and that perfected form of Reuben is none other than the daughter of Pharaoh. Actually, it's not just the daughter of Pharaoh, it's the daughter of Pharaoh working in consort

with Miriam. Together they become the perfected form of Reuben. What we saw last week is that as

the Torah narrates the story of the daughter of Pharaoh and Miriam, it's using all the language from

Reuben's involvement in the story. Just like the brothers were sitting from afar, so there's Miriam who's

standing from afar, but the brothers don't care about what's going on and Miriam does care, she's

watching what happens.

And then there's Reuben himself, but this time it's the daughter of Pharaoh and the daughter of Pharaoh

does actually serve the opposite of Reuben. Although Reuben said, don't send out your hand to reach

towards the child, what does she do? "Vatishlach et hamatah" and "vatishlach" is the exact same language

which is, "Al tishlach yadcha el ha'naar." Reuben said, don't send out your hand to the child and now

she is sending out. What is she sending out? "Vatishlach et hamatah." So now, remember the famous

Chazal -- isn't that interesting? That Chazal now takes on a whole new meaning. Chazal goes out of

their way to say, well, "amah" doesn't necessarily mead "maidservant", "amah" means "arm". You have

this fishing rod, the shirt of her arm stretches. In a way, what Chazal are doing, it's almost as if Chazal maybe saw the connections and Chazal are saying, yes, you know, that's what Reuben was talking about, sending out your hand. She was also sending out her hand. amah could be a hand too.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:10:22).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Zero'a netuya, the outstretched arm, I wonder, that's kind of interesting, maybe

that's true. That's an interesting thought, I hadn't thought about that before. That's actually a very

interesting idea which is, if you're right, let's just take the implication of that idea for a moment, that when we talk about God, what's the language "bizro'ah netuyah" but it goes, "beyad chazakah u'bizro'ah netuyah". Isn't that interesting? The imagery of God acting to save us is with a strong hand and an

outstretched arm so if you actually think about the imagery of a strong hand and an outstretched arm. So

if you actually think about the imagery of a strong hand and an outstretched arm, what is a strong hand and an outstretched arm?

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:11:31).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes, that's what you need if you pull somebody out of the pit, isn't it, right?

Because the strong hand is that my hand has to be strong because I can't loosen the grip on you as I'm holding you and the outstretched arm is that I'm making the effort to stretch myself towards you and

then I have to have a very strong hand to hold onto you as I literally pull you out. imagery that we have.

That really is the

In other words, it's that maybe what we're saying about God is that this is what we know about God. What do we know about God, really? In a certain way, and we'll see this in a moment, we'll actually get to this today where you'll see it in the text, but just sort of foreshadow it for a moment, the things we

know about God -- we talk about what we learn from God, almost, in this story. God can be seen in a

way as the great Reuben in the sky, because who is Reuben? Reuben is the one who sees, right, sees suffering, is the one who hears, hears the screams, and then the one who acts, right?

What's the hearing? When do you see hearing? You see hearing constantly when God says, and the

cries of the Jewish people came to me, right? Later on, by the way, when Pharaoh ignores the cries of the Jews and the (inaudible 00:13:10) is "vata'al shavatam al Hashem", "and therefore the cries went up to

God instead". So, God is a hearer of cries when others won't hear them, but God's not just a hearer of

cries, God also acts upon what he hears. It's not just enough to hear, you have to act upon what you hear and he acts with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and it could go back to that cardinal image of pulling out of the pit, right? We were in the pit, we were in Egypt. We were in this place and God

pulled us out. So, yes, I really like that, I think that's probably true, thank you.

Audience Member: Imagery of that is just all over the place. (Inaudible 00:14:10), "vaya'ar Yisrael es hayad hagedolah," "vayshev Hashem es Yisrael miyad Mitzrayim," there's just a lot yad.

Audience Member: Yes, yad is a very powerful imagery. It's used --

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes, but it's interesting, I never really saw it that way. When you always saw,

"yad chazakah vizro'ah netuyah" I always saw it as, that God used his arm to punish the Egyptians.

That's what I always thought, but maybe it doesn't mean that. Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:14:46).

You never saw it that way?

Rabbi David Fohrman: I know, but what did you always think that meant?

Audience Member: "Yad hagdolah asher asa Hashem b'Mitzrayim".

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right, yes, so there it is, that's the punishment of Egypt.

Audience Member: Did you know the Holocaust in Miami Beach, the Holocaust (inaudible 00:15:02) did tremendous harm (inaudible 00:15:05) and people like hanging on. It's very powerful (inaudible 00:15:07).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right. That is the imagery. If you think about Holocaust imagery, that is the

imagery we tend to instinctively use, that imagery of a hand kind of reaching out to save. I know Ivan, artist friend, Stan Leibowitz (ph), who has one of his most striking artistic representations in Holocaust art, he actually got from his father. Stan's father is a Holocaust survivor and Stan's father, when he was teaching Stan's son, his grandson, how to put on tefillin before his Bar Mitzvah, Stan recalled seeing the tattoos on the tefillin of his arm, you know, between the tefillin on his arm and it sort of inspired a painting which he did, of his father's arm, you know, very muscular, with tefillin on it, with the tattoos on it, grasping the baby hand, or the 12-year-old hand of this other child. There's that sort of outstretched hand.

If you would think in Hollywood, by the way, think of the poster for Schindler's List, remember the poster for Schindler's List? It's the same thing, it was that grasped arm and maybe that really is the imagery, on some level, that maybe here actually the hand does two things, that the same hand that punishes Egypt is there to grasp the Jews and pull us out.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:16:58).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right, and this gets back also to what we were talking about, the interplay of din

(judgment) and compassion, if you remember, a couple of weeks ago, in the Plagues. We were talking about that every plague on one level, is an act of judgment upon Egypt, forcing them to confront the pain that they inflicted. On the other hand, it's also an act of compassion, it's a hand towards -- there's a hand against Egypt and there's a hand towards the Jews in that it's steps in their redemption, it's steps of

pulling them out. So it really is maybe, the same hand that inflicts justice upon the aggressor, is

outstretched towards the victim.

Audience Member: It also says (inaudible 00:17:58).

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:18:00) that the idea of the daughter of Pharaoh who stretched out her

hand, was the incidental or she happened to be there? Who is the hand behind the hand?

Rabbi David Fohrman: tool of God.

Right, is there an unseen hand of God behind all of it. In a certain way, she's a

Audience Member: I'm looking to see if the imagery of the hand is anywhere in the portion where Moses takes the bones of Joseph out of Egypt. (Inaudible 00:18:49).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes, we're going to get there. That's on our list. I think I mentioned that, by

the way, all the way back before Pesach. We talked last week about "mizeh" being shattered

brotherhood. Right, we talked about that? We talked about it in terms of the eigel (Golden Calf), when

we mentioned the Golden Calf, no, we didn't? You don't remember the aftermath of the Golden Calf?

Didn't I talk about this last week? Yes, we talked about that. So one of them, as Sima is pointing out, is

when Joseph says, "Ve'alitem et atzmotai mizeh". We're going to get to this but, "pokod yifkod Elokim

eschem, ve'alitem et atzmosai mizeh." God's going to redeem you and he's going to take you out

"mizeh". "Mizeh" is the place of shattered brotherhood. What's the place of shattered brotherhood?

Egypt is the place of shattered brotherhood.

How?

In what way is Egypt this shattered brotherhood of

humankind? Because when you throw somebody's babies in the Nile, that's shattered brotherhood. take me out of this place and bring me back. Bring me back towards where? We talked about this

So,

before.

Our Sages say, why was Joseph buried in Shechem? That's where he was taken from.

So take

me back from this place and bring me back -- because there's two aspects of shattered brotherhood. One

is the shattered brotherhood in Egypt, the other shattered brotherhood is the brotherhood of the brothers themselves. Bring them back towards there, bring me back to the last normal place I was in, which was Shechem.

So, moving on. We have on the one hand, what I was talking about, was corrupted Reuben and then

perfected or exalted Reuben. Who's exalted Reuben? That is Miriam and the daughter of Pharaoh. We

talked last week about Moses' name, that seemingly this is Moses' destiny, "moshe", to be the one who pulls. And there's, by the way, that imagery of the outstretched arm again as you talk about, the one who will reach out with his arm and pull, to do to others what was done to him. He was pulled out. He's not just "mashuy" which would mean "pulled out" which would have been the normal name. I

believe the Kol Yaakov says that. It should have been "mashuy" because he was pulled out. Moshe, it's the puller. He will be the one who pulls.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:21:45).

It's not, it's

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes, that is kind of interesting now that you mention that. It's "vayimshichu

vaya'alu et Yosef min habor".

Oh yes, that is actually kind of interesting.

You know why? I'll tell you

why that's interesting. Let me give you a very quick introduction of why it's interesting. This takes you

back to the classes we gave before Pesach. which we did?

So do you remember the korban Pesach (Pascal offering) class

In the Pascal offering class, I argued to you that all of the language of the Pascal offering is actually borrowed from the sale of Joseph and I argued to you that the Pascal offering is a symbolic replay of the sale of Joseph with one difference. The difference is that instead of allowing Joseph to languish in the pit and be sold in Egypt, the command symbolically in the Pascal offering is, "mishchu u'kchu lachem tzon

l'mishpateichem". Now the only other time you have Mem-Shin-Chaf-Vav, "mishchu", in the entire

Chumash is, "vayimshichu vaya'alu et Yosef min habor", when Joseph was pulled up from the pit.

The question is, who did that? I believe that it actually wasn't the brothers who did it. The Rashbam's theory was it wasn't the brothers, it was the Midianim who did it. The brothers were eating lunch, the

Midianites were the ones who pulled him out of the pit. tzivui, which is the command is, you must pull him out.

So "mishchu u'kchu lachem tzon" is lashon So the command is, pull Joseph out of the pit,

don't let the Midianites pull him out and don't pull him out and sell him as a slave. "Mishchu u'kchu lachem", "kchu lachem lemishpateichem". Interesting words, isn't it? On one level, pull the sheep and take him for your families but it means something else, right? It means, pull Joseph out, "u'kchu lachem", "and take him to yourselves", "l'mishpateichem", "into your family".

He's your brother, don't just let him languish; bring him back into the family. That's the command. Now, isn't it interesting, that "mishchu", the first two letters of which, Mem, Shin, it's almost like

"moshe". "Min hamayim meshitihu" is just a shortened form of "mishchu". It just left off the last letter.

I remember a Rebbe of mine in Baltimore, Rabbi Eissman (ph), propounded what he called, I think, the "bi- consonantal root theory of Hebrew grammar" and basically that is that every Hebrew word, of course, has a three letter shoresh (root), but the first two letters of the root determine the fundamental

meaning of the word and the third letter allows you to construe it in a slightly different way. So, for

example, alatz is related to alaz. So alaz is a tranquil kind of happiness, "alaz" with a Tzadi, with a sharper

sound, is a more ecstatic kind of happiness. "Alatz libi b'Hashem", "my heart exalts in God". If you look

at Peh, Reish words, all of them are variations of each other. parah, to be fruitful, paraz, to be scattered, parach, to flower.

Perah, to be wild, parad, to be separated, Do you begin to see this? Parat, specifics.

Do you see where this is going? Parach, to crumble. You don't see where this is going? Where this is

going is from one to many. Right? Paraz is to be scattered, to be wild. saying? Parad is to separate, it's from one to many. Parah, to be fruitful.

Do you understand what I'm

It's very Hirschian. He's a student of Hirsch. So if you take the bi-consonantal root theory and apply it

to Mem, Shin, maybe there's a connection between "masha" and "mashach", right? "Ki min hamayim --

", it's close to pull, on some level, different kinds of pulling. So, going back to your point now, one

imperative, or one way we think about Moses as Moses the puller, "mishchu u'kchu lachem" as actualized by Moses, Moshe, the one who pulls us out of Egypt. It's also very interesting that Moses is not only a puller, he's also - the next word in what the Midianites did, "vayimshichu va'yalu," Moses is also the

elevator. Where do you see that?

So you see that in the Golden Calf. It's very fascinating. If you look throughout the Golden Calf, do you remember, there's this debate between - I'll show it to you, why not - God and Moses, basically over

who owns the people. It's actually kind of, if it wasn't so sad, it would be humorous. Here it is.

Remember this debate over here? "Lech red," God says. "Ki shiches amcha asher he'elita mi'Eretz

Mitzrayim."

Notice how dis-possessive God is of the people.

So go down, your people have corrupted

themselves, the ones you took out of Egypt. Like, I had nothing to do with this, right? So what do you

mean, you had nothing to do with this? (continues reading verses) "...asher he'elucha m'Eretz

Mitzrayim." So this is very dangerous, because if God is dispossessing Himself from the people, that is

not a happy thing and God in fact is about to say, I am going to get rid of them all.

Now, look at Moses.

"Vay'chal Moshe et pnei Hashem Elokav".

Why "Elokav"?

Because it's only God,

right? Do you understand? Right now, God, having dispossessed himself of the people, so it's only

Moses and God, it's me and You, God, right? So you're my God, singular "my", not the God of the

people anymore. So now look at what God (sic) says. "Lamah Hashem yechere apcha b'amecha".

Whose people is it now? Basically, what's the implicit message?

God, you can't, not so fast!

Do you

know what I mean? You can't do this. These are your people. "Lama Hashem yechere apcha b'amecha

asher hotzeita mei'Eretz Mitzrayim".

Who took them out of Egypt, right?

You took them out of Egypt.

"b'koach gadol u'v'yad chazakah. Lamah yomru Mitzrayim lemor b'ra'ah hotzi'am laharog otam beharim u'l'chalotam me'al pnei ha'adamah, shuv micharon apecha v'hinachem al hara'ah l'amecha". There's your

people again, right? Right over here. So, again, it's your people.

Audience Member: It ends with God agreeing.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Hashem la'asos le'amo."

Exactly. It ends with God agres. "Vayenachem Hashem al hara'ah asher diber This is where God reclaims his people again.

What's interesting is, is that even though there's this debate over who owns the people, in a certain way it's not that they're clashing, they're not disagreeing with each other, because the fact is, there was a

partnership between God and Moses.

God and Moses together took the Jews out of Egypt.

Moses was

the agent of God in taking the Jews out of Egypt. So when God says, the people that you took out of

Egypt, that's not incorrect, it's just emphasizing Moses role in it and Moses is emphasizing God's role in it. They're not arguing.

Now what's interesting is that there's a code word for each name in this partnership. If you look at what Moses said to God about God's role, it's "asher hotzeita mei'Eretz Mitrayim". The verb is, that you took

out of Egypt. Look at the verb that God uses to describe Moses's role, "asher he'elita mei'Eretz

Mitrayim", the one that you took out, the one that you took up, right? And where is it again? Over here and that explains, by the way, this too, which is -- remember the famous Ramban? They were

looking for a Moses replacement, they weren't looking for an idol, right? How do you know? This is

the proof. "Eileh loch Yisrael asher he'elucha mi'eretz Mitrayim." What was the Golden Calf? The

Golden Calf was Moses's role. They didn't say, "eileh lach yisrael asher hotzaitah", right? That was

God's role. "Eileh lach yisrael asher he'elucha mi'eretz Mitzrayim." This was Moses's role.

Later on, when for example, what we talked about last week, when God says, "leich aleh mizeh". Again,

he's commanding Moses, you're the one who does this "he'elucha" stuff. from this again. This is Moses's role.

So, "lech aleh mizeh".

Go up

Maybe what you're suggesting is the genesis of Moses's role. Why did Moses's role get to be called that?

The one who brings them up out of Egypt, because he's of course the puller. What did the puller do?

The puller was perfecting, of course, the great sin of the sale of Joseph. "Vayimshichu va'yalu et Yosef."

The brothers sat picnicking while others pulled and brought up Joseph from the pit. Now, what Moses

would do, is Moses would pull, "Moshe", he's the puller, but not just the puller. Moses would also

elevate, "he'elucha", "va'yalu et Yosef min habor". good insights in one day.

I like that, thank you very much.

You win for two

Audience Member: (Interposing 00:32:06).

Rabbi David Fohrman: How Joseph led us out of Egypt? In the end, I'm not sure if it's true. I'm not

sure that Joseph led us out of Egypt so much as we let ourselves out of Egypt by embracing Joseph.

So, moving on. We've been talking about corrupted Reuben, we've been talking about perfected Reuben. Let's go further and see what else we meet.

Audience Member: Is it corrupted or imperfect?

Rabbi David Fohrman: Corrupted, because what Pharaoh does is corrupt Reuben. Reuben wants to

save. Pharaoh uses Reuben's language to destroy. So let's see where we go from here.

Audience Member: Oh, Reuben's language. (Inaudible 00:33:37). What does that have to do with Reuben?

Rabbi David Fohrman: That has everything to do with Reuben. It was Reuben's idea to throw Joseph

in the pit, to throw Joseph alive.

Audience Member: This is not human (inaudible 00:33:54).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes, well let me tell you what I mean by that. I don't mean Reuben himself, I

mean there is another character later on in history who was assuming the spiritual mantle of Reuben,

okay? The first character who does that is Pharaoh. Pharaoh dons the spiritual mantle of Reuben and

desecrates it, by using Reuben's language. Indeed, not just his language but his plan. What was Reuben's plan? Reuben's plan was, throw Joseph in the pit alive. Well, what does Pharaoh do?

Throws

babies in the pit alive. I mean, that's how he kills the babies, throwing live babies in the water and drowning them.

So we have corrupted Reuben, we have perfected Reuben. Here's who we meet next. The next thing

we have, and I suggested to you that this was Moses' destiny. Moses' destiny was given to him by his

mother. His mother made a dramatic choice and this is what we talked last week, when she says,

"miyaldei ha'ivrim zeh". Remember, she sees the child, "vatachmol alav", she has compassion on the child and then she says, "miyaldei ha'ivrim zeh".

Your heart stops when she says, "miyaldei ha'ivrim zeh" because if you don't know what's going to happen next and you're the daughter of Pharaoh, so you see the child and you don't know what you're thinking and you have compassion on the child. Then all of a sudden, the cognitive part of your brain switches into high gear and you say, oh my gosh, "miyaldei ha'ivrim zeh" and then you say to yourself, who am I? I am Hitler's daughter. Okay, that's who I am, and this is a Hebrew child, this is a Jewish child. This is the enemy.

At that point, she has this choice. She has the choice of "mizeh". The great choice of shattered

brotherhood which is -- remember as we talked about last week? There's the three parts of genocide, the three factors of genocide. There's, these people are up to no good, they don't like me. There's, they're smarter than me and therefore I can't afford to listen to their screams and they're basically not my

brother. Not my brother is the last piece of genocide, the last thing that enables genocide. She has this

choice, which is, am I going to say they're not my brother? not my brother.

These are the Hebrews. The Hebrews are

At this point, the question is, is she going to drown this baby? She ought to drown the baby as the

daughter of Pharaoh, but instead she doesn't. Miriam comes in, gives her a way out and she says, yes, call

the mother of the child. That's perfected Reuben. Reuben wanted to bring the child back to parent. They bring the child back to parent, they save the child. What she does, she conquers the "mizeh",

"miyaldei ha'ivrim zeh". She doesn't see the shattered brotherhood, she puts it back together. She sees

there's a common human bond of brotherhood between her and this child and she brings up the child and she names the child "Moshe" which is, it's your destiny to do what was done to you here.

In fact, it is Moses's destiny because the same very difficult choice that she was faced with, she almost ensures that her child will be faced with. She brings up the child in the palace, with dual identity. It had

to be that way.

Moses knows who he is, he understands he's a Jew because she told him who he is.

How

else would he know who he is? She could have covered it up if she wants, but she doesn't. She wants to

make sure that he knows who he is. But he's also a child of the palace, he's also her son. is guaranteed -- he is the child that doesn't fit and he at some point has to make a choice.

At that point, he

The beginning of Moses's greatness comes right over here when, "vayehi bayamim hahem, vayigdal

Moshe," Moses grew up, "vayeitzeh el echav vaya'ar besivlotam".

He made a choice.

He didn't have to

view them as his brothers. am Pharaoh's brother.

He could have viewed them as the Hebrews and I am the kid of the palace, I

Audience Member: Other than Basya, who knew that he was a Jewish child, no one else.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Maybe so, we don't know. Where did he get the child? What did Pharaoh

think? We don't know. It could be she prevailed upon him to just save this one. comes of him. We don't really know.

I'll make sure nothing

Audience Member: And maybe that's why he tested him also (inaudible 00:38:56).

Rabbi David Fohrman: By the way, if you want a really good -- I hate to really commend secular

culture with this so don't tell anybody that I said this or deny it, but if you want a good representation, an interesting representation of the dramatic tension in Moses's life, watch Spielberg's "The Prince of Egypt". Isn't it interesting, like if you really think about what it would mean for Moses to be in the

palace, you know, as an Egyptian, but understanding that he's a Jew. So he's growing up brother to

brother with a child who's going to become the next Pharaoh that he's going to oppose once this Pharaoh dies. Think about it. That's his step-brother, right?

So if you think about it -- There you go, with the question of who's really your brother? So who was

more my brother? My step-brother Pharaoh and I can be in the palace and I can be royalty or are my

real brothers those slaves? It's interesting if you really think about it. Almost the opposition between

Moses and Pharaoh is really a choice Moses has to make about who's his brother. step-brother that I really have no relationship to?

Will he choose the

Audience Member: You say that it's his brother, that the grandfather (inaudible 00:40:11).

Rabbi David Fohrman: We don't really know. In other words, that Pharaoh dies -- we don't know. It

could be his uncle, but the idea is that it's the Pharaoh I'm growing up with in the palace, that I'm adopted, that this is mine and he turns his back on that brother and identifies with the ones who it's not so easy to think of as your brother, these slaves. Different socioeconomic class, right?

Now, what happens? "Vaya'ar besivlotam."

(He sees their suffering.)

Now, remember, we've just seen

corrupted Reuben, we've just seen exalted Reuben and remember, corrupted and exalted Reuben are all

about seeing and hearing.

So here comes Moses, "vaya'ar besivlotam".

Next word, "vaya'ar" again,

"vaya'ar ish Mitzri" and he sees this Egyptian man "makeh es Ivri me'achiv vayifen koh vakoh". Vayar,

again. This guy is all about seeing. He can't get enough of seeing. There's three "sees" in a row.

"Vayar ki ein ish vayach et haMitzri vayatminehu bachol." In a certain way -- I remember a colleague of

mine once pointed out, isn't it interesting that when Moses shows up at the doorstep of Jethro and the daughters of Jethro describe who saved them, what does he say?

Audience Member: "Ish Mitzri."

Rabbi David Fohrman:

"Ish Mitzri hitzilanu miyad haro'im."

Here he's killing the Egyptian, right.

Moses looks like an Egyptian man because he does look like an Egyptian man. In a certain way who is the Egyptian man that he kills?

Audience Member: Himself.

Rabbi David Fohrman: am I?

It might be himself, right? Which is that he has this dual identity. Again, who

Audience Member: Jacob was (inaudible 00:41:45).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Right.

Who am I?

Who is my brother?

Because once I view these Jews as my

brother and I'm willing to go to bat for them, I'm killing that other side of me that might say I'm

brothers with Pharaoh, which is that am an Egyptian man. So in a certain way the Egyptian man that he

kills is also the Egyptian man that he later is recognized as being. He's no longer really an Egyptian man,

he's only an Egyptian man in how he looked. He killed the Egyptian man over here. "Vayach et

haMitzri vayatmineihu bachol. Vayeitzei bayom hasheni v'hinei shtei anashim ivrim nitzim, vayomer

larasha lamah takeh rei'acha. Vayomer mi somcha l'ish sar v'shofet aleinu ha'l'hargeini atah omer ka'asher

haragta et haMitzri, vayira Moshe vayomer achein noda hadavar."

Now, what's interesting about all this is that you're seeing -- is that Moses now has experienced seeing, to save somebody who's in trouble three times. The next thing he should ask for is, is there any hearing. Because that's the cardinal verse with Reuben, right. "Asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho behitchaneno eileinu v'lo shamanu." Interesting that you can't find any hearing here.

Audience Member: "Achein noda hadavar."

Audience Member: Only with Pharaoh you have (inaudible 00:42:55).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Exactly, but you do find hearing don't you, if hearing is right over here.

Vayishma Pharaoh, Pharaoh heard. Now, what's the significance of Pharaoh hearing? "Vayishma

Pharaoh et hadavar hazeh vayivakesh laharog et Moshe, vayivrach Moshe mipnei Pharaoh." Okay. Now, we've seen corrupted Reuben. We've seen exalted Reuben. We're getting seeing and hearing

again. How does this relate to the original Reuben?

Audience Member: He was involved with his brother Shimon. Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:43:41).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

No, the whole picture of Moses.

If Pharaoh is corrupted Reuben -- if Pharaoh is

the corrupted Reuben, if the daughter of Pharaoh is exalted Reuben, who is Moses? Moses must be

something in respect to Reuben because we're getting seeing and hearing in all of these Moses verses. How does Moses relate to Reuben?

Audience Member: He was forced into action.

Rabbi David Fohrman: No, he's not.

Audience Member: He had to run away and that totally (inaudible 00:44:14). Audience Member: Why isn't it a combination?

Rabbi David Fohrman: He was forced into what kind of action?

Audience Member: Maybe it's a combination, seeing and hearing.

Audience Member: He was separating himself from the Egyptians completely.

Rabbi David Fohrman: From the Egyptians and the Jews.

Audience Member: So they see Joseph like.

Rabbi David Fohrman: He's Joseph like.

Audience Member: Yes. "Va'y'vakesh laharog et Moshe."

Audience Member: No, maybe he had to go (inaudible 00:44:28).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Okay.

Audience Member: Maybe he sees and then he goes.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

I'm asking about Reuben.

How does Moses relate to Reuben?

Audience Member: Well, you said Moses sees. Audience Member: He sees everybody's paying. Audience 3: Then he must be dead.

Audience 4: It's the original Reuben.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes, so I'm asking you --

Audience Member: He doesn't do what he's supposed to do.

Rabbi David Forhman:

Okay.

So talk to me.

Audience Member: He's before I know (inaudible 00:44:48). Audience Member: He's the (inaudible 00:44:48).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay.

Good.

So I agree with you.

If the daughter of Pharaoh is exalted

Reuben and if Pharaoh is corrupted Reuben, Moses is Reuben himself. Moses is actually playing old

Reuven. I'll explain to you why. Who is Reuben? Let's define who Reuben was. Reuben was the one

who so desperately wanted to save his brothers in trouble and tried, he made an effort, but that effort

came to naught. Why did it come to naught? Because someone foiled him. Who foiled him? The

hearing one.

Shimon foiled him. He was trying, but he couldn't go against all the brothers.

He had this

plan -- this surreptitious plan, but it didn't work. It was almost like -- it's almost like, by the way, what

the Torah is giving us is almost like a background. For example, when Reuben says, "halo amarti

aleichem al techeta'u bayeled" -- later on. the child.

I told you guys, "al techata'u bayeled," don't do this against

Notice that we never hear that in the selling of Joseph story. You understand, later on when Reuben

tells over to the brothers, he's talking in front of Joseph, Reuben says -- right, remember the verse, "ashemim ... asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho behitchaneno eileinu v'lo shamanu al kein ba'ah eileinu hatzarah hazot," right. "Vayan Reuven otam leimor halo amarti aleichem leimor al techeta'u bayeled." We never hear Reuben say that? When did Reuben say that?

Answer is we're getting an insight into a prequel to the selling of Joseph story. Something which we

never heard. We're getting a new level of detail, which means that at some point earlier than Reuben's plan, Reuben had said, "al techata'u bayeled," and they just completely disregarded him, which forced

Reuben into a surreptitious plan, which is that I'm going to try to save him on my own. listen to me, I'll save him on my own.

If you won't

It didn't work because he tried, he got him in the pit, but then he was pulled out of the pit and he was

sold. So Reuben was thwarted. He was thwarted by Shimon who didn't listen to him. Then he was

thwarted because he tried, but nothing worked.

That is Moses.

Moses also sees the pain just like Reuben.

Moses also is thwarted by a hero, except the

hero is not someone by the name of Shimon, the hero is Pharaoh. Vayishma Pharaoh. Pharaoh hears.

Who is Moses?

If it weren't for Pharaoh, you know what Moses would have done?

He was a one man's

Jew saving machine. Right? He was just a one man font of justice and compassion. He was just going

out there and he was going to redeem the Jews all by himself right there, except, he hit a wall. The wall was Pharaoh. "Vayishma Pharaoh et hadavar va'y'vakesh laharog et Moshe."

What's Moses response? Failure, right. I'm leaving the scene, I'm gone. "Vayivrach Moshe mipnei

Pharaoh vayeishev be'eretz Midian vayeishev al ha'be'er," right? He goes to the land of Midian. what's the significance of him going to Midian? Think about it, if the story ends now --

Audience Member: They were the original fighters.

Now,

Audience Member: Saved by the Midianites.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Yeah, that's interesting. Isn't it, right? I didn't even think about that.

You're

right. That's very good.

See, I like that guys.

You learn something new every day.

You're right. Isn't

that interesting that of all places he should go to Midian. It's almost like Reuben has allied himself

unwittingly with the Midianites. Who were the Midianites? The Midianites were the ones who

corruptly pulled Joseph out of the pit and allowed him to go.

Basically, what is Reuben doing now? He is throwing up his hands in surrender. He's saying nothing I

can do. In the absence of that, the Midianites pull him out and I'm on the Midianites' side. This is

Reuben now. If the story ends here, the Jews languish in slavery the same way that Joseph languished in Egypt. This is not what's supposed to happen. The proof that it's not supposed to happen is something that happens --

Audience Member: "Vayeishev al habe'er".

Rabbi David Fohrman: you're right about that.

Well, yes. By the way, you're right about that. I'll tell you how you know No, I won't tell you how you know you're right about that.

Audience Member: Ha'y'orah tashlichuhu also has the same root (inaudible 00:49:11).

Rabbi David Fohrman: What's that?

Audience Member: Ha'y'orah tashlichuhu." (Inaudible 00:49:15).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Oh, y'or and be'er. Yeah, maybe.

Audience Member: Bor or --

Rabbi David Fohrman: What?

Audience Member: Or it was the bor. Audience Member: It could be the be'er part.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Well, put it this way, instead of being at the y'or, which is where he should have

been with his brothers in trouble he went to the be'er. The be'er was just about the y'or, but it was the next step, right. It was another body of water. Instead of the horrific Nile where everyone's being killed, it's the placid be'er where I'm going to meet my wife. It's one step later. be'er, right, it's instead of the unity of the bays. Anyway, maybe.

Let's go on.

What I was going to get to is the following.

Remember that we've been going through the

Joseph story backwards. Inside of our Joseph story backwards, we've had a very detailed look at the

Reuben part of the selling of Joseph. We've had three iterations of Reuben. We've had the corrupted

Reuben, we've had the exalted Reuben, now we have Reuben himself, which is Moses. Now, what

we're going to do is continue and conclude our view of the backwards Joseph story in Exodus, right. We're almost at the beginning of the story.

Let's continue and you'll see one last piece of this. By the way, remember this, "vatomarna ish Mitzri

hitzilanu miyad haro'im." What does hitzilanu miyad remind of you, if you're Reuben? "Vayishma

Reuven vayatzileihu miyadam". The original Rueben saved -- is the one who saves miyad. Moses also,

he's Reuben, vayatzileihu miyadam." Except, notice that his energies are getting diverted. Moses's real

strength is to save his people. He ought to be saving his people, but he's not there. He gave up because

of Pharaoh, but he's still a compassionate guy.

So he's still involved in saving, but who's around.

So he's

going to save these girls. He's going to save whoever he can. Reuben in Midian.

You with me?

Audience Member: Yeah.

So now he's using Reuben, but he's using

Rabbi David Fohrman: Okay.

Audience Member: Is there a significance that they used the word va'y'vakesh where we have -- with the ish, (inaudible 00:51:24)?

Rabbi David Forhman: Where?

Audience Member: It says "va'y'shma Pharaoh et hadavar hazeh va'y'vakesh laharog et Moshe."

Rabbi David Fohrman: Maybe, I don't know.

Audience Member: It's not really (inaudible 00:51:35).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Ma tevakesh. Yeah, maybe, interesting. Okay.

Audience Member: Also ro'im, the brothers were also ro'ei tzon.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right.

Audience Member: It's the whole (inaudible 00:51:41).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay. Guys, here's what I wanted to show you.

Follow me here.

Look at these

words over here. These are the last words before the burning bush story. Audience Member: Yeah.

You with me?

Rabbi David Fohrman: "Vayo'el Moshe lashevet et haish," and Moses was content to settle with the man.

"Vayitein et Tziporah bito l'Moshe" and he gave her Zipporah, vateiled ben, and he gave birth to a child

and his name -- "vayikrah et shmo Gershom," and he called the child Gershom, "ki amar ger hayiti b'retz nochriyah," because I was a stranger in a strange land.

Now, if you hold on for a moment, the residences of this verse are very interesting. First of all, if I just ask you, if the story ended here and you had to guess what was -- and you didn't know the rest of

Exodus, right? The rest of Exodus was a completely closed book. You had to prognosticate about what

happens next, you would basically say this is the end of Moses's active role in the story. Moses settled

down with his father-in-law. He has married. He's found himself a new life. He has given birth to a

child. He's got a family. in his heart?

How is Moses dealing with his intense feeling of brotherhood, which still beats

Audience Member: He feels like a stranger.

Rabbi David Fohrman: He feels terrible. Oh, poor thing, but he feels terrible, but he has a very nice

family, so you know what he does? He does what we do when we feel terrible. We name our children

words that console them. We name somebody after our dear departed father, right? So Moses names his

child after his dear departed nation, right? "Ger hayiti be'eretz nochriyah." I feel so terrible, but thank

God, I have a family and I have a child and every time I look at junior Gershom, I feel so happy and a

tear of wistfulness of my old life rolls down my cheeks, but I am consoled by watching junior play with blocks in Midian.

Audience Member: Why wouldn't you just say that he was waiting for Pharaoh to die? Audience Member: Right. If (inaudible 00:53:43).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Because what -- let me ask you, what happens at the burning -- at the burning

bush, how excited is Moses to go back?

Audience Member: Not.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Not.

Five times he says no, he's not going back. This man has settled down. I

mean, that's the simple explanation. He has settled down. The proof that he's settled down is this, the

backwards Joseph's story. remind you of?

If we're going backwards through the Joseph story, what verse does this

Audience Member: And (inaudible 00:54:08).

Rabbi David Fohrman: This verse, the last verse of the enslavement in Egypt before the redemption

begins reminds you of, in perfect backwards form, the first verse of the Joseph story, but that last verse

would remind you of the first verse. What is the first verse of the Joseph story? I'm glad you ask. It is

this. "Vayeishev Yaakov be'eretz m'gurei aviv b'retz Cana'an." Listen carefully. There's the vayeishev.

Vayeishev Yaakov, Jacob settled down "be'eretz megurei aviv be'eretz Cana'an." Now, remember the

significance of that verse. Let's go back and understand really the significance of that verse. Audience Member: Bikesh.

Rabbi David Fohrman: That's right.

The Chazal tell us the significance of that verse. Chazal are coming from the text. "Bikesh Yaakov

leishev b'shalvah." Right.

Jacob thought his life was over.

It was done.

Vayeishev Yaakov.

Why did

Jacob think his life was over?

Audience Member: Because he thought Joseph --

Rabbi David Fohrman: Now, let's go back to it -- right. Let's go back to our whole way of seeing the

Jacob story until now, which we've talked about a numbers of times. Why did Jacob think his life was

over?

Because Jacob was a student of Jewish history.

He knew about the brit ben habetarim, right. He

understood "ger y'hiyeh zar'acha be'eretz lo lahem ve'avadum ve'inu otam arba me'ot shana," but he thought it was him. He thought it was him because "dor revi'i yashuvu heinah," the fourth generation is going to come back here.

He does a calculation and he says the first generation is Abraham and the second generation is Isaac and the third generation is me and the fourth generation is my son, my son Joseph, the real child of my real

wife. Finally, I have a son from Rachel. It's the fourth generation. It's time for me to go home. Because

I was a slave in a land not my own and I was there for a long time and the fourth generation, it's time to

return.

So it's time to up and come and we're going home.

Finally, thank God, "vayeishev Yaakov

be'eretz megurei aviv be'eretz Cana'an."

Look at my fathers. My fathers all failed to actualize the promise of Jewish nationhood.

They tried, but

they failed. They were just strangers in the land that God promised.

They were just strangers.

Not me,

I am settling down here. I am putting down roots because I can be confident in the Abrahamic promise of God that I am going to come, the fourth generation has returned and it's up to me. My life is over.

I've done everything. I've come back from Laban, I've survived Esau and I'm settling down and I'm having a family. We're going to have tribes, thank God, we're going to build the land, we're going to

have the land of Israel, it's all going to be good.

"Bikesh Yaakov leyshev beshalva".

Jacob thought it was

all over.

It was tranquility time. He didn't see what was coming.

"Kafatz alav rogzo shel Yosef," then

Joseph came and took him down.

Now, listen to the language of "vayeishev Yaakov b'eretz megurey aviv b'eretz Cana'an," and tell me what elements you hear in this verse that's highlighted on your screen. It's not just the vayeishev, it's the ger. It's not just the ger, it's the father. It's settling, ger and father all in the same verse.

Now, look at the relationship between the verses, you will see that the verse here in Exodus is looking to

the verse in Genesis as a kind of commentary to help you understand what's happening in Exodus. In

Genesis, Jacob thought his life was over, "vayeishev Yaakov b'eretz megurey aviv," he was settling down

in the place that his father was only sojourners. Now, here is Moses, "vayo'el Moshe," Moses is content

"lashevet et ha'ish," to settle down with who? With the man. What kind of man? His father-in-law,

right. So whereas Jacob settled down in the land of his fathers, Moses is settling down in the land of his

father-in-law, with his father-in-law, and he's getting married. What does he name his child? He named his child Gershom because I was a stranger there.

So in other words, Jacob settled in the land in which his fathers were strangers. Moses now settles with a

man who is his father and has a son and names his son Ger (stranger). So another words, it's almost like

both -- Moses like Jacob is looking back to the past, right, to the time of gerut, as a distant, bygone

memory of tragic times. As I build a fuzzy-wuzzy life for myself, right, as everything is good. So that's

what Jacob did and that's what Moses is doing. Moses too, yes, it was terrible, Egypt, I'm a stranger,

right, really I belong there, but thank God I'm here. Really I should make aliyah, I shouldn't make aliyah, I'm really not sure, but I'm here and I have families and I name them after and it's good and ger.

If the story ends here, this is it. Moses is failed -- Moses is Reuben himself. Just as Reuben failed, so did

Moses fail. Nice try, like Reuben, right, good intentions but no cigar.

Audience Member: "Eretz megurey aviv," it's interesting that ger has -- megurey aviv means that going to where I was and should be fuzzy-wuzzy, but by the same token, ger and gur it's (inaudible 00:59:49) im Lavan garti and it just said -- the ger has two different -- another words, megurey aviv is sort of a posit, I'm going back to my roots to where I belong.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes.

Audience Member: Not being a stranger.

Rabbi David Forhman: No, that's true. What I'm saying is, is that both Moses and Jacob are sort of

reminiscing about gerus in the past as a way of building their future. Let's put it that way. thinking about how his fathers were strangers, right.

Audience Member: I think the keyword though is in both cases vayeishev.

Jacob is

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Yes, that's exactly the keyword because vayeishev is a bad word.

Vayeishev is

where you're settling down somewhere that you do not belong. Midian, right. He is settling in Midian.

Moses does not belong settling in

Audience Member: Is Moses the Egyptian stranger? Does he betray himself as the Egyptian?

Rabbi David Fohrman: No, I'm not saying he is an Egyptian. He understands that his heart belongs

with the Jews. He got that. What am I going to do, if you look -- if you're Moses, by the way, it's perfectly understandable, right. It's perfectly understandable. I was trying, I gave it the old college try, okay, I mean, I did. I killed an Egyptian, I saved Jews, I was doing -- what could I do already? I was a

one-man saving machine. I'm number one on the FBI most wanted list and every SS officer in Egypt is

looking for me. I'm out of here. What am I supposed to do? life. It's perfectly understandable, right.

I'm sad about it, but I'm building a new

Enter God. "Vayehi bayamim harabim haheim vayamat melech Mitzrayim vaya'anchu Bnei Yisrael min

ha'avoda vayizaku vata'al shavatam el Elokim min ha'avoda." Now, somebody else is hearing, aren't

they, and it's not Pharaoh. It's God. "Vayishma Elokim et na'akatam," and God heard their pain.

"Vayizkor Elokim et brito et Avraham ve'et Yitzchak ve'et Yaakov vayar Elokim et Bnei Yisrael," and God saw, God hears, God saw. "Vayeda Elokim," and God knew.

The next thing that you know. Now, if you think about it, hearing and seeing, we always say "eino

domeh shmiah lere'iah". Seeing is more vivid, right. What's even more vivid? Hearing is when you

take something from the outside and you bring it into yourself. Seeing is when you take something

much more immediate into yourself. Then, what happens is, when you internalize all of that you know.

The next thing that happens, if you're a normal human being or if you're a normal being at all, if you're God, is if you see the pain of others and you don't deafen yourself to it and you really hear and you really see and you really know, what do we call that you know? We call that -- know is always connected, by the way, with connection.

Audience Member: Intimacy.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Intimacy, right. "Vayeda Adam et Chava ishto."

To connect.

God connects

with the pain of his people. "Vayeda Elokim." English?

Audience Member: Empathy.

When you connect with pain, what do we call that in

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Empathy.

God empathizes, when you feel the pain. The next thing that

happens when you're in a position of empathy is you act, right. That's "yad chazaka uvizro'a netuyah."

You stretch out your arm, right. That's the next thing that happens. So the next thing that happens is

God acts. What is God's act? God's act is that He selects Moses.

Now, think about it for a moment. I know I don't have time to do this with you now, I'll get to it next

week. Think about it for a moment. Why do you think Moses was picked at the sneh (burning bush)?

Why do you think Moses was picked at the burning bush? There are a lot of possibilities. interesting possibility is, what did God see about Moses that made Him want to pick him?

Audience Member: Well, he was looking for the (inaudible 01:03:50). Audience Member: The sympathy.

One

Rabbi David Fohrman:

The answer is, they shared the same values.

Who is God?

God is the Reuben in

the sky. Do you understand?

Audience Member: Yeah.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

No one messes with God.

Oh, so Pharaoh got in the way of this Reuben.

Pharaoh got in the way because "vayishma Pharaoh." Well, you know, I can hear too. When I hear and

when I see -- so basically, what God is saying to Moses, in essence, we'll see it actually in the language, is God comes to earthly Reuben, so to speak, Moses, and it's almost as if God is saying, you and me, we

really should get on the same team. I mean, we would make a great team.

Look at you.

You know,

look at me. I stand for the same thing you stand for. Only difference between you and me, I got a lot

more power than you, right. We should be on the same team. We have the same values. The Reuben

in the sky is talking to the Reuben on the ground and telling him, get back into the game. belong on the sidelines.

You don't

Audience Member: So why didn't He do that right away?

Rabbi David Fohrman: What?

Audience Member: Like why didn't he -- when God, like, He sees Moses's acting, how long later, I mean, many years later all of a sudden?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

You've got to ask God.

I don't --

Audience Member: 01:05:17).

No, I'm saying in terms of this story, it's not exactly, you know, it's not (inaudible

Audience Member: It's almost like he died (inaudible 01:05:19).

Rabbi David Fohrman: He didn't pick him out of nowhere.

Audience Member: There's a time that comes (inaudible 01:05:24).

Rabbi David Fohrman: He didn't pick him out of nowhere, right.

Audience Member: They had the same --

Rabbi David Fohrman: He didn't pick him out of nowhere. He picked him out of somewhere.

Audience Member: Here (inaudible 01:05:29) strange way.

Rabbi David Fohrman: What's that?

Audience Member: It was the timing. The timing was --

Rabbi David Fohrman: He picked him out of somewhere, right. I'll just give you a little glimpse into

where we're going next week without showing it to you, but just to prove this one point to you. Look

at God's words to Moses, God's introduction to Moses. He says the following, "vayomer Hashem." Let's

read these words. "Ra'oh ra'iti et ani ami asher beMitzrayim." I have seen the suffering of My people.

"Ve'et tza'akatam shamati mipnei nogsav." I have heard their cries. "Ki yadati ... ve'ered lehatzilo miyad Mitzrayim."

Hello, does anyone want to quote Reuben? Audience Member: It's "ki yadati."

Rabbi David Fohrman:

"Ki yadati et machovav."

So I've come to internalize it, right. "Va'ered lehatzilo

miyad Mitzrayim." Now, I'm going to act on it. I'm going to save them. What was Reuben's

language? "Vayishma Reuven vayatzilehu miyadam." I'm going to do that too. "Va'ered lehatzilo

miyad Mitzrayim." I'm going to take them out.

I'm going to pull them out of the pit.

"Uleha'aloto,"

right. There's the "ha'aloto."

"Uleha'aloto min ha'aretz hahi."

Although, there it's God, but maybe it's

God through Moses, right. "Uleha'aloto min ha'aretz hahi." I'm going to take them out "el eretz tova

urechava el eretz zavat," a land flowing with milk and honey. Now, it turns out that there's a little

chiasm here. Here it is in reverse. "Ve'ata," and now, "hinei tza'akas Bnei Yisrael ba'ah eilai," the screams have come to me, "vegam ra'iti," and I have seen, "et halachatz asher Mitzrayim lochatzim

otam," right.

--

So what have you had, see a little chiasm. See, hear, save, hear, see.

You got it?

So it's like

Audience Member: I think the previous verses -- I was going to ask it, it said "shamati vera'iti." I was going to say maybe that's interesting, first you hear the external and then you use your insight. Re'iya it not just seeing, it's insight. Then you internalize and see the insight (inaudible 01:07:23).

Rabbi David Fohrman: It could be.

Audience Member: I also wanted to say that for Reuben and Simon. For Reuben seeing is a visionary, it

can take you very far. Hearing, even though you can internalize it and it may impact on your part, it's like, it's more a meaningful thing.

Audience Member: I'm saying the opposite that he is --

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay.

Although --

Audience Member: In terms of, if you're talking about Reuben, Reuben's story (inaudible 01:07:49).

Reuben is -- he had this long-term vision of what was going to be. what was going to be as to a momentary hearing.

God had this long-term vision of

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Right. Okay. It could be.

For now, all I want to leave you with is that in the

next story we have the meeting of the divine Reuben, sort to speak, with the earthly, imperfective Reuben and we want to see where it goes. One of the interesting questions also is, have we left Joseph

behind? Because what we've done now, textually, is we've gone backwards through the Joseph story to

its first verse. So seemingly, we're done -- because how far can you go. We went all the way from the

death of Joseph all the way backwards through Joseph's life ending up with the first verse, so we should be done.

It turns out we're not done.

We're not done.

You know why?

You're going to see next an amazing

thing textually. I'm just going to tell you, textually what you see next is mind blowing. What you've

gone through is all of the enslavement of Egypt leading up to the burning bush through Joseph's life,

going all the way backwards to the first verse of Joseph's life. Now, Ge'ulat Mitzrayim (the Redemption

of Egypt) starts. What you're going to see now is we haven't left the Joseph story behind.

Now, you're going to replay the Joseph story forwards. Instead of going backwards, we're going to play

it forwards and everything that went wrong in the Joseph story is now going to go right in this story.

So in other words, when we did the enslavement of Egypt, what happened is that everything that happened in the Joseph story crumbled and led to disaster in the enslavement of Egypt. Everything that's

happening now is going to be everything that went wrong. We're going to redo, and it's going to lead

to the redemption from Egypt. So what we have to do is begin from the beginning, the very first verse

of the Joseph story and work our way through and we will see the burning bush.

Rabbi Fohrman: So we haven't met for a couple of weeks. Basically, we've been looking at what I've

been calling Yetzi'at Mitzrayim (the Exodus from Egypt) through the rearview mirror. As we've been

going forwards through the Exodus from Egypt story, we've been looking at the Joseph story backwards. We were trying to figure out where all of this led us. What I suggested to you last time we got together is that, seemingly, the end of this pattern leaves us in a disconcerting place.

What I mean by that is that if you trace the end of the pattern -- the end of the pattern is going to be, how far can you go moving forward through the Exodus from Egypt story and moving backwards to the

Joseph story?

So there's a logical end to that progression.

When you get to the beginning of the Joseph

story, you're done, right? It's basic mathematics. Probably the wrong the answer, but seemingly, that's

the answer. If you go backwards through the Joseph story, once you reach the beginning of the Joseph story, you can't go much further.

So it turns out that that is right here, this verse over here, which I've highlighted on the screen for you,

Verse 21, in Chapter 2.

"Vayo'el Moshe lashevet et ha'ish va'yitein et Tziporah bito l'Moshe.

Vateiled

ben Vayikra et shemo Geirshom ki amar geir hayiti b'eretz nachriyah." These are the words of Moses

meeting up with Jethro, getting married, having a child, Gershom. It turns out that these words are the

end. This is it. Right over here, the end of Chapter 3, this is the end of the progression that started from the very beginning of Shemot (Exodus), which is the Exodus from Egypt in the rearview mirror, seeing

the Joseph story, because this is the parallel to the very first verse in the Joseph story. all the way to the beginning.

This takes us back

What happened? So what happened was, until now -- to give you a very brief review, until now, the

main action that had been happening in these parallels between the Exodus from Egypt story and the Joseph story had basically been revolving around another iteration of the story of Mechirat Yosef (the

sale of Joseph). That story had been told from Reuben's perspective, so to speak, three times. In other

words, in the world of Exodus, there seem to be three iterations, as it were, of the sale of Joseph from Reuben's perspective.

There is what we can, in short, call corrupted Reuben, what we can call exalted Reuben and what we can

call plain old Reuben himself. Corrupted Reuben is the first iteration we meet. That is represented by

Pharaoh. What does Pharaoh do? Everything Pharaoh does is a play off of Reuben's language from the

Sale of Joseph. When Pharaoh throws babies in the Nile drowning them, the language of the throwing

babies in the Nile is exactly the same -- just about exactly the same -- as throwing Joseph in the pit, from Reuben's perspective.

Reuben was the one who says "Hashlichu oto el habor," cast him in the pit. The verb shlach (cast), Shin, Lamed, Chaf, together with haborah (the pit), Hei before the noun Hei after the noun and that gets

mimicked by Pharaoh. "Kol habein hayilod haye'orah tashlichuhu." Hei before, Hei after. Tashlichuhu

(cast), same verb. Right, the same thing is happening. This is corrupted Reuben because whereas Reuben tries to save, Pharaoh is trying to kill.

In a way, this version of corrupted Reuben takes the worst moment of the Sale of Joseph and kind of magnifies it and multiplies it. When I say the worst moment of the Sale of Joseph, let's just talk about what the worst moment of the Sale of Joseph is. The worst moment of the Sale of Joseph is basically

where the brothers have agreed they're going to kill Joseph. What are they doing, in effect, by killing

Joseph? They're actually doing something -- as Judah later on says, they're doing something which is

irrational. Because remember Judah's critique of the plan offered by Reuben, right? The brothers have accepted Reuben's plan. They're going to throw him in the pit; he's going to expire in the pit. Then, Judah comes along, sees the Ishmaelites and what are Judah's words?

"Mah betza ki naharog et achinu v'chisinu et damo." What do we gain, what profit do we reap from

killing our brother and covering up his blood? Let's actually make some money on the deal and it will be

a little bit better for us. We won't be so morally culpable. We're not going to kill him. It'll be better for

Joseph. It'll be a win-win situation. "Mah betza," what profit do we get out of killing our brother.

"Lechu v'nimkerenu laYishm'eilim." Let's sell him to the Ishmaelites, make some money on it.

So that means that -- if you now abstract the process and go back to Reuben's plan, which the brothers had accepted before Judah came along, that means that, at the point, the brothers were sort of doing something irrational. They were going to kill Joseph by leaving him in the pit, thereby denying themselves whatever profit they would make. It just wouldn't make sense.

Now, if you think about it, that gets corrupted in Pharaoh's world. Because who were the Jews? His

slaves. So if I go and I start killing all the males, what am I doing to my GDP? Where's my bottom line

here?

Do you understand? I'm working against myself economically.

So Pharaoh is guilty of the same

economic neurosis that the brothers were at this moment that Pharaoh mimics Reuben's words by let's throw him in the pit. Except this time, the pit is full of water. The pit is the Nile.

So it really is -- this is corrupted Reuben. Because remember, Reuben had just said this as an attempt to

save Joseph.

Reuben wasn't trying to get rid of him. It was a pretense.

For Pharaoh, it's not a pretense.

Pharaoh is going to really carry this out; Pharaoh is going to make this happen. By the way, there's a --

did I mention to you my gematria (numerical value) here? I'm not a big numerical value guy. know what, I'm not going to do this because I don't want to --

Do you

Audience Member: Oh, come on. No, go ahead.

Rabbi Fohrman: All right. Fine.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:07:56) do numerical values.

Rabbi Fohrman: Right, that's why. All right. I'm going to tell it to you anyway. It's just kind of

interesting. In the "Haye'orah tashlichu'hu" and "Hashlichu oto el habor," so there's this system of

numerical value that ignores place value. Are you familiar with that?

Audience Member: The hidden letters?

Do you know what place value is?

Rabbi Fohrman: No, the tens and the ones. Basically, in this theory, you ignore the place value of the

number. What's the place value of a number?

So ten, hundred, thousand, all the same.

So it means that

Alef is the same as Yud, which is the same as Kaf and Beit is the same as Chaf and Gimmel -- so if you

buy that, think about "Haye'orah tashlichu'hu," and "Hashlichu oto el habor." Think about the

difference between ye'or and bor. Not much.

The Reish is the same. The middle Vav is the same. What's the only difference? The Beit in bor versus

the Yud Alef in ye'or.

The Yud Alef would be what?

Two.

Beit would be two.

It's the same. So

"Haye'orah tashlichu'hu" becomes "Hashlichu oto el habor." It's just a little spooky thing, again, just

throwing it out there, right. Again, I'm not a big numerical value guy, so take it for what it's worth. The bottom line is you don't have to go the numerical value; the language is the same. That's what's happening.

So there's corrupted Reuben. There's exalted Reuben. Exalted Reuben, of course, is Bat Pharaoh (the daughter of Pharaoh). The daughter of Pharaoh comes along, uses all of Reuben's language and redeems Reuben. When I talk about Reuben here, I'm talking about Reuben of two moments in history, I'm talking about Reuben at the pit and then Reuben, later on, when they're discussing plans among Joseph.

At that point, Reuben says to his brothers, "Ha'lo amarti aleichem leimor al techet'u bayeled," I told you not to do this. There's all this talk about that we say his pain, but we didn't hear his cries. We talked

about Reuben. Reuben gets his name from seeing, remember. I saw the pain of my mother. gets his name from hearing. Reuben is thwarted by Simeon, the hearer. Remember all this?

Simeon

Basically, you get all this language again with the daughter of Pharaoh. The daughter of Pharaoh, "Vatiftach vatir'eihu et hayeled," she goes, she sees the child, "v'hinei na'ar bocheh," she hears the child

crying. Her response to hearing the child crying is that response of brotherhood. about last time.

This is what we talked

I mentioned to you the word mizeh as the cardinal word of shattered brotherhood. Yet, the greatness of

the daughter of Pharaoh is that she hears the cries and when her brain kicks in and says, my god, you

can't do this. You're Hitler's daughter, how can you save a Jewish child? The Jews are the snakes. The

Jews are not our brothers. The Jews are the ones we got to get rid of because they're so dangerous and

all that. The words are -- when she realizes that "Miyaldei ha'Ivrim zeh."

Now, what's chilling about that is there are those words. Mizeh is the words of shattered brotherhood,

the words that go back to Joseph in the pit. The last words that Joseph hears from the brothers are

"Nas'u mizeh," they left here, they abandoned brotherhood. I made you the argument last week that you

can actually trace mizeh throughout the Torah and mizeh is always shattered brotherhood. At least, the

argument I made to you is that mizeh, whenever it replaces mipoh is shattered brotherhood. I would

actually expand that argument to say that wherever mizeh appears is actually shattered brotherhood.

We can do this one day, but if you look and see all the places where mizeh appears, it's probably always

shattered brotherhood.

It's always like a little reference to shattered brotherhood.

I'll give you just a real

quick example. Where are the other mizehs? The luchot (tablets). The tablets are written, "Mizeh u'mizeh heim ketuvim." Talking about the eigel (golden calf). They leave the place of mizeh u'mizeh was. The sin of the golden calf was shattered brothers, where one person killed his brother, right. "Mizeh u'mizeh heim ketuvim," what's the whole purpose of the tablets? What is the purpose of the tablets?

So here you have to go back to -- so I don't know if you're familiar with my talk on the tablets. This is

one of my more famous talks. I give it all the time. So if you haven't heard it, basically it's where -- it's

the structure of the Aseret Hadibrot (Ten Commandments) is two.

It's five, five and five.

So if you add

it up, basically, what it all boils down to is that the Ten Commandments are about respect about non- violation, non-violation in five different spheres. There are five basic principles that I don't violate you.

Why would I not violate you? Either by killing you, or by committing adultery, or by stealing from

you, or by damaging your reputation by lying about you, but all these things are different levels of

violation. Why would I violate you? Why would I think that I could?

The answer is, if there's an essential lack of brotherhood between us, if I'm not the same as you, if you're the other and I am me, then I can do whatever I want. What the Ten Commandments are, so to speak, they are "Mizeh u'mizeh heim ketuvim." They're written, so to speak, on the stones of shattered

brotherhood.

They're meant to bridge shattered brotherhood.

Because non-violation is to recognize the

essential brotherhood of someone, therefore, we don't violate him. So that's the Ten Commandments.

The other mizeh u'mizeh, by the way, is what? "Keruv echad mikatzah u'keruv echad mikatzah mizeh." Where do we have that? In the Mishkan (Tabernacle). That also is the same thing. What's the whole idea -- the angels above the aron (ark) are --their faces are "Ish el achiv," one brother facing the other.

Where are they? They're also perched on shattered brotherhood. The whole point of that is that, you

know, the famous Midrash about when the keruvim -- they turn away from each and when they turn close to each other is when God can be there. That makes perfect sense.

The idea is that -- one of the themes that I'm really getting to in this whole thing is that there's no such thing as maintaining your allegiance to God as a father and breaking your allegiance to your brother

because the family is the family.

So if you recognize that there's a father, then there's a brother.

If you

don't recognize there's a brother, that's a way of being kofer (heretical) on the father because what are

you doing?

He's your brother.

So you must not believe in this family unit. That's what Chazal (our

Sages) are really saying. When the Jews are treating one another as brothers, then God can come into the Tabernacle. That's the "Mizeh u'mizeh mitzuvim" over there as well.

The very first mizeh in the Torah. Hagar. The angel to Hagar. "Ei mizeh ba'at v'anah teilchi." Isn't

that an interesting one? Where have you come from? Did she come from a place of shattered

brotherhood?

She did, right. Because what happened where she came from?

"Vate'aneha Sarai

vativrach mipanehah." Inui is the cardinal word of shattered brotherhood.

Inui is oppression.

You don't

do that to your brother. She was being subjected to a non-brotherhood kind of -- she was running away

from a place of non-brotherhood.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:15:40).

Rabbi Fohrman:

Yeah, it actually is.

How could he criticize Sarah?

Audience Member: No, how could it have been done otherwise?

Rabbi Fohrman:

How could it have been done otherwise? This is a long schmooze.

You have to really

look at that story in detail. My view of that story, without getting into it in detail, is that Sarah was not a

vindictive, spurned mistress or whatever. She was doing something very rational. Unfortunately, it was

also very painful. What she was doing that was rational was -- what was her plan? What was she doing? Audience Member: She wanted to separate Ishmael from Isaac.

Rabbi Fohrman:

No, that was before -- that's later. This is before.

This is the first time around, where

Ishmael is first born.

So when Hagar is pregnant so "Vate'aneha Sarai vativrach mipanehah."

Now, what

happened was is that Hagar was treating her lightly. It says "Vateikal gevirtah b'einehah." So there are

two ways to interpret that. One is, you know, Sarah couldn't handle that her mistress was being uppity. That's not, I think, what was actually going on. What was going was that Sarah had a plan that --

Sarah's treating her lightly was about to destroy. What was the plan?

The plan was that Sarah had come to the conclusion that -- and you see you this in the pesukim (verses)

-- that she was not going to have children. God had just appeared to Abraham in the brit bein habetarim

(Covenant between the Parts) and said you're going to have children. As Rashi says, Sarah looks at that

and says, you asked God the wrong question. You shouldn't have said, God, what are you going to give

me? I don't have any children. You should've said, what are you going to give us? We don't have any

children. So God answered, you and said you're going to have children. He didn't answer me and say

I'm going to be part of it. Basically, you left me out and that's why she's angry at him when it says that Sarah was angry at Abraham.

So what happened? Why was she angry? The answer is that Abraham had done something originally to precipitate this. Sarah's plan basically was, if I'm going to get excluded -- and that was her mistake, to believe that she was excluded. Just because Abraham didn't especially include her didn't mean that she

was being excluded, right. She jumped to that conclusion. She said well, you've got a promise here. I

don't have a promise.

I want to make sure that I have a hand in this developing nation.

Therefore, if I'm

not going to have the biological child, I'm at least going to control the biological child.

So if I can control who the mother is, then I have a shot at raising the kid. So why don't you take Hagar

as the mother?

Why?

Not because Hagar is especially wonderful to be the mother of the Jewish people,

but because she's my servant, and therefore I can raise her. So it's going to be a surrogate motherhood.

The deal with that is that, you know, a surrogate motherhood always goes wrong when the biological mother decides she wants to keep the child, which is basically what happens here. Once Hagar gets pregnant and starts treating Sarah lightly, i.e. no longer as my mistress, but as an equal, because I'm a

wife, you're a wife. What just happened to Sarah's plan? That's the end of her plan. So I'm going to be

the mother now, Hagar's basically saying.

Sarah's attempt to subjugate her is nothing more than to try to put the genie back into the bottle when

the genie can't be put back in the bottle anymore. It was tragic and Hagar runs away. When Hagar

runs away because of Sarah's inui, so then think of that. Here you got this woman by the name of Hagar, who just happens to be Egyptian, who's running away from oppression right after Abraham gets

a prophecy, "Geir yih'yeh zar'acha b'eretz lo lahem." Now, what was her name again? Hager. Right

after Abraham gets this prophecy that "Geir yih'yeh zar'acha b'eretz lo lahem va'avadum v'inu otam," and they're going to be subjected to oppression for 400 years. We don't know where, but it just happens to be in Egypt.

The next thing you meet is "Shifchah Mitzrit u'shmah Hagar," who gets subjected to oppression in

Abraham's house.

Kind of suggestive.

So the very first mizeh was the mizeh of shattered brotherhood

that Hagar runs away from. Ultimately, we run away from the same mizeh. When we run away, God

says there's going to be one more plague, "Acharei kein yeshalach et'chem mizeh k'shalcho kalah gareish yegareish et'chem mizeh." Our mizeh is Egypt. That's our place of shattered brotherhood.

By the way, if you think about "Gareish yegareish et'chem mizeh," God's language, what does that

remind you of? Who got kicked out of a place of slavery with the language of gareish? Hagar. Six

chapters later, when Sarah says to Hagar "Gareish ha'amah hazot." So she's expelled as gareish and

ultimately, when we leave, we're also gareish.

God says that you're going to get gareish, too.

You're

going to get gareish from mizeh just like Hagar got gareish mizeh.

Remember when the Jews -- by the way, when they leave, they take their bread and they wrap it up and

they put it "B'simlosam al shichmam," they put it on their shoulders. What does bread on the shoulder as

you leave slavery remind you of? Hagar. Hagar takes the child, "Sam al shichmah," places it on her

shoulder with the bread. We, too, we take our children, we take our bread and we put it on our shoulder, we leave. Hagar has a water crisis. She's wondering around in the dessert and stuck and encounters this terrible water crisis.

What does Pharaoh think about us? "Nevuchim heim ba'aretz sagar aleihem hamidbar." The Jews, they're wandering around the desert. They're facing this water crisis, this yam (sea). They don't have

any water to drink. So Pharaoh runs after us in the same way. Basically, the way we leave Egypt, we're

mimicking the way Hagar leaves Egypt, too. Anyways, so the point is that mizeh is one of those words,

you know. It resonates wherever it is. That was a tangent. Just kind of letting you know. Yeah?

Audience Member: What brotherhood was this? (Inaudible 00:22:37) they're running from shattered brotherhood.

Rabbi Fohrman: So the argument is that there's different levels of brotherhood, right. One level of

brotherhood is your brother.

So you would say well, you and Naomi are you brothers?

Well, you're

not brothers in terms of immediate family, but you're brothers in terms of you are all from the same nation. There is a common brotherhood there. That's why we have "V'ahavta lerei'acha kamocha," or

"V'chei achicha imach," right, this language.

We call our countrymen brothers, but larger than that, there's a kind of brotherhood humanity. That level of brotherhood is something, which the Egyptians were ignoring. It's something which she, the

daughter of Pharaoh, is upholding. So my point just is that when she says "Miyaldei ha'Ivrim zeh," her

greatness is that she's inserting -- she's breaking the mizeh with the yaldei ha'Ivrim and she's saying that

the yaldei ha'Ivrim are not shattered brotherhood. The yaldei ha'Ivrim are our brothers.

Audience Member: She had some relationship to Hagar. Hagar was not allowed to bring up this potential very important child and she does.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, kind of interesting.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:23:51 - 00:23:54).

Rabbi Fohrman:

Yes, we do.

So you also have --

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:24:00).

Rabbi Fohrman: Right. Yeah, and you also have --

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:24:05 - 00:24:07).

Rabbi Fohrman:

When there's no more water and then the -- yeah, that is interesting. Okay.

Good.

Anyway, so you've got three Reuben paradigms, you have the corrupted Reuben of Pharaoh; you have exalted Reuben of the daughter of Pharaoh and all the same language of hearing and seeing and saving. These are all Reuben languages, you see with the daughter of Pharaoh. We talked about this before.

Then, you have Reuben himself.

Now, the key point to remember is that Reuben himself -- regular, old plain manila Reuben -- that is

Moses.

Why?

Who is Reuben? Reuben himself, neither exalted nor corrupted, is the one who

desperately wants to save Joseph but gets thwarted in doing so. How does he get thwarted? He, the seer

-- very good at seeing, not so good at the auditory piece of it -- gets thwarted when it comes to auditory

perception. So Simeon, our hearer, ends up thwarting him and he can't get any purchasing power with

his plans. What's more is he sort of gets ignored. If you look at Reuben's role in the story, there's something very tragic about Reuben's role in the story, which has been -- no one's listening yet, really.

In other words, it's true, he does get them -- in other words, the difference between Judah, for example, and Reuben is that Judah feels that he can make a moral argument to the brothers and they're going to

listen. So Judah comes and says -- it's a quasi-moral argument -- "Mah betza ki naharog et achinu

v'chisinu et damo. Lechu v'nimkerenu laYishmeilim v'yadeinu al nehi bo ki achinu besareinu hu." He

is, after all, our brother.

Judah's making the brotherhood argument.

Now, he's not making a very good

brotherhood argument because if he really is your brother, you wouldn't sell him either. Still, he is

arguing that we can't kill him because he's our brother, and the brothers listen to him. "Vayishme'u echav."

Reuben has no such luck. Reuben never even attempts to get listened to in that kind of way. Instead, Reuben comes up with a circuitous end-run around the brothers, which is, okay, we're going to kill him, but we'll kill him this way. That way -- he says to himself -- I can come back later on and save him.

Reuben doesn't feel he can convince the brothers.

It happens another time, by the way, when Reuben's ignored. The other time that Reuben's ignored is at the end of the story when Reuben comes back to the brothers and says he is not in the pit. What's the

brother's response?

No response.

Their response is good, let's get an alibi together.

They take the coat;

they put the blood on the coat. to.

They don't even respond to Reuben.

So Reuben doesn't get responded

Audience Member: Jacob also doesn't respond when -- in the story with Benjamin in going down to

Egypt. Jacob (inaudible 00:26:57).

Rabbi Fohrman: Correct, he doesn't respond there as well.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:26:58) kill my own kids if I don't bring him back. That was bizarre (inaudible 00:27:02).

Rabbi Fohrman:

Right. It was.

So here's Moses.

Who is Moses?

If you look at Moses, the language

you get with Moses is, on the one hand, he has this destiny coming to him from the daughter of

Pharaoh. The destiny is that you got to decide who your brother is.

You got to save your brother.

You

got to reach out and see their pain, which he does, right. He identifies with the Jews. He didn't have to identify with them. He could call himself a prince in the palace and they're the others. He doesn't and he goes.

The language you always see with Moses is the seeing, seeing, seeing. "Vayar besivlotam," he sees their pain. This is Reuben, the one who sees. "Vayar ish Mitzri." He's going and he's saving everyone and

that's great. Then something happens, which is, he gets thwarted. "Vayishma Paroh." Oh, isn't that

interesting? Pharaoh, the auditory one, comes along and thwarts him, just like the original Reuben got thwarted by Simeon, the hearer.

All of a sudden, Moses' great career as the one-man vigilante superhero saving the Jews from oppression of Egypt comes to a very abrupt end. What happens? "Vayevakeish laharog et Moshe vayivrach Moshe

mip'nei Paroh vayeishev b'Eretz Midyan vayeishev al hab'eir." So all of a sudden, he's gone. He's out of

there. Basically, you've just sidelined the one person who can change everything, the one person who can save the Jews.

These are the three iterations of Reuben; corrupted Reuben, exalted Reuben and Reuben himself. Now,

the problem is that as long as Moses is Reuben himself, his effectiveness is limited. Because what can I

really do? By the way, isn't it chilling when Moses, later on -- his last protest to God, I can't do this is,

"Lo ish devarim anochi." Isn't that interesting? As the living embodiment of this generation's Reuben, to say to myself that my weakness is, I'm not an ish devarim, I can't convince people. "Gam mitmol, gam mishilshom," he says. Yesterday, I wasn't an ish devarim. The day before, I wasn't an ish devarim.

I was never an ish devarim. You wonder what he's really saying, right.

Reuben, in my past, wasn't an ish devarim. If I'm, you know, channeling his energy, how do you expect it from me? I don't think Moses is aware of this, but the narrator is aware of it and the narrator is telling you that -- it's almost like, I don't know what make of it. Is it like a past life regression thing? I don't think Moses is aware of this, but to some extent -- he's the neshama (soul) of Reuben? I don't know. I'm not one of the heebie-jeebies guys, but the bottom line is that he's some sort of existential embodiment

of Reuben. He is the Reuben character. He's living out Reuben's role. His destiny is somehow Reuben's destiny.

He's perfecting Reuben's role.

Audience Member: At the end, his eyes go dim, at the very end of Deuteronomy.

Rabbi Fohrman:

Oh, that's very nice.

Do you hear what Bobby's saying? Isn't it interesting that at the

very end, the last thing we hear about Moses is "V'lo kahasah eino," his eyes would never dim? If you look throughout Moses' life also, look at the appeal that he makes in Parshat Va'etchanan. "Va'etcha'nan

el Hashem ba'eit hahi leimor. Hashem Elokim atah hachilota leharot et avdecha et gadlecha v'et yadcha

hachazakah asher mi Kel bashamayim uva'aretz asher ya'aseh k'ma'asecha v'kigevurotecha. E'eberah na

v'ereh et ha'aretz hatovah asher b'eiver haYarden." What's his whole argument? It's all visual. You've

begun to show me all of these great signs and wonders. I want to see the land. What's God's response?

"Vayit'abeir Hashem bi lema'anchem v'lo shama eilay." Here, again, thwarted at the level of hearing. I

am talking about seeing and God is not listening. Now, God is the Simeon who says no, I'm going to

thwart you.

God says "Al tosef dabeir eilay od badavar hazeh." There's the speaking.

You can't talk to

me about this. You're not going to go in.

Moses' response to the people, at that point, having been thwarted in that way, "V'atah Yisrael, shema el hachukim v'el hamishpatim asher anochi melamed et'chem la'asot, lema'an tich'yu u'vatem virish'tim," I

who can't go into the land because I emphasized seeing and God didn't listen to me. So if you want to

go into the land, you better make sure to listen to the commandments. What happens when you don't

listen and you just focus on the seeing? You don't go into the land.

Do you what the greatest proof of that is? Why can't Moses go into the land? Because he hit the rock.

What was the command? The command was to talk to the rock and the rock will listen. "Kach et

hamateh," take the staff. "V'dibartem el hasela," and speak to the rock "l'eineihem," in front of their eyes. So they're going to be looking, but they're not going to see anything because you are not going to hit

the rock. You are just going to talk. It's going to be a purely auditory experience.

Moses didn't do it. He gave them something to see instead. He hit the rock and he never talked to it,

and because of that, God says you didn't listen. When you don't listen exactly, what happens? You

don't go in the land. So don't keep on emphasizing the sight thing. It's very tragic when Moses, at the

beginning, says "Lo ish devarim anochi," I'm not the man who talks. I'm not the auditory guy; you got the wrong guy. At the end, that's why Moses can't go into the land, he does get to see it.

What's interesting also is what do we remember Moses for?

What do we call Moses?

We call him Moses

our teacher.

How does a teacher teach? A teacher teaches auditorily.

It's interesting that even though in

his lifetime, he was emphasizing the seeing, but his legacy ends up becoming the hearing. He says he wasn't a man of words, put he taught us everything.

Let's go back. Basically, the Joseph chiasm, so to speak -- it's really a chiasm, but basically, it's the rearview mirror of Joseph -- it comes to an end over here with this verse. Once Pharaoh hears this, so then, "Vayavo'u haro'im vayegarshum vayakam Moshe," -- by the way, all this language is all evocative.

Because what really is the destiny of Moses? The destiny of Moses is to save the Jews, to see their pain,

hear their suffering and save them. These are the three Reuben words -- going back to the pit -- seeing, hearing the cries and then acting appropriately, which in Reuben's language is "Vayishma Reuven

vayatzileihu miyadam," and he saved them from their hands. So that's sort of Moses' destiny.

Ultimately, that's going to take place when God says "Gareish yegareish atem mizeh," they're going to

expel you from this.

Now, what's happening?

"Vayavo'u haro'im vayegarshum." Isn't that interesting

language, vayegarshum? And Moses chases away the shepherds. In so doing, "Vayoshi'an," he saves them. That's also evocative, because later on with the Jews, "Vayosha Hashem bayom hahu et Yisrael miyad mitzrayim," that's the language at the sea.

So the language of vayegarshum and vayoshi'an are both languages that are borrowing from the future in

terms of what Moses is going to do with the Jewish People. Not just that, but look at what the girls say.

"Ish Mitzri hitzilanu miyad haro'im."

That's Reuben language also.

"Hitzilanu miyad haro'im",

"vayatzilaihu miyadam," the verse says about Reuben.

My point is Moses is acting out his destiny in Midian. If the story ends here, what happened?

You took

the world's greatest superstar and because Pharaoh heard and decided he wanted to kill him, He sidelined him. Instead of playing baseball and pursuing Babe Ruth's record, he's playing hockey and he's going to

be a nobody. He's on the sidelines. He's in Midian. He's still doing the stuff, which is, he's saving, he's

chasing away, he's saving us from, but his effectiveness is now limited to helping a few girls in Midian oppressed by shepherds, instead of his real destiny, which is to save an entire nation.

If the story ends here -- look how the story ends. "Vayomer el benotav v'ayo lamah zeh azavten es ha'ish

kir'en lo v'yochal lachem," and you left him outside?

He was such a good date.

"Vayo'el Moshe lashevet

et ha'ish," so Moses is content to settle with the man, "vayitein et Tziporah bito l'Moshe," he settles down; marries one of his daughters. "Vateiled bein," starts a family "vayikra et shemo Geirshom ki amar geir hayiti b'eretz nachriyah."

There's something very poignant and wonderful about this. Here's a man whose destiny is salvation.

Look at the name of this child. Do you know what the name of this child is? This child is wistfully

named for the life that he might have had. Do you understand? I remember my old life. I remember

that I really belonged in Egypt and "geir hayiti," I don't even belong here. I'm a sojourner here in a

strange land. You almost hear at the naming party, at the bris for Gershom -- imagine this speech.

I call him Gershom because I really don't belong here. I really should be back with my people.

Unfortunately, Pharaoh's trying to kill me. A person can't really endanger their life. You're not allowed

to go back for that. Thank God, I have the ability to use my God-given strengths here. I can give a very yeshivish speech. I was able to save these daughters. Thank God, I have such a great father-in-law and he was able to give me one of these daughters. It's so good, Jethro, that you're here and you're alive.

You gave me a job. I'm shepherding your sheep and I'm settling down and I'm still able to carry out my

abilities right here in Midian.

Of course, I remember my brothers and that what the name Gershom means, because I remember where

I really am. Even though I'm here, I remember. Boy, do I remember. I really don't belong here, but if

God wills it, I'll get back one day. Meanwhile, thank you for being here, Jethro. It's just terrific and

thank you, everyone, for coming. now.

This is the speech.

You are witnessing the end of Moses' life right

The language that is describing the end of Moses' life is actually the end of the Joseph chiasm. It's the

end of the story. The end of the story evokes the beginning of the story, which is what I did with you

last week. But just to remind you what we did last week, my argument to you was that this language evokes the beginning of the Joseph story, which is Vayeishev, the very first verse, which is Chapter 37, Verse 1.

"Vayeishev Yaakov b'eretz megurei aviv b'Eretz Cana'an." The language vayeishev, "Vayo'el Moshe lashevet et ha'ish." He names his son Gershom, "Ki amar geir hayiti b'eretz nachriyah." Because I'm a

stranger, so my child's name is Gershom. the place where his father was a stranger. they're settling.

By Jacob, it was "Vayeishev Yaakov b'eretz megurei aviv," in Do you understand? His father geir, child geir in a place

Now, go to what the Sages say. What do the Sages tell us about that moment? "

"Bikeish Yaakov leishev beshalvah," he wanted to sit in peace, which is Jacobs also thought he was sitting

on the sidelines. He thought his life was over. These are two men who think their life is over, but God

had other plans for both of them, the opposite of their plans.

Jacob thought his life was over and he was wrong because the bondage in Egypt was just starting. He

didn't realize that Joseph was right around the corner. "Kafatz alav rogzo shel Yosef," the Joseph story

came and dragged him down to Egypt. Moses didn't realize that his life wasn't over either because the

Redemption from Egypt was just about to start. These are literally mirror images of each other. The

beginning of the bondage is in Chapter 37, Verse 1, the mirror of this is the story before the Burning Bush. The Burning Bush is the polar opposite of the Selling of Joseph, which is what we're about to see. It's really very elegant. But if the story ends here, this is a disaster.

One of the interesting techniques you could use, by the way, in reading of the Torah -- you ought to use -- is to play what if the story ended here? That's a game that you can play and it's a very important game to play because it causes you to erase -- in other words, erase everything you know about the story as it continues, ask yourself if the story ended here, what happens? It allows you to become surprised by

the progression of the story. That's what I'm trying to help you understand. If the story ended here, it's

a very different story and what happens next takes the story in a whole different direction. appreciate that until you stop and play what if the story ended here?

You can't

Audience Member: You don't need the word (inaudible 00:42:35 - 00:42:43). It's all about to change.

Rabbi Fohrman:

"Geir hayiti b'eretz nachriyah."

You mean here in Midian, I was a foreigner, but

maybe no longer because I'm settling down?

Audience Member: Settling down or life's about to change. Either way, but hayiti, past tense is interesting.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, it is. The reason why I think it's interesting is because -- I'll tell you why it's

interesting. One reason why it's interesting is because of the word lashevet. Lashevet, historically, is

always the opposite of geir. A geir never settles down. So to the extent that Moses is settling down, you

could argue, he's no longer a geir, maybe that's the past tense. I was a geir until Jethro came and took

me in.

So, again, thank God for Jethro.

That's one way of seeing it.

Another way of seeing it is you wonder -- at least the text offers you the possibility of ambiguity as to

which land he's talking about.

It could be he's talking about Egypt.

So another way of saying it is, thank

God, I finally found my place because I really realized that my place wasn't in Egypt. I was really just a

foreigner there all along. The fact that Pharaoh wants to kill me shows how unwanted I was. Thank

God, Midian is the place for me.

Either way, whichever interpretation you take the answer is the same, which is Midian is the place for

me. I'm settling down and life is good. I can mollify myself with religious names like Gershom while I

build a new life. All of a sudden, that mollification is going to come to a very abrupt end and that is the very next verse.

Look at the very next verse. "Vay'hi bayamim harabim haheim vayamat melech Mitzrayim vayei'anchu

B'nei Yisrael min ha'avodah vayizaku vata'al shavatam el haElokim min ha'avodah. Vayishma Elokim et

na'akatam." Now, isn't it interesting? What sense makes the connection between the Jewish people and

God? Hearing. Isn't that interesting? The people screamed. "Vata'al shavatam el haElokim min

ha'avodah."

"Vayei'anchu B'nei Yisrael min ha'avodah vayizaku."

Now, here's the question.

Who were the Jewish

people crying to?

They weren't crying to Moses; Moses wasn't around.

The answer is they weren't

crying to anyone.

It doesn't say they were crying to anyone.

They were just crying out. That, by the

way, is a very typical slave-mentality response. You see it even with Hagar, the slave. "Eiy mizeh bat

v'anah teileichi." Hagar can't answer anah teileichi. She could only answer eiy mizeh bah. "Mipnei Sarai gevirti anochi borachat," she says. I'm running away from Sarai. I know what pushed me here; I don't know where I'm going.

A slave's mentality -- I give this back to the story of Hagar. This is what inui does to you. Inui is the

pi'el form of the pa'al anah. Anah means to answer, which means that pi'el, the intensive form of it, which we use for oppression, means that the soul of oppression is really just intensive answering. It means to be so reactive that I can't even imagine being proactive, that all I do is answer, answer, answer

but I don't question, question, question. That's to be a slave. All I'm doing is responding. I know the

master's lash on my back. That's why I'm working. no idea.

What am I trying to achieve with my work?

I have

Here, the same kind of thing is happening. The Jews are crying. Where are they going with their crying? They don't even know, but they know that life is hard. That's what they know. They know what's pushing them. They don't know what's pulling them. They don't even know who they're

crying to. Certainly, at the terrestrial sphere, their cries are met with silence, which is to say that the

Egyptians and Pharaoh don't care. What happens is you have an unheard cry at the terrestrial sphere. Unheard cries at the terrestrial sphere have a way of making their way to the celestial sphere.

We see that language in the verse, "Vata'al shavasam el haElokim." That's what it is. It's not that they

cried to God.

They didn't cry to God.

They cried, but the cry not being listened to at the terrestrial

sphere makes its way upward. "Va'ta'al shavasam el haElokim," and God heard the cry. What's interesting about this is that, later on, whenever God demands from us -- what's the one thing God demands from us as people? The answer is to listen. "Shema el hachukim," I'm giving you commandments; I want you to listen to them.

Do you know why God has the authority to ask that of us? Because he listened to us, that's why. He

listened and He responded appropriately. He listened, He took something in and He responded

appropriately.

That's all God asks of us. Listen to me and respond appropriately.

If you really listen, so

then how do I know that you listened? "Lo tosifu el hadavar asher anochi metzaveh es'chem v'lo tigre'u

mimenu." When you do exactly what it is, then I know you listened. If you start adding on, you're not

really listening. Then, you're making it up. things and that, by the way, we call idolatry.

You're fluffing.

You're interpolating your own head into

This goes back to my idolatry and monotheism schmooze, which I talked to you about before. I want to

now connect that idolatry and monotheism schmooze to this because it's all one thing. I argued to you before that the weekly Torah portion of Va'etchanan shows a certain progression, a certain continuum in

idolatry and in monotheism.

The continuum is a way of connecting seeing, hearing and doing.

There's

a productive way to do it and there's an unproductive way to do it.

I wanted to talk about this for a moment, because if there's anything that I want you to take away from this long extended series about Joseph, this, to me, is one of the really important things to take away.

This is important. Here's my advertisement for what I'd like you to take away from it.

The difference between monotheism and polytheism, I argued to you a few months ago, is this; it all has

to do with how you connect seeing, hearing and doing. A polytheist, a pagan, starts with seeing. They

want to see their god, because to the extent that religion tries to create a relationship between the man and the divine, it's very difficult to have a relationship with someone you can't see. I see my wife, I can

touch my wife, I can hug her, I can see her in the morning. Studies show that when you don't see

people, it's very hard to keep in touch with them. If you never end up seeing people, it's hard to keep in

touch with them. Human beings have this desire to see their God. The problem is God can't be seen.

The first mistake that a polytheist makes is compromises to get out of the problem, which is fine. I'll

make a god; I can do that. I can make a god that I can see.

Now I can relate to it.

Does the god speak

to me? The answer is no, it's a thing so, obviously, it can't speak to you. Does that mean I don't worship

the god because it's a thing?

No.

I don't admit it's a thing. I think that the god wants me to do certain

things, but if the god isn't communicating the things that I'm supposed to do to worship them, then how do I know what they are?

The answer is I make it up. Now, I don't acknowledge that I make it up. I pretend that the god is

talking to me, but, in fact, I'm not really listening. So what happens is I pretend that I'm being talked to,

but, in fact, I'm just projecting my own -- either my own as an individual or my own societal desires, subjective desires, implicit desires on the god and saying the god wants me to serve it by doing this, which is why Ba'al Pe'or is such a Freudian kind of thing. It's all these really weird, Freudian ways of worshipping god.

It's really just neuroses that we project. We give ourselves the permission to do it because we say that

god wants us to do it.

So we feel very religious and we get to act out our own neuroses.

It's great.

That's the wonderful thing about idolatry. You can do all the stuff that, normally, the ego controls. If

you go back to classical Freudian theory, normally, the superego is going to control the id, but the superego can only control the id if there's an ego. If I understand that it's me who is the one responsible for things, so then the superego is going to control the id. Once I can say I'm no longer responsible for it because the id isn't, but the id is the god and the god wants me to do it, then I'm being very religious and acting it out.

So I get to act out all of my id without any constraints of superego because the god is telling me to do it, which leads to something that my boss Yechezkel Danziger from ArtScroll once said to me. He said do you know what the proof that Peninah was causing Hannah to cry out and the Sages say she did it for

the sake of Heaven. So the head editor at ArtScroll, ArtScroll Gemara project, said the proof for that is

that nobody can be so mean unless they were doing it for the sake of Heaven. That's true.

Think of all the wars and all the pain that religion has brought to the world and that religion corrupted is evil. It allows you to escape responsibility for what you're doing because the god told me to do it. But if

the god isn't telling me to do it and I'm just projecting it on the god, now there are no limits anymore. I can do the whole thing.

Basically, this is the great evil of idolatry. The evil of idolatry is that, basically, idolatry is a narcissistic

system, but you don't even admit that you're a narcissist, which is why it's so dangerous. If I wake up in

the morning and I say hi, I'm a narcissist; how are you? So then, at least you know how to deal with me.

This guy thinks there's nothing in the world but his own pleasure. At least he's honest about it; we get that. We can understand how to deal with a guy like that.

If you meet me and I say, no, I am self-sacrificing for my God, I will do anything to uphold the will of my God and you think I'm a nice religious guy, but really I'm a narcissist because all I'm doing is projecting my own unconscious desires on the God, then I'm a very dangerous being. I'm completely unhinged. It's all sorts of idolatry.

Audience Member: Including burning your children?

Rabbi Fohrman:

Including burning your children, of course.

Read Oedipus.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:53:51 - 00:53:54)?

Rabbi Fohrman: Sure.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:53:55 - 00:53:57).

Rabbi Fohrman: Including burning a child. Have you ever been so frustrated with your child that you

wanted to get rid of him? We all want to burn our children; we just don't.

That's the whole point.

It's

not like parents don't have a desire within them, at some point, to get rid of their children. They do, but they don't do it because they're responsible parents and they understand that, in the long term, you don't do it. If you let your id be unhinged, then you start doing things like this because the god wants you to do it. That's the danger of idolatry.

How does monotheism work? Monotheism basically works and says, look, you can't see your God,

don't make that compromise.

Don't start with seeing. Start with hearing.

You heard your God.

Remember, at Sinai, you didn't see anything. "U'temunah einchem roim zulati kol," all there was was a

voice. It was dark, there was a cloud.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:54:53 - 00:54:59).

Rabbi Fohrman:

You can't see my face, so then I'll pass by.

You'll experience it like that. I don't think

it's says you'll see my --

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:55:07 - 00:55:09).

Rabbi Fohrman: Well, I don't know. The bottom line is that the Sinai experience that we had, "Pen

tishkechu et habrit Hashem Elokeichem asher karat imachem va'asitem lachem pesel temunas kol," (lest

you become destroyed if you make for yourselves a molten image). Why is that a corruption? Because

you need to remember that at Sinai, "U'temunah einchem ro'im zulati kol." This is just what

Va'etchanan says. You saw nothing. All you saw was sound.

What that means is that our religion starts with hearing. We say, okay, yeah, I know you'd really like to

see God. You can't, but the essence of a relationship is hearing and responsiveness to hearing. If you

have that, you have a relationship. So God speaks to you and then your job is not to start by doing --

making yourself a god that you can see.

Your job is to end by doing.

Your job is to take in what you

hear and process it and do faithfully what it is that you hear because then you show me that you're really responsive, you're really taking it in, you've heard, you understood and you didn't add anything to it.

If you add, that's "Lo tosifu al hadavar asher anochi metzaveh et'chem v'lo tigre'u mimenu," in

Va'etchanan. If you add, you compromise the hearing because that's a little bit of idolatry. How does

that work?

Here's how it works.

If religion is really about hearing, hearing is really the difficult part of

life because it's the guts of a relationship, to really listen and communicate.

If we think about what a relationship really is, a relationship is in conversation, in anything. I have to really listen. I have to take in what it is that you are actually saying. I have to then process it and understand what it means in terms of implication, how I should act, both in terms of how I should verbalize a response for you and also how what you're saying should change my life and what I should do with it. I allow myself to open yourself and that what you say should actually affect me and affect my

actions, otherwise we are not having a real conversation. If nothing you can ever say will change my

actions in any kind of way, then we might as well not have this conversation. conversation.

That is the work of a

The problem is that that's hard work and that's work that most of us don't do that often. It's exhausting

work because it requires actually listening in a very deep way. I think I gave you my example of this, a

few months ago, of how most of us listen at cocktail parties. doing totally fine. I haven't seen you in such a long time.

Someone says, oh hi, how are you?

I'm

As I scan the room, I'm looking around for other people to talk to. I put down my glass of wine. I can

continue this conversation with you, but out of the corner of my eye, I see the next person I'm going to

talk to. How do I continue this conversation if I'm so distracted? The answer is I listen to the cadence of

your voice and I know that I can put my conversation on autopilot with you.

I'm playing this little tape in my head that saves me the energy of actually listening to you.

I just kind of,

listen to the lilt of your voice and say uh-huh, really, that is so amazing, right? And then what? I can

continue the conversation when I'm not actually listening to anything that you say. So what happens is

that -- what I'm doing is -- how do I survive in the conversation? That's idolatry.

The answer is I'm making it up.

When you transfer idolatry to the human sphere, it looks like the not-listening in conversations. Or, in

the extreme case, it looks like you're not my brother so I'm not going to be responsive to you at all, which is the pit. That is what allows me to not listen to your screams.

My point is that there is a takeaway here and the takeaway is that real relationships -- what God demands

-- what God wants is to understand that you're part of a family. The family has brothers and sisters and

parents. God is your parent and the brothers are our people. The family is a family. If you aren't going

to be responsive to your brothers, then that's another way of saying that you're really not responsive to your father because your brother is who your brother is by virtue of your father.

So, God says we're a family here and what I demand in the family is brotherhood and kinship. A sign of kinship is a real relationship, where you're really hearing and you're really listening and not just making

things up. Once you make stuff up, that's idolatry. Once you think you know what your brother is

saying and you don't bother actually listening to see what he's actually saying -- you say no, I know

what you're going to say already, don't even say it because this is my response.

We all do that.

Don't

even tell me. Even before you start talking, I know what you're going to say. Do you know what he's

going to say? The body language -- you know exactly the body language they're going to put in? You

know exactly -- he's going to say it with a little nuance differently this time because he's coming a little bit closer to your opinion?

No, you're not even interested in taking the energy to listen to those subtleties. It's much safer for you to decide that this is my world and I know my world and to stay in myself than to open myself up to what you’re really, really saying. That's the problem.

So where do we learn and why is it that God has a right to demand this from us? Because God, the father, modeled listening right over here and this is our national birth. Our national birth comes from God listening and really hearing this pain that came to us and responding to it appropriately through starting Ge'ulas Mitzrayim (the Redemption from Egypt).

Audience Member: Why did Simon have the merit to be called Simon? so important -- of all the brothers, he's the one who listened the least.

That's bothering me now. It's

Rabbi David Fohrman: I think the answer is that Simon's destiny lies in hearing, but you can always

mess up your destiny too.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 01:01:08) what they were trying to do by the Golden Calf (inaudible 01:01:13) hearing relationship or seeing relationship?

Rabbi David Fohrman: God.

Maybe, that might be one way of thinking about it, that they wanted to see their

Audience Member: They want to see their God or they want to see their leader? Audience Member: It just seems that seeing -- Hashem is saying -- it's not that seeing --

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yeah, maybe. That might be one way of seeing the Golden Calf.

Audience Member: That's why our religion is na'aseh v'nishma (we will do and we will hear), it's those two that were the most important.

Audience Member: It's more superficial, but (inaudible 01:01:48).

Rabbi David Fohrman: ve'acharei eineichem."

It can be, but it also can lead you astray -- "Lo taturu acharei levavchem Your eyes can lead you astray -- can mislead you.

By the way, we talked about this. This is with tzitzit (ritual fringes) also. The idea of ritual fringes is that

if you need to make something, so make ritual fringes just as a way of remembering. See the blue and the blue reminds you of more and more transcendent things until you get to something that you can't

see at all and that's how you relate to what you can't see. So start with something you can see. Yeah?

Audience Member: What you're not taking into account over here is that stuff happened in between in

the family, in the nation. I mean, the Ribono shel Olam (God) heard, but it took 210 years to hear. So 210 years went by with a lot of pain and suffering and all that and that's very hard to take. That

translates into a family structure also. Things happened.

Rabbi David Fohrman: So let me give you my take on that for a moment, now that you brought it up.

But my take on that is -- let me just crystallize your question in a little bit different way.

So another way of putting your question is that on the Seder night, it's all very nice to thank God for taking us out of Egypt. But why are we thanking him for taking us out of Egypt if he put us there? In other words -- I mean, that's another way of asking the question. Like, God, I don't really see why I

need to thank you so much. Oh, you're such a benevolent God.

God, it's so wonderful.

Hello?!

It's

like, maybe at the Covenant Between the Parts, maybe the answer was, look, God, I'll forgive the whole

Yetzias Mitzrayim (Exodus from Egypt). Skip this part of the history. Don't put us there, don't take us

out of there. You know what I mean? Why do I need this?

Audience Member: But it's any nisayon (personal trial) that Hashem puts you through.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Maybe. But I now want to tell you something which you're going to think is

heretical but I don't think is heretical at all. So I will deny this. I'll say you doctored the tape, but this is

the point that I want to make. You see it, by the way, in the Passover Haggadah. In the Passover

Haggadah, do you ever find -- when does God become active in the Haggadah? Haggadah tells it. "Arami oveid avi vayeired Mitzraymah." Where was God?

Look at the story as the

Audience Member: Not in the picture.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Not in the picture.

Do you notice?

No mention of God.

Laban tried to destroy

my father. "Vayeired Mitzraymah," he went down to Egypt. "Bimtei me'at. Vayehi sham legoy gadol

atzum verav," he became a great nation there. Where is God? Now, where is God in the Haggadah?

"Vayotzi'einu Hashem misham beyad chazakah u'bizro'a netuyah," there is God. The Haggadah doesn't

even attribute Shibud Mitzrayim (the Bondage of Egypt) to God.

Audience Member: You could say the same thing with the Joseph story, that Hashem is completely --

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Exactly.

So I think that one of the messages that everything we're seeing is, how

do you understand the whole Joseph chiasm? How do you understand everything we've been doing for

the last few months? Showing you how the Bondage of Egypt happened, the sociopolitical things, even

-- and this is subtle, even the judgment in heaven.

Like we talked about three or four weeks ago, a moment where the brothers could've reconciled with

Joseph.

They don't reconcile with Joseph, they pledge themselves as slaves.

Joseph says, I don't know

whether you should be slaves, ask God.

God says, okay, I guess you can be slaves.

Now, is that God

putting us in Egypt, or is that us putting us in Egypt? That's us putting us in Egypt. Because there is a judgment in heaven because you could've reconciled but you didn't reconcile and you hid behind your father and you said that I'm the one who has to make the decision. I didn't ask you to make the decision.

You're the one who pushed the decision on me! You're the one who enslaved your brother and did all

that and then said well, if there's no apology then tit for tat and then Joseph is the one who said let God decide and then -- so my point is --

Audience Member: That doesn't include Jewish exceptions because things don't happen to us the way it happens to other people.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay. Maybe so.

So maybe God is more attentive and maybe there's a closer

judgment of our lives and all that. The point is that at the bottom line -- the bottom line is that if the Bondage of Egypt was a reaction to the Hagar and Ishmael story, was a reaction to the Joseph story, if

those parallels are real, then the answer to who put us in Egypt is really ourselves. took us out of Egypt. We're the ones who put us down.

God is the one who

So in the Covenant between the Parts when God says "Ger yihyeh zaracha b'eretz lo lahem," there are two ways of understanding that. One way of understanding that is God is decreeing that there is going to be something called the Bondage of Egypt, that God is saying, I want this to happen, but that's not the only way to interpret it.

There's another possibility too, which is, you're asking me what the mechanism is going to be that you're going to become a great nation? Bame eida, you want to know? I'll give you an insight into the future. I, God, happen to be able to see the future because I'm outside of time, so I'm going to show you

what the future holds for you.

Now, the future is the future that you create.

Don't blame me for that

future. I am telling you that you are going to get yourself into such a hole that the only one that's going to be able to get you out of that hole is me.

Notice even in the Covenant between the Parts. "Ger yihyeh zaracha b'eretz lo lahem." Does it say I'm

going to put you there?

No, you're going to become geirim (foreigners).

"Ger yihyeh zaracha b'eretz lo

lahem va'avadum." Does it say that I am going to -- there's a way of saying -- does it say I am going to

enslave them? No.

"Ve'inu otam", and they're going to suffer there.

Does it say I am going to make you suffer there?

No,

it doesn't. What does it say next? It says after that, "ve'inu otam arba mei'ot shana," and it says, now,

what's the language in the Covenant between the Parts? "Ve'inu otam arba mei'ot shana" -- so it says,

"ve'acharei chein yeitz'u b'rechush gadol vegam et hagoy asher ya'avodu dan anochi." There is God. So God is --

Audience Member: This really takes you to the whole situation of bechira chofshit (free will). God

knows what's going to happen so how do we have free will? I personally don't have a problem with that

because I can somehow relate to that, but the choices that we make are ours. what He says come true, but with His power, not necessarily --

God will ultimately make

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right, so God responded to our choices, but our choices brought us down to the

Bondage of Egypt. The nice thing is that once we got us into that hole, God was willing to take us out.

He made a promise to Abraham He's going to take us out. Basically, the promise at the Covenant

between the Parts was, look, I just got finished delivering you from the war of the five kings, and Melchizedek comes and says baruch Hashem (blessed is God) who took you out "asher migein tzarecha

beyadecha," and God basically says, you think that was cool, "asher migein tzarecha beyadecha"? You

ain't seen nothing yet, because your children are going to get themselves into such a mess. You think

Lot got himself into such a mess? That's nothing. You should see what's going to happen in Egypt.

"Asher migen tzarecha biyadecha," then I'm really going to have to be your shield, so don't think it's all over now. We ain't seen nothing yet. But that's God as deliverer and that I think is the rationale why we thank God in the Redemption from Egypt -- in the Haggadah. That's how I see it.

Audience Member: There's also the whole concept of teshuvah (repentance) that I think is built into here because God gives the g'zar din (judgment) that somebody is supposed to die and people pray, and they do repentance and then all of a sudden the person doesn't die because the person changed himself and he no longer gets the judgment. The whole power of Hashem understanding and bringing about things that have to happen are so way above us that we can't conceive about how Hashem is going to do it, but He can do the free will and He gives us the ability to change and to grow and to make things different in our world with an ultimate (inaudible 01:09:33) --

Rabbi David Fohrman: And even if God is involved in judgment, right, you can't blame God for that.

That's one of the things that God gets paid to do. God's job is to be a judge.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 01:09:46) that we're operating on the same realm as every other nation in the world.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Why?

Audience Member: Because the things happen on a cause and effect basis and very often, Jewish history

has shown time and again that it's not. It doesn't work on a --

Rabbi David Fohrman: Why? Because God is there --

Audience Member: Because if somebody sells their brother in a normal nation they don't end up with up 600,000 slaves --

Rabbi David Fohrman:

I agree with you.

I am willing to argue that our history is different because of

that and that we have a different relationship with God but that's still not the same thing as saying, how

do you respond to this question? How do you respond if I challenge you and I say, why am I thanking

God for taking us out of Egypt? He put me there. What's your answer to that? The only way I you can answer that is that God is not the responsible party for putting us there.

Why? Because if I commit a crime, and the judge sentences me to 10 years in prison, the judge is not

the responsible party for my 10 years in prison.

I am, because I committed the crime.

So I can go and

hire the mafia to knock off the judge, but that is unjust because the real reason I'm in prison is, the judge

gets paid -- the judge's job -- everybody has a job. The judge's job is to dispense justice.

God is the creator.

Well, part of being the creator is He gets to be judge.

So part of the job the judge

does is the judge dispenses justice. Now, a judge may, in his prerogative say, justice for you is different

than justice for you. But, assuming that that's just, for whatever reason it is, it still is not the judge's fault,

that justice for you is different than justice for you. just --

(Interposing)

It's still not the judge's fault that I'm in Egypt. It's

Audience Member: God gave us a blueprint upon which to act. If we act upon His blueprint, then life is

different for us than when we don't follow the blueprint. It says the earth is going to throw you out if

you don't do the mitzvot (commandments). We hear all the time through the Torah, do it the way I'm

telling you to do it, it's the better way to do it. It becomes your choice how you --

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay. I don't want to get too bogged down.

I understand these notions are --

this was why I said it was going to be controversial and all that. I don't believe what I'm saying is actually so controversial but I do believe that we don't educate our kids like this and we weren't educated like this.

I think it's because we have a certain misnomer in our heads and the misnomer is, we think it's the frum

(religious) thing to believe that everything comes from God. And everything does come from God but

that's a subtle concept. It's not so simple. It doesn't just mean, everything comes from God and

therefore people don't have responsibility, okay? It doesn't mean that.

So one of the reasons it doesn't mean that is, if God is the judge and everything comes from the God and compassion comes from God and justice comes from God, that doesn't mean -- it means that God is

responsible for everything -- it doesn't mean that God -- it means that everything comes from God but

that's not the same thing as God is responsible for my misfortunes. That's what I'm saying.

So I'm saying, you can believe everything comes from God and believe that God is not responsible for

my misfortunes at the same time, once you understand God as judge. saying?

Do you understand what I'm

Audience Member:

You're saying either or.

You gave two options, either it all came from God or really

we did it. I don't know if it --

Rabbi David Fohrman:

So you're right. That's a false choice.

I shouldn't put it that way.

God is

involved, but God is not involved -- there are two ways to think God is involved. could be God is the one manipulating the marionette --

God is involved and it

Rabbi David Fohrman: Hi, everybody, we're back. Just want to respond to a thought which just came

up here about something we mentioned last week, which is your idea that the language that the Torah uses to describe God's listening to the cries of the Jews is actually a language of judgment. If we accept

that Elokim is the language of judgment, Yud Kay Vav Kay is the language of compassion. So when

God listens, if you look here at the verse, "Vayishma Elokim et na'akatam," God hears their cries, "vayizkor Elokim et brito et Avraham et Yitzchak v'et Ya'akov, vayar Elokim at B'nei Yisrael vayeida

Elokim."

Vayeida Elokim, that's not compassion.

What do you make of that? I don't know what to

make of that, but I'll tell you what I would make of it. Which is that the line between judgment and compassion is a very amorphous line, almost as if they're two sides of the same coin.

What looks like judgment from one perspective is compassion from another perspective. What's compassion from one perspective is judgment from another perspective. We talked about this earlier when we went through the three signs, which we're actually going to come back again to today, but we talked about this a few weeks back. Basically, the idea is that if I am a judge and I am also the creator, my two responsibilities towards my creatures can be encapsulated in two words which are really

judgment and compassion. As a creator I will feel compassion towards my creatures, but as a judge I also

have the responsibility to administer justice.

Those two things, you can view them in the abstract on the one hand. In other words, you can talk about them in terms of -- let me put it this way. We often think of that in bein adam leMakom (between man and God) terms, which is to say that if I sin against God, God can deal with me compassionately, God can deal with me in judgment. Right? That's one way of seeing that, but the two sides of judgment and compassion really being the same coin, I think, come into play when we aren't talking about between man and God, but we're talking about bein adam lechaveiro (between man and his fellow).

So if you say what's the responsibility of a creator when Sam abuses Kathy? At that point how do

judgment and compassion play out? So at that point judgment and compassion actually become two

sides of the same coin. Which is to say, that part of my responsibility is to feel compassion for Kathy and

to help Kathy out, but part of my responsibility is also to do judgment for Sam.

They're two sides of the same coin because there's really no such thing as compassion for Kathy without

judgment for Sam. So if all I do is cuddle Kathy and tell Kathy how bad I feel for her while Sam keeps

on sniping at her with his air gun, what have you really done? You've been out to lunch as creator. On

the other hand if all you do is punish Sam, but you don't cuddle Kathy, you're also not responding. But

even more than that, part of -- and this is what we talked about with the three signs -- but they really become two sides of the same coin because ultimately part of the compassion for Kathy, in a deep way, is

not just me putting my arm around her and saying Kathy, I feel so bad for you. It's also stopping the

injustice and Kathy seeing that there are consequences for the injustice. That's part of what the compassion is.

So what happens is compassion is a function of judgment, especially when oppression and abuse is part of

the picture. What's happening over here when the Jews cry out and they cry out to God, "vata'al

shavatam el Elokim min ha'avoda?" Perhaps the God in judgment is listening. What's going to happen,

actually, is a process of judgment upon Egypt which is really the 10 plagues culminating, as we'll see, in the splitting of the Red Sea. But judgment and compassion at that point really become two sides of the

same coin.

So that might be something of what's going on here too.

Last week was I talking to you

about the Laban and Pharaoh connection?

I don't think I was, was I?

No.

Audience Member: Can I interrupt for a second?

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yeah, go ahead.

Audience Member: What is the topic of your book?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Ah, no problem.

You'll figure it out as we go along.

Basically, what we've been

doing here over the past -- the tricky thing with these classes is they kind of are a series. So you're

coming in the middle of a series, which is totally fine, because I try to make each one somewhat semi- independent within this. But the series that you're a part of is, sort of, looking at the connections between the book of Genesis and the book of Exodus; they seem to be disconnected kinds of books.

We're trying to develop an overall theory where the two books are connected and in so doing we're looking at the first four chapters of Exodus and seeing the connections between that story and the last

story in Genesis, which is really the Joseph story. about to see.

That's kind of the overall context for what you're

Let's come back to -- we just finished going through this and we're up to the burning bush if I'm

correct. Does that make sense to you guys? Basically what we had done is that we had gone through the

entire story of enslavement in Egypt and we've seen that it's a mirror of the Joseph story. The working

title for my book at this point was the Exodus through the rear-view mirror. The idea is I usually go

forward and the Exodus story you're looking at, the Joseph story, recede in back of you. All of these

events have a double meaning and they're explicable in terms of the Joseph story and that sort of chiasms, what we're talking about reaches its end right before the burning bush. When it reaches its end, it leaves us with a question.

The question that faces us, as we confront the burning bush, is basically, what's going to be? And as I mentioned to you last week, that question, basically, is if you don't know the rest of the story at the end of Exodus Chapter 2 going into the burning bush, you'd basically -- the only reason why we know that

the rest of the story is comforting and works out well is because we all know the rest of the story. But,

again, the trick with reading the Torah -- and this is a very important methodological tool that you

should always beat into your brain -- is that you cannot read with the end in mind. You cannot allow

the fact that you know the rest of the story, to dupe you into thinking that the rest of the story was

inevitable at any given point. happens next.

Never inevitable.

You have to allow yourself to be surprised by what

You have to read it as though you don't know what happens next. So if you're reading Chapter 2 and

you've finished Chapter 2 and you don't know what happens next, actually there are ominous storm

clouds on the horizon. The ominous storm clouds get short-circuited, but the ominous storm cloud is

basically is that Moses has just been sidelined. Right? Moses has been a one man salvation machine. He

had been saving these guys who were getting beaten up, he saw the pain of -- you had the sense of hope that here's this guy who's finally making a difference and he has power to make a difference, he's a prince in the palace and all of a sudden it all gets sidelined. Why? Because "vayishma Paroh," haraoh hears what's going on, "vaivakeish la'harog et Moshe" and Moses in response to the threat to his life, what does

Moses do? He leaves.

As we said last week he leaves and he settles down and he settles down in Midian. We hear Moses in Midian still holding true to his values, he's still a savior. He's still saving people, but this time he's saving

Midianite girls who are threatened by these shepherds and things are working out well for him. Jethro

takes him in, brings him in and Jethro gives him a wife, gives him a job, settles down and the very last things we hear are things like Moses having a child and Moses naming his child. I gave you that

facetious rendition of Moses's speech at the circumcision or the non-circumcision of Gershom. Where

he's sitting there and he's talking about thank God, he's got this chance, he's there with Jethro and he's still able to use his strengths in Midian to save these daughters and it got him this wife. It just shows you how God is on his side and he's so happy to be able to use his strengths in this way and to develop his potential.

Of course. what I'm making fun of, by the way, is the narcissistic side of all of these sermons as well. Which is, thank God, I can use my potential and all that. It's not just about using your potential, it's

about actually doing something for other people with your potential. Moses is about to get sidelined

over here. He's basically going to take this tremendous force that he has within him and use it to save

some girls in Midian and that's basically it and this is going to be the end of Moses. This is the moment

when -- and I mentioned to you last week, the echoes of Jacob at this moment, when all the language is Jacob language. When Jacob settled down, when Jacob kind of got sidelined in his own life and it was going to be over and he thought that everything was done.

At that point, "kafatz alav rogzo shel Yosef" our Sages say, which is that Joseph jumped him and Jacob's

life wasn't over yet. And it turns out Moses's life isn't over yet either. Something jumps him, too and in

certain ways Joseph also.

So the question was, basically, what happens now?

From a literary angel, what

we have seen before over the last number of weeks, is that as we went forward in the Exodus from Egypt, as the Joseph series evolved, we were seeing through the rear-view mirror the devolution of the

Joseph saga. As the Exodus from Egypt evolves, the Joseph story devolves. Right? Until we get to the

last sentence in the enslavement in Egypt, which is right over here, which we did last week, which

corresponds to the first sentence in the Joseph story. So the question is what happens next?

That brings us to Chapter 3 which is the beginning of the redemption, of the redemption from Egypt. Now, my theory is that starting from here, what you're about to see is what you actually see in Genesis at

that moment. It's interesting. In other words, to give you a look that the Joseph story was going

backwards in the enslavement in Egypt. Now, in the redemption from Egypt it's going to start going

forwards.

We're back to the Joseph story, that's when it starts going forwards.

The way it works is, kind

of, like an image of what actually happens in the Joseph story. Remember the verse we were up to, the

verse that describes Moses settling down with Jethro, is a parody, we argued, of Chapter 37 Verse 1, which is the verse in Genesis which describes Jacob settling down.

Remember what our Sages tell us at that point, "Bikeish Ya'akov leisheiv beshalvah," Jacob had wanted

to just settle down and he had his family and everything was good. "Kafatz alav rogzo shel Yosef," but

Joseph changed everything. Here, too, that's going to happen again -- a mimicry of that is going to happen, that you're going to start seeing, now that we've devolved the Joseph story all the way to the

beginning. Now we're at the beginning, it's going to start going forward again. In other words, if

slavery in Egypt comes about through this house of horrors backwards mirror of the Joseph story, then

salvation is going to come by going forward through the Joseph story and this time doing it right. So all

the things that messed us up the first time are going to get fixed or there's going to be a chance to fix

them this time.

It begins here.

So let's see how that goes.

"U'Moshe haya ro'eh et tzon Yitro chotno, kohen Midyan, vayinhag et hatzon achar

hamidbar vayavo el har haElokim Choreiva." In this one verse, which you've probably read a dozen

times in your Beis Yaakov career or whatever it was, your post-seminary and all that stuff, actually lies

hidden an extremely elegant caricature of the first 10 verses of the Joseph story. You have compacted in

here a very quick run-through, backwards -- well forwards, but in a better way, of the Joseph story. Now, this would be easier to illustrate with a PowerPoint and I confess that I did not create one for this. So I'm going to try to illustrate this to you by actually walking around the room and we'll try to do this visually. Okay? Let's think about what we have in this verse. I'm actually going to get up which is a big step.

Let's read the words one more time.

"U'Moshe haya ro'eh et tzon Yitro chotno.

Let's just translate the

words. Moses was shepherding the sheep of Jethro, his father-in-law, kohen Midyan, the priest of

Midian, "vayinhag et hatzon achar hamidbar" and he was leading the sheep through the desert, "vayavo

el har haElokim Choreiva," until he came to the mountain of God at Horeb. Now, what, if anything,

about this reminds you of the Joseph story?

The first thing is shepherding.

Now, I want you to turn

back to the very beginning of the Joseph story, the first two verses of the Joseph story -- if you have them -- in Genesis 37. I'll put them up on the screen for you because I'm such a nice guy.

Take a look at this, these are the first two verses of the Joseph story. "Vayeishev Ya'akov be'eretz

megurei aviv, be'eretz Cana'an." So here is Jacob settling -- this is the parody of the last verse we had.

Now look at the next verse. "Eile toldot Ya'akov," these are the generations of Jacob, "Yosef ben sheva-

esrei shanah," when Joseph was 17 years old.

Now look at these words.

"Haya ro'eh et echav batzon."

Isn't that interesting? "Haya ro'eh et echav batzon," he was shepherding with his brothers, the sheep.

Which sheep? His father-in-law's sheep.

Now let's skip back to Exodus.

Look what that reminds you

of.

"U'Moshe haya ro'eh et tzon" -- you see that? Haya ro'eh et.

Now, I don't have my little search

program over here, but I would encourage you, when you get back home if you have one, to look in the

concordance for haya ro'eh. How many times do we have someone haya ro'eh et, someone shepherding

et?

Audience Member: Five.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

I don't know, it could be more.

I haven't looked at it, but I don't think it's that

common.

So what you have is this echo of that verse.

Joseph was shepherding the sheep of who?

Of his

father.

Moses is shepherding the sheep of his father-in-law.

Now, what else about this verse reminds

you of the beginning of the Joseph story?

Let's look at it one more time.

Moses was shepherding the

sheep of his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. Now notice how it's really important for us to know

that Jethro was the priest of Midian at that point.

Why is that important for us to know now?

Good

question. That wouldn't be the place to tell us this.

We should really hear that Jethro is a priest of Midian -- I think we did hear it, back in Chapter 2

already. So why are you repeating to us -- I mean, we know who Jethro is, we've been paying attention

-- why take two more words to remind us that Jethro is a priest of Midian? But now I ask you does that

remind you of anything in the Joseph story, Midian?

Anyone?

The Midianim were actually the guys

who pulled him out of the pit in the Joseph story. So let's just look at what's happening here. Here's

Moses, he's haya ro'eh et tzon Yitro, he is shepherding the sheep of Jethro, kohein Midyan, who is from Midian. And then "vayinhag et hatzon achar hamidbar," now he's shepherding the sheep and he's traveling through the desert.

Was there a trip through the desert, through the midbar, back in the Joseph story? Well, there sure was a

trip through the desert. How do you know? Because where was Joseph thrown into a pit? What does it

say about the pit? It says that the pit is where the brothers said, "Hashlichu oto el habor asher bamidbar,"

right? The pit was known as a pit in the desert. So he was traveling through the desert, the Judean

Desert. There's a trip through the desert in the Joseph story, there's a trip through the desert in this

story. Now, "vayinhag et hatzon achar hamidbar," he's leading sheep through the desert, "vayavo el har

ha'Elokim Choreiva" -- now, the destination here is har ha'Elokim Choreiva.

Now, does this destination remind you of anything in the Joseph story? First of all, there's up and down.

How do you know? Because in the Joseph story we started -- let me put it this way. Where was Joseph

sent from in the Joseph story?

From Hebron, but what do we know about Hebron?

Eimek Chevron, he

was sent from the valley of Hebron.

Now, spell Hebron for me.

So the valley of Hebron was a mixed up

version of the mountain of Horeb. You with me? The valley of Hebron was the place from which

Joseph was sent. The mountain of Horeb was the place to which Moses goes. Do you understand?

Okay. So let's now understand what's happening over here.

Let's start with the Joseph story. Here's how the Joseph story goes. In the Joseph story, I am Joseph,

right? I am shepherding sheep and having the time of my life. I'm shepherding sheep. Then one day I

start travelling. I travel through a desert. What am I doing? I'm leaving the valley of Hebron, I am

travelling to somewhere else. I'm travelling through a desert and at the desert I get thrown in a pit and

in the pit Midianites pull me out. You're with me? Okay. If I am Moses, I am here with these sheep.

Which sheep? The sheep of my father-in-law, who is the priest of Midian. Then I start travelling

through a desert. Then I end up at a mountain called Horeb. Do you understand what's happening?

It's, kind of, like this reverse version of the Joseph story, kind of all in one. Then what happens next?

"Va'yeira malach Hashem eilav," then an angel appears. story?

Audience Member: Yes.

Does this remind us of anything of the Joseph

Rabbi David Fohrman: Joseph story?

Do we have any angels in the Joseph story?

We did.

Who is the angel in the

Audience Member: The ish (man).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

The man who tells him they went that way.

So there is an angel in both cases.

Our sages tell us that the man that Joseph met was an angel. Now, let's talk about the function of the

angel. The function of the Joseph angel is to do what? Joseph, if it weren't for the angel, what would

happen? He never would have met his brothers. He never would have -- he would have gone back

home. Nothing would have happened. He wouldn't have gone down to Egypt and he wouldn't have

entered into the enslavement in Egypt. Now, if it wasn't for this angel with Moses, what would have

happened? If it wasn't for an angel finding Moses, what would have happened? have been different?

Audience Member: They wouldn't have gone there.

How would the story

Rabbi David Fohrman:

There would have never been the redemption from Egypt.

So there never

would have been enslavement in Egypt without angel number one; there never would have been the

redemption from Egypt without angel number two. Now, let's talk a little bit further about exactly the

function of the angel. Angel number one in the Joseph story does what, to start the enslavement in Egypt? They went that way and in so doing directs Joseph into a very dangerous situation. A situation in which there is a mortal threat to his life.

Now, let's look at what this angel does. "Va'yeira malach Hashem eilav b'labat eish mitoch hasneh,

va'yar v'hinee hasneh bo'er b'eish vehasneh einenu ukal. Vayomer Moshe asura na v'er'eh et hamar'eh

hagadol hazeh, madua lo yiv'ar hasneh?" Then here comes God and God calls out to him. Then he says,

"Moshe, Moshe. Va'yomer hineini." The very first thing he says is -- this is the very first actual other

than hello, who are you.

The very first message is this, "al tikrav halom," do not get too close.

Because if

you get too close, what will happen?

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:23:37) Hashem.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

You will be in a situation of mortal danger.

So notice that the first message to

Moses is exactly the opposite of the first message to Joseph. Right? First message to Joseph is, they went

that way. Not only they went that way, but I want you to look at this. Let's look at the angel who says

they went that way. It's right over here. "Va'yomer ha'ish nasu mizeh ki shamati omrim neilchah

Datona," they have already gone to Dotan.

So he says they went that way.

So here comes Joseph,

"Vayeilech Yosef achar echav vayimtza'em b'Dotan. Vayiru oto mei'rachok u'beterem yikrav aleihem

vayitnaklu oto l'hamito," and before Joseph even got close, they were planning to come up with grounds in which to kill him. "U'beterem yikrav aleihem."

Now, look at this guy.

"Vayomer al tikrav halom."

Isn't that interesting? "Al tikrav halom" --

"Ubeterem yikrav aleihem" -- halom.

You got that?

Halom is just a playoff of aleihem. Right? "Al

tikrav halom."

It's exactly the opposite.

That angel said they went that way and then you started going,

ubeterm yikrav, and before you even got there, they were going to kill you. This angel says, "al tikrav

halom."

No, No.

Stop sign.

Do not go this way, this way lies mortal danger.

So the angel is actually

redirecting Moses away from danger and in so doing he is actually initiating the redemption from Egypt, instead of the first angel that's directing Joseph towards danger and is initiating the enslavement in Egypt.

Are you with me? Okay. Let's continue. "Shal na'alecha mei'al raglecha, ki hamakom asher ata omed

alav admat kodesh hu." Take off your shoes.

What does that remind you of?

After Joseph heard the

angel and approached the brothers, what's the next thing that happened? Audience Member: Stripped --

Rabbi David Fohrman:

The brothers stripped him and threw him in the pit naked.

Moses also gets

stripped, but only of his shoes. So his shoes have to be in contact with the ground because it's holy

ground for some reason. So there's a version of stripping that, sort of, works for Moses.

Now, something else is going on here also and this is -- what about this? This is a little complicated to

show you here and I wish I'd brought my -- I printed out my little PowerPoint for you. You know

what? I can sort of show it to you.

Can I show it to you?

It's going to be hard for you to see. All right.

You know what I'm just going to do it this way, this will be easier. Okay.

Look at this.

"Vayomer

Moshe, Moshe, vayomer hineini." Does this remind you of anything in the Joseph story?

Audience Member: His father calls him and he says hineini.

Rabbi David Fohrman: you right over here.

Yeah, because his father calls out to him and Joseph says hineini. I'll show it to

Audience Member: Are you going to put it side-by-side?

Rabbi David Fohrman: you, I'm going to do it.

Could I put it side by side? If I was really nice I could.

You know what, for

Audience Member: That's sweet.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Yes, thank you.

Hold on.

In order to do this -- where are we now? That's

Lamed-Zayin (37), right? Here we go. Let's try this. Paste and -- yes, success. Okay. So we're going

to put this here. We're going to turn this off and we're going to put this here. See all the work I'm doing for you guys. This just shows how much I like you guys.

Okay.

So here we are. Right?

"Vayomer Moshe, Moshe, vayomer hineini." Okay.

You got that?

What does that correspond to over here? It corresponds to this. Hold on, here we go. Okay. Let's just

read this through. "Vayomer Yisrael el Yosef, halo achecha ro'im bi'Shechem." Aren't your brothers in

Shechem? "Lecha v'eshlachacha aleihem."

Go, I think I will send you to them.

"Vayomer lo hineini."

You got that? There's the hineini. Then, you got this over here.

You got that.

So in both cases, father

calls out to our Joseph character and father -- and the answer is hineini.

Now, let's look again back at Verse 37 and see if we see anything else here. One more time.

"Vayomer

Yisrael el Yosef, halo achecha ro'im bi'Shechem," aren't your brothers in Shechem? What he actually

said was, "lecha v'eshlachacha aleihem. Vayomer lo hineini." "Lecha v'eshlachecha alehem," go and I

will send you to them. Father is going to send Joseph to a very dangerous situation -- there are people

who are going to try to kill him -- and Joseph says hineini. Are you with me? here, can you find the "lecha v'eshlachecha aleihem" in Exodus?

Audience Member: It says "v'eshlachacha aleihem."

Now, you see the hineini

Rabbi David Fohrman:

In Exodus.

Can you find it in Exodus?

Audience Member: When he sends him to go down? Audience Member: Is it on that same page or it's -- Audience Member: That is the "anochi shlachticha."

Audience Member: We have when they have the conversation later on.

Rabbi David Forhman: You're almost there.

Audience Member: "Asei lecha ha'ot." Audience Member: "B'yad tishlach."

Rabbi David Fohrman: These exact words, lecha v'eshlachscha. Can you find these exact words?

Audience Member: Verse 10.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Verse 10.

Look at that. "V'atah, lecha v'eshlachacha." There it is.

You with

me? How cool is this? The actual dialog between Jacob and Joseph, which appear together with Jacob

and Joseph, are now getting split up in Exodus.

Okay?

So "lecha v'eshlchacha, vayomer lo hineini." In

Exodus, lecha v'eshlachecha came first. I'm sorry, in Genesis, lecha v'eshlachacha comes first. Hineini

comes second. Here, the hineini comes first, lecha v'eshlachecha, which is what we're seeing. We're

seeing, kind of, a reversal of the Joseph story. Now, what's the meaning of -- by the way, who was he

being sent to? In both cases, who was his father sending him to?

Audience Member: To the other brothers in the (inaudible 00:32:41).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Sending him to -- not brothers.

Audience Member: The other tribes.

Rabbi David Fohrman: To someone --

Audience Member: Who is hateful.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

-- who hates you.

Somebody who's trying to --

Audience Member: Destroy.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

-- kill you.

In both cases father is sending Joseph.

Pharaoh wants to kill Moses.

Remember, "vayevakesh laharog et Moshe," right? Pharaoh wanted to kill him. So what happens is, in

both cases father is sending, so to speak, Joseph -- either Joseph one or Joseph two, Moses -- on this

mission to someone who wants to kill him. Now, what's interesting is, is that these words which appear

together in Genesis are now getting split up in Exodus. So I have these words over here. The initial call

to Moses is hineini, followed by, in Verse 10, "ve'atah lecha v'eshlachacha el Paroh." is what happens in between. What happens in between, actually, is the mission.

What's interesting

So you're going to get the mission in between. So let's look at what the nature of the mission is. The

sending is now becoming bookends for the mission itself. What is the mission itself? So let's read.

Now, in the mission itself, you're going to find a nice little elegant literary structure, in between the

hineini and "lecha v'eshlachacha el Paroh." Let's see if you can find a literary structure.

Ready? Here we go.

"Vayomer al tikrav halom" -- so he says don't come close.

So that's the first key.

That's the angel doing the opposite of the other angel. I'm sure it's (inaudible 00:34:18) and I'm saying

don't go there. So in other words, even though it looks like I'm sending you to a mortal threat, to

Pharaoh, but I'm also saying don't come close.

I care about you.

I'm not going to send you into mortal

peril. So don't get into mortal peril. What, by the way, will the nature of the mortal peril be? It would

be coming too close.

Let's not get into that. Let's keep on reading.

So don't come too close.

Take off

your shoes. Vayomer -- now here's what God says. "Anochi Elokei avicha, Elokei Avraham, Elokei

Yitzchak v'Elokei Yaakov," I am the God of your forefathers. "Va'yasteir Moshe panav ki yarei milehabit

b'Elokim."

Okay.

So he was scared, he didn't want to see God.

"Vayomer Hashem," and God says, "ra'oh ra'iti et ani ami asher b'Mitzrayim." I've seen the suffering of

my people in Egypt. "V'et tza'akotam sham'ati mipnei nogsav," and I've heard the cries of my people

from their oppressors.

"Ki yada'ati et mach'ovav.

Va'eireid l'hatzilo miyad Mitzrayim." I'm going to go

down to save them from Egypt. "U'l'ha'aloto min ha'aretz hahi el eretz tova ur'chavah el eretz zavat

chalav ud'vash." I'm going to bring them out to the land flowing with milk and honey, the land of the

seven nations. "V'atah," and now, "hinei tza'akat B'nei Yisrael ba'ah eiloi." Now, the screams of the

Jews are coming to me. "V'gam ra'iti et halachatz asher Mitzrayim lochatzim otam." oppression and now go to Pharaoh. Okay. Can you find the literary structure?

I've seen the

Audience Member: It's in reverse a little. pulling him out.

Joseph crying out and the brothers not hearing him and not

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay. Exactly.

So first of all, what it reminds you in the Joseph story is what?

Remember -- now let's go back to Reuben. Remember Reuben's perspective on the Joseph story. Later

on, the guilt of Reuben, remember? Right, the guilt of Reuben expressed by -- we saw his pain, but we did not hear. "Asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho b'hitchaneno eilienu v'lo shama'anu." We saw his pain. but we

did not hear. Notice that the senses which God is talking about over and over again are seeing and

hearing, seeing and hearing. Now, it's not just seeing and hearing; it's something else. If we think

about Reuben -- if we think about the composite picture of Reuben -- so Reuben, later on in front of Joseph -- talks about seeing and hearing in these terms. I saw his pain, we did not hear. Reuben back at the pit -- let's talk about Reuben back at the pit.

"Vayishma Reuven," Reuben heard, "vayatzileihu miyadam." Reuben saved them from his hands because Reuben said throw him in the pit alive, remember. Can you find something playing off of vayatzileihu miyadam? "Vayishma Reuven vayatzileihu miyadam." There it is, "va'eired l'hatzilo miyad

Mitzrayim." These are Reuben words. Everything that God is saying here is a playoff of Reuben.

Except, it's not exactly Reuben. There's a difference. Because even though we're talking about seeing and hearing, there's a difference between the seeing and hearing experience by Reuben and the seeing

and hearing experience by God. That is this.

When it was Reuben, Reuben was foiled because Reuben saw, but someone stopped him. Someone got

in the way. That was Simeon, right. Simeon -- we saw, but we did not hear. What about God? God

sees and God hears. There's no stopping God. God is not going to be foiled like the initial Reuben was

by someone who won't hear. I'm going to see and I'm going to hear and I'm going to save. everything you dreamed of doing, Reuben, seeing and hearing and saving, I'm going to do. who I am? I'm the Reuben in the sky. I'm the big Reuben, with capital R, right.

So

You know

Now you understand why it is that God introduces Himself the way He does to Moses. You know why?

Because who was Moses in the last story? Reuben. Remember, last week we talked about three versions

of Reuben as we went through enslavement in Egypt and went through the Joseph story backwards, when we got up to the pit, we saw three different versions of Reuben. What we called exalted Reuben, corrupted Reuben and Reuben himself. Exalted Reuben was the daughter of Pharaoh, corrupted Reuben

was Pharoah, but Reuben himself was Moses. A guy who sees the pain of his brothers, vayar b'sivlotam,

sees "vayar ish MItzri," all of this, but just like Reuben, "vayishma Paroh vayivakeish laharog et Moshe." He's sidelined, just like the original Rueben gets sidelined by Simeon, the Reuben incarnate, Moses, now gets sidelined by hearing.

Now he too, like Reuben is trying to do vayatzileihu miyadam -- "vayishma Reuven vayatzileihu miyadam." Just like the original Reuben, it was just a dream and it got foiled, so too Moses it was a

dream and got foiled. Because where is he doing vayatzileihu miyadam? In Midian, when the shepherds

come and threaten the girls, vayatzileihu miyadam. He's getting sidelined. He's exactly Reuben.

You know why God introduces himself this way? He knows who He's talking to. who's channeling Reuben, right. He's talking to a guy who is a latter day Reuben.

He's talking to a guy So God says you

know who I am? I have the same values as you.

I'm Reuben too.

The only difference between Me and

you, Moses, is I'm the Reuben in the sky.

No one gets in the way of me.

You're getting foiled by your

latter day Simeon, a Pharaoh who won't listen to you.

I don't have those problems.

Pharaoh is no

problem for me. I'm going to see, I'm going to hear and I'm going to save. I need somebody on the

ground.

Somebody who understands Me, who I can work with.

You're the guy because you showed

me you're the guy. Because you showed me you were Reuben. You made that choice.

Just like the original Reuben, by the way, had a fateful choice to make and chose correctly. You had a

fateful choice to make and chose correctly. Reuben's choice was -- Reuben's essential choice was one

thing. Which is, will I see Joseph as a brother or not? That was his choice, right. His choice was I will. Because he could've easily not done that. It gets back to Reuben's name, remember. Reuben's name,

"ra'ah Hashem b'anyi."

God has seen my pain.

So how do I interpret that pain?

God has seen the pain

of my mother, Leah, and now here's this child of my mother's rival.

After, by the way, what happened to Reuben? Why did Reuben lose the firstborn status according to

Chazal? Because what did he do? Because after the death of his mother, Rachel, when Jacob moved his

bed into the tent of -- didn't even go to Leah's tent, but moved her into Bilhah's tent, right. So it's fine

that my mother had to play second fiddle to Leah was one thing. That she has to play second fiddle to

Bilhah? So he goes and moves that out and for that act of audacity, he loses the firstborn status. What

was he doing? He was just doing his name. He was standing up for what his name says, which is "ra'ah

Hashem b'anyi."

God has seen the pain of my mother.

My job is to act on that and to do something to

redeem the pain of my mother. I lost the firstborn status for doing that.

Now, my brothers are trying to give it to me back because Jacob's given the special doubled coat to

who?

To the child of my mother's rival, to Joseph.

My name is "ra'ah Hashem b'anyi." My name is

that I've seen the pain of my mother.

So what's my job?

My job, probably -- God is coming out of the

sky and saying -- my job is probably to stand up and to rightfully take the crown that my brothers are

giving you. To take that coat that's stripped from Joseph and to wear it myself and say that, yes, I am the

rightful firstborn. Thank you everyone for standing up for me finally, it's about time.

That's not what Reuben did. Reuben instead is the guy who's screaming, we can't do this. Because Reuben learned something else from his mother's name. He learned that if God saw the pain of my

mother, what I take out of that is that God sees people's pain. You always have to be sensitive to people's

pain, no matter who they are. If God was sensitive to the pain of my mother, I need to be sensitive to

pain even if it's coming from the child of my mother's rival. Because that's what God is. to pain.

God is sensitive

So Reuben made a choice. There was someone he could've easily seen as not his brother, as just the

other, the rival. He said no, he is my brother. I have to feel his pain.

That's exactly the same choice Moses makes. When Moses' in the palace, right, who were the Jews? I

could easily make a choice that they're not my brother. They're the scurrilous scalawags. I am the royal

heir to the palace fortune. I was, thank God, rescued from those -- he could've bought all the Goebbels

propaganda about who the Jews were. There was plenty of that lying around in the palace, but he

didn't. Instead, he made a choice that they are my brothers. They are in pain and I have to feel their

pain. I side with those who are in pain. That was Reuben's essential choice. Reuben.

That's why Moses is

Reuben got foiled on the ground?

All right.

So you can't always -- you know, you don't always win.

Sometimes you have good in your heart and you don't always win. Here, now, God is coming out of

the sky and saying I'll help you.

Because I have the same values as you.

I am Reuben too.

No one gets

in the way of Me.

So you know what, you and Me, we really should be a team together.

We can work

together. That's what God is saying at the burning bush.

Now, what you see here is a fascinating literary structure between the sandwich. I mentioned to you there was a sandwich. Which is, Jacob is sending Joseph and now those words are being bifurcated and between that bifurcation, we have the mission. The mission is actually the opposite of Jacob's mission.

Well, actually, maybe yes and no. The original Jacob. "leich nah r'eih et sh'lom achecha v'et sh'lom hatzon."

What was Jacob's mission?

Jacob's mission was,

Audience Member: Jacob or Joseph?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Jacob.

Jacob's mission to --

Audience Member: Oh, what he's sending him to. Okay.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Jacob's mission was, right, "leich nah r'eih et sh'lom achecha v'et sh'lom hatzon."

That's not really the opposite mission. Go check on the welfare. In a certain way, that's what's Moses is

also being sent on. He's being sent on more than just checking on the welfare. He's sent on, redeem

them from slavery. The original mission was what got Joseph sent down to Egypt. This is a mission that's going to redeem the Jews from Egypt. The language is, again, all Reuben language, but there's a fascinating literary pattern in the language. It is a chiasm. Can you find the chiasm within God's words?

You can see the chiasm if you focus on the Reuben language. There are three elements of the Reuben

language. Seeing, hearing and saving. Now focus on seeing, hearing and saving and you see the

chiasm. The first thing God says is, "vayomer Hashem ra'oh ra'iti." I have seen. Seeing. The next

thing, "v'et tza'akatam sham'ati." Hearing. The next thing, "va'eired l'hatzilo." I'm going to save. See,

hear, save, followed by, "v'atah," and now, "hinei tza'akat B'nei Yisrael ba'ah eilai," hearing. "V'gam

ra'iti et halachatz," seeing. To you see it? See, hear, save, right. Save is a central element so it's see, hear,

save, hear, see. You're with me? With saving is the central element. Saving is the central element. The

whole point of it is, you don't see for seeing sake, you don't hear for hearing sake. All that's prefatory. What it's really about is saving. Saving is a central element.

Audience Member: Where's the hearing on the way back down?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

On the way back down?

"Hinei tza'akat B'nei Yisrael ba'ah eilai." Ba'ah eilai is

a synonym for hearing. It's come on to me, right. The cries have come on to me. "V'gam ra'iti et

halachatz asher Mitzrayim lochatzim otam." Now, so therefore, "v'atah l'chah v'esh'lachacha el Pharaoh."

In other words, I am sending you on this mission and the point of this mission is to save. So this is the

opposite of enslavement in Egypt, right. This is Entebbe. That's what it is. "V'hotzei et ami B'nei

Yisrael mi'Mitzrayim." What you're about to see next is something quite astounding.

All right. Where do we pick in the story?

Is this the end of the Joseph parallels in Exodus?

So for a

while I thought it was. I didn't see anything further. Then I found it. It's a little bit further. What

happens next -- I don't see anything here in the next words. There's a discussion about who God is.

What's His name, right. I'm going to come to the Jews. What name am I going to give them? So God

says I'm eh'yeh. I'm "eh'yeh asher eh'yeh," and that whole discussion. Then, after that, God says the

following. After they get done with the names.

Look at these words.

What does this remind you of?

It turns out it reminds you of something in the

Joseph story. You're about to see six things that are going to happen in order. Every one of those six

things reminds you of six things that happen in the Joseph story. The six things that are about to happen

now correspond in order to the six things that happen in the Joseph story. find the six things.

Okay. Let's see if you can

Audience Member: Not reverse order?

Rabbi David Fohrman: Not reverse order. This time it's actual straight order.

Audience Member: You're talking about in the Exodus part of it?

Rabbi David Fohrman: I'm sorry, did you have a --

Audience Member: No, they only comment I had to make is that's really very nice whatever else.

However, the way that you told me about it is as if it's Moses' job? I never thought of it, but, you know,

did Moses actually even know what really happened with the brothers?

Rabbi David Fohrman: No.

Audience Member: Is there an (inaudible 00:49:51) because he himself really didn't know. I'm sure that

none of the kids knew what really happened. So you're looking at this and we're looking at this

objectively as the narrator does, but (inaudible 00:50:02) he didn't even know what happened.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Correct.

Absolutely.

I doubt very highly that Moses himself was aware of what

you and I are seeing. You and I are seeing it because we have the privilege of reading a God-given

document which has given you a God's eye view of the meaning of what's happening.

Audience Member: Didn't he know his roots began in Cana'an and somehow he ended up in (inaudible 00:50:27).

Rabbi David Fohrman: doesn't.

No, he knows that.

Does he know that he's channeling Reuben? Right, he

Audience Member: In other words, is he a reincarnate? Is he really Reuben?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

So of course not like that. I am sharing with you data right now.

How to

interpret that data is another thing. So let's just understand this. There's a difference between seeing the

data and knowing how to interpret it. So let's just agree on one thing. It's very hard to look at the data

and not see the correspondences between Moses and Reuben's life within the sale of Joseph. It's very,

very hard to deny that, I think. It's not just this week; it's the whole last three weeks going through this,

right. You could argue, if you want, with any one observation I'm making, but it's very hard to argue

with all 57 of them. know what I mean?

You know what I mean? It's cumulative, right. If any one of them are right -- you So it's just very hard to argue with. That's the data.

Now, the question is, how do you interpret the data? Now, that's much trickier. What does it mean?

So I'm going to be agnostic. I'm going to tell you straight out, I don't know what it means. We could

speculate about what it might mean. To tell you that I know what it mean? I'd be an idiot to tell you I

know what it means. I'll tell you what I suspect it kind of maybe means, right. In some way, shape or form it means that it falls to Moses in God's view of the world to redeem Reuben's role within the sale of Joseph story.

It's almost as if Reuben's role lives on in history beyond the original Reuben. In order for the Jews to get

beyond -- remember, the Jews came down to Egypt in no small part because of the Joseph story. That

you don't have to get philosophical for, it's just a matter of fact. Philosophically as we've seen, through

these connections, it wasn't just happenstance that the Jews came down through the Joseph story. The

Jews came down in more ways than one through the Joseph story. There was a decree in heaven

because of the Joseph story and it got actualized in the enslavement in Egypt. That seems pretty clear.

If we got down to Egypt through the Joseph story, it seems like there's no way to get out unless you

somehow redeem the Joseph story. The Joseph story has to be redeemed. There's no way to get out

otherwise.

That's just the way the things work.

So people are not going to be able to get out unless they

somehow put back the pieces. Even in heavenly mercy and all that -- and you're about to see this, I

think -- that there's no such thing as waving a wand and it all goes away, right. God doesn't work that

way. That's not the way the world works. something which is easy to lose sight of.

When you walk outside, justice matters. See, and that's

Because we're all very -- we're merciful people, you know what I mean. Right, we can get into Yom

Kippur, right.

Rosh Hashanah was a little hard to get into.

The idea of justice -- how many of you are

motivated by -- you know what I really like about religion? It's like, justice. You know, that's what I

love. Give me some good justice. It's scary. We're not into that. I'm the same way as everyone else. I'd

much prefer mercy to justice. The only reason why when you get outside, you know, the inverse square law of gravity works to keep your feet on the ground is because there's something called justice. Because God made rules and generally speaking, God adheres to those rules.

There's rules of nature. There's rules of physics. There's rules of chemistry. God's pretty scrupulous

about the rules. Every once in a while there's a miracle. Every once in a while. Too many miracles and

no one knows if they're going to breathe in a nitrogen oxygen mix or inhaling acid rain, you know

what I mean? Predictability is good when it comes to these rules. Things have got to work. So there

are rules in life. The same way that there's a courtroom for physics and there's a courtroom for chemistry, there's a courtroom for all the laws of nature. There's a courtroom for, you know, human actions and the way things work and there's rules.

You're just not going to get out of the enslavement in Egypt that brought you down because of the

Joseph story without somehow working it out. Part of working it out is that Reuben's role is got to be

redeemed. Reuben came so close that somehow if you're going to fix the Joseph story, Reuben has to be

able to win. Now, Reuben is going to get a little help from God, right. I get by from a little help from

my friends, as the Beetles once said. It's a little help from my friends. Reuben's still got to make the

fundamental choice.

Now, Reuben did make the choice.

That was Moses' key choice.

Moses' key

choice was to see the Jews as his brother. Once he does that -- once he makes Reuben's choice, God

comes out of the closet and says, okay.

This time I'm going to help you.

I'm going to help you.

As you're about to see, that help, that offer of divine help, was not actually even enough. If it stopped

right there it wouldn't have worked.

Because what's Moses' position at the burning bush?

Do you

remember?

God comes out and says I'm going to help you.

We're going to do this together.

What

does Moses say?

No.

You got totally the wrong guy. Trust me, you got the wrong guy. I know You

think You know it all, I know You got it figured it out. Trust me. I got my life Midian. Everything is

good. I have no charisma. I'm just totally not the guy over here.

By the way, isn't it eerie when Moses says "lo ish devarim anochi, gam mitmol, gam shilshom." I was

never a man of words.

Not yesterday, not the day before.

Well, if Moses is channeling Reuben, think of

Reuben. Reuben is the man who failed with words.

Every last time he failed with words.

Three times

he tried to succeed with words and each time he failed. The first time was when he tried to save Joseph and he was scared because his words wouldn't work for him. If you look at Reuben's words -- let's look

at Reuben's words. The people are saying to each other, we're going to kill him. "Vayishma Reuven,"

Reuben hears, "vayatzileihu miyadam. anyone.

Vayomer lo nakenu nefesh." He says we're not going to kill

Now, that sounds like very brave words.

Except look at the next thing that happens.

"Vayomer aleihem

Reuven." As we talked about before, "vayomer aleihem Reuven," -- I think we talked about this before. Look at the contrast between "vayomer aleihem Reuven," in Verse 22 and "vayomer lo nakenu nefesh,"

in Verse 21. Do you see that? What's the difference? What's the difference between "vayomer aleihem

Reuven al tish'p'chu dam hashlichu oto el habor hazeh asher bamidbar v'yad al tish'l'chu vo?" The

difference is there's no aleihem.

Do you get that, guys? What does that tell you?

That tells you in Verse

21 he wasn't talking to them. He was talking to himself. He can't. His first speech is not to them. When he says, "lo nakenu nefesh," he's talking to himself. He's saying, my God, we can't do this. nakenu nefesh." We can't kill him.

"Lo

Now the question is what's he going to tell them? He knows that he can't get them to change their

mind.

So instead he comes up with a story.

The story is of course we'll kill him. We'll just kill him

indirectly. Let's throw him in the pit alive instead of dead because he's so dangerous. We don't really

want to get rid of him alive. Are you with me?

So that's his first failure with words.

Unlike Judah who

later on actually has the power of persuasion and the ability to get the brothers to change their minds on

moral ground and say look, he's our brother. We can't do this. Reuben does not think he has that

power. This is his first failure with words.

His second failure with words comes -- what's his second failure with words? His second failure with

words is later on, "ashser ra'inu tzarat nafsho b'hitchan'no eileinu v'lo sham'anu, halo amarti aleichem al techet'u vayeled v'lo shama'atem." Right, I told you not to do this and you just didn't listen. That's later

on reflecting back on the same story. His next failure with words comes here. When Reuben comes

back to the pit. "Vayashev el echa'av."

So he comes back with this news.

Now, I'm going with the

Rashbam's theory. The Rashbam's theory is that the brothers didn't sell Joseph. The Midianites found

Joseph and sold him. So the brothers are off eating lunch and they're unaware of what happened.

Reuben is the first person who finds out that Joseph is not there. He doesn't know where he is. "Vayashav el echa'v vayomar," and he says to them, "hayeled einenu va'ani anah ani va." He says the child's not -- he's stammering, he can't even get the words out, "hayeled einenu va'ani," and me, "anah

ani va."

How could I possibly come?

This doesn't even make any sense and he's telling them, guys, he's

not there.

What's the brothers' response?

"Vayikchu et k'tonet Yosef va'yishchatu s'ir izim vayitb'lu et hakutonet

badam." They're not even listening to him. They're looking for an alibi. He's totally ignored. the second time Reuben is "lo ish devarim."

So this is

The third time is later on when it comes time to bring Benjamin down to Egypt. We know what happens there. Reuben proposes to his father, give him to me and I'll kill my two sons if I don't bring

him back to you.

Father ignores him until Judah comes along.

He never worked with words.

So it's

very poignant when Moses says, "lo ish d'varim anochi," I'm not a man of words, "gam mitmol gam

shilshom."

Not today, not yesterday, not the day before.

You're wondering what he's referring to with

all the day befores. Maybe despite himself, he's referring to this Reuben inability about words.

You think about why he can't go into the land, right. We talked about this before. It's because he was

told to speak to the rock and he was not an ish d'varim. Instead he hit the rock. Speak to the rock and

make the rock listen and he wouldn't do it. issue.

Now he can't go into the land. It's always been this d'varim

The question is -- just to finish the thought I said before -- what is the meaning of this? So, you know,

if you were the Kabbalistic heebie-jeebie kind of type so then you might say that Moses is a gilgul

(reincarnation) of Reuben. Okay. You might say that. I'm not saying he's not.

Audience Member: Does anyone else say that?

Rabbi David Fohrman: I don't know. It could very well be. I don't know. I'm not an expert on

reincarnations. I cannot tell you about past life reincarnation and all those experiences. So it could be. I

just plead agnostic. I'm just telling you, at the very least it falls to Moses in the decree of heaven to be the

one who is going to transform Reuben's role. To the extent that history has faded for Moses to play that

role -- that somehow Moses becomes saddled with the baggage of the original Reuben. He has his skills, he has his flaws and God's going to help him and together they're going to do their best, right. Yeah?

Audience Member: It's interesting that Reuben keeps trying and trying and failing. opposite -- shies away and says, hey, I can't do this.

Moses -- the

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Maybe because he had the experience of failure before.

If he is the reincarnation

or even -- somehow if you are channeling Reuben's role, you're weighed down with Reuben's baggage on some level. He understands he's not an ish d'varim. I don't know. Yeah, what?

Audience Member: God is helping Moses.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Buy God is helping Moses.

Audience Member: So there's the therapist.

Rabbi David Fohrman: What?

Audience Member: There is a therapist.

Rabbi David Fohrman: There is a -- he is.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 01:03:01).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Yeah, he is. Well, it's going to get more that way.

You'll really see.

You want

to see how psychotherapy works? You're about to see an exercise in Freud's psychodynamic therapy. It

really is. It's actually to the extent that Freud would do that, would say let's go back into your childhood

and ask what's holding you back? God is actually going to do that. There's going to be a Neo-Freudian

session with Moses, actually, where Moses is going to be asked to relive something in his childhood and to make it better. It's really quite remarkable. I'm getting ahead of myself so let's not spoil the fun.

All right. So now, the six things. We're up to the six parts of the Joseph story which we're about to see.

Now, the reason why it's hard to see -- I'm just letting you know now -- is because the six things which

you're about to see seem asynchronous.

Which is to say, they're out of chronological order.

Even

though the six things are in chronological order, it's A, B, C, D, E, F and they mimic six things that happen in chronological order in the Joseph story, but it's not the part of the Joseph story you would expect. Because if we were looking for Joseph parallels, let's just understand what we would expect.

You saw the beginning of the story. Here's Moses, he's doing the sheep, right. He's going and the

Midian and the whole thing.

So we're mimicking the beginning of the Joseph story.

So he's going

through the desert.

Along comes this angel and says stop, don't go there.

Got a better idea for you.

Then we have a mimicry of a father sending Moses slash Joseph. Except this time, he's sending him on a

different mission. A mission to save rather than a mission to be enslaved, but to save those who are

enslaved.

So we have father sending Joseph on a mission.

So now, if we keep on going through the

Joseph story, what's the next thing we should find parallels to? So Joseph goes on his mission and then

what happens? There has to be an encounter with the brothers and what happens at that encounter with

the brothers?

He gets stripped and thrown in a pit.

So you would expect that that's the next part of the

story which we are going to see parallels to.

Here is the red herring. It's not.

You're not going to see

any parallels to that. It's, like, totally ignored. It's not part of the story. It gets skipped over.

We now jump chapters forward in the Joseph story.

Chapters forward.

Remember -- and here's the

hint -- God has been using all this Reuben language to talk to Moses, right. In essence telling Moses,

Moses, do you know who you are?

You might think you're Joseph.

Your destiny is not to get thrown

in the pit. Really, you're Reuben. I'm Reuben too, right. We're going to work this out together. So

now Moses sort of switches roles.

He's not Joseph anymore, from this point on.

Now God's talking to

him as Reuben. One Reuben relating to another Reuben; the Rueben in the sky relating to the Reuben

on the ground. The next part of the Joseph story which you're going to hear is the next part of the story

in which Reuben is active. So after this story about Reuben trying to save but failing, when's the next

time in the Joseph story Rueben is active?

Audience Member: When he comes back and Joseph's missing.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Well. Okay. I'm skipping that.

Audience Member: When he goes to father and speaks up in Egypt?

Rabbi David Fohrman: No, Rueben is not part of that. The next time you find Reuben is when Joseph

encounters Reuben and the rest of his brothers and Reuben tells them, "halo amarti aleichem al tech'etu

vayeled." That's the next time we really meet Reuben. So we're going to skip chapters ahead to there.

Okay. So now, let's just look at the text in the Moses story and you'll see what I'm talking about.

Here we are. Verse 16. "Leich v'asafta et ziknei Yisrael, " God says. I want you to go and gather together the elders of Israel. "V'amarta aleihem," I shouldn't have given you all these hints. I gave it away. "V'amarta aleihem" I want you to say to them. "Hashem Elokei avoteichem nir'ah eilai." The God of your forefathers has shown himself to you. "Elokei Avraham, Elokei Yitzchak v'Elokei Ya'akov."

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. "Leimor," and the God of the Hebrews have said, "pakod

pakad'ti etchem v'et ha'asui lachem m'Mitzrayim." I've redeemed you and I have redeemed that which was done to you in Egypt. This is what you should tell the Elders. "Va'omar," and you should tell them, "a'aleh etchem mei'ani Mitzrayim el eretz ha'cna'ani v'hachiti v'ha'emori v'habrizi v'hachivi v'hay'vusi el eretz zavat chalav ud'vash." Tell them, I'm going to take them out of Egypt and I'm going to bring them to the land flowing of milk and honey.

Now, listen to what He says.

Not only am I telling you go, but vesham'u l'kolecha.

Now remember,

God knows keenly who He's talking to. He's talking to Rueben. What has always been the problem for

Reuben?

No one ever listens.

So God knows that this is an issue for Moses.

So God says, you know

what? I'm just going to make it real easy for you. Not only am I telling you to go and to tell people that

God nir'ah eilai, has shown Himself to you, which will be easy for you because Reuben always relates to

seeing very well, right. So God has shown Himself to you.

The problem is -- you're worried about getting listened to because no one ever listens to you. So do you

know what I'm telling you? V'sham'u l'kolecha. I, God, Master of the universe am now going to cue

you in because I can see history wherein I'm telling you not only are you going to go and do this, not only am I commanding it to you, but I'm going to make it easy for you by telling you that it's going to

work.

Because when you tell the Elders this, v'sham'u l'kolecha.

They are going to listen to you. So

don't worry about a thing, my friend, Reuben. Everything is going to be fine. Okay. V'sham'u l'kolecha.

"U'ba'ata atah v'ziknei Yisrael," and after they listen to you, you and the Elders are going to go.

You're

going to go to Pharaoh. "V'amartem eilav Hashem Elokei ha'ivri'im nikreh aleinu," the God of the Hebrews has come to us. "V'atah neilchah na derech sh'loshet yamim bamidbar v'nizb'chah la'Hashem

Elokeinu." Let us go for three days in the desert and we will sacrifice to God.

Now, at this point by the way, if you're reading Exodus on its own, one of the things that always puzzled me is -- I know this just gets left on the cutting room floor in movies like The Ten

Commandments and in movies like The Prince of Egypt. see Moses go in to Pharaoh and saying let my people go.

You never see this part, which is, you always You never say the part -- let my people go for

maybe like three days and then we'll come back. We're really just looking for a long weekend. Because that takes all the dramatic thunder out of it. Like, you have God on your side. Yet for some reason, God only wants three days. Very strange. What's the explanation in that? We're about to see the answer to that. The answer is going to lie in the parallels to the Joseph story.

Anyway, let us go for three days, "v'niz'b'chah laHashem Elokeinu. Va'ani yada'ati ki lo yitein etchem

melech Mitzrayim lahaloch." Now, I know that the king of Egypt is not going to listen to you. "Velo

b'yad chazakah." He's not going to listen without getting forced. "V'shalachti et yadi v'hikeiti et

Mitzrayim v'chol nifl'otai." Therefore, I am going to stretch out my hand. I am going to strike Egypt

with all of my wonders that I am going to do with them. "V'acharei kein y'shalach etchem." Only afterwards are they going to send you out.

Notice, by the way, the kind of credibility that God is building up with Moses. What He's saying is

look.

You've got to trust me over here because I am being very open with you.

I will tell you when

people aren't going to listen to you. I am going to tell you now that there is going to be someone who

that will not listen to you.

His name is Pharaoh.

So let's just get this on the table right now.

Don't get

scared about it. Don't get fazed about it. Pharaoh will not listen. The Elders are going to listen to you,

"v'sham'u l'kolecha," they will listen to you, but Pharaoh is not going to listen. So trust me, when I tell

you that the Elders are going to listen, you really should trust me because you see I'm honest with you.

When people aren't going to listen, I tell you. The Elders are going to listen.

Let's keep on reading. "V'natati et chein ha'am hazeh b'einei Mitzrayim." I am going to give the grace in the eyes of the people to Egypt. "V'hayah ki teilchun," and when you leave, "lo teilchu reikam," you're not going to leave empty-handed. "V'sha'alah ishah mish'chentah umigarat beitah k'lei chesef

u'chlei zahav u's'malot." You're going to take all these things from Egypt. "V'samtem al b'neichem v'al

v'noteichem v'nitzaltem et Mitzrayim." out Egypt.

You're going to take all of this stuff and you're going to empty

Now, the thing that happens with Moses now is beyond comprehension. If you were Moses, what

would you expect to say now? You have been totally reassured by your therapist. The Master of the

universe Himself has issued an iron clan guarantee based on His ability to see the future. He says, guys,

Moses, you are going to be listened to. you, but it's going to be good.

The Elders are going to listen to you.

Pharaoh won't listen to

Look at Moses.

If I am Moses, I'd say thank you.

I really appreciate You reassuring me, totally, fine.

Remember, God Himself has appeared to you. If God came to you in a dream -- do you know what I

mean? Like, God came to you in a dream and said something crazy. Said, I would like you to run for

senator, right. I think it would be a very good idea for you to run for senator. Sima, Sima, you have a

dream tonight and says, you should run for senator. Sima says, I've never run before, I have -- politics is

not my thing.

God says I know Sima. Trust me, I am God.

Here's the miracle to prove it. When you

wake up in the morning there's going to be exactly $373,000.41 underneath your pillow. deposit that in the bank to start your campaign.

I want you

You wake up in the morning and there's $373,000 in small change underneath your pillow and the $0.41

and it's a sign and it's from God and you know it's true. You haven't been having hallucinations and it's

absolutely true. He gives you three signs, proves it, it's absolutely true. Then God says to Sima and I just

want you to know that I know you think -- you're worried about politics. You ran for student council

president when you were in seventh grade. It didn't work out so well. So you have some issues in your

childhood.

I am telling you -- I'm going to give you the roadmap over here, okay.

What's going to

happen is you're going to breeze through the senate campaign. When you try to run for president

there's going to be some issues.

So I'm going to have to come and smooth them out.

Totally you're not

going to -- you're going to have barely any opposition, right. I am the Lord.

So now, Sima, at that point, do you think you could see your way to go into the bank and depositing

$373,000 and hiring the lawyer to create the Sima for senator bank account. It's on a silver platter.

I mean, you could do that.

Look at Moses. "Vaya'an Moshe vayomer v'hein lo ya'aminu li v'lo yishma'u b'koli ki yomru lo nir'ah

eilecha Hashem."

God -- he's talking to the Master of the universe -- it's not going to work.

They're

not going to trust me. They are not going to listen to me. They are going to deny that you were ever seen to me. There's not going to be any hearing. There's not going to be any seeing. He's a crushed Reuben. Reuben normally -- at least he's got seeing on his side, right. There's a problem with the hearing. They're not going to hear me. There's going to be no seeing, there's going to be no trust.

There's going to be no nothing. He's contravening the Master of the universe. that?

How could he be doing

Audience Member: Maybe he knows the people well. Maybe he knows how crushed the people are. Audience Member: (Inaudible 01:14:30)

Audience Member: No, but maybe it's not about him. Maybe it's about the people.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Sure, sure. All right. If you're right, if you're right then he should have said

something different to God.

You know what he should have said to God?

God, I bet this is my

schizophrenia acting up, okay.

Show me that this is for real.

Show me that it's really You.

If he would

have said I don't believe that I'm talking to the Divine, that would be rational. It sounds like he believes

he's talking to the Divine. He's not saying I don't think I'm talking to God. He says I'm never going to

be able to convince the people that you're talking to God. That's irrational because if you believe that

you're talking to God and God has told you that the people are going to believe you, why can't you believe it?

Audience Member: So it's glaringly, again, the opposite of Reuben. He succeeds and becomes the

successful Reuben in spite of himself.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Correct.

In spite of himself.

So right now, you have a crushed Reuben. Reuben

is on the floor.

You know why Rueben is on the floor?

Why Reuben won't believe? The parallels to

the Joseph story are going to explain it to you. What's going to happen is once you see the six ways in

which everything which we've just seen corresponds to the Joseph story, you will be able to match up

those six things. Those six things are going to serve as commentary on what's happening in Exodus and

are going to tell you why Moses can't believe it. That has to do with the Joseph story. We're out of

time so we'll do that when we come back next time.

Rabbi David Fohrman: The puzzle last week was I suggested to you that there six references in the story

that I just read you in Exodus 3, which takes you to a certain point of the Joseph story where you find

those same six things appearing, once again, in exactly the same order in the Joseph story. Everything

that's happening in Exodus is a play off of those six things. I suggested to you last week that if you understood those six things, then you would understand the answer to a certain puzzle. The puzzle that is the payoff for understanding these six things is actually a very crucial issue, I believe. It is the solution to a very crucial issue.

The crucial issue is, basically, just to review, at the beginning of Exodus, Chapter 4, we find an astounding thing and this is really what I left you off with at the end of last week. Right over here, at the

top of the page, we find something just extraordinary. We find Moses arguing with God. It's fine;

Moses arguing with God. I get that, except that the nature of the argument here is very strange.

What has happened is that in the previous chapter, in Chapter 3, God has assured Moses that things are

going to go well. Moses' job is to go to the Elders and to tell them what happened, tell them that he saw

God at Sinai and to then march with them together to Pharaoh to demand freedom for the Jews. God is

very upfront with Moses about how this is going to work. lekolecha," they are going to listen to you.

He says when you go to the Elders, "V'shamu

Not only am I telling you to go, but I am telling you that your mission is going to succeed, that they are going to listen to you, they're going to believe you and they're going to go with you to Pharaoh. But I'm also telling you that when you go to Pharaoh, that mission is not going to succeed. "Va'ani yada'ati

ki lo yitein et'chem Melech Mitzrayim lahaloch," I know that he will not listen to you. It's going to be a

long process. At that point, I'm going to have to hit him and there are going to be plagues and that's

how you're going to have to go. God is very upfront about this. What could be more reassuring?

Last week, I gave you the example of God appears to Simah and tells her you're running for the Senate. If you really knew it was God, you really knew it was God and there were the $350,000 under your pillow to start your war chest for your campaign, the next thing you'd do is you would deposit the

money and you would start a campaign if you were sure it was God. Now, that's even without a

guarantee. God just said start a campaign.

But if God came and said to you -- I mean, imagine this. God comes and says to you, Simah, here's

$357,433 under your pillow. I want you to start a campaign for Senate and I'm going to tell you that

your initial polls are going to be very good.

You'll poll at 65 percent by November.

Then, you're going

to drop to 43 percent by January, but don't worry because that's when I'm going to get involved and I'll

make sure that you win. Do you know what I mean? Then, you'd really be pretty confident.

I mean, you know the game plan.

You understand this is going to work.

This isn't going to work.

When we hit this obstacle, God's going to help me. This is how it's going to work. You know the

game plan. It's not even like you have to take it on faith anymore. You wouldn't take it on faith because

you know it's the Master of the Universe. We're not talking about that you don't know it's the Master of

the Universe.

You do know it's the Master of the Universe.

You can show your friends the three signs

that God has chosen you. It's for real.

We would think that Moses would for sure do this. Therefore, in light of all of this, Moses' response is

just astounding. Moses' response is "Vayan Moshe vayomer v'hein lo ya'aminu li v'lo yishme'u b'koli ki

yomru lo nirah eilecha Hashem." Do you understand this? They're not going to believe me. This is the

thing that God said is going to work. God says I'm telling you you're going to go to the Elders; they're

going to listen to you.

Along comes Moses and says they're not going to listen to me.

Do you know

what I mean? What are you doing? God, the Master of the Universe, told you this is going to happen

and you're telling Him it's not going to happen? Who do you think knows best?

If Moses didn't believe he was speaking to the Almighty, we could understand this, but Moses believes he's speaking to the Almighty. This is halfway through the burning bush. It's not like he thinks this is a

hoaxer, this is Oz the Great and Terrible. How do you possibly understand this?

Do you know what I mean? It's the Master of the Universe.

I believe that the clues that we've seen last week, the six references in this story to the Joseph story, is going to lead you to the answer. There are six events that are happening here that echo what happened

in the Joseph story. question.

Once you understand those six events, you're going to understand the answer to the

I'm going to make it a little bit easier for you by just giving you the outline of a theory and then I'm going to explain to you how it works in detail. Here's the outline of the theory. Let's think about it

logically for a moment. What's the only way it would make sense for God to explicitly promise you

something and for you to doubt that that could actually be? Audience Member: It happened before.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

It happened before that didn't work.

Maybe.

Audience Member: Really not believing in yourself.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

There are a couple of possibilities.

Either you really don't believe in yourself or

you really don't believe in God or both. Those are the logical possibilities here. Either you really don't

believe in yourself, you really don't believe in God or both. I want to argue that, in some way, all three

of those are true here. Now, I want to be very careful and explain what I mean. I would not accuse

Moses of not believing in God.

You can't accuse him of not believing in God.

He's talking to God. I

mean, he can't be so blind as to believe that God doesn't have the power to do things.

I believe that Moses -- that part of this is that he doesn't believe in himself for good reason, and I'll explain why in a moment, but part of it also is that I believe -- and I'm going to say something that

sounds slightly controversial here, but I really don't think it's so controversial. send this tape around if you value my children getting married.

You might not want to

There is an old philosophical puzzle, which this, I believe, relates to when we talk about belief in God.

An old philosophical puzzle is the problem.

This is the following.

Can God make a rock that He can't

lift? You've all heard this question. If you haven't heard this question, could make a rock He can't lift?

It's a famous paradox. In other words, if God is all-powerful, so God is all-powerful, He can do

anything. Now, if God, though, can do anything, so could He make a rock that he can't lift? If He

couldn't lift a rock, then you're not all-powerful. So could God make a rock that He can't lift?

There are all sorts of paradoxes that hit you when you start considering God being all-powerful. What

would you say the answer to that question is? What do you think the answer to that question is? Can God make a rock He can't lift? Is there no answer? Is the answer yes? There's got to be an answer. It's either yes or no.

Audience Member: God can do it, but He'll be able to lift it. That's the answer.

Rabbi David Fohrman: But then it's not a rock He can't lift.

Audience Member: If God intends to make something that He won't be able -- put in quotes carefully

--

Rabbi David Fohrman: of lifting?

I mean able. This is my question. Can God make a rock that God is incapable

Everyone: No.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

The answer is no. I agree with you, the answer is no.

Now, let's go to the other

side of the paradox. Audience Member:

Then, God can't do everything, right?

No, because the second part has to be true in order for (inaudible 00:09:13).

Rabbi David Fohrman: He can't lift, yes or no?

One second.

There's something God can't do, right? He can't make a rock that

Audience Member: Still no.

Rabbi David Fohrman: but this.

Still no? In other words, no, God can't do everything? He can do everything

(Interposing 00:09:30 - 00:09:33)

Rabbi David Fohrman:

This is where you guys are (inaudible 00:09:34).

You guys are all -- everyone

was all very unanimous in saying that God can't make a rock that He can't lift. We all agreed to that. So you're saying we don't know whether can do it.

Audience Member: We're not God. We can't determine what He can do or can't do.

Rabbi David Fohrman: So we don't know. That's possible, we don't know.

Audience Member: I still say He can do it and then He'll be able to lift it.

Rabbi David Fohrman: No, because then it's not a rock that God is incapable of lifting. If He could lift

it afterwards, it can't have been a rock that He's incapable of lifting. (Interposing 00:09:58 - 00:10:00)

Rabbi David Fohrman: All right. Maybe. Let me suggest to you a possible answer. A possible answer

might be that no, God can't make a rock that He can't lift because to do so would be to weaken Himself.

God cannot weaken Himself. Now, you'll tell me that if God cannot weaken Himself, then there are

certain things He can't do. The answer is yes, there are certain things He can't do, but the things that

He can't do don't detract from Him being all-powerful.

God is all-powerful. Part of being all-powerful is that you're not weak and you can't make yourself

weak. Ay, that means there are certain things you can't do, meaning make yourself weak. Okay. There

are certain things you can't do, but that doesn't detract from me being all-powerful. Now, if would

accept that theory, it means that the definition of all-powerful does not mean can do anything. Those

two are not the same thing. All-powerful does not mean can do anything. I'm all-powerful; I can't be weak.

Audience Member: It's the same thing as evil.

Rabbi David Fohrman: I don't want to get into evil here.

Audience Member: But it is the same concept.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Maybe, but I don't think so.

Let's just stick with me for a moment.

Here's a

very interesting possibility. The possibility is that it may be that God is all-powerful, but being all-

powerful is not the same thing as meaning that you can do anything. There are certain things that even

an all-powerful being can't do, so to speak, but it doesn't detract from Him being all-powerful. example, He can't make Himself weak.

For

Now, it may be that there's another thing that an all-powerful being can't do, but it doesn't detract from

Him being all-powerful and, actually, this is where evil comes into the picture. Now, this is a subtle

point, but the point is like this. It's actually a point, which a non-Jewish theologian by the name of -- what's his name? He explores it in his book The Problem of Pain? C.S. Lewis, the guy who wrote The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

Audience Member: Alice?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

No, it wasn't Alice in Wonderland.

He wrote children's books, but he also

wrote books of theology. He explored this possibility in a book called The Problem of Pain, which was a

book that was an attempt for him to deal with the loss of his wife to a rare form of cancer before her time. He was struggling with it and he wrote this book.

Basically, the issue is the following.

Can God do something, which is inherently contradictory?

For

example, can God make a square circle? The answer to that might also be no, but that doesn't detract from what an all-powerful being could do.

Audience Member: geometry.

Don't get into math because you could do it in another geometry, a Riemannian

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay.

So let's say standard geometry in our standard three-dimensional world,

the way we understand it. Could you create a contradiction in terms? The answer might be that a --

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:13:16) outside of nature (inaudible 00:13:18).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Maybe, but it could be that a contradiction in terms is not something that can be

created. In other words, an all-powerful being means that you can do anything but that which is

inherently impossible. It may be --

Audience Member:

Possible in our realm, but not in God's realm.

God can do anything. He may not

want to everything, but He can do anything.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Okay. Fine. Let me soften it a moment and take it out of the realm of absolute

theology and talk about something which we can pretty much agree on. Let's talk about this. Let's talk about miracles. We all believe in miracles, but believing in miracles is not the same thing as believing that miracles are pervasive and they happen all the time. I'm not talking about a hidden miracle. I'm talking about an open miracle. I'm talking about the sea splitting, stuff like that. It hasn't happened lately, but it doesn't shake your faith that it doesn't happen lately.

In other words, if an atheist came to you and said I don't believe in God because I haven't seen very

many miracles lately.

How come the sea didn't split last week?

You wouldn't be terribly bothered by

that. You would say that miracles are rare. They're rare. They're rare even in the times of the Bible.

They're even rarer now. Now, someone would say to you, well, how come miracles are so rare? If you

really believe God exists, so why doesn't God do miracles all the time?

If you really think about the answer to that question, the answer to that question is that God doesn't like

miracles very much. They kind of annoy Him. God will do miracles, now and then, when the purpose

suits Him, but generally speaking, God has a prejudice against miracles. He much prefers what?

Everyone: Nature.

Rabbi David Fohrman: He much prefers nature, teva. Why does God prefer nature so much?

Audience Member: Consistency.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

The answer is consistency.

In other words, if we lived in a world where miracles

were commonplace, what's the downside of that world? Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:15:14).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

You have no idea what to expect.

You're going to get outside the door and is

there going to be gravity or is there not going to be gravity? Is God going to decide to suspend gravity because someone's coming through in an ambulance and it would be a lot more convenient if He made them get there faster if He suspended the inverse-square law of gravity for a little bit? All right,

everybody put yourself on hold, so everyone’s flying through the -- it doesn't work that way. doesn't do -- because it's very important for there to be a predictable world.

God

The laws of chemistry and physics, when you really think about them, are also creations of God and are expressions of God's will every bit as much as miracles are. Nature doesn't just follow God's will when God decides to split the sea. Every time nature does its thing, every time the elements in the periodic table act like the elements of the periodic table should and follow the laws of chemistry and physics, every time that happens, that's a validation of God's will. Because why is that happening?

This, by the way, is one of the deepest questions that you can ask about nature, which is why are there rules? Why is there such regularity that the same inverse-square law of gravity, which holds true right over here in our little corner of earth, will also hold true in the Andromeda galaxy in the Crab Nebula?

The truth is astrophysicists do not really have the answer to that question and they think it's a very good question, a much better question than you think it is they think it is because they can't really figure out why there should be such precise regularity across all these vast regions of nature. What's holding it

together? What lawgiver is enforcing the rules?

Now, we don't have much of a problem with that because we believe that there's a lawgiver enforcing the rules. But if you didn't believe there was a lawgiver, then you would say where are the traffic lights?

Where are the cops?

Where is the government?

Who gets a ticket if chromium doesn't decompose in

the half-life that chromium is supposed to decompose? So we believe in a lawgiver.

If that's true, that means this really, if you think about it, we're getting for -- if you want to put on your Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur shoes, Elul isn't that far away, but if you think about this from a

perspective of Jewish life, this really is the argument of justice in the world. This is really the argument

for justice. We approach the days of justice. The days of justice are no fun. Do you what I mean? No

one says do you know what turns me on about Judaism? Justice. Do you know what I mean? Give me

a little bit of justice. That's what I like. We're really into compassion, the other way that God tends to

deal with things. Justice doesn't really float our boat that much. Not many of us are attracted to religion

because we feel that that's the realm of justice.

The real truth is it is the realm of justice and the Creator is going to deal with us in terms of justice and

compassion, and you need both. This is the reason why you need justice because if you don't have

justice, what that means is you don't have law. So that means if you would imagine -- so law in the

physical realm is stuff like, will nature be predictable? We all understand there that law is very important.

Well, law is also important in other realms, too. Law is important in the social realm.

What if there were no laws? What if nobody paid attention to the traffic lights and laws? That would

not be a very good society to live in. You would not want to live in a society where you wouldn't know

-- again, it's unpredictability. You wouldn't know if you ventured across Rockaway Turnpike and

Broadway whether or not that truck barreling at ninety miles an hour was going to stop or not. That

would not be a nice thing.

So you want predictability.

You want to know that when you wake up in

the morning, the car is going to be in your driveway where you left it. You want that sort of

predictability and that predictability comes when law is adhered to in the social realm. This really is the reason why there needs to be a lawgiver and why laws need to be taken seriously and why things -- there has to be due process.

So that means that if there's a -- so I want to argue that perhaps what Moses saw was that God was promising something that was an abrogation of all of this. The way Moses understood what was going on, part of it was that there was a -- that he may not have believed in himself, and we're exploring that, but part of it may have been that he didn't believe in God.

What I mean by didn't believe in God, I don't mean anything as stupid as not believing that he's talking to God or not even believing that God is serious or not even believing something like that. But you can imagine someone who takes the notion of justice seriously in all of its aspects would find it hard to believe a judge who comes along and says he's going to abrogate all of it because he just doesn't care

anymore. It's like, really? I mean, you're the judge. Is that really, really true?

Now, I understand what I'm saying is a little bit abstract, so let's try to actually flesh it out in terms of the Joseph story and I'll try to show you what I mean by it. What are the six correspondences between this

and the Joseph story? The last three, by the way, are here in the words that are highlighted on your

screen, Exodus 4, Verse 1. The last three are "V'hein lo ya'aminu li, v'lo yishme'u b'koli, ki yomru lo

nirah eilecha Hashem." There are three of them right there in order. to the first three. The first three are in Chapter 3.

Those are the last three. Let's go

Audience Member: What about the problem with free will?

You skipped over that totally.

In other

words, you could say that Moses believed in himself, Moses believed in Hashem, but then, the whole idea of how much Hashem is controlling free will. The Children of Israel, He's controlling them, but then

they still have free will.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

You didn't touch on that.

Okay. We'll get there. These are my personal notes, which are really not meant

for you, but I'm just going to show you some of it here because I'm in a particularly benevolent mood.

This will hopefully make it just easier. Ignore all the words; just look at the colors on the screen, the underlines and the highlights. This here is a visual markup PDF of the beginning of Exodus, Chapter 3, over here.

Basically, if you look at this, this is the story of the burning bush here and we saw how the story of the

burning bush mimicked the beginning of the Joseph story. It begins over here, "U'Moshe hayah ro'eh et

tzon Yitro chotno kohen Midyan vayinhag et hatzon achar hamidbar vayavo el Har HaElokim

Chorevah."

This is the beginning of the Joseph story.

We talked about this last week. If you don't

know what I'm talking about, that's fine.

Then, over here, the two greens over here, "Hineini" and "Lechah v'eshlachacha," when Moses first says "Hineini" I'm here, and then God says "Lechah v'eshlachacha el Paroh," come, I'm going to send you to Pharaoh. That is the mirror of the exact words that Jacob uses to send Joseph on his mission.

Remember? "Lechah v'eshlachacha aleihem vayomer lo hineini," I'm going to send you and he says I'm here.

Then, inside those green brackets, the red and the blue over here, this is the mission. The mission we said is don't come close, go and save the Jews. We talked about this and this is all the language of

Reuben. God is saying I'm the big Reuben in the sky. What is the Reuben language? I am going to see

and I am going to hear, and no one is going to stop me.

Now, remember, we talked about last week why is it that God is introducing Himself as the big Reuben

in the sky? Because who is Moses? Who is Moses we talked about before, Moses was -- remember we

talked about our three versions of Reuben. If you weren't here previously, you have no idea what I'm talking about, but just stick with me over here.

The three versions of Reuben, corrupted Reuben, exalted Reuben, Reuben himself. Moses is Reuben

himself. Moses vis-à-vis the Joseph story is the guy who like Reuben -- the language in Reuben we're

looking at is "Asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho behit'chaneno eileinu v'lo shaman," we saw his pain, but we did

not hear. "Ha'lo amarti aleichem leimor al techetu bayeled v'lo shematem," I told you not do it; you

didn't listen. It's the guy who saw that got thwarted by hearing. Moses also is the guy who sees the pain

of his brothers that gets thwarted by hearing. "Vayishma Paroh," Pharaoh hears and Pharaoh gets in the way.

Basically, what is God saying? I'm the big Reuben in the sky. Nobody thwarts me. I can see, I can hear,

I can save, I can do everything, which you, this channeling Reuben in the Joseph story did so long ago

and failed, with hearing I can do. What that goes back to is exalted Reuben. Because who is exalted

Reuben? Exalted Reuben, remember, is Pharaoh's daughter. Now, Pharaoh's daughter was the one, who

up over in the greens and the blues, mimics Reuben successfully, takes Reuben to the next level when "Vateire et hateivah betoch hasuf," she sees, she hears the cries. "Vatiftach vatireihu et hayeled," she sees the child "v'hineih na'ar bocheh," and she hears the child crying. She responds and she saves the child. She together with Miriam becomes exalted Reuben.

Now, what I argue to you, what I believe I argued back here, is that in naming Moses Moses, what she was really doing was giving this child a destiny and that destiny was that you are ultimately going to

have to face the same choice I faced. To succeed in life, you're going to have to make the same choice I

made. I chose correctly over here, but you're going to have to make the same choice.

What choice did she make? The choice she made is that she was faced with a situation, where she had to decide what to do about the screams and cries of a child that everything she was brought up to believe

was that this child is not your brother, this child is a threat and this child needs to be gotten rid of. the daughter of Hitler. She's supposed to be throwing these babies in the Nile.

She's

Her success is when she says no, there's a common bond of brotherhood that unites us, that unites all of humanity. I cannot do this to this child. I need to save the child and not kill it. When sees the child as a brother, so to speak, and saves the child, that's exalted Reuben. That's what Reuben did and that's what Reuben succeeded in doing -- Reuben tried to do but, in the end, couldn't succeed in doing.

Ultimately, it falls to Moses to make that same choice. Moses is going to have to choose because Moses is

also a prince in the palace. When the time comes, he's also going to have to decide who his brother is. Because when he hears the screams of all the slaves, the most convenient thing is to simply turn your back and say who am I, I'm a prince of the palace, there's not much I can do.

Moses' greatness is that he doesn't do that like Reuben. This is Reuben's choice also. Reuben can say to

himself, this is my brother, we already dispelled him. We already have nothing to do with him. He's

Ishmael; we got rid of him already. But he doesn't do that. Reuben says no. He is my brother. listen to his screams. I have to respond.

I have to

Moses has to make her choice. She says you have to do what I did. I pulled you out of the water; you

have to pull.

You have to pull somebody out.

Moshe, to pull, which means not just by naming you for

having been pulled, but you are the puller. You are going to be the one who's going to pull. Think, of

course, about the imagery as I mentioned to you before, "B'yad chazakah u'bizro'a netuyah."

"B'yad chazakah u'bizro'a netuyah," has a double meaning. It's the outstretched hand that God uses to

smite the Egyptians, but also, what do you do with a strong hand and an outstretched arm? You pull.

That allows you to grab someone in trouble.

Think about that image from Schindler's List.

You know

what I'm talking about. It allows you to pull and to pull someone out from a position of harm, and that's

Moses. Moses' destiny is to pull.

Here's the deal. Now, as we're going through -- so now, let's go to the beginning of Exodus 3. As you

go through everything you see up on your screen, all of this is playing off of the beginning of the Joseph story and is all leading up to -- as I said to you last time, it's all leading up to this pit in the middle of the Joseph story, which is literally the story of the pit. We're getting closer and closer to the story of the pit, so what we'd expect right around here, Verse 12 or so, is that if the parallels are going to continue the way they are, the next thing that I should see parallels to is the story of Joseph in the pit.

What's surprising, that I suggested to you last week, is that's not what you see. The parallels do continue to the Joseph story, but the part which we haven't gotten to, the next six parallels are not where

you would expect them to be.

Something is skipped over.

The pit is skipped over and it's a much later

connection to the Joseph story, which is, chapters later.

I believe that this literary device which the Torah is using here, what I'm going to call skipped parallels, parallels which aren't where you believe they should be, the pit has been skipped over, is the narrator; i.e. God, God's way of giving you the beginning of an insight into why Moses doesn't buy this. The reason

why Moses doesn't buy it is because you've skipped the pit. You can't skip the pit.

Think about it for a moment. If you were Reuben -- think about this from Moses' perspective. I want

you to get into Moses' skin for a moment. If Moses is really channeling Reuben, so to speak, whatever

that means, he's a reincarnation of Reuben, he's acting out Reuben in the next generation, he doesn't know he's Reuben, but whatever it is that's who he is. He's the one who's trying to -- right? The Jews

get down -- let's understand -- to Egypt through the sale of Joseph. there. All of the disasters -- and we saw that earlier.

That is the sin that brings them

In the last few weeks, we had seen that, where in all of these different ways, the sale of Joseph is what

brings them down. Not just in the chronological way that Yosef was sold and came down to Egypt, but

in so many other ways, the socioeconomic level, the jealousy of the Egyptians of having to deal with how Joseph treated them. That was part of it. The lack of forgiveness between the brothers and Joseph, that seems to catalyze it. All of the literary parallels suggested, in some way, there's this justice in heaven. You threw your brother in a pit; your children are going to be thrown in a pit. All of this stuff just seems to be so real.

Now, imagine that that's really real and you are Reuben.

You are a latter-day Reuben.

So here you are,

you're going through, in the burning bush, this story, the story of the sale of Joseph. It's happening

again and it's happening better. You're being sent on a mission, but here the mission is to save. It's

great. The problem is how could you skip the pit?

Now, how could you skip the pit is a literary issue, but it's also an existential issue. The way it's an existential issue is what? It's that if we got down to Egypt because of the pit, if that in so many ways is the sin that brought us down to Egypt, the question that Moses, so to speak, or Reuben, so to speak, has

for God is how do you expect to get us out of this without us relating to that? You're just going to wave

your magic wand, God, and say it's all better now, you can all come out of Egypt, let's not deal with the pit?

We're here because of the pit.

How does that work?

You can tell me you're all-powerful all you want.

I don't believe it in my bones. I don't see how we get out of here because you're going to wave your

magic wand. That's just a capricious miracle. It doesn't even make sense. You got us here, 400 years of

slavery that, in some way, traced back to that instance. We're relating to all of that and all these events that happened. All these events that we're going through now are leading up to this and then you're saying never mind about the pit, and especially if I'm Reuben.

Here's why especially if I'm Reuben.

Look at the guilt that I'm saddled with as Reuben.

You see

Reuben's guilt. We've talked about this before. When Reuben comes back and he cries and he rips his

coat, he's only the child that rips hit coat. When he sees that Joseph isn't there and comes to report with

the brothers, he can't even get words out straight. He says "Hayeled einenu va'ani anah ani ba." It doesn't even make sense. It's not grammatical. He's beside himself, Reuben. Why is he beside himself?

I suggested to you he's beside himself because he was the one that made this bargain with the devil for the purpose of saving Joseph that backfired. He wants to save Joseph, but he doesn't think he can convince his brothers, so he says it's his idea, let's throw him in the pit. Let's throw him into the pit alive. What he's not telling them is so I can come double back and get him later, but there is no later.

Audience Member: But he still essentially saved him because otherwise (inaudible 00:34:36).

Rabbi David Fohrman: That's true, but he doesn't know that he's saved. He knows Joseph's gone.

Audience Member: But he would've been killed.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right now, he doesn't know Joseph is alive. He thought he may be killed him.

He thought it was -- you know, he's gone. He was kidnapped, murdered, something. He doesn't know

that he's safe and sound in Egypt. Reuben is beside himself with this guilt that I tried to save, but I was the last guy with my hand this guy. I was the one who said do this and then it's all falling apart. I have to come back to Father; it seems so cruel. Rueben doesn't realize that he did actually save him. He just doesn't know that.

If you are Reuben, all the more so, how do you think -- you think we could just skip over this guilt that I have? This is the Moses doesn't believe in himself. The Moses doesn't believe in himself, is if I'm Reuben, you're going to tell me that I know culpability for what happened, that we can just skip it, that I can go and be the merry old person leading everyone out without relating to the pit?

Now, with that in mind, let's come and look at the six parallels. They begin here, the orange. "Leich v'asafta et Ziknei Yisrael." That's Parallel Number 1. Parallel Number 2 is "Neilchah na derech sheloshet yamim bamidbar," let us go for three days in the desert. Remember, this is what God says to tell Pharaoh. Tell Pharaoh let us go for three days in the desert "V'nizbechah laHashem Elokeinu," let us sacrifice to God.

Parallel 3 is that God says, by the way, "V'natati et chein ha'am ha'zeh b'einei Mitzrayim v'hayah ki

teileichun lo teilchu reikom." When you leave, you're not going to leave with nothing; you're going to

leave with great wealth. One, two and three.

Those are the three parallels. "Leich v'asafta et Ziknei Yisrael," the orange ones.

Now, if you think about two and three, they're actually interestingly sort of superfluous. In other words,

if I'm Moses and God is telling me that He's going to engineer a miraculous salvation of the people, two and three really don't seem like they should be part of the picture. If you notice, two and three never

actually make it in Hollywood stylized portraits of the Exodus. For example, if you're watching The

Prince of Egypt or The Ten Commandments, you don't actually see two and three.

Two is, Pharaoh, could we please go for just three days? Now, that really drains all the drama out of

everything. I mean, here you are, you're representing God, so let my people go, that's nice and forceful,

it's pithy, but let my people go for a long weekend?

No.

Do you know what I mean?

So that always

gets left on the cutting room floor in Hollywood style, but it's here in the actual Bible. Why would God do this? Why drain all the power from -- if you're God and you're going to back it up with plagues, so just say, Pharaoh, we're going. I don't care if you don't say no. What's this, we're going for a long weekend? That's two.

Three is "V'haya ki teileichun lo teilchu reikom." When you go, by the way, you're going to have lots

of gold and silver with you. Oh, yayesher kochacha, that's really nice. Here I am, I've endured 400 years

of slavery and now I have to schlep out, for my 40 years sojourn in the desert, all this gold and silver? Do

I really care?

Four hundred years of slavery is over.

I'm happy to get out of there with my life. I'm not

really thinking about -- but it's very important for God.

You all know the Midrash. Rashi quotes that it's very important for God.

This is why God says please

can you do this? Bevakashah mimcha, I'm asking you because Abraham is going to get mad at me if you

don't do this. You could ask the same question about Abraham, why did Abraham really care? These are

interesting questions. I'm not going to answer them fully.

I just want to point out to you for a moment that these two, the two and three are sort of superfluous

things. Here's one reason why they're not superfluous. There's more than one reason, but one of the

reasons why they're not superfluous is all of the things are taking you back to important points in Joseph's story.

So now I ask you, when do we have the following six things in order in the Joseph story, something that mirrors "Leich v'asafta Ziknei Yisrael," go and gather together the Elders of Israel, something that mirrors "Neilchah na derech sheloshet yamim," let us go for three days in the desert, something that mirrors "V'hayah ki teileichun lo teilchu reikom," when you go you won't go empty-handed and then something that mirrors "V'hen lo ya'aminu li," they will not trust me "v'lo yishme'u b'koli" and they will

not listen to my voice "ki yomru lo nirah eilecha Hashem," the red and the blue over here? things in the exact same order appear somewhere in the Joseph story.

Audience Member: Which was the sixth one?

Those six

Rabbi David Fohrman: "V'hen lo ya'aminu li v'lo yishme'u b'koli ki yomru lo nirah eilecha Hashem."

Audience Member: Is it when Joseph -- when the butler and the baker had the dreams?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

No.

Good guess. It is not.

Audience Member: When he had his own dreams he told them to (inaudible 00:40:04)

Rabbi David Fohrman: teilchu reikom"?

Well, it's true you have three days there, but where is "V'hayah ki teileichun lo

Audience Member: When he wanted to keep Benjamin (inaudible 00:40:14) Benjamin.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Filling the sacks?

No.

We do have three days there -- no, you don't have three

days there. Do you have three days there?

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:40:23) for three days.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

No.

That's correct.

That's where it is. It's not with the sacks. It's earlier.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:40:31 - 00:40:33).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

No, it's earlier than that. That's correct.

Simeon's correct.

It is the

imprisonment of Simeon. The story is the imprisonment of Simeon. In the story of the imprisonment of Simeon, all three of these things happen -- all six of these things happen in the exact same order. Let's go to the story of the imprisonment of Simeon and you'll see how it plays out.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:40:52 - 00:40:54) mizeh also?

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes, it is. Actually, there is a mizeh right in the middle of that. I think we

talked about that. Did we talk about that one? Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:41:01).

Rabbi David Fohrman: We talked about that mizeh, yeah. Let's go back into the imprisonment of

Simeon and you'll see what it is that I'm talking about. The imprisonment of Simeon, in a certain way,

was a very dark moment for the Tribes. We see it was dark because their response to it is oh boy; God really has it in for us now. Remember that's the moment when they say this is Divine that this is happening to us. It's all because of the crimes that happened to us. We talked about the mizeh about that, but to keep it simple, I'm not sure if I'm going to re-raise that. Let's go back to the text and let me

show it to you. The imprisonment of Simeon is -- where is it, 42?

Audience Member: Forty-two.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Here we go. Let's just keep track. The first element was "Leich v'asafta et

Ziknei Yisrael." Do you remember? Okay. Watch. Here you have -- let's give ourselves a little bit of

background. "Vayizkor Yosef et hachalomot asher chalam lahem vayomer aleihem meraglim atem," so

he says you guys are spies "lirot et ervat ha'aretz ba'tem," you've come to see the nakedness of the land. "Vayomru eilov lo adoni va'avdecha ba'u lishbar ochel," no, sir, we are not spies. We've come for food.

"Kulanu b'nei ish echad nachnu," we're all the children of one man "keinim anachnu lo hayu avadecha meraglim," we are not spies.

All right. I'm going to do it anyway. I wasn't going to get into this, but I'm going to do this. The idea is one of the problems with the simple reading here is how do you understand the conversation between

Joseph and his brothers?

It's a very strange conversation.

Joseph accuses them of being spies. They

come back and they say no, we're not spies; we're all the children of one man. Did it ever bother you

how that -- if you wanted to come up with an alibi, would that be your alibi? No, you don't understand

we're all brothers. So maybe you're still spies.

Audience Member: They would endanger themselves.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Was that it, that they wouldn’t endanger themselves?

No, because we left one at

home.

What they really should say is we're accountants.

Let me show you I'm a member of the Bar

Association. I'm not a spy. I have no CIA training. Try out my CV. Why are you saying "Kulanu

b'nei ish echad nachnu"? It must be that the brothers believe that there's something about saying that we're all brothers that will discredit the possibility that we're spies. What is that?

I believe the answer is this. Joseph looks at them and says what's drawing a group like you guys

together? I think the common denominator here is that you're spies. They come back and say no, what

draws us together is not that we're spies. What draws us together is that we're brothers. We just happen

to be brothers. You don't understand. We're brothers and because we're going to get food, that's why

all 12 of us are here. Otherwise, it wouldn't need to be 12. (Inaudible 00:44:32) there are 12. What's drawing you here? The common denominator is that you're spies. Once you understand that, you understand the argument between them.

Now, let's get to Joseph. Joseph then says "Lo ki ervat ha'aretz ba'tem," no, I'm telling you, you have

come to see the nakedness of the land. Then, they say again, no, "Shneim asar avadecha achim anachnu b'nei ish echad b'Eretz Cana'an v'hineih hakaton et avinu hayom veha'echad einenu," I'm telling you it's

not true. We left one home. We're all the children of one man. Then, Joseph says "Hu asher dibarti

aleichem," no, it's just like I said "meraglim atem." Do you get the sense that nobody's listening to

anybody over here? This is like a nobody-is-listening-to-anybody conversation. interesting? A nobody-listening-to-anybody conversation

Audience Member: Simeon.

Oh, isn't that

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Simeon. Simeon is about to be imprisoned.

Who is Simeon? The guy who

didn't listen to anybody and here in this conversation nobody is listening to anybody. Then, all of a

sudden, it strikes the brothers; maybe this is a punishment for the fact that we didn't listen. We saw the pain, but we didn't listen. Because now, there's someone who we keep on talking to, but he's just not listening.

Now, here's the deal. "V'heim lo yadu ki shomei'a Yosef," they didn't know that Joseph was listening.

In other words, Joseph was pretending to not listen, but he's listening very well. Now, he's listening

very well on a number of levels because if you think about it in a very deep way, he actually is listening

to them and he's responding to them. Here's why. Joseph says to them -- listen to the accusation.

"Ervat ha'aretz ba'tem lirot," you've come to see the nakedness of the land. Over and over, you can’t get out of it, the nakedness of the land, the nakedness of the land, the nakedness of the land.

Now, if you look earlier, land, land, land, watch what happened earlier with land. "V'Yosef hu hashalit al

ha'aretz," Joseph was in charge of all the land "hu hamashbir l'chol am ha'aretz," he was in charge of all the people of the land "vayavo'u achei Yosef vayishtachu lo apayim artzah," and now they bow to the

ground to him. Do you see the word that's appearing over and over again? It's land.

Now, here comes Joseph "Ervat ha'aretz ba'tem lirot," you've come to see the nakedness of the land.

What's going on, the nakedness of the land?

Who is Joseph?

"Hu hashalit al ha'aretz hu hamashbir l'chol

am ha'aretz", "vayishtachu lo apayim artzah." This is what happened right after Joseph was elevated to king, to second in charge of the land.

Now, if you think about kings in the ancient world, a king, an all-powerful king, someone like Joseph, they were identified with the land. In Shakespeare, whenever you read Shakespeare, when someone says

Norway or Denmark, that's a reference to the king. You would call the king by the name of the land.

Joseph is in charge of the land. "Hu hamashbir l'chol am ha'aretz." He's the land; he's identified with the

land now because he's the one whose sacred duty is the land. As Louis XIV said, "L'état c'est moi." He

says the state? I am the state. Now, it wasn't just an egotistical thing. It was an understanding of what it

means to be a sovereign, what does it mean to be king. I am the state. I am the land.

So, Joseph, I am the land. Oh, I am the land, "Vayishtachu apayim artzah," and he remembers the dreams. What were the dreams? The dream is they're all going to come bowing to me. But if you look at the text, they didn't bow to me. They bowed to me, but they bowed to the land. The land is the

same thing as me.

Bowing down to the ground in front of me is the same thing. I am the ground.

I am

the land. I'm in charge of all the land.

"Ervat ha'aretz ba'tem lirot," you've come to see the nakedness of the land. Isn't that interesting?

You've

come for another look at nakedness. Look how you left me; you stripped me. I was naked in the pit.

You all made fun of me. You jeered as you looked at my nakedness back then, an illicit kind of

nakedness, a nakedness of brother to brother. Do you know what you're doing now? Why are you

back here? Are you coming back for another look? You don't realize who you're looking at this time.

You don't realize that Joseph isn't little old Joseph anymore.

Joseph is the land.

Who you're looking at

now is "Ervat ha'aretz ba'tem lirot," you've come to look at the land.

"Meraglim atem," you're spies. They come and then say no, you don't understand. "Kulanu b'nei ish echad nachnu," we're all the children of one man. What brings us together is not that we're spies; what

brings us together is we're all the children of one man. We're all brothers. We're coming for food.

They think Joseph isn't listening, but Joseph is listening because Joseph is saying I have a problem with

your theory, that we're all the children of one man. What's the problem? The sale of Joseph is the

problem.

If you really believe that you are brothers by virtue, the fact that you all are the children of one man,

guess who else is also the child of that man? Me, but you sure weren't treating me that way. You

weren't treating me as a brother. So that is a hole in your theory. Because if what connects you is being

the children of one man, that didn't connect me, so it doesn't connect you either. We're done with

brotherhood as a thing that connects you.

What's the only other possibility that connects you?

There's

some other possibility of things that connect you. understand; we're all children of one man.

It must be that you're spies.

No, they said.

You don't

Listen to what they say.

"Lo ki ervat ha'aretz ba'tem lirot.

Vayomru shneim asar avadecha."

So the

brothers explain, no, you don't understand. We're 12 people. "B'Eretz Cana'an v'hineih hakaton et

avinu hayom," we left one behind "veha'echad einenu," and one is lost. Then, Joseph says "Hu asher

dibarti aleichem leimor meraglim atem," that's just what I mean when I say you're spies. What does he

mean that's just mean? What's the last thing that they said? One of them is lost. Joseph is picking up on

that. Yeah, what do you think? One of them is lost. That's what I mean you're spies, you're not

brothers.

Let's talk about why he's lost.

He's lost because he wasn't a brother.

That's the hole in your

theory.

You're not brothers because of the one man.

You must be spies. It all fits.

Then, of course, that leads to the mizeh. As we said, mizeh is always the word for shattered brotherhood. Along comes Joseph and says "B'zot tibacheinu chei Paroh im teitzu mizeh ki im b'vo achichem hakaton heinah," you will not get out of this place of shattered brotherhood until you bring your little brother.

Of course, who's the little brother? The little brother is the other child of Rachel. If you think that you

could get rid of him the way you got rid of me, who knows what's happening to him? Bring him and

let me see that he's safe and then we can talk about you getting out of shattered brotherhood. Let's see

how much of a brother you are for Benjamin.

So that's sort of the subtext in what's happening.

Now,

we get to the six parallels. Are you guys with me here? Audience Member: Is the mizeh important, too?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Yes, the mizeh is important.

It's shattered brotherhood.

Audience Member: "Zeh Keli v'anveihu"? I mean, there are a lot of zehs.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

I'm talking about mizehs, not zehs.

Now, let's continue.

He says, "Shilchu

mikem echad v'yikach et achichem v'atem hei'asru v'yibachanu divreichem ha'emet it'chem v'im lo chei Paroh ki meraglim atem." Here we go. Parallel Number 1, "Vaye'esof otam el mishmar." What does

that remind you of in Exodus? Remember Parallel Number 1? What is it? "Leich v'asafta et Ziknei

Yisrael," go and gather the Elders. Gathering. "Vaye'esof otam el mishmar," but the first time they were

gathered, they were gathered to go into prison in Egypt. Now, what's the purpose of the gathering of

the Elders? Where are the Elders? Where are all the Jews? All the Jews are in prison. What's the

purpose of gathering?

To get out of prison.

So the first --

Audience Member: Didn't (inaudible 00:53:07 - 00:53:08)?

Rabbi David Fohrman: Sure.

Audience Member: You're so good at that.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Oh, that is so nice of you to say.

Audience Member: That will make it easier for all us.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

It will. Where are we up to?

What verse was that? Here we go. There it is.

Now, let's do this. Three minutes and I'll be done with you.

They're going to get smaller here.

Sorry

about that, guys, but this is the way the cookie crumbles here. Are you with me? Here you go. Parallel

Number 1, "Vaye'esof otam el mishmar," is going to match up with the first orange up here. Do you see

that? "Leich v'asafta et Ziknei Yisrael." Did you get that, guys? That's going to match up to "Vaye'esof otam el mishmar."

Now, look at the next orange. "Neilchah na derech sheloshet yamim." Why did Moses ask for three

days? Here we go.

How long were they in prison for?

Three days.

How did slavery in Egypt begin?

With temporary slavery for three days, then they were going to be released. So how is redemption

going to work? There has to temporary redemption. If slavery began with temporary slavery for three

days and then there was a release, so redemption has to go the same way. There has to be a temporary redemption for three days, you have to come back into slavery and then you got to go. That's how it's

going to work. We're going to do this. We're going to go back by the same path we came in. That's

Parallel Number 2.

Now, look at Parallel Number 3. "V'hayah ki teileichun lo teilchu reikom."

What does that remind you

of in the Joseph story? When you leave, you won't leave empty-handed; you'll take all this stuff from

Egypt.

Look at the next thing that happens.

"Vayomer aleihem Yosef bayom hashlishi," when he

releases them "zot asu vich'yu et haElokim ani yarei," you're going to go back, you're going to take your

brother. "V'atem lechu havi'u shever ra'avon bateichem," you're going to go and bring all this food. By

the way, what does ra'avon remind you of? Reuben.

"Shever ra'avon bateichem. V'et achichem hakaton tavi'u eilay veyei'amnu divreichem," so you're going to take all this food and he goes and he leads them -- he goes and he packs them with all of this food, this

abundance of food.

It's like they're taking everything from Egypt.

So God says when you leave, you're

really going to have to take everything. Do you know why? Because when you first came into slavery,

in temporary slavery, you got everything from Egypt. When you go out, you're going to go out the same way; you're going to go out with all this stuff. That's the third element.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:55:58 - 00:56:00).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Yes.

Now, the fourth element.

Now, why is all this here? Remember, we've

skipped over the pit and now we're five chapters later. We're decades later in the Joseph story now. In Moses' head, it's like, oh, my gosh, we're skipped over the pit, we're skipped over the pit, we've skipped

over the pit. fascinating.

Now, listen carefully. The Torah is now going to explain to you -- this is incredibly

The explanation for these extremely puzzling words in Chapter 4, Verse 1, "Vaya'an Moshe vayomer

v'hein lo ya'aminu li v'lo yishme'u b'koli ki yomru lo nirah eilecha Hashem." How Moses could doubt

God like that lies in the words themselves. The words themselves are now going to give you the explanation to that. All you have to do is match them up with their corresponding words in the Joseph and story and you will see why Moses thought what he thought.

Let's see how that's so.

"V'hein lo ya'aminu li." What does that remind you of in the Joseph story?

Let's

look a little bit farther. We just got to go a little bit farther. Where do you see this? "Vayomru ish el

achiv," when the people saw that this was happening, the brothers said to themselves "aval asheimim anachnu," we are guilty "al achinu," for our brother "asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho," we saw his pain "behit'chaneno eileinu v'lo shamanu," we saw his pain and didn't hear.

Now, what is this preceded by? It's preceded by this. "V'et achichem hakaton tavi'u eilay veyei'amnu divreichem," you were going to verify your words by this, you're going to earn your trust by bringing

back your brother. Earn your trust; "V'hein lo ya'aminu li." Did you get that? It's the same word.

Ya'aminu, they will not trust me. It's a play off of yei'amnu. It's the same root word. have ya'aminu followed by yishme'u, followed by nireh, trusting, seeing and hearing?

Where do you

Now, look at Joseph's story. Trusting, "Veyei'amnu divreichem." Seeing, "Asher ra'inu." Hearing,

"V'lo shamanu."

Who said those words?

These are Reuben words.

"Vaya'an Reuven otam leimor ha'lo

amarti Aleichem leimor al techet'u bayeled," I told you not to do this "v'lo shematem," and you didn't

hear.

Now, who is the latter-day Reuben?

Moses.

Do you know what's happening here?

The reason why Moses doesn't trust God is because of what Reuben said back in this story. When

Joseph said bring back Benjamin so that I can trust you, whose other meaning was I don't believe that you're brothers, bring back the other brother you left behind to show that you're really brothers.

In Reuben's mind that's oh, my God, I can't believe that's happening. That is the hammer blow that makes him believe that this God talking to them because Reuben knows more than anyone that we

didn't treat him like a brother.

I wanted to treat him like a brother, but I couldn't convince them.

Now,

here comes this guy who doesn't believe that we're brothers and doesn't listen to us just like we didn't

listen and says bring me back your brother so that I can believe that your brothers. for words, Reuben says.

This is too spooky

It makes Reuben, the real Reuben, at the time, 10 years later, remember the pit and the guilt at the pit

and says I can't believe it. "Ha'lo amarti aleichem leimor al techet'u bayeled," I told you not to do this

"v'lo shematem v'gam damo hineih nidrash," and now his blood is being sought by heaven. That's

exactly what Moses is saying.

Moses is saying we skipped the pit.

You can't skip the pit.

In other words, the same way -- Simeon was the first slave in all of Jewish history in Egypt. The

brothers thought that that was a suffering coming to them from God. "Tzaras nafsho behit'chaneno

eileinu v'lo shaman al kein ba'ah eileinu hatzarah hazot." Little did they realize, how much of a suffering

that was going to come to them from God because of this. It wasn't just going to be Simeon. It was going to be everybody a generation later.

Now, a generation later, when it is everybody, because of the sale of Joseph, you have a latter-day Reuben, which is Moses himself, channeling these words and basically saying we can't do this. This is

not going to work. I know you think, God, that I'm going to go to the Elders and I know you think

that I'm going to get them to believe and I know you're guaranteeing to me that it's going to happen,

but I just don't see it. I don't feel it in my bones. How could this happen?

You were telling me that you're going to wave a magic wand. We went all through the Joseph story, la-

di-dah, we were walking through the Joseph story. Then, we got to the pit and we just skipped it over

and you think that without somehow atoning for that, without somehow dealing with that -- this happened. This terrible thing happened and that's why we're here and now it's just going to un-happen because you're going to say oh, time to go now?

It doesn't work like that. That's like saying the inverse-square law of gravity is going to be suspended

now for a little while and everyone's going to walk upside down. Where's the justice? We're here

because of this justice.

How could you do this? That's his problem.

Reuben's first words, the sense that

the sale of Joseph has come back to haunt them 10 years later have now been channeled into Moses' words in the sense that the sale of Joseph has come back to haunt them 210 years later. We can't get out of this. We didn't get out of it then and we didn't get out of it now.

This is when God comes back and says oh, the pit is what you're worried about? You think you can't

get out with going back to the pit?

You're right.

You can't get out with going to the pit. I'm glad you

reminded me of that. Let's talk about the pit. The next thing you're going to see is the parallels to the pit. This is what I talked to you about before Passover and this is what we're going to get to next week. The next piece is the pit.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Today, I think, I'm ready to bring a lot of different things together here, so this

is kind of a little bit of a climactic talk. Let's see if we can pull some things together. I want to go back

to a number of questions that I've raised over the weeks that are still somewhat dangling and try to show you how the next piece that we're going to do here in Shemot, I hope, will answer these questions. Here are some of the questions that were left hanging. Number one is a question which appears in the covenant of the pieces itself and that is that there is a certain mystery -- there's many mysteries in the covenant of the pieces, but one of the mysteries is that the time periods don't seem to work out correctly.

I mentioned this to you before. Basically, the problem is that on one hand the prophecy says that there's

going to be 400 years of servitude, "ger y'hiyeh zaracha b'eretz lo lahem va'avadum v'inu otam arba mei'ot shanah" and on the other hand, the prophecy says "v'dor r'vi'i yashuvu heinah" that the fourth

generation will return here. Now, the question is how do those two live together because if you look

around at your parents and your grandchildren, so that's four generations right there, but that's not 400

years. So it's hard to see how the fourth generation could return and there be 400 years of slavery. The

fourth generation wouldn't be alive after 400 years, so what does that even really mean?

We also know that it caused some confusion earlier in time, right? to you a while back, really Rav Soloveitchik's theory, about Jacob.

You recall the theory that I suggested That Jacob thought that the birth of

Josef was really the fourth generation and that Abraham was generation Number 1 and Isaac was generation Number 2 and Jacob was generation Number 3 and Joseph was first born, as it were, was generation Number 4 and that's why he decided to leave Laban's house because he thought that that was

the slavery that was foretold. review it there as well.

We had talked about this before.

It's actually in the book, so you can

Was Jacob right, or was Jacob wrong? That's one of the interesting ambiguities. On the one hand, it

looks like Jacob was wrong because in the end, slavery happened differently. It happened through

Egypt, it didn't happen through Joseph. But on the other hand, there's intriguing evidence that in some

way Jacob was right because we talked about the many linguistic connections between Egyptian slavery and Jacob's sojourn in the house of Laban and it seems that, on some level, what he experienced in Laban's house was a kind of mini slavery. The bottom line is there's some ambiguity about that, but you still have this basic problem which is how does 400 years of slavery live together with four generations? So if Jacob's fourth generation was really Josef, then he has a problem with what's the 400 years.

Now, the truth is, we all have the problem with what's the 400 years because in the end it's not really 400

years, it's 210 years. You have to, kind of, use your thumbs to figure out how it gets to be 400 years.

Maybe Jacob thought Jacob was 21 years, 20 years in slavery, he left in the 21st year. Maybe the 400

years is just a way of saying a very long time. I don't know, but anyway, this is a problem. How did the

400 years live with the four generations and I want to come back to that problem today. Here's another

problem. Another problem is that the theory that I'm about to give you -- we've been reading through

three chapters of Shemot and seeing them in connection to the Josef story and what I am about to show you seems to be directly at odds to an entire class that I gave you about six weeks ago. Where I interpreted everything I'm about to interpret with you in a completely different kind of way.

Just to confuse you thoroughly I want to go back and refresh your memory, in case you forgot it, as to the interpretation I gave you six months ago of all of this. Then you're going to see how vastly at odds the interpretation I'm about to give you is to that previous interpretation. Then I'm going to show you

how, in fact, those two interpretations are two sides of the same coin.

That's the agenda for today.

Let

me go back in preparation to thoroughly confusing you, to the class I gave you six weeks ago which was really the jumping off point for everything we've been doing in the last five weeks or so where I had left you with an unanswered question. The question basically, for those of you who remember, was but why are the Jews a snake? Remember that question?

Now we're finally going to get back to that question, but in order to get back to that question, you have to remember the background to that question and that's the thoroughly confusing part. The background to that question was a theory I had given you about a way to interpret the three signs. Remember the three signs of the snake. Basically my theory went like this. It's what I called my combination lock

theory of the signs. Remember my combination lock theory of the signs? You have no idea what I'm

talking about. Did I use that metaphor?

Audience Members: Yes.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

I did, right?

So my combination lock theory of the signs basically was this.

That there are actually four signs at the burning bush, not three. The first of the signs is the very strange

sign where God says to Moses you're worried? Don't worry, here's the sign that I have, in fact, sent you.

The sign that I have, in fact, sent you is "ki b'hotziacha et ha'am m'Mitzrayim ta'avdun et haElokim al hahar hazeh," when you take the Jews out of Egypt, you're going to end up serving God at this

mountain. If you're Moses, that wouldn't be a very impressive sign, right? If you want to know that

God has appeared to you and that this is all very serious right now and you're doubting whether you have the ability to take the Jews out of Egypt, so don't tell me that oh, don't worry, once you've taken the Jews out of Egypt you're going to end up serving Me at this mountain.

That's not a sign. Then I'm not going to need a sign. My whole point is I don't think it's going to

happen, so where's the sign? It's very strange. So I suggested to you what I called my combination lock

theory of the signs to explain this. Basically, I said -- I'm just rushing through this, so you remember because we did this before -- basically, I said, that just as with a combination lock there are two important points in time, so too with these signs there's two important points in time. The two important points in time I called a set point and a verification point.

A set point with a combination lock is when you set the combination and you typically try to find some sort combination that's meaningful for you, in some way, so that you can remember it; a birthday, your

kid's birthday, something like that. So you have this four-digit code that's going to be your

combination. Then there's a verification point when you lock your bike and you redo the code to show

that you're, in fact, the person. What I wanted to suggest is that the same thing is happening with these

signs, in reverse. So there is a set point and there's a verification point, but whereas with the

combination lock the set point comes first and the verification point comes second, with these signs the

verification point comes first and the set point comes second. Which means to say that there's a set point

which means there's an event which needs to happen which is an important event.

What verifies that you are authentic? What verifies that you are authentic is that the combination is lining up in a way that's a microcosm of that event and anticipates that event. That's really what God's

telling Moses. I'll prove to you you're authentic. There's this event that has to happen, it's called Sinai.

Everything that you are doing now is a replay of Sinai. You're leading sheep through the desert, you're

coming to this mountain, you're seeing fire on the mountain that's consuming something that's not

burning. That's all going to happen again when you worship Me on this mountain. You're going to be

leading sheep through the desert, but the sheep are going to be the Jews. You're going to come to this

mountain again, there's going to be fire that's not going to burn the thing that it rests on. thing.

It's the same

The fact that you're going through this is an indication that you're authentic because you're anticipating

the set point.

What I suggested is that's the model for the rest of the three signs too.

The next three

signs that Moses experiences at the burning bush, I want to argue, also works with that set point and verification combination and that explains the three signs of the staff and the snake, the leper's hand and

the water and the blood.

Basically, my theory to you was the following.

That God had promised three

things. At this point, where the three signs happened, at the burning bush God had promised, he says I am God, I am Yud-Kei-Vav-Kei; "pakod pakadeti etchem," I have redeemed you; "v'et he'asui lachem b'Mitzrayim," and I have redeemed that which was done to you in Egypt.

There's a promise that God is going to redeem you from Egypt, but God is also going to exact

retribution from those who have inflicted pain upon you. There's going to be payback. Jewish blood

doesn't come cheap and therefore "pakod pakadeti etchem v'et he'asui lachem b'Mitzrayim," I have redeemed you and have also redeemed that which was done to you in Egypt. The three signs are showing you that redemption. In other words, there are steps in redemption. There are steps in both

parts of this promise. A; the redemption from Egypt, that you are going to leave Egypt and b; payback.

There's steps and at each point the whole thing could come true or the whole thing could not come true. If it doesn’t come true, it's going to go to the next step. If the whole thing finishes there, that's fine and if not, it's going to go to the next step.

The three signs are really three steps in the process of these two promises. A, the promise that I'm going

to redeem you and take you out of Egypt; b, the promise that there's going to be payback. Payback for

what? So I argued that it's payback for the greatest crime that Egypt committed, that is the throwing the

babies in the Nile, that sort of limited genocide. So what are the three signs? The three signs, basically, I

said, are sign number 1, what event that's going to happen later does this verify, right? What's the set

point that you say the third sign verifies? Water turning into blood. reminds you, of course, of the Plague of Blood.

So water turning into blood

The Plague of Blood is the beginning of the process of redemption. The Egyptians could have let the

Jews go at that point. If they would have, they would have been responding to a divine critique on their

actions because they had thrown babies in the Nile. The first response to that is not even that any Egyptians are going to get killed in a retribution, but that at least the criminal is no longer going to be able to cover the tracks of the crime. The advantage of throwing babies in the Nile is that the Nile looks the same in the morning as it did at night and you cover the tracks of your sin. There's no piles of mass

graves, there's no corpses, all there is is the Nile and the Nile looks the same as it did before. The Nile's

not even red because the blood of the babies is diluted in the water and it just looks like the water.

So the first response that God has redeemed the pain of the Jews is the water turns into blood and then the aggressor is confronted with the evidence of their crime. There's no more covering it over and the victim is validated because at least it's real and the aggressor is confronted with the evidence of the crime. Egypt could have let the Jews go then, but they didn't, there was a step Number 2. Step Number 2 was the leper's hand. Leper's hand, a hand as white as snow. When does flesh turn white as snow? During death. What this foretells is that there's going to be a moment where actual death will come to Egypt.

When is that? It's in the 10th plague. plague.

So if the Egyptians don't listen, there will eventually be a 10th

The 10th plague is the next step up. It's another stage, I want to argue, in the retribution for throwing Jewish babies in the Nile. Jewish children were thrown in the Nile and killed, now Egyptian children

are going to be killed.

Not all Egyptian children, only the firstborn.

They're not going to die the

wretched death of drowning in the river, it's just going to be a death at night while you sleep. It's an easier kind of death, but it's the next stage in retribution and that sets up the first sign. We're going

backwards in time. The first sign, I want to argue, is a sort of combination of the first two. The first two

are almost like puzzle pieces. The way they are puzzle pieces is that there's a certain question -- I'm sorry -- when I say the first two, it's complicated because it's actually backwards.

We're going three, two, one, so when I say say the first two now I'm actually referring to signs three and

two. But signs three and two, which is to say the water turning into blood on the ground and the leper's

hand, each one of those have the question in it. They're, sort of, opposites of each other. In one case

there is water, which is a translucent liquid, turning into blood. In the other case there is matter, which

is a hand which normally has blood in it, which is being drained of blood. Right? That's the leper's

hand.

So those two are kind of opposites.

In one case there was something which was drained of blood,

water and now it has blood in it. In the other case there's a hand which normally would have blood in it, which is now being drained of blood.

One way of expressing that is you could say that there's a question that emerges in each of these signs. The question that emerges in the last sign is if the water is turned into blood, where did the blood come

from? All of a sudden there's this water and it's turning into blood, where did the blood come from?

The opposite question exists with the leper's hand which is that if the blood drains from the hand, where

did the blood go to? So what I want to argue is that those two questions in Sign 3 and Sign 2 are

answered in Sign 1. Another way of putting it is that maybe those two questions answer themselves. You want to know where the blood came from in Sign Number 3 and you want to know where the blood went to in Sign Number 2?

Well, where the blood went to in Sign Number 2 was sign Number 3. Right? That's how the water

turned into blood. And you want to know where the blood came from in Sign Number 3? The answer

is the blood came from the hand, so to speak, in Sign Number 2. Which is to say, put the two signs

together and they explain to you each other, which is blood leeching out of bodies into water. Now we

understand where did the blood go in Sign Number 2? It went into water. Where did the blood come

from in the water that may have turned into blood?

It came from human flesh.

So when does that

happen to Egypt? When does blood from human flesh go into water, so to speak, and turn it red? The

answer is when do Egyptians drown in water? That's the Red Sea. So really, that's Sign Number 1.

Sign Number 1 is the combination of Sign 3 and Sign 2. In other words, Sign 3 and Sign 2 are basically pale representations of the ultimate vindication of the great crime of Egypt, which takes place at the Red Sea. Which is what Jethro says when Jethro says "ki badavar asher zadu aleihem." He's saying that I know that it's really God because God has inflicted upon Egypt that which they did to the Jews. He's referring to the Red Sea which is the moment where Egyptian males drown, all Egyptian males drown. The children of Egypt, so to speak, drown in the water just as they had drowned the male children of the Jews. I wanted to argue that that was Sign Number 1.

Now, there's also linguistic support for this, language support for this. The language of Sign Number 1

mimics the Red Sea in a couple of respects. So if you look at Sign Number 1 which you have up on your

screen, there's a few words here. For example, "Vayanas Moshe mipanav" when Moses recoils from the

snake. So the only other time you had people recoiling from the face of something, in the Torah, is at

the Red sea when the Egyptians say "anusah mipnei Yisrael," it's the last thing they say before they're destroyed when they recoiled from before Israel and they say "Hashem nilcham lahem b'Mitzrayim" they

recoil from Israel. So that prefigures the Red Sea.

Another thing thing that prefigures the Red Sea is this, right before the sign Moses complains of "v'heim lo ya'aminu li" they will not believe in me. Of course, at the Red Sea what happens? "Vaya'aminu

baHashem u'v'Moshe avdo." So the language over here seems to prefigure the Red Sea, as well.

Now, the only problem is that whereas the language seems to prefigure the splitting of the Red Sea, the

actual sign itself doesn't and this is the problem. The problem with the theory is that whereas with signs

three and signs two, the event that takes place in the signs seems to be a mimicry of what's going to take

place in the future. That doesn't seem to be the case so much with sign number one. In other words,

with sign number three, when I take a glass and I spill it and it turns into blood, that, sort of, reminds you what happens in the plague of blood, right? That's, kind of, what happened in the plague of blood. If you look at the leper's hand, the leper's hand sort of reminds you of what happened at the plague of the

firstborns. Sea?

But how does taking a staff and casting it down remind you of what takes place at the Red

So if you actually begin to piece together the puzzle, it does sort of remind you of the splitting of the Red Sea; you just have to piece together the puzzle. First of all, the staff. Remember there is a staff at the Red

Sea also. Let's actually go forward into the splitting of the Red Sea and you'll begin to see it. I don't

know if we did this so much five or six weeks ago, so you'll forgive me if we did. Let me bring up the splitting of the Red Sea on the screen for you and I'll show you what it is I'm talking about.

So here's the interesting thing. Let's just remember how the staff trick works.

How does it work?

God

says, take your staff, put it in your hand -- the staff. Take your staff, throw the staff down. What

happens to the staff? The staff turns into a snake. Then God says, what? "Sh'lach yadcha, v'echoz

bi'znavo", go grab hold of the tail of the snake. "Vayehi l'mateh bekapo."

Right? Okay.

So now, the

first time when Moses cast down, what does he have in his hand? A staff. The second time Moses is

using his hand to grab the snake. What does he have in his hand?

Nothing.

Okay?

So the first time

Moses cast his hand down he has a staff in his hand. The second time he casts his hand down he has nothing.

Now look at the splitting of the Red Sea. "Vayomer Hashem el Moshe, mah titzak eilai, dabeir el B'nei

Yisrael v'yisa'u," what are you screaming at me? Go through the water. "V'atah," and now, "hareim et

matcha," pick up -- raise up your staff, "u'neteh et yadcha el hayam uvka'eihu," and then stretch out your

hand -- presumably with the staff. So the first time when Moses stretches out his hand, it's with a staff.

The second time is when the sea is parted already. So now look at this.

"Vayehi be'ashmoret haboker," it happened in the morning, that God says, "neteh et yadcha el hayam."

What's missing here? It doesn't say the staff. So the first time, God tells Moses to take his staff and to

stretch it out over the water and the second time, He's just saying take the hand, right? It's interesting. It's two times with your hand. The first time with staff, the second time without staff and it's just like the snake trick. First time with staff. It's almost like the staff isn't there anymore because the staff turned into

a snake.

Now the question is what do you mean the staff turned into a snake? A snake?

So now we get

to, what's the snake? This is the question I left you with last time.

So the snake seems to be the Jews. Here's why. Because as I talked to you about before, there is a problem with the staff trick. There's a certain contradiction in the staff trick and this contradiction is, is that the first time Moses does this staff trick, the staff turns into a nachash (snake) but the second time he turns it into -- the second time he does the staff trick, which is before Pharaoh in the palace, it turns into

a tanin (serpent).

So the question is, what's the deal?

So many English translations confuse the point by

translating "tanin" and "nachash" the same way, but why would the Torah use two Hebrew words for

the same thing?

What is a tanin?

So it must be it's not the same thing.

So the only other time we have a tanin in the Pentateuch is back in Genesis, at the

creation of the world , where God made the taninim that were in the tehom (abyss). So here's an

interesting thing. The first time round, on Horeb, the staff turns into a snake. The second time round, in front of Pharaoh, it turns into a tanin.

There's one other interesting difference between the staff trick, as it's done at Sinai and the staff trick as

it's done in the palace. Let me show it to you here for a moment. In the original staff trick,

"hashlicheihu artzah," throw it down to the ground. Are you with me? And then he throws it down to

the ground, "vayashlicheihu artzah," he throws it down and it turns into a snake. So where is he

throwing it? He's throwing it down to the ground.

Now, look at the staff trick; the staff trick that takes place just a hop, skip and a jump later in front of

Pharaoh.

Now, notice this. "Kach et hamateh ve'hashleich lifnei Pharoh."

Notice the difference in

language. The first time, it was take the staff, "vehashlicheihu artzah," and throw it down. Here, it's not

"hashlicheihu artzah," but it's "hashleich lifnei Pharoh." Then look at what Moses and Aaron do.

"Vayashleich Aaron et mateihu lifnei Pharoh."

Now notice that there's no mention of ground.

There's

just mention of doing it in front of Pharaoh. What's the deal with that?

So here's what I want to argue. We have two discrepancies. Discrepancy number one is that the tanin

in front of Pharaoh, is a snake in front of Moses. Discrepancy number two is, you threw it down to the

ground in front of Moses, but you threw it down before Pharaoh in front of Pharaoh. How do you

explain both discrepancies at the same time? The answer is this. What is this referring to? To add it up

mathematically, look at the language correspondence. One of the language correspondences we had was

this language right over here. "Vayanas Moshe mi'panav," Moses recoils from in front of the snake.

Now, that corresponds at the Red Sea to what event? To Pharaoh and the Egyptians saying, "anusa

mi'pnei Yisrael," I will recoil from Israel, right before they're destroyed. they see God working on behalf of the Jews. "Anusa mi'pnei Yisrael."

The last thing that happens is

What that means is, if you add it up, that if Moses recoiled from the snake and Pharaoh recoiled from the

Jews, so Pharaoh equals Moses, in the analogy. Pharaoh is occupying the same role as Moses, the

recoiling one.

Recoiling in front of what?

So that means that Israel equals snake. That was the problem

we had. Not a problem, just a fact. Israel equals snake. Are you with me? That's just what the analogy

-- do the algebraic substitution here and that's what you get. Israel equals snake. and somehow, Pharaoh is recoiling from in front of the Jews that are snake-like. understand that?

So the Jews are a snake How do we exactly

So what I suggested to you is the following. That if this sign is really prefiguring the splitting of the Red

Sea, it makes a lot of sense why it would be a tanin in front of Pharaoh. Because where do taninim live?

Taninim live in the sea. What is this sign all about? It's about the splitting of the Sea. It would make a

lot of sense that at the Red Sea, what happens if you've split a sea? So for those of us who've lived

through Sandy and had eels in your backyard, you know that when you start dealing with the sea and the sea comes in places where there's dry land in the middle of the sea where there usually isn't, so you

have all the huge fish on your lawn. So it makes sense that what does Pharaoh see? Pharaoh sees these

taninim, that normally inhabit the deep, that normally you wouldn't see in the deep. The last thing Pharaoh's going to see before he dies is the tanin. But the tanin is a tanin for Pharaoh but a snake for

Moses. What the snake is for Moses, the tanin is for Pharaoh.

Here's where I suggested that the plague has a dual reality to it -- that all the plagues had a dual reality to it. The water that was water for Jews, was blood for Egyptians. The darkness -- the air that was dark for the Egyptians was light for the Jews. What I argued to you was that at the Red Sea, what was the

dichotomy in Egyptian experience and Jewish experience? You actually see it in the language of the text

itself. The dichotomy and experiences, are you dealing with dry land or are you dealing with water?

See what happens is that as the Jews go into the water, over and over again the Torah emphasizes that it's

not water, that it's "chareivah" (dry land), that it's "yabasha" (dry land). "Vayavo'uh B'nei Yisrael be'toch

hayam bayabasha." The Jews are very clearly going on dry land, right? And then it says, "hineni mechazek et leiv Mitzrayim veyavo'u achareihem" -- they're going to go in after you.

Now, as they go in after them, look what happens. "Vayeit Moshe et yado al ha'yam -- vayibak'u" -- and then there's the strong wind and it makes the sea into dry land, at least from the perspective of the Jews. And the Jews go into it "ba'yabasha," they go into it again on dry land. And the waters for them, a

wall on one side and the other side. Now look what happens next. "Vayirdefu Miztrayim vayavo'u

achareihem," the Egyptians come after them, "kol sus Pharoh, richboh u'parashav el toch hayam." Now,

I want you to compare this "el toch hayam" in Verse 23 to the "el toch hayam" over here in Verse 22. Do you notice that when the Jews go "betoch hayam" they go "bayabasha". When the Egyptians go "el

toch hayam," do you see any "bayabasha?" understand?

No.

Answer is, it's not "yabasha" for the Egyptians.

Do you

That's the dichotomy, that for the Egyptians it's just water. In other words, when the Egyptians saw the Jews, what I want to argue, is that it's not just that the Jews got the benefit of dry land. It really was two different experiences. That when the Egyptians saw the Jews going into dry land, they didn't see the Jews going into dry land because it wasn't dry for them. That wasn't their experience. What they saw is

these crazy Jews are plunging into the water and then they saw the Jews are still alive in the water. So

the Egyptians were crazy enough to plunge into the water after them. When they plunged into the water after them, they started getting stuck in the water which is the next thing that you have happen.

Audience Member: But there was a strong wind that blew all (inaudible 00:34:03) water aside, so you can't undo that for the Egyptians.

Rabbi David Fohrman: I don't know. I'm just telling you that --

Audience Member: How do you know that (inaudible 00:34:10)?

Rabbi David Fohrman: Because I'm suggesting that when they went into the water, they were going

"toch hayam" without "yabashah" and that's the reason why the wheels of their chariots start coming off,

because they're in the mud. In other words, their experience is they're going right after the Jews. Now,

if that whole path was dry, how come their wheels were coming off in the mud? The answer is -- now, you could just say God took the wheels off, but the water didn't come back yet. This is before the water

comes back. Look, right? Over here. "Vayasar et ofan markevotav va'yenahageihu bichveidut." The

water did not come back yet in Verse 25 and it's that when they say, "anusa mi'pnei Yisrael," I'm going

to run away. Then God says, "neteh et yadcha al hayam vayashuvu hamayim." So even before

"v'yashuvu hamayim" the wheels are coming off. So you could just say God took the wheels off, but the

easiest way to explain it is the wheels came off because they were in mud. They were trying to go through the muddy, slimy bottom of the ocean. That was their experience of the water.

Audience Member: So the Jewish People went through "ba'yabashah," which sounds like dry land?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Right.

So the answer is, it was a Heisenbergarian experience, right? It was a

quantum -- you understand, right?

Audience Member: So basically, you're saying that the same way that in the plague of darkness, where

the Egyptians experienced darkness and the Jews experienced light, so here the Jews experienced dry land and the Egyptians --

Rabbi David Fohrman: Precisely.

Audience Member: Can you read Verse 21 and then how do you go backwards and explain this?

Rabbi David Fohrman: I want to argue that Verse 21 is from the perspective of the Jews.

Audience Member: It says, "v'hamayim lahem chomah" -- lahem signifies that same thing (inaudible 00:35:53).

M: Maybe you're right. "Lahem," specifically for the Jews. So I can't tell you exactly what it was like.

I'm just telling you, there was a wind. Did the Egyptians feel it windy? Maybe the Egyptian experienced windy. But whatever it was, their experience in going through the water was not an experience of going through dry land. At the very least, it was a muddy seabed. It was a slimy, watery,

muddy seabed for them, whereas the Jews had dry land. watery seabed, when -- now let's put the sign together.

So what I want to suggest is, if it was a slimy, When Pharaoh says, "anusah mi'pnei Yisrael"

over here -- let's find it. "Anusah mi'pnei Yisrael, ki Hashem nilcham lahem b'Mitzrayim." What is it that they had seen at this point that convinced them? This is before the water comes in on them, right?

That hasn't happened yet. So they already know that God is fighting for them. What have they seen?

If my theory is correct that so far nothing supernatural has happened yet to them, other than the water splitting in the first place, so what convinced Pharaoh that God is fighting on their side right now? The answer is, the sense that, at least from his perspective, the Jews are effortlessly gliding through this

swamp, whereas he's stuck in the water with the stuff coming off and it isn't fair. How come the Jews

are gliding through the swamp and I'm stuck in the swamp? Well, what he doesn't realize is that for the Jews it's not a swamp, but at least from his perspective --

Audience Member: He shouldn't have even seen a swamp. He should have just seen water?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Let's say he just saw water.

So he sees water and he sees Jews gliding through

water and he's stuck in this watery mess. So the answer for him is when he looks at the Jews, I want to

argue, what does he see? He sees a tanin. He sees "betoch hayam" (into the water) and because he sees into the water, what do the Jews look like to him? They look like a tanin. A tanin is a sea monster.

That's what the Jews are. A sea monster is indigenous to the ocean; it's a creature that effortlessly glides

-- it's a huge snake-like thing that effortlessly glides through the bottom of oceans. That's exactly what

we were and that's why for him, the staff turned into a tanin. Later, when he recoils from that, that's why the Jews are a tanin. He's recoiling and his sense that we're a tanin is what convinces him that God is fighting for us.

Audience Member: And why are we a snake to Moses?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

We'll get to that.

So for Moses we're a snake.

Look, let's answer that. The

answer is, is because for us, what was the experience? Dry land. What is a tanin on dry land? A snake,

right? That's the dichotomy. So for Moses -- it depends what you're looking at. If you're Moses, you're

looking at a snake, right? If I'm doing it as Moses -- if I'm the observer, then what I see is a snake. If I'm Pharaoh and I'm the observer, I see a tanin. That's why for Moses, it's throw it to the ground, because where does a snake live? A snake goes on dry land. But how come there's no eretz (ground) in the palace? The answer is because it's not a miniature recreation of land, it's a miniature recreation of sea, of

Pharaoh's experience. Pharaoh's experience is it never hits the ground. The staff turns into a tanin that's

going through water. There is no ground. That's how you explain all the dichotomies.

Audience Member: You know, Rabbi, every one of the plagues really does fall back. Every one we had

a different experience and he should have seen that upfront?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay.

You're always limited by your own experience, but okay.

Audience Member: We don't have the same experience, we're out of it. We're not affected by it.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Right, that's true. Okay.

So what was I about to tell you before you interrupted

me? I forgot my point, but the bottom line is there's these two different experiences. The Jews, from their own perspective, are a snake, from the Egyptian perspective, they're a tanin.

I remember what I wanted to tell you. What I wanted to tell you is this. In a certain way, I want to

argue -- so now let's go back to understand the third sign in relation to the first two signs. What I mean

really is the first sign in relation to the third and the second. The third and the second are just baby steps

towards the ultimate retribution for throwing Jews in the Nile. This is the real retribution for throwing

Jews in the Nile. The real retribution is not just that you're going to die like you killed them. Your

males are going to drown the way you killed their males. That's part of it, but there's another part of it too.

That you thought that you were going to take their corpses and you were going to cover your crime

and you were going to throw them in the Nile where no one would ever see any blood.

Right?

Not

only is the Nile turning into blood, not only are you going to lose your own children, but now you're

going to confront those corpses. You thought you weren't going to have to see the bloody remnants of

your crimes, the bones at the bottom of the ocean. Now, here you are, at the bottom of the ocean,

looking at all the Jews you killed. It's almost like those babies have come back to life. Do you know

what I mean? They've come back to life in the form of a sea monster.

What is a sea monster?

A sea

monster is an indigenous thing at the bottom of -- an indigenous thing that lives in the sea that can't be

killed by the sea.

What did Pharaoh think we were? Pharaoh thought we were humans, but we were dangerous humans. One might even say we were snakes. Snakes live on the ground, they don't live in the ocean. Snakes are

the ultimate other. He was treating us as the ultimate other. You even have that language with Pharaoh,

which is that the population explosion, according to Egypt was vayishretzu. Listen to that language -- they swarmed. The sheretz language is creepy-crawly language. They saw us as creepy-crawlies. That's why they could kill us because we were creepy-crawlies.

What kind of creepy-crawlies? Land-based creepy-crawlies like a snake. What can you do with a snake,

if you want to kill it? You wouldn't kill it in a hand-to-hand combat, you would throw it in water. If

you threw it in water you could kill it and then you wouldn't have to worry about it because there's this gross snake at the bottom of the water. Well, now, here you are at the bottom of the water and you're confronting your crime, but instead of seeing dead snakes, you are seeing live taninim (sea creatures).

That's the astonishment of Pharaoh, my god, it's a sea creature, which is I couldn't kill it by throwing it in the water because it was indigenous to the water. I thought the water would destroy the nation, but the nation is really a sea creature and therefore the nation is impervious to destruction by water, right? Because it's just -- it's effortlessly sliding through and I will be the one who will be destroyed through water. Yes?

Audience Member: But it's the wrong body of water in this (inaudible 00:43:16).

Rabbi David Fohrman: True.

Audience Member: The one is the Nile and the one is the Red Sea.

Audience Member: A different body of water, so it's a theory, but it's not the same the body of water. So I mean, it's beautiful, but it's (inaudible 00:43:22).

Audience Member: Why should the babies be in the Red Sea, though, supposedly?

Rabbi David Fohrman: You're right. I'm not saying it's the actual baby.

Audience Member: It's an allusion.

Audience Member: I understand. I'm saying, I know, but the way that you're describing it (inaudible 00:43:31).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

I'm just saying it's an allusion, with an A, right?

So it's a metaphor. So

metaphorically, it says if all the children that I killed are here. Now, obviously they can't be here. Even

if it was the same body of water, it wouldn't be the same children. The children were actually dead.

Metaphorically, by killing the children, what was I really trying to do? I was trying to kill the nation. I

failed at killing the nation. Why conceptually did I fail at killing the nation? The answer is because the

nation can't be killed by drowning. with killing the Jewish nation.

You can't just drown babies and think that you're going to get away

So in effect, when God fights for us, when God is -- "Anusah mipnei Yisrael ki Hashem nilcham lahem

b'Mitzrayim." What did God do?

God kept the nation alive, when by all rights it should be dead.

You

should be able to drown -- you should be able to destroy a nation by drowning all the males, that should

work.

It didn't work.

It didn't work because God was fighting on our behalf. On the one hand, God

was fighting on our behalf because of all the little tricks he was playing in the Red Sea, but on a deeper level God was fighting on our behalf, perhaps, because all the way back -- going back to how ineffective

the genocide was of Pharaoh. Which is that you can't kill us in water because we are a sea creature. So I'm saying that there's a symbolic message in us being a sea creature, which is that yes, even though,

perhaps, I can kill individual babies, but all of that was in the purpose of killing not just the individual little snakes, but killing the nation that's a snake. The nation wasn't a snake, the nation was a sea creature and now it's going gliding through water and I am dying. That's kind of -- to be a little bit more precise about it.

Audience Member: "Vehi she'amdah la'avoteinu -- b'chol dor vador."

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right. Yes?

Audience Member: It might be a little farfetched, but when you see a king's hat, he has a snake coming

out of his crown. If that was the way the Pharaohs at the time looked at a snake towards, as a simple

(inaudible 00:45:36) sort of the time, as the crown of Pharaoh and somehow the staff is a shepherd, which is us somehow that there is some kind of correlation?

Rabbi David Fohrman: Maybe. It could be. I tried to actually look up snakes and Egyptian mythology

and stuff. I didn't get that far, but if you can research that for me I'd be --

Audience Member: I know the (inaudible 00:45:56). I know that the (inaudible 00:45:57).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Yeah, I know. I saw that also.

Right.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:45:58) cobra, a type of puffed up snake is on the ground and can't fight. It almost reminds me a little bit of Joseph where the shepherd becomes the Pharaoh and also even Moses, who is now a shepherd who came from Pharaoh's house and, you know what you're saying, if blood can become water, well, if a shepherd can become a king or a king could become --

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Right. Okay.

So hold on for a second.

This is complicated.

I told you this is

kind of the climax. All of this, I've just laid the table -- set the table for what I -- this wasn't really what I

wanted to talk to you about. This is actually --

Audience Member: Now, you want to confuse us.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Now, I want to confuse you.

This was step one.

Okay.

Now you know -- this

is the theory I suggested six weeks ago. Now, I'm going to show you something that is completely at

odds with this wonderful theory. You're thinking what a beautiful theory, why can't I just go home,

right? But no, I want to show you that actually there's another meaning to the three signs or at least to

the first sign.

Now, which seems like completely at odds with what we've just seen.

So I need you to

forget everything that we've just gone through with only keeping one image in your mind. wich is the final question, which is, okay, that's all very nice, but why do we have to be a snake.

In other words, from Moses's perspective we're a snake. Now, there is a certain logic to us being a snake,

because if you would imagine a space camera view, a NASA satellite view of the splitting of the Red Sea, that's actually what the Jews would look like. We're a snaking column going through this kind of dry

land.

So we actually do look like a snake.

So yes, that's all very fine, Rabbi Fohrman, I understand that,

but it's just not so nice to have to be a snake. Why do we have to be a snake? So now, I want to answer

that question. Okay. I'm going to answer that question by showing you an entirely different way of

looking at the first sign, that's in fact complementary. Audience Member: Of our sign being a snake?

So here's the new way of looking at the first sign.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

The first sign being the snake. Okay.

So back to the snake.

So now, this is

really the climax of the first four chapters of Exodus, I want to argue. It’s the climax in the following

way. Just remember where we were up to. We've gone through a whole Joseph chiasm in the book of

Exodus, showing you that, in fact, the evolution of the enslavement in Egypt parallels the devolution of the Joseph story, right? The enslavement in Egypt is Joseph in reverse. It's the whole Joseph story coming apart. That ended with -- where did that end? That ended with the beginning of the burning bush. In the beginning of the burning bush, you have the redemption from Egypt.

At that point, we saw literary allusions, taking us back to the Joseph story, but this time going forward in

the Joseph story. We had a problem, because when we graft the literary allusions, we notice something.

Here's what we noticed. We noticed that there all these literary allusions at the beginning of the Joseph story, getting ready for the story of the pit and then we jumped over the pit, there were no literary allusions for the pit. Then, after that, there is all these literary allusions to the next major story involving

Reuben, which is a few chapters later, when Reuben meets Joseph and there is all of that. is, what happened to the story of the pit?

So the problem

Now, what I suggested to you last week is that it was that very question, in a way, that was bothering

Moses.

Who was Moses?

I argued to you that Moses is channeling Reuben through the whole story.

He is the modern day Reuben. The latter day Reuben. The one who sees, but is thwarted by hearing. The one who wants to save, but can't save. Right? All the language of Moses in the story is all Reuben's language. The problem is, if you're channeling Reuben, Reuben is saddled by guilt, by a sort of existential guilt. The guilt is -- you can view this either as Reuben's own personal guilt or you can view it more likely as national guilt.

So Reuben's own personal guilt is that he knows that he was the one who said throw Joseph in the pit. It

was his words.

Reuben said, "Hashlichu oto el habor hazeh," right?

Throw him into the pit, "v'yad al

tashlichu bo," don't send out your hand; to save him. He was the guy who wanted to save and it got all

foiled and it was -- and his plot was ruined by Shimon. Here he has to live his life with the knowledge

that he was the one with the last hands on Joseph and he was the one who said throw him in the pit and it all got fouled up. That's Reuben's personal guilt.

The national guilt, which is really what -- which is just an amplification of Rueben's guilt, is really the guilt in a way that Moses's channeling, which I argue to you is happening here. When Moses says these words, "V'hein lo ya'aminu li v'lo yishme'u bekoli ki yomru lo nirah elecha Hashem," those words

exactly paralleled Reuben's language when he meets up with Joseph, not realizing that it's Joseph. Joseph

says, "V'yeiamnu divreichem" -- so you have to come back with your other brother. Then Reuben says

this language, that we're guilty and that's Reuben's great expression of being weighed down with this

terrible guilt and now Moses is weighed down with this guilt. Moses said there's not going to be any

hearing, there's not going to be any seeing, nothing is going to work and it's all Reuben language.

In a certain way, what I argued to you, is that Moses is bothered by the following problem. The

problem he is bothered with is, the Torah in skipping over the pit -- that literary devise is intended to jog in your mind, I believe, the sense that from Moses's perspective, the reason why this whole thing is going to fall apart, the reason why he can look with a straight face upon the master of the universe and

say this won't work, when God says it will work. It's because Moses knows, so to speak -- whether

Moses knows or Moses doesn't know -- the fact is that the Jews are where they are because of the Joseph

story. Not just chronologically because of the Joseph story, because all of the guilt associated with the

Joseph story.

Now, along comes God, very cheerfully and says it's all good.

Right? We're going to go

and we're all going to leave. At that point, Moses comes along and says it's just not going to work. same way the original Reuben was saddled down by the guilt of the Joseph story and said that's why

The

Shimon has been taken prisoner. So on the national sphere, Moses is saying that's why we're all taken

prisoner because of this thing.

How are we all going to leave?

You can't replay the Joseph story happily

and pretend there was no pit and just go skipping over it. Audience Member: When he throws him into the pit?

You got to replay the pit too.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

One second.

Stop.

Just, let me do this and then ask questions, because it's

complicated. So just stay with me here. Okay. It's this question that God wants to answer now. This is

why I mentioned before the psychotherapy of this. This is really Moses / Reuben. It really is

psychotherapy, to the extent that for you psychotherapy is reliving your childhood. Boy, is this reliving

your childhood. This is reliving your past life as Reuben, in a certain way. It's that God knows what's

weighing down Moses / Reuben. It's the guilt of the Joseph story. How can we go?

So basically, Moses is saying it just isn't going to work. Moses is saying I'm telling you it's not going to work.

So God says I'm telling you it's going to work. At that point, there is no choice, but to go back

and replay it. Right?

So now God says oh, so you think we're skipping over the Joseph story.

Watch

this.

"Vayomer elav Hashem," God then says, "ma zeh b'yadecha," what's in your hand?

Do you think

you're skipping over the Joseph story? Let's not skip over the Joseph story, let's replay it. Let's go

through those moments of childhood and let's relive the agony.

"Ma zeh b'yadecha." "Ma zeh b'yadecha," notice is a kri and ktiv. Mem, zayin, hey. Mi zeh. Oh, mi

zeh? Mi zeh is that word.

Mi zeh is shattered brotherhood.

That was the last word that Joseph heard

before he came into Reuben's hand. Before Reuben took him and stripped him and threw him in the pit.

So now, let's go back to mi zeh, God says. "Ma zeh b'yadecha," what's in your hand, Reuben? Now,

right after mi zeh, what was in Reuben's hand?

Who was Reuben holding?

The answer is Joseph.

This

is when they strip him. Reuben says we're going to take him and we're going to throw him in this pit and they're stripping him. Here's the Reuben who wants to save, but he's forced to strip his brother and

throw him in the pit. So "Ma zeh b'yadecha?" Okay. Reuben / Moses, identify that which you have in

your hand.

"Vayomer mateh," and he says, mateh.

Now, what is a mateh? A mateh is a staff, but what

else is a mateh?

Audience Member: Tribe.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Mateh is also a tribe.

So the question is,what do you have in your hand? Do

you have a staff in your hand or do you have a whole tribe in your hand? Identify what it is that you have in your hand. This is the great question of mi zeh, which is, what do you think you have in your

hand here? Mi zeh is, do you have a brother in your hand or do you have a thing in your hand? Do you

have something that looks like a brother, but really isn't a brother? hand?

What do you really have in your

"V'yomer mateh."

So the question is what's a mateh?

"V'yomer hashlichehu artza." "Hashlichehu artza.

Va'yashliche'u artza," and he throws it down.

Hashlichehu --what did Reuben do?

What did Reuben

say? "Hashlichu oto habora," throw him down into the ground.

God says okay.

Let's go down now,

let's do it again and then let's throw it down to the ground. Reenact what you did. Take that staff / tribe

and throw it dow. And in the act of throwing it into the ground, when you said cast it off, what we're

you arguing? Remember, Reuben was brilliant. Reuben understood the brothers' mentality. The brothers were treating him as an other, as a thing and, therefore, really as a snake.

When you're dealing with a snake, a snake is dangerous.

What do you with a snake?

You don't want to

kill him in hand-to-hand combat, you throw it in a pit where there's snakes and scorpions. Let it live

with its own. Get away from it. That was what Reuben was saying. He knew he could get the brothers

to listen to him not to kill Joseph if he just said, "hashlichu oto haborah."

So now let's relive it. "Hashlichehu artza," throw it down into the ground, into the pit with no water. Remember, right? And here it is. At Sinai, there is no water there. "Hashlichehu artza," throw it down

into the ground. "Va'yashlicheihu artzan va'yehi lenachash." Oh, isn't that interesting? All of a sudden

it's not a tribe anymore, it's a snake. Because what's the snake? the snake is the sign of what? It's the

sign of the other. The sign of non-brotherhood. Right? The snake is the creepy-crawly that you have

that experience of otherness towards. So the staff becomes the snake.

There might be one other metaphor here and let me back up and just show you the metaphor. Should I

show you the metaphor? Why is the snake the sign of the other? Right? The snake of course reminds

you of what? Where do we know snakes from? Audience Member: Garden of Eden.

Rabbi David Fohrman: The Garden of Eden. Let's talk about the snake in the Garden of Eden. The

snake in the Garden of Eden really was the sign of the other. Let me explain to you why. This gets into the Sheva Brachot (the Seven Blessings) thing, which I talked about last night, but I'm not going to get into the whole Seven Blessings part of it, but just a little piece of it.

Let's understand how the snake comes on the scene. A snake comes on the scene in the following way.

"Lo tov heyot h'Adam levado," God says. It's not good for man to be alone. "E'eseh lo ezer kenegdo."

So if you were God, the next logical thing to do would be to make Eve, but that's not what God does. God then says, "vayitzar Hashem Elokim et kol chayat hasadeh." Takes all these animals and parades

them before Adam and then has him date all these animals. So basically, you know, he goes out with the

hippopotamus, he goes out with the flamingo and he goes out with the crocodile and it just -- Audience Member: I think at this time, it's also (inaudible 00:59:14).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay. Maybe so.

The bottom line is, none of this is working.

There's no

chemistry and he just feels like, you know -- he's very down. Right? He thinks he's never going to find

his beloved. So then God puts him to sleep and takes a tzela, a rib or something from his side and builds

it into a woman and presents the woman to him. Adam happily says, "zot hapa'am etzem mei'atzamai

u'basar mibsari, l'zot yikarei isha ki me'ish lukacha zot." He names her woman because he says etzem

mei'atzami, this is a bone from my bone and flesh from my flesh and I named her woman.

What is he saying?

God is trying to show him something.

Why not just present him with Eve already?

God knows that's going to be the answer. God is the matchmaker on this guy. Why make him go

through all these frustrating dates with the animals that don't work? The answer is, is that God wants

him to appreciate Eve for who she is. Who is she? In other words, he has to get in touch with why he

really loves her. Also, to avoid something, because the next story is coming.

In a certain way, this is going to be an antidote to the next story, which is that he needs to understand

that they are animals and that they are fundamentally foreign. That he can never seek solace in the

animal world. Which means, in a certain way -- it's more than he could never have sexual union with

animals, it's more than that. Because sexual union really means, you're uniting with your soulmate.

What it really means is the animals could never be your soulmate. It's really the question of identity,

which is to say, you're a king of the animal world, but you're not one of them. You're never going to --

so attempting, as it might be, to think of yourself as just a sophisticated animal, as just a walking, talking animal -- you have to understand that there's something fundamentally different between you and them and that you could never really be one of them. Never lose that understanding because it's a slippery slope.

So once man has this chance to find a soulmate in the animals and just feels that it's not going to work,

then he meets his real soulmate.

Who is his real soulmate or what makes her his real soulmate?

The

answer is, it's a lost part of himself. Right? The feminine part of himself was taken away from him with his rib, built into a feminine being and Adam feels a sense of loss and wanting to recapture that feminine

side. Therefore, that's what he feels is fulfilling in his relationship with Eve, which he can never get

anywhere else. That's what he means when he says, "zot hapa'am etzem mei'atzamai u'basar mibsari,

l'zot yikarei isha ki me'ish lukacha zot." That's why he names her ishah, "ki me'ish lukacha zot."

Now, the next thing that happens is that then it says, "Al kein ya'azov ish et aviv v'et imo vedavak b'ishto vehayu lebasar echad." What I said last night was that the al kein means, that's why man leaves behind his mother and his father, because who is his mother and his father? His mother and his father are actually those which whom he was once united with. He came from them physically. It's hard to leave

home. It's hard to leave the unity behind. What gives you the strength to leave the unity behind? The

sense that you're coming together and recapturing another unity. She was taken from me and I can build this unity and therefore I can leave behind the unity with my parents.

Immediately after, it says, "Zot hapa'am etzem mei'atzamai uvasar mibsari, lezot yikarei ishah ki mei'ish lukacha zot," and immediately after, "Al kein ya'azov ish et aviv v'et imo vedavak be'ishto vehayu lebasar

echad." Then you have the notion, "Vayiyu shneihem arumim velo yitboshashu." They were naked,

which means that there was nothing coming between them, which means that they could become basar echad.

Immediately into that story steps who? Very next verse -- "Vehanachash hayah arum." And isn't

interesting that the snake is described as naked, too? The sense is that he wants to get into the act and

the idea -- and this is where the Sages are coming from when the Sages say that the snake wanted to

assassinate Adam and marry Eve, but all that is really a metaphor. It's not really about bestiality, it's really

a metaphor for the snake on some level or the animal, attempting to convince humanity that you're really one of us, because here comes this creature that can walk, that can talk, that's very smart, that's very human-like, attempting to portray themselves as why can't I be the mate over here?

This is the challenge, which is, okay. Now you've understood why Eve is right for you because you've

understood that she's your lost feminine side. Can you withstand the challenge of the snake saying aren't you really just an animal in disguise? This is really the snake's argument. If you want to see this in greater detail, I talk about it in the Beast that Crouches at the Door.

Okay.

Now, let's talk about who the snake is, in light of all this. The snake is the anti-Eve.

Who is

Eve? Eve is "etzem mei'atzamai u'vasar mibsari." She is my kin. She is me. She is the lost part of me, as it were.

Who is the snake? The snake is not the lost part of me. The snake is not my kin. The snake is the other.

That's why the snake is the other. Do you understand? The snake is the symbol of the other who

masquerades as if he's kin. He looks like you, he talks like you, he thinks like you. To all external

experiences, he's your brother, but he's not your brother. That's the snake. What do you end up doing

with the snake? You end up hating him because he's impersonating your brother.

Now ask yourself, how were the brothers treating Joseph?

Exactly like that.

You look like us, you talk

like us, you think like us, you have the same facial characteristics, you have the same hair color, you have

all of that, but it's all an impersonation because deep down you're not really our brother. So who are you

then? You're just a snake. That's what a snake is. A snake is someone you hate because they're

impersonating your brother, because they look so much like you and they can be confused, but they're

not really you.

That's the issue, which is, so how are you going to look at Joseph?

When you take

Joseph and in the act of throwing Joseph in the pit, that is the act of treating him like the snake. He is the one who is impersonating being a brother and he looks just like you, but he's ultimately the other.

Later on, this is how Pharaoh will treat us. That's why, in the Joseph chiasm, throwing into the pit mirrors throwing babies into the Nile, because the same way that we treated Joseph like a snake by throwing him in the pit, so Pharaoh treated us like snake. Because there was no common bond of humanity between us and therefore we, too, look like human beings, but we were impersonating human beings. There was no common bond of brotherhood between us, so Pharaoh was getting rid of us.

Now, at that point, "Vayanas Moshe mipanav," Moses recoils from the snake. Just as what happened in

the Joseph story. Just as really the brothers recoiled from the snake, because after the brothers threw

Joseph in the pit, what did they do next? They sat down to eat bread. As the Rashbam said, where did

they sit down to eat bread? No one is going to sit down and eat bread within earshot of the one who is

screaming. You're far away. Why are you far away? Because I just don't want to have anything to do

with all of that mess in the pit.

So what did they do?

The brothers are actually recoiling from the snake

also. It's just like, let's just get out of there. That's ugly, what's happening over there. The snake is

going to expire and let's let the snake expire in peace and we're going to be over here, eating our lunch.

Audience Member: Also, Joseph is arum, naked.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Ye, and Joseph is naked in the pit just as the snake was, right? Naked in the pit.

Okay.

So now, here's the next thing that happens.

"Vayomer Hashem el Moshe," God says to Moses,

"shelach yadcha." Where did those words come from in the Sale of Joseph? "Al tishlach yadcha" -- it's

Reuben. He says, now let's do it over again, but let's do it right. Back then, you said don't send out your

hand to help Joseph -- "Al tishlach yadcha el hana'ar." That was the wrong response. When you think

there's a snake in the pit who's not really a snake, that you misidentified him as a snake, but there is really

a common bond of brotherhood between you and you're just scared of him. You know what you're

supposed to do?

"Shelach yadcha," grab hold of him. Grab hold of that which you fear.

Go back into

the mess and pull Joseph out and grab hold of him.

That's what you need to do.

"Ve'echoz b'znavo.

Vayishlach yado vayachazek bo."

Now, grab hold of

that which you fear because your real problem is fear. If you think about it, what motivated the brothers to treat Joseph this way? The real answer is fear. In other words, it was a cascading effect. If I fear you enough, if you're my brother and I think you're smart and I think you don't like me, then I learn to fear

you.

Once I fear you, my mind plays tricks on me and says you're not really my brother.

Why does my

mind say you're not really my brother?

In order to be able to do away with you.

I have to turn you into

a snake. Fear is the impetus that makes me turn you into a snake.

It was the same thing with Pharaoh. Pharaoh was afraid of us so Pharaoh turned us into a snake because

of the fear.

So what God is really saying to Moses is, confront your fear.

Don't recoil from the snake, as

fearful as you are. Grab hold of the snake. That's the way out, because when you grab hold of the snake, you're going to realize that when you confront your fear, guess what's going to happen? "Vayehi l'mateh bekapo," it's back to a staff. It's not going to be a snake anymore, it's back to a staff. That is the

antidote. The antidote is, confront your fear and don't give in to the mind games, the illusions, of non-

brotherhood that your mind is playing with you.

Okay. Now, everything I've just told you contradicts everything I told you in the first half of this talk.

This is an entirely different way of seeing this sign. The answer is, no, it's not. They're actually the

same thing, and here is the, kind of, conclusion. The conclusion is this. Grab hold of the tail of the

snake. Specifically, the tail of the snake. Why would you grab hold of the tail of the snake? So now, I

told you before -- the argument I made to you, was that -- here I'm making an argument to you that

this sign really is a replay of the Sale of Joseph.

It's therapy for Reuben in the Sale of Joseph.

But now, I

have another question to ask you, which is, why?

The answer is God is showing you how you're going to get out of this.

Now, the problem is, if I am in

therapy and I am Reuben, my next question is, very nice, but that happened a long time ago and I don't

have the chance to be able to redo it again. You're telling me what I should have done, but I can't

anymore.

So it's all very nice that you're showing me what I should have done.

What am I supposed to

do? So God says, no. I'm showing you what you're supposed to do and here is how I'm showing you

what you're supposed to do. of the Red Sea.

This has a double meaning. It's the Joseph story, but it's also the Splitting

Now let's go to the Splitting of the Sea. Remember that the splitting of the Red Sea -- remember that if the splitting of the Red Sea is Pharaoh's nightmare, which is, Pharaoh now is at the bottom of the ocean where he threw the little Jewish snakes and now he's there and Pharaoh is confronting his worst

nightmare at the bottom of the ocean. The splitting of the Red Sea is something else also. It's also where

we Jews confront our worst nightmare. Why? Because remember what the Nile was. The Nile in the Joseph chiasm matched up to the pit. The language of throwing in the pit was the same thing as the language of throwing in the Nile. What the Nile was for the Egyptians, who threw the little Jewish snakes in, was the pit without water that we threw Joseph in.

God says you know how you're going to -- Moses, you think you're going to get out of Egypt by

skipping over the pit?

You're not going to skip over the pit.

You're going to replay the pit.

Not

symbolically; you're going to replay the pit for real. You know who's going to be the snake in the

bottom of the pit? It's not going to be Joseph. big snake.

It's going to be you guys.

You guys are going to be one

Let's go back now to the NASA view of -- the from-space view of the splitting of the Red Sea. The

from-space view is, there's this snake slithering on the ground. But where is the snake? There's water.

"Habor reik ein bo mayim." When is there going to be a pit that’s empty, that's "ein bo mayim?" When

are the Jews going to be in a pit that’s empty? You're in a pit now and there is going to be no water

there. Oh, there's water, but where is the water? There are these huge walls of water; the walls of water of what's making the pit. There are these granite walls of water and at the bottom there's a snake

slithering through. It's a snake at the bottom of the pit.

Now, you're where you threw Joseph.

How are you going to get out?

Do you know what you're

going to have to do to get out? You're going to have to follow the advice that I give you in this sign

and that is don’t run away. Who runs away at the splitting of the Red Sea? Pharaoh. That was his

undoing. When he saw the sea monster, he shouldn’t have run away. When he saw the sea monster and

was scared and that was the Jews and their a sea monster, he should have confronted his fear. He should

have confronted the other and said you aren’t other, you're a brother. If he had done that, he wouldn’t

have been destroyed, but he didn’t. because he did, he was destroyed.

To the last, he looked at us as an other and he ran away from us and

The key to us getting out is, at that moment when you're in the pit, don’t look at Joseph as an other;

look at him as a brother. Grab hold of the snake.

It is interesting that other and brother are really two sides of the same coin. Now, grab hold of the tail of the snake. By the way, isn’t it interesting, who is

the first one who jumps into the sea?

Audience Member: Nachshon.

R: Isn't that interesting, the head of the snake. So the head of the snake is the one who jumps into the

sea.

Now, the question is who is the tail of the snake?

So if the head of the snake is the first guy who

jumps into the sea and leads the charge, so that means the tail of the snake is someone who's moving so slowly as to almost not be moving at all. Or to put it in another way, in time, if the first person in is the head of the snake, so going backwards in time, going backwards, backwards, backwards, who is the tail

of the snake going all the way back in time? So who now is the tail of the snake in space, the real lagger,

the one who's moving most slowly and the tail of the snake in time and space? Who among everyone

going is the one who can't move at all, who goes back in time, back in time the farthest back?

The answer is,what were they carrying with them?

Moses holding Joseph's bones.

Joseph's bones are

the tail of the snake. That's what God was saying.

You have to hold Joseph's bones.

When you hold

Joseph's bones, you are grabbing hold of the tail of the snake and in one last human act, you're taking

Joseph with you. When you take Joseph with you for 40 years through the desert and you're careful

with his bones, what are you saying? You're saying he is your brother and you're taking him with you

out of the pit, out of land and that’s only by holding on to the tail of the snake that you are going to be able to go free.

It's undoing. You have to actually go through the pit again and undo it. This time, you're going to

reach out with your hands or you're going to grab hold of the tail of the snake and you're going to win.

Guess what? It's 400 years of slavery. And who is the fourth generation? In the end it is Joseph. Joseph

leaves with you.

Jacob was right; the fourth generation will leave with you.

His bones will leave with

you and that’s when you go free. When four generations and 400 years both come together and you take Joseph's bones with you, that’s when you go free.

Finally, "Hayam ra'ah vayanos, haYarden yisov l'achor." Isn’t that interesting? "Hayam ra'ah vayanos,"

the sea saw something and ran away. Do you know what our Sages say the sea saw? Rashi says it. the

bones of Joseph. Isn’t that interesting? The sea saw the bones of Joseph and it ran away. Why? The

answer is God said to Moses, Pharaoh is going to run away from his nightmare; you're going to succeed because you didn’t run away. If you don’t run away, if you don’t "Vayanos Moshe mipanav," if you grab hold of the tail of the snake, there is going to be running one way or the other. If you don’t run away, who is going to run away? The sea will run away and the sea will split. If you run away then the sea

won't run away and the sea will converge and you will die. out and that's "hayam raah vayanos".

Joseph's bones become the way that you get

Rabbi Fohrman: I've been working on some new material lately and I want to share it with you, it's related to [the Exodus](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/understanding-the-exodus-from-egypt). There's an upside and there's a downside. The upside is it's really cool material. I really like it. I think it's some of the best stuff I've put out and it rivals the [Amalek material](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/amalek-and-antisemitism) in its coolness, but it's less controversial. Well, I'm not sure about that, but it's really a lot of fun. I'm really enjoying it. I have a feeling it's not done yet, but I want to share with you what I'm up to. I'm still kind of researching it. It's really stuff I've been working on just in the last week.

It's especially gratifying because I've done a lot of stuff on the Exodus. I've put out tape series. I've put out various different things. I've just put out a really nice video series, which [you can see on](https://www.alephbeta.org/passover) [alephbeta.org](https://www.alephbeta.org/passover) and all that stuff is great. There's actually a very nice [video series](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/meaning-of-being-gods-chosen-people) – tell all your friends – on the Exodus. It's seven parts. It's free. You just have to register. It's a lot of fun. Anyway, this new material is, kind of, like an epilogue to that and it's great stuff. So that's the upside.

The downside. An upside always comes with a downside. The downside is, is that it's too much stuff to do in one session with you. So I'm only going to have to, I'm only going to be able to give you a little bit of it, but I hope that it will enrich your [pre-Passover thinking](https://www.alephbeta.org/passover) and you can take it further and you can see it now, talk about it further.

Audience Member: This is not what's on the website?

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah. This has nothing to do with what's on, well, it has a lot to do with what's on the website, but it's different. It's a continuation of it. But if you want to see the background of this, you can go to [the video](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/meaning-of-being-gods-chosen-people) which we have on the website.

Now who was here about a year or two ago when I went through the laws of the Passover offering with you guys? The significance of the laws of the Passover offering. We did it once when we did the Passover offering before Passover and we did it another time quickly as [part of Amalek](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/amalek-and-antisemitism), but very quickly. Does anyone have any recollection of this? Raise your hand if you have any recollection of the Passover offering. My wife, that's about it. Nobody else?

That is the first piece of background which you need to know. So here's the idea. What I'm about to share with you is background. So I'm going to go through it very quickly. So you have to hold onto your hats. Wigs, whatever. Here's the deal. Let's start with the Passover offering. The Passover offering, as you know, occupies quite a place on [seder night](https://www.alephbeta.org/passover/what-is-a-seder). It is part of our Passover seder even though we don't have a the Passover offering. In the times of the Passover offering there, that was the main show; the Passover offering.

The problem with this is, boys and girls, that how much do you relate to the Passover offering? Very little, right? But it's the main deal. You know what I mean? So it's not about Rabbi Akiva in Bnei Brak. It's not about all of the kaddesh, urchatz -- like, all that is nice, but that's just the parperaot l'chochma, that's just the accoutrements. The main dish is the Passover offering. When I say main dish, I don't just mean it's the main thing that you eat, but halachically it's the main thing. Everything revolves around it.

Everything is in remembrance to the Passover offering and to the laws of the Passover offering.

So here's the problem. The problem which you have, if you want to be really just flat out, straight, honest with yourself, is how can you expect to have a meaningful experience of the Exodus and a meaningful experience of the seder while completely ignoring the role that the Passover offering plays in this? If all you do is focus on a little vort here and a little vort there on the seder, then you aren't willing to tackle the Passover offering and understand why this offering, that seems so strange and seems like it is an ancient right from 3,000 years ago that has nothing to do with you and your family today. If you aren't willing to tackle that, then you're missing the big elephant in the middle of the room on Passover and you can't really hope to have a complete spiritual experience of Pesach as the Torah wanted you to have it. You have to deal with the Passover offering.

One of the proofs that you have to deal with the Passover offering is where the Passover offering shows up. It shows up right smack in the middle of the greatest story that has ever been told. What I mean by that is as that, you well know, the Torah divides itself into narrative and into laws. It's basically narratives and it's basically laws. And more or less you understand the sections. Right? Genesis, mostly narrative; Leviticus, mostly laws. Right? Exodus? Well, that's a trick question. What about the first half of Exodus? Mostly narrative. What about the second half of Exodus? Mostly laws.

There's one exception in Genesis, Leviticus and Exodus to this nice little divvy up of narrative and laws. The exception is the Passover offering. The Passover offering is the section of laws -- the most detailed section of laws, for the first time, that interrupts the greatest narrative -- the greatest story ever told. The Exodus is the greatest story ever told. Just talk to Steven Spielberg or Charlton Heston or any of these guys that turned this into a stylized retelling. It's a great story. And the story inexorably builds towards its climax. The climax, of course, is the tenth plague.

Now, it's a gripping story. If you go through the plagues -- I can't do it with you now because of time, but if you go through the plagues, there's the slow tension that's building up. Pharaoh is getting more and more recalcitrant. Moses is getting more and more insistent. Finally, in the aftermath of the ninth plague, Pharaoh makes an offer you can't refuse. He says, fine, you can all go, even your children.

Everyone can go. I'm just asking for one little face saving measure, leave the cattle behind. That's all he wants. The man just wants the cattle. You're Moses. Let's play deal or no deal. Do you take the deal?

There's 400 years of slavery. You have a chance to bring it to an end right now. It's just leave behind the cattle and you can all go. Right? You take the deal and you go.

What does Moses say? Well, I'm glad you mentioned cattle, Pharaoh, because you actually have to give us cattle. See, we're not going to leave -- "Lo nishar parsah," we're not leaving a hoof behind. We're taking all of our cattle. Hippopotamuses, giraffes, everything. "Ki lo neida mah na'avod et Hashem ad bo'achem sham," we have no idea what we're supposed to sacrifice to God until we get there. He might want us to sacrifice hippopotamuses. We've got to take the whole national zoo with us. Plus, you don't have all the species. You have to bring us cattle so that we have extra stuff. I'm really glad you brought up the cattle, Pharaoh. What is the man doing, right? And then Pharaoh gets mad and sends them out

and says I don't want to see you. The next time I see you, you'll die. What is going on?

Moses turns and says fine, just as you say the next time I'll see you, you'll die. So things are clearly coming to a head here. Right? These men are not going to see each other. There's no more negotiations. What's going to happen? And then as Moses turns and wheels out and gets ready to go, he has a prophecy. God appears to him and says, "Od nega achad avi al Mitzrayim," one more plague I'll bring upon Egypt and after that you'll see they will send you out. It's going to be in the middle of the night and the Angel of Death is going to come and is going to destroy all the firstborn. Moses turns and warns Pharaoh and then leaves b'chori af -- leaves in anger.

Now the next thing you would expect to happen -- right? This is the great climax. What's going to happen? Is Pharaoh going to win? Is Moses going to win? You expect to see the tenth plague. That's not what you see. The next thing you see is another prophecy. God turns to Moses and says by the way, it's time for a little commercial break. I just need to tell you what you have up on the screen. "Hachodesh hazeh lachem rosh chadashim." A calendrical note. Right? I just want to let you know, even though generally people count months from the seventh month, you're going to start counting months from here. "Rishon huh l'chadshei hashanah" and there's going to be something called the Passover offering.

Right? And everybody's going to offer this offering.

Now I wouldn't have had any problem if we took a sentence or two to describe the Passover offering. Everybody should take a sheep. They should sacrifice the sheep, put the blood on the doors and you'll all go out and leave Egypt and you'll all be safe. Great. Ai there's a lot of laws of the Passover offering.

Great. Where should the laws go everybody? Where should we put them? Put them in Leviticus, where all the other laws of offerings go. Right? You know what I mean? That's where they should go. No.

They go right here.

You go through a long laundry list of the very detailed and unique laws of the Passover offering. Everybody has to get together. They each have to eat it in a group and they have to count themselves into the group beforehand. The meat has to be roasted and it can't be boiled in water. It has to be a seh. What's the definition of a seh? Even though a seh normally includes a sheep, it can include a goat also. The seh has to be exactly one years old. You have to eat matneichem chagurim, with your belts on and all of that. You can't leave over until the morning. You have to eat it with matzos and bitter herbs together. All these laws, like, hello? By the time you're done with this, it's like you lost your train of thought. You forgot about the story. You're just lost in these laws. This is very bad narrative style. Do you know what I mean?

Now, it's not like the Torah is written by an author that didn't know how to tell a good story. Whatever else you would say about God, God knows how to tell a good story. I mean up until now it's a great story. You know what I mean? It's not like this author can't tell a story. So the author knows what a good story is. So why is the author blowing it with this incredible digression, losing like 95 percent of his audience here, whose eyes are going to glaze over with this stuff and expect it to be somewhere else? Why is this here?

Now, this is not a question which most of us are used to asking. The reason why it's not a question that most of us are used to asking is because we were trained, and yes, even you, who learned in Bais Yaakov and maybe never really learned Gemara in detail, but certainly men that learn Gemara, we're trained not to get phased when we read a section like this. Laws are our bread and butter. Right? This is, like, we have a whole Tractate P'sachim that's about this. So we go through this and we expound the laws and even if you're learning this in Bais Yaakov what does your teacher assign you to do? Look at all the Rashi's and understand all the halochos and all the laws and you come and you'll take a test and you'll learn all the laws and even though you say you haven't learned Gemara you really did because Rashi brought in all the Gemaras. So don't say you don't learn Gemara. You know what I mean, like, this is --

What this is, is a great diversionary tactic from a very basic question which is what is this doing here from the point of view of pshat? You see, when you're learning Rashi or when you're learning Gemara, you're attacking Gemara -- you're attacking the written Torah from a whole different angle. The written Torah can be understood on a number of levels. The most basic level, even though we say there's shivim panim laTorah there is basically four panim laTorah and that's basically pshat, remez, drash and sod. What the Gemara is doing is drash; it's halachic drash. It's the way that you expound verses so as to learn laws from it. That's what we do when we learn Gemara. That's what you do when you learn Rashi and basically we can relate to all of that.

That's all very nice, but never fool yourself into thinking that drash replaces pshat. Drash is another way of learning the written Torah. The written Torah is apprehensible on all four levels simultaneously.

What that means is don't be fooled and think oh, I'm now learning drash and I can ignore pshat. No. It's simultaneous. You have to understand pshat too. So my question to you today is not what the drash explanation of the Passover offering is. Yes, we'll go and we'll expound this law from this verse and these extra words to understand this. We'll get all of that. You can read the Minchat Chinuch or Rashi and get all of that.

My question is from a pshat angle, how do you understand this? Pshat is the story. This is interrupting the story. What is this doing here? Boys and girls, there's only one explanation for this. There's only one possible answer to this. The answer is it must be it's not a digression. It has to be part of the story. It has to be that the author is telling you that right before the penultimate point, before the climax, it's telling you this is the greatest story ever told and you're waiting for the climax? You think it's the greatest story now? Wait until you hear these laws. These laws are mind blowing. These laws take the whole tension to a new level. You ain't seen nothing in terms of the climax of the story until you understand the laws. Then, look at the tenth plague.

The laws are part of the story. They're part of the tension. That's how you have to look at the laws. So that's what we're going to do. That's what we're going to begin to do today. Unfortunately, we're not going to get that much beyond that because this is going to take some time. But this is what I did two years ago. This isn't what I did a week ago. This is kind of background to what I did a week ago. So you have to understand, what is the meaning of these laws?

In order to understand the meaning of these laws, what you're going to find as you go through the laws is that there's a lot of language that appears odd, that appears strange. I'm going to take a quick run through some of the language and at the same time you'll familiarize yourself with some of the laws then you'll understand what's strange. Well, let's leave that aside for a moment.

So everybody should get together as a group and eat this all together. If you can't finish the lamb yourself, "V'lakach huh u'sh'cheino hakarov el beito, b'michsat n'fashot ish l'fi achlo tachosu al haseh." Now if you know even a littlest of Hebrew, you would translate michsat n'fashot or tachosu al haseh -- even if you weren't sure what it meant, but you had to sort of search your brain for what the root is over here, what would you think the root is and what would you think the word means? You would think it means to cover, like kisui. That's not what it means. That's not what anybody says. It's what any normal speaker of biblical Hebrew would say it means, but it's not actually what it means.

The way the Gemara interprets this and the way Rashi and other commentators interpret this is it means to count in. "V'lakach hu u'sh'cheinu hakarov el beito" -- if you can't finish the lamb yourself, then you and your neighbor "b'michsat n'fashot," have to count their souls in, "Ish l'fi ochlo tachosu al haseh," each one according to what they can eat, have to count them in on the seh. But that's not how you would translate it. It's like the Torah is going out of its way to use a word that normally doesn't mean counting to mean counting. The word normally means covering. It sounds like it means covering of souls. Each person according to what they can eat needs to cover themselves with the seh. So the question is why use this strange language? We are going to find the strange language over and over again here. All of the language here --

Audience Member: What chapter is it in?

Rabbi Fohrman: Where is this? This is in 11 maybe, Exodus, 12. So let's go a little bit further. Here's the next piece of strange language. The next bit of the strange language comes from defining terms. Now, normally what does a seh mean? A seh means a lamb. A seh is very unequivocally a sheep. Normally there are -- there's something called tzon. Tzon is actually a larger category which would include sheep and goats, but seh is a lamb that specifically means a sheep, except for in the context of the Passover offering.

Take a look at this. "Seh tamim zachor ben shanah," it's a seh that's a male seh that's a year old, "min hakvasim umin ha'izim tikachu," you can take the seh both from lambs or from goats. So all of the sudden the goat is going to be included in the definition of lamb. So that's a little odd.

"V'hayah lachem l'mishmeret," so keep it for 14 days, then you should slaughter it and you should take the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel and should eat it that night. How should you eat it? You should eat it tzli eish, you should eat it roasted -- roasted without water, "u'matzot al m'rorim yochluhu," you have to eat it -- these are very specific laws. You have to eat it with matzah -- you don't find this with any other offering and you have to eat it with bitter herbs.

Now, when you eat it, "al tochlu mimenu na," you can't eat it raw. Now, if I didn't just translate that for

you, in a million years, would you have known that na was raw? Have you ever found na meaning raw anywhere else in the Torah? What does na mean? Nun, Alef -- right over here. What does na mean? Na means please. What it really means is don't eat it, please. I mean that's what it means. You know what I mean? It doesn't make any sense, but it's another one of these mixed up words.

Rashi's bothered by this. Rashi says it means raw because in Arabic that's what na means. So it means the Torah is using Arabic, you understand? Like, why couldn't we find a Hebrew word to mean raw maybe? We're not writing this in Arabic. So even according to Rashi, the Torah is really going out of its way to use a word that you know as please. You see the connection? Just like michsat is a word that you know to mean cover and the Torah is using it for something else, so na is a word you know to mean please, it's being used for something else.

Plus, you definitely can't use water -- "u'vashel m'vushal bamayim" -- totally, you don't want to use water. You want it "tz'li eish" -- a very unusual law. And how should you eat it? "Rosho al k'rovo al kirbo," you should eat it the head bunched over the knees. "V'lo tosiru mimenu ad boker," there shouldn't be anything left in the morning. "V'kacha tochluhu oto, matneichem chagurim, na'aleichem b'ragleichem," you have to eat it with your belts on, your shoes on and your walking sticks in your hands. You have to eat it b'chipazon -- and you should eat it quickly, "Pesach hu laHashem."

Pesach by the way is another one of these words. What does Pesach mean everybody? Audience Member: Pass over.

Rabbi Fohrman: Pass over. You're ready? I'm going to ask you how do you know Pesach means to pass over? How do you know the word Pesach means to jump over? Because it says, "Hashem pasach al bateinu." You see it in the next the Passover offering over here. Right over here, right? "V'ra'iti et hadam," I will see the blood. This is a few verses later. "V'hayah hadam lachem l'ot al habatim asher atem sham, v'ra'iti et hadam," and I will see the blood, "u'pasachti aleichem," and I will pass over you. That's how you know it means pass over. Now, I'm going to challenge you one more time. How do you know it means pass over you here?

Audience Member: From the context.

Rabbi Fohrman: That's the answer. From the context. And that's a different answer from the way you know everything else. Let me ask you this. The word batim. How do you know what the word batim means? From context? How do you know what the word batim means? This is not a trick question.

Audience Member: Because it's used so many times.

Rabbi Fohrman: Exactly. Because I can look at the 1,'500 other times the Torah uses the word batim, I can understand that it always means house. So that's how you're going to understand what anything is. How do you understand a language? You look at the other places the word is used. So the normal way you would understand what a word means is you'd say how is it used elsewhere?

Now, when you try to do that with the word pasach, guess what happens? You come up short, because it's never used anywhere. You know what this means? It means God made up a word and just dumped it right over here. It's a nonsense word, pasach -- and dumped it right over here and you're forced to understand what it means from context, because there's no other way you can understand what it means. You can't look elsewhere to understand what it means. The best you can do is guess -- let pasach equal x. Right? And guessing from context, I mean, the only thing I can do is fill in x the value, what else does it mean given the context.

Do you see the word games the Torah is playing with you? Michsat n'fashot is a word game, na is a word game, pasach is a word game. What's the deal with all these -- seh is a word game, izim. What's the deal with all these word games? It gets worse.

This is later on. Here's the Passover offering 2. This is just a few verses later in Exodus 12, when Moses repeats these laws to the elders, the z'keinim. Here's what he tells them. "Mischu u'k'chu lachem tzon l'mishpechoteichem." God just said k'chu. Moses adds mischu u'k'chu. Hello? Mischu u'k'chu, pull and take. And if it only said take for yourself, you would've had a problem? You would've come to me and said well, what I really want to say, why does it say take for yourself? What it really should have said pull and take. Right? What's the pull doing here? So the Gemara expounds this; so we have an answer in drash, but in pshat what's the answer? Why are we --

Audience Member: They are going to have to pull it.

Rabbi Fohrman: Okay. Maybe. "Mischu u'k'chu lachem tzon l'mishpechoteichem v'shachatu ha'Pesach," and then you have to slaughter the Passover offering with these strange laws. "U'lekachtem," you have to take this "agudat eizov, u'tavaltem badam," you have to dip it in blood, "dam asher basaf." Here's another one of these strange words. What's a saf? So you have to figure out that a saf -- what does saf mean?

Again, so we have to figure out from the context. So the Gemara says it actually means a pail, but if you have to figure out from context, you're forced to go into the book of Judges to figure out -- remember, by the way, Judges is written after this. Right? Which means that when the Torah was written, no one knows what a saf means. So it's another one of these nonsense words. Once saf means whatever it means, Judges uses the word -- borrows from here to use it.

In Judges it's in the story of pilegesh b'Givah when "v'yadehah al hasaf." The concubine, exhausted after the night of torture, collapses with her hand on the threshold of the door. So it would seem to mean threshold, even though the Gemara understands it to mean bucket. So it's either bucket or threshold, but it's another one of these made up words.

"V'atem lo teitzu ish mipetach beito ad boker," nobody can come out until the morning. "V'avar Hashem lingof et Mitzrayim, v'ra'a et hadam al hamashkof v'al shtei hamezuzot, u'pasach Hashem" -- that's where you know what pesach means -- "al hapetach, v'lo yitein hamashchis lavo el bateichem lingof." It turns out -- so the challenge, of course, is to find -- to connect the dots. To find what it is that -- what theme is connecting all of these things that emerges.

By the way, this is a nice segue. I'm just going to give a short 30-second advertisement here and I'm wondering what you -- I always struggled, especially with this new endeavor that I've been creating, this video institute kind academy and all that we're doing and we're going to bring in other teachers other than me. I'm not the only guy, but the question is how do you define, either for ourselves or for the marketplace, what it is that we're doing? I don't want just anybody to teach and so, you know, like, you say, well I like this teacher, I don't like this teacher. It forces me to grapple with what it is that I'm doing and it's not just about putting my Torah out to the world as much as I'd love to do that. It's really about bringing a certain kind of learning into the educational world. What kind of learning is that?

I find it very hard to pin down. If you want to chat with me for three hours, I would be happy to detail my methodology for you. I can give you 13 things that I do over and over again trying to understand text, but if you don't have three hours to spend and you had to boil it down to 15 seconds, could you boil it down to 15 seconds? What is it that I do? Yes, ma'am.

Audience Member: Contemporary development and the DNA of Torah. You really work to find the hidden mysteries and have the mysteries revealed.

Rabbi Fohrman: Okay. So you can say that, but the problem with saying stuff like that is it sounds messianic. Right? You know what I mean? Like the DNA of Torah, mysteries revealed. I mean, lots of people can say they're revealing mysteries. For those of you that have been around, it's, like, you sort of feel that it's true. It is very contemporary and it's relevant. It is. But if somebody asked you well how does he do it? What is he doing in order to reveal the mysteries?

So you see how difficult it is for you to explain this. Try describing to someone who's never been to a class here what goes on. You find yourself -- do you find that sometimes it's hard to describe? You come here, you go to a class and you want to describe it to your friend and you find yourself -- your friend is looking at you, like, right, yeah, like you're a little crazy because you say things, like, wow, there's these mysteries revealed. So they kind of think in the back of their head, I don't know there's this charismatic guy and obviously they got stuck. I mean some charismatic person. You know what I mean. And they're diffident or something.

Or you say wow, there's these mysteries or it's like it's so text-based. So they say well, I don't know, in Bais Yaakov I learned all the text too. It was all very text-based. We sat there and we learned all the text. What is it that's so special? Do you know what I mean? It's hard to explain.

Audience Member: When somebody asked me why I come, I say I go to hear something creative.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yes, but that's hard to use also, because a lot of people hear creative stuff, but it doesn't strike them as compelling, because it's like gymnastics in the air. Do you know what I mean? Like anybody can say creative things, but they don't necessarily strike you as true. When you walk out of here and it's right -- but let me put it to you this way. If you walk out of here and your takeaway is wow, Fohrman came up with this really creative idea, I failed. Okay. Because it has to be true. You see if it's true and here's the issue with creativity. The problem with creativity is you make it up. Do you know

what I mean? Yes, but the idea is that if the point in which you're making it up, is the point in which it's no longer interesting. Do you understand? It's only interesting if it's really there.

What's happening here when it succeeds -- when it fails it fails -- but when it succeeds, what's happening here is a process of discovery of what is already there, not a process of creation. It's a process of unearthing; it's like archeology. It's finding what is there. So here's what I would suggest, if you had to boil it down to 15 seconds. You're going to give me your 15 seconds? Go ahead.

Audience Member: Comparative analysis.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yes. Okay. Good. Let's try and break down what that means.

Audience Member: As a new member here, I think of it as an exciting way of looking at the text in the Torah way.

Rabbi Fohrman: Right, but then the challenge is but what makes it exciting?

Audience Member: No, but like into the actual words and to, like, understanding the words.

Rabbi Fohrman: Let me actually -- you used one word there. Let's focus on that one word. If I would have to boil it down in one word, the word I would boil it down to is understanding. And let me explain what I mean by that word. I want to define understanding and I want to define it in relationship to another word which is knowledge.

Generally speaking, when you think what is education about? What is your Torah learning about? More often than not it's about gaining knowledge. Right? You learn stuff and you add to your store of knowledge. You learn more laws. You learn more facts and you fill your mind with facts and then you get tested. If you're in school, you eventually get tested on those facts. You have to give back all those facts and the more facts you know, even if you compare and contrast the facts all the better. I can compare the Siforno to the Ramban and I can compare all these different things and I have all these facts. I learn more and more stuff.

That's part of what learning is. Obviously, you need knowledge. But there's another thing, which your education is not just about knowledge. It's about understanding and understanding has to do with what it all means. Why it's important? Why it matters? What does it mean to me? How do you make the facts mean something?

What I want to argue is, that one of the core aspects of understanding is when you have a whole bunch of disparate facts and you begin to see the relationships between them. Once I can define the relationships between the facts, so it's not 15 facts, but it's one thing with 15 aspects and here's how they connect. Just the mere fact that connecting them and making them one, makes the thing have meaning that's larger than the sum of any one of those things. It's not just 15 things, it's literally larger than the sum of its parts. Then after you define the relationships between the facts, you define the relationship

between that thing and you and then you have understanding. Right? That's what it's about.

I think if I had to boil down what I'm doing, that's what I'm doing. There's a lot of tools to how you do it. There's a lot of ways in making the connection -- intellectuality, stuff like that, but that's what it is.

So back to the Passover offering, what I want to do is try to do that here. I've shown you a lot of strange things in the Passover offering. The challenge is what is the path that wends its way to make this into one thing? How do all of these things come together?

So what is the answer to that question? Here's my answer to that question. Before I give you my answer to that question, I want to give you somebody else's answer to that question and the somebody else is the Maharal. The Maharal is also bothered by this and the Maharal has a very nice stab at what it means -- what he thinks the relationship between all the facts of the Passover offering. I have a different theory than the Maharal, but I believe that my theory is complimentary with the Maharal. So if you put my theory and the Maharal's theory together, I think that they interact with each other in very interesting ways.

So let me introduce the Maharal's theory. You can read the Maharal in detail in the Haggadah Shel Pesach of the Maharal. When he gets up to the part about the Passover offering, he talks about this. But just to abridge his idea. Basically, his thought is the Passover offering, the theme that binds it all together is the theme of oneness.

What he wants to argue is that it is the quintessential, monotheistic offering. It is the offering that declares our allegiance to monotheism. Every aspect of the offering has to do with one. It's a one-year- old sheep. Right? It's a one-year-old lamb. It has to be one years old. You can't break the bones, because if you break the bones the bone becomes two; it has to remain one. Everyone has to come together in a group. Everyone has to come together as one to eat it. You can't cook it; you have to roast it because anybody who's been in the kitchen knows that what happens when you cook meat in water? It falls apart. But when you roast it, what happens? It comes together as one.

So this is his idea that all of the aspects of the Passover offering is that even in time, it's a singularity. We eat quickly, as close as possible to one point in time. In all of these aspects -- this is the Maharal, Reb Yehudah Loew of Prague. This is his theory that before we were going to get out of Egypt, we needed to slaughter the god of the Egyptians, declare our allegiance to monotheism as opposed to polytheism. We do it symbolically through the Passover offering. Okay. This is the Maharal. I agree with that, but I want to argue that there's another facet of the Passover offering that's happening at the same time.

So are you with me guys? So that's one theory. I want to add a second theory that goes along with that. The second theory brings us back to something which I've introduced to you before. It brings us back to this question. How did the Jews leave Egypt? Let me explain what I mean by this question. So Rav Soloveitchik, of blessed memory, had an interesting insight that I want to build off of. The insight is the following.

It says that Jacob left the house of Laban when Joseph was born. The way the verse is phrased, the verse goes out of its way to make a clear connection between the birth of Joseph and Jacob's decision to leave, as if there is a causative relationship there. "Va'yehi ka'asher yaldah Rachel et Yosef," and it happened when Rachel gave birth to Joseph that Jacob said to Laban, "shalcheini v'eilchah el m'komi u'leartzi" -- I want to go back home now. The way the verse is phrased makes you wonder what was there about the birth of Joseph that impelled Jacob to think that it was time to leave?

Here's Rav Soloveitchik's answer to this. Rav Soloveitchik's answer is that Jacob knew how to count. Everyone knew about this prophecy in the family that there was going to be this period of dark slavery, but nobody knew exactly when and exactly how. There was this talk of 400 years of slavery. In the end it wasn't really 400 years. It was 210 years. You have to use your thumbs to figure out how it ends up to be 400 years. But there was going to be this long period of slavery.

Then there was this ambiguous phrase of the end. There was this idea -- God says, "Ger yiyeh zar'acha b'eretz lo lahem" -- there was this idea that -- let's just read through it. "Ger yiyeh zar'acha b'eretz lo lahem." Does it say where? No. Your children will be strangers in a land that's not their own. "Va'avadum," and they will be enslaved, "v'inu otam," and oppressed for a long time, for 400 years. "V'acharei kein yeitzu b'r'chush gadol," after that they will go out with a lot of stuff. "V'dor revi'i yashuvu heinah," the fourth generation will return here.

Jacob knows about this prophecy and he looks at himself. He says, "ger iyiheh zar'acha b'eretz lo lahem," your children will be strangers in a land not their own. Look at me, I'm not in my land. "Im Lavan garti," I've been with Laban. I've been a stranger in Laban's house. I've been a stranger. Va'avadum, and they will enslave them. I don't know, but I've been working pretty hard for Laban, it really feels like slavery to me. If you listen to how he talks about it. I ate ice during at night. I was up all night watching your stuff. It was like slavery. Ve'inu otam, I was oppressed. Well, I was oppressed. He wasn't the nicest master. He switched my wives, played all these tricks on me. He wasn't like this where he dealt with me in good faith. "Arba mei'ot shana" -- alright, fine, it's not 400 years, but how long was it? It was 21 years.

Isn't that interesting? How long were the Jews in Egypt? 210 years. It was 21 years. I've been here for a long time. "Ve'acharei chein yeitzu b'r'chush gadol." Isn't it interesting that Jacob goes out of his way to play the whole trick with the sheep to make sure that he leaves b'rechush gadol, with a whole lot of stuff from Laban's household? Right? "V'dor revi'i yashuva heina," the fourth generation is supposed to return. So he's thinking, okay. Abraham, that's generation number one; Isaac, that's generation number two; Jacob, that's me. That's generation number three. Joseph --

Audience Member: Why Joseph?

Rabbi Fohrman: Right. Why Joseph? Because who is Joseph the first child of? Rachel. And that S-O-B Laban who was me'aneh oti and switched my wives -- who was I always supposed to marry? I was always -- in a certain way, he's viewing his real legacy, his real firstborn as Joseph. So this is my real fourth generation.

If this theory is correct, it means he's looking at Joseph as the firstborn. It means, by the way, that the k'tonet passim -- again, remember we talked about this in the Joseph thing. Remember how they stripped him of both coats? Two coats according to Rashi. Why? Rashi -- one coat all the brothers had, but a second special coat that belonged only to him. What does a firstborn get? Pi shna'im, it's the double portion. The coat was the pi shna'im, it's the double portion. Lots of other proofs, but this I'm not going to get into now, but he seems to be treating Joseph as the firstborn.

Here they are and now they're leaving. Now ask yourself was Jacob wrong? So you say to yourself, was he right or was he wrong? If you're going to sit back in your armchair and say, yeah, well, you know, that poor delusional Jacob. You know what I mean? Nebach. He doesn't know what we know. Right? We read the Torah and we understand it was always Egypt and he was misled by a red herring. Are you so sure? Look at the following.

Hear how Jacob leaves the house of Laban. Look how the Jews leave Pharaoh's house. "Vayugad l'Lavan bayom hashlishi ki barach Yaakov." "Vayugad l'melech Mitzrayim ki barach ha'am." It's exactly the same language. Do you understand what's happening here? The Torah is using the same language to describe them leaving. Does the Torah think this isn't real? And then, "Vayikach et echav imo," Laban takes compatriots with him. You know, minor characters. Pharaoh takes compatriots with him -- "v'et amo lakach imo." "Vayirdof acharav" -- "Vayirdof acharei B'nei Yisroel." It's all the same language. When they catch up, "vayaseig Lavan et Yaakov" -- "vayasigu otam." It's not one thing. It's over and over and over again and every last thing the Torah is saying, it's all the same.

What's going on? The Torah is saying it's real. Now what do you mean it's real? But I thought Egypt's real? The answer is Laban's real too. You know in the Seder how we compare Laban and Pharaoh? It's real. Laban and Pharaoh are the same. The only difference is one "gazar al ha'z'charim" and one's gazar on everyone, but Laban and Pharaoh are the same father that starts nice and ends up turning mean and enslaves you. It's all the same.

What's going on? So it brings us back to a Rashi. The Rashi is the first Rashi in Parashat Vayeishev. The first Rashi in Parashat Vayeishev says, "Vayeishev Yaakov b'eretz megurei aviv b'eretz Kena'an. Bikeish Yaakov leishev b'shalvah," Jacob thought it was all over. What does Rashi mean? Do you understand what Rashi means? Rashi means that when Jacob came home after all of this, he thought he went through -- he thought he left Egypt. He thought his job -- he's the fourth generation with Joseph. He's triumphantly coming home and what's his job now? To establish the Jewish People in the Land of Israel and, you know, I am home free. I'm done with my life's mission -- "bikeish Yaakov leishev b'shalvah" -- all I need to do now is enjoy and watch my grandkids and see the nation unfold.

"Kafatz alav rogzo shel Yosef." What he didn't understand, what jumped him, what ambushed him, was the story of Joseph and what the implication is. If it weren't for the ambush of the story of Joseph, which takes them down to Egypt and when they go down to Egypt, what happens? They go through it all again. Do you understand? And then now it's 400 years. Not 210 years. Not 21 years. And now it's real. So yes, that means that if it's not for the story of Joseph, Jacob's right. That's what that Rashi means. If

not for the story of Joseph, Jacob's right.

The prophecy gets fulfilled in other ways. An elastic prophecy. Instead of 210 years and figuring out your thumbs for 400, you can figure out 21 years. You go back and you count it from the creation of the world. You know, you'd figure something out and it would be the fourth generation and the fourth generation would make sense. Now you really have to kvetch the fourth generation what it really is.

What that means is, is that it could've been real. For example, when Rabi Akiva held that Bar Kochba was the messiah, was he wrong? Did he believe in a false messiah? No. Bar Kochba could've been the messiah. If he wasn't successful, Bar Kochba was not messiah. He's not a false messiah. It's a failed messiah. It just didn't happen, which is why his name is Bar Koziba, the disappointed one. It disappointed us. It wasn't wrong. It was just a disappointment. Here, too, there was a disappointment. It could've been Laban, but in the end it's not. Because of Joseph it continues.

Now, here's the interesting thing. If it's true that the sojourn of Jacob in Paddan Aram reminds us of the sojourn of the Jews in Pharaoh's house. And if it's true that the Jews leaving Pharaoh's house reminds us of Jacob leaving Laban's house. So if the present is similar and the future is similar, don't you think the past would be similar too? In other words, don't you think what brought us down to Egypt would parallel what brought Jacob down into Laban's house. What is the source of the problem that brings you into exile?

The answer is what happened in both stories. What happened in both stories is that there was a problem. Father thought that someone is his firstborn. Isaac thought that Esau was his firstborn. Jacob thought that Joseph was his firstborn. The problem is the brothers thought something else. Jacob thought that he really deserves to be the firstborn and Reuben and everybody else thought that Reuben really deserved to be the firstborn. And brothers were willing to go to such length as to deceive their father over who the real firstborn is and they did so with goats and coats, in both cases. Jacob brings the coat of his brother and puts the goat -- and kills the goat and brings it to father and they bring goats and coats to their father and say I'm the firstborn. And Reuben also brings goats and coats. Not Reuben but the brothers also bring -- slaughter the goat, put the blood on the coat and bring it to father and it's actually with the message, never mind Joseph, we're the chosen one. We're the firstborn.

Audience Member: That needs a tikkun.

Rabbi Fohrman: That's right. So now don't you think that if what brings us down to exile is goats and coats -- goats and coats one and goats and coats two -- don't you think that you should have to relate to that as you leave? Which brings us to a very interesting possibility. Because one of the problems with learning the Book of Exodus is, it doesn't seem connected. I talked to you before about connections. It doesn't seem connected to Genesis. Genesis you spend 13 chapters on Joseph and then Joseph died. End of Joseph. Let's talk about something else now. Let's talk about Egypt. No. It's not something else. You got into Egypt because of Joseph. Now watch how he leaves.

Now let's go back and let's read the Passover offering one last time. Watch me over here. "Hachodesh hazeh lachem" we'll come back to. Michsat n'fashot -- why were we talking about covering of souls? Think about the story of Joseph. Was there ever any covering in the Joseph story? They covered -- what does Judah say? "Ma betza ki naharog et achinu v'chisinu et damo." What does the Torah always tell you about blood? Why can't you eat blood? "Ki hadam huh hanefesh," blood is the soul. There was soul covering going on in the story of Joseph. We're going to cover up the blood of Joseph. That was the plan, to cover up the blood of Joseph. Now, we're going to take this offering to cover their blood.

You're going to have to cover your own blood and your own soul with this offering.

By the way, I just have to let you know, we're going to offer a seh and even though seh usually just means a lamb, how could it not mean a goat too? After all, it's all about goats and coats. And what do you do with this? You have to slaughter them and you have to put the blood on the doorpost, we'll get back to that. You have to eat it, by the way, tzli eish which we'll get back to also, but you have to eat it with bread. Now it's Passover so you can't eat it with bread so you have to eat it with matzah. But why do you think it would be so important to eat it with bread? Because what did the brothers do after they threw Joseph in the pit? "Vayeishvu le'echol lechem," they sat down to eat bread. And in goats and coats one, what also happened? Even though he presented his father with the -- but he gives bread to Esau, in the original story when he tricked Esau with his firstborn. So bread was always served as accoutrements, so bread needs to be served here too. And bitter herbs. Was there anything bitter in goats and coats one and goats and coats two, anybody?

Audience Member answers.

Rabbi Fohrman: That's right. "Vayitzak tze'akah gedolah u'marah," Esau lets out a great and bitter cry. It really would be appropriate to eat some bitter herbs along with the bread, don't you think? Now whatever you do, do not eat it na. Please do not eat it na, raw, but we all know what does na really mean? Please. Why would you not want to eat it please? Please?

Because Esau said, "haliteini na min ha'adom ha'adom hazeh." When Jacob deceived Isaac, he says, "kum na, shvah v'achlah mi'tzeidi," please get up and eat. It was also polite all of these deceptions. And when the brothers deceived their father, they had to get the na in too with haker na. Everyone was so very polite when they deceived their fathers. Just let's do away with the politeness this time, "al tochlu mimenu na," just don't eat it with please. "U'bashel m'vushal bamayim," and whatever you do, let's not have any water. Why? No water.

Audience Member: "Habor reik ein bo mayim."

Rabbi Fohrman: "Habor reik ein bo mayim," the pit had no water in it. It was just Joseph there all alone. So that's how this offering has to be eaten. Just a naked Joseph, this thing, was sitting there roasting in the air in the pit.

Audience Member: How have we never seen this before?

Rabbi Fohrman: Right. So let's keep on going. Then we eat it "rosh al k'ra'av v'al kirbo," which we'll get back to. It all has to disappear sometime in the morning. When everyone comes looking they can't see a trace. Why? Because what happened to Joseph? Reuben comes back to the pit and what does he find?

Nothing left. Right? So you really have to make sure everything is gone. You can't leave the smallest trace. It has to disappear without a clue. "V'lo tatiru mi'menu ad boker," there has to be nothing left. You have to eat it with your shoes on, ready to go, with your staffs in your hand. Because in goats and coats one and goats and coats two, what always happens after the story? Exile.

You're ready to go. You're off into Haran. You're off, you're running into Haran to escape the wrath of your brother. You're running into Egypt. This time you are going to go out of Egypt. This is how you are going to leave. You are going to go from exile to redemption this time, instead of into exile. And you have to eat it b'chipazon, you have to eat quickly, "Pesach hu laHashem." We will come back to Pesach also.

Look at this. Next chapter on the Passover offering. "Mischu u'k'chu lachem tzon tzon." You know, we really should pull and take, not just take. Do you know that there is only one mem, shinl, chaf, vav in the Torah other than this one? It's in the Joseph story. "Vayimshechu va'ya'alu et Yosef min habor," when they pulled Joseph out of the pit. Vayimshichu, they pulled Joseph out of the pit. Mishchu, you really should pull the sheep. When Joseph was sold he was pulled out of the pit. You can see it side by side; the Joseph's story is on the right-hand side, the Passover offering's on the left-hand side. "V'shachatu ha'Pesach," slaughtering. Was there ever any slaughtering? Oh yes, we slaughtered the goat. "Vayishchatu s'ir izim."

Audience Member: Isn't shor (ox) an animal, the same family also? Joseph is compared to an ox. They say even with the Golden Calf, that --

Rabbi Fohrman: "Agudat eizov," take the plant, "u'tevaltem badam." Why do you think you would have to dip in blood, boys and girls? "Vayitbelu et haketonet badam," they dipped the coat in blood. You're really going to have to dip something in blood this time, guys. Which blood? The blood asher b'saf. Saf

-- samach, pei. What does that kind of remind you? Joseph, the Joseph blood. Right? It was supposed to represent the blood of -- of course it is not really the blood of Joseph, but it's the fake blood of Joseph. So we have to construct some more fake blood of Joseph. This, of course, isn't Joseph's blood. But we'll have to make fake Joseph blood, just like the brothers made fake Joseph blood, the blood of a goat. In both cases it's fake Joseph blood. So it really should be fake Joseph blood, but "dam asher basaf."

"V'higatem el hamashkof v'ell shtei ha'mezuzot min hadam asher basaf," so you should put it with the blood asher basaf. "V'atem lo teitzu ish mi'pesach beito ad boker." All right. Now, hold on for a second. Let's come back to the unexplored parts. Pesach, what does the word Pesach mean? Why does it have to be that you go out in haste? Why do you have to put the blood on the doorposts and the lintel? Then why do you have to take from the blood, asher basaf, specifically? Why do you have to wait? Finally, the key to it all, why does the animal have to be bunched up, rosho al k'ra'av al kirbo, with his head over his

knees?

Rabbi Fohrman: Head over knees. Let's do this. I want you to do a mental experiment right now. We're not going to actually do this. I want you to pretend that I am going to ask you right now, to get up out of your seats, excuse yourself and lie down on the floor with your head -- it's the fetal position. The animal is bunched up in the fetal position. Then there's blood on this doorway and there's blood on the sides, on the top, the sockets, the threshold. There is blood on all four sides. And you have to wait -- it's the womb and you have to wait back in the house. Waiting all night long. Waiting to go through. No one can go through until the morning.

Then, in the morning, what happens? In the morning, you rush through the door. Upasach Hashem. Pasach -- pei, samach in the Joseph story. The ketonet passim. What was the ketonet pasim? It was that which father gave son to indicate that you are the firstborn. God says tonight I am killing all firstborns, except for my own. You are going to be born. God says I am going to kill all firstborns, except for my firstborn. God says I will strike you. The ketonoet passim, the coat of many stripes. I am going to put the stripe on you and crown you my firstborn. You are going to be born and I am going to say this is my firstborn, after you go through all of this. You know why? Here's why. It's a birth process. You are being born as a nation.

Which is why hachodesh hazeh lachem is there. Hachodesh hazeh lachem is everybody else starts counting from Tishrei, but not you guys. Because this is your birthday. Rosh Chodesh Nissan is when you're born. You are literally being born.

What's God saying? Here's the meaning of it all. Look at you guys. I love you. I love your parents. I made promises to them and all of that. I really wanted to redeem you early on. I thought, you know Abraham, will take you to the land, but things got in the way. Stuff happened. Goats and coats happened and every time goats and coats happened it threw you into exile. The first time it was just 21 years. The next time it was 210 years. The first time it was just slavery of one person. Then it was a much bitter slavery for everybody. You guys, look at you guys. It gets you into trouble this firstborn stuff. You're so into firstborn, you have to be the firstborn, you have to be first. You got to go, so much so that you are willing to lie, cheat and steal and deceive your father in order to make him into your firstborn.

Let's talk about what a firstborn is. Why is a firstborn so special? Passover is all about -- you can't understand Passover without understanding the idea of firstborn. It's all about the Plague of the Firstborns. It's all about the Passover offering because it's about the firstborn. God says b'ni bechori Yisrael, my firstborn nation is Israel. What does that even mean? We weren't born first. What it means is we occupy the position of firstborn with respect to the family of nations. Which means what? What is a firstborn? A firstborn is a leader, a child leader.

Now, what if I challenged you and says who needs a firstborn in a family? Aren't you a good parent? If you're a good parent, why can't you lead the family? Who needs a firstborn? You're a parent, you're the leader of the family. What's the answer to that question?

Audience Member: You are not going to live forever. Audience Member: Transmission.

Rabbi Fohrman: Not just transmission. Even while you're alive. The answer is this. Audience Member: It's the peer group.

Rabbi Fohrman: Right. It's the peer group. The answer is there is something that the firstborn can do that a parent, no matter how hard they might try, cannot do by virtue of their being a parent. That is the following. Every child, by virtue of being a child, wants to rise to the expectation of their creator. That's why children play and they try to model so they play house. They try and do things that parents do. But there is a limit to how much house you can play. My mommy and my daddy go to board meetings and they sit on the board of this foundation. Hello. How exactly am I going to play house with that? My mommy and my daddy drive carpool. Okay. I have a tricycle. I guess I can sort of, kind of, like. Do you know what I mean? There is so much stuff that my mommy and daddy do and I am six years old and I have no comprehension about how to do that.

I want to live the values of my parents, but I don't know what it means to translate the values of my parents from the world in which they live, the world of the parent, into the world of the child.

Enter the firstborn. The firstborn is the transmission, the answer to the generation gap. The firstborn says I will show you what it means to take the values of the parent and live it in the world of the child. Here's what it means. Of course, the firstborn isn't always the firstborn. We all know that in a family it can be any one of your children that do this, but one child rises up and occupies the role of firstborn. Sometimes it's a girl -- rises up and says, this is what it means to live the values of the child in the world of the parent. Then all of the other kids have a choice. They can get into the sibling rivalry issue and say who are you and what makes you so great and they can hate them. Or if it works out right, they can say, yeah, that's what it means. They can begin to imitate them, say I understand that I have a real-life, flesh and blood model.

Now, if that's a problem for parents and children, all the more so, it's a problem for God and humanity. God has the same issue with humanity, but in spades. God has the same issue with humanity, but it stays. God is our father in heaven. Think about the generation gap between parent and child and now think about the generation gap between humanity and God. It's not even comparable. You can't touch Him, you can't feel Him. We all want to do God's will, sure. Ask anybody if they want to do God's will.

What's the problem? What the heck is that? Who knows what God's will is? God himself is frustrated. God can't solve the problem because He's God. You still can't touch Him. What's God supposed to do? Turn Himself into not-God? That was Christianity, right. That didn't work for us, but that was one way of doing it. You know, if you make God into a human being, you solve everything.

If you say, sorry, God is not a human being. That won't work. There's only one other possible solution. I need a firstborn. I must have a firstborn. I have to have someone who I cultivate, the child lead. We give

them laws and say this is what my role looks like. Share these laws, do them and be an example and show everybody -- show all My children. I love all My children. You think I love you? I do have a special relationship with you, but the whole point of my special relationship, that I have a special relationship with you, because you facilitate my relationship with the whole family. My whole point is not to love you. My point is to relate to all of My kids. I treasure you because you occupy a special place in my ability to relate to the family.

Which is why a corrupt firstborn can just say it's all about me, right? So anytime you think, God loves the Jews and doesn't care all about the goyim (non-Jews) and the non-Jews are really awful, right? If you go into the goy, goy, goy mentality and really we say, I'm nothing -- you've defeated the whole purpose. The whole point is that you should be able to be a model nation that models what it's like, by your behavior, to live according to God's laws. Everyone should say, that's what it looks like. I want to be like that in some way, shape or form. They don't have to convert, but they have to say, I want to be like that.

So God says, I really need a firstborn. Egypt, Pharaoh, you're going to deny me my firstborn serving me? That messes up my whole plan for the world. You do that? I'll take away your firstborns. You see how easy it is to translate Egyptian culture from one generation to the other without benefit of a firstborn.

You won't be able to. God says there's going to become a time which you insist on enslaving my people and not letting them go, I will kill all of your firstborns. As a matter of fact, I'll kill all firstborns. The only firstborns I will save are my own.

When did the Jews become God's firstborn? They became God's firstborn when, on this night -- and they did two things simultaneously to do it. This where my theory and the Maharal's theory come together. The first thing they did was they declared their allegiance to monotheism. They declared their allegiance to monotheism. They said that we are not a polytheism. Egypt stops at the door. The door -- the bloody door. There's no Egypt in this door. This is what it means to be a monotheist. I take the god of the Egyptians. I put its blood on the door. I have this oneness offering. I pledge allegiance to oneness. This is the first act, in practice, of showing what it means. This is the first thing you do to show what it means to be a monotheist. You stand up against your Egyptian oppressors, you reject their faith system and you say this is what it means to be a monotheist.

That's the first thing you do, but it's not the only thing you do. It's not just about your relationship with God. That's not the only function of monotheism. Monotheism isn't just about how you relate to God. It's also about how you relate to people. You know why? Because it's only in monotheism that's there a morality. It's only in monotheism that there's a creator who has expectations. It's not just like -- there's this family -- there's no family without the parents. There's no relationship without the parents. There's nobody really matters without the parents to anybody else. There's no such thing as being a brother if there's not parent. There's no sense of brotherhood among mankind if there's no parent, really. It's just happened. Well, just happening. It wasn't like anybody got together and decided to have a family. So what relationship do I really have with my brother? Not much.

That leads you straight to goats and coats. Where I'm willing to lie and deceive and do what -- and stab my brother in the back and do whatever it takes to get up on them. That led you straight down into exile. Now you want to worship the one monotheist God? Well, there's a corollary to worshipping the one monotheist God. You're all part of one family. You're the firstborn now. The firstborn cares about the other children. The whole point of the firstborn is to facilitate father's love in all the children. Not to facilitate rivalry. Not to facilitate division. Not to facilitate that father likes you and nobody else. We're all part of one family.

Therefore, the way you got to get over this is you have to confront the selling of Joseph. You have to confront what happened with Esau. Don't think you can just sweep it under the carpet and oh, we're free now. You can all be religious with God and the how you relate to your brother -- well, you know, we don't have to talk about that. Oh no. You have to confront it. You have to go through it again. Every single thing that you did wrong, everything that happened in that pit, do it right this time.

God says, you guys, look at you. This idea of being firstborn it gets you in trouble. Do you know how I'm going to redeem you? This is what I think ga'alti is. This is what ga'alti means. All the expressions of redemption make sense. Lakachti, I know it means; hotzeiti, I know what it means; hitzalti, I get. What's ga'alti? If it didn't have ga'alti, you would've had a problem? Well, I left, I'm free, I'm going, right? What do I need ga'alti for? This is ga'alti. To be redeemed from what brought you down from Egypt. Because otherwise you leave stains. You can't really be free. Here's what God says to redeem you.

What do you do with a troublemaker kid? What do you do with a troublemaker kid in school? We were troublemakers. God really loved us, but we were troublemakers. The whole firstborn thing. So what do you do if you're the administrator and you have a troublemaker kid? You have a choice. If you're a bad administrator, you send a note home to the parents and you send a note home to the kid -- we're not sure if there's a place for you in our school. By the way, I spoke last night to a guy who had a troublemaker kid with a 142 IQ -- any 142 IQ kid is not going to be in the box -- who got one of these notes, we're not sure if there's a place for you next year. The father called the principal and says what are you doing? He says do you know what you're doing with this kid? This kid thinks there's no place for him. You just turned off this kid. He said well, I didn't mean to do that, I just meant to scare him a little bit. He says I don't care what you meant to do, you did it. That's what you did.

It's this little passive-aggressive thing, which is like, oh we'll scare you a little bit by cutting you up. That's one thing you can do if you're a bad administrator. If you're a good administrator, what do you know? You know the troublemakers are always the ones with the 142 IQ. Do you know what this father said? This father said do you know what my son's aspiration is? My son's aspiration is to get an MBA and to go into business. He's going to be a multimillionaire one day. He wants to make $100 million and do you know what's going to happen? He's so good, he's going to do it. Do you know what would have happened if you had dealt with him? He would have endowed a whole wing in your new campus. Now what do you think is going to happen? He won't give you a dime. Because you didn't have anything to do with him.

A good administrator -- and by the way, Rabbi Tendler in Baltimore, in Ner Yisroel, was a good administrator. This is what he did. There's a guy, I will tell you right now, who is one of my best friends, who is the Rosh Yeshiva at a yeshiva in Israel that you have probably sent your sons to, that will remain nameless. I know what this kid was like in mechinah, okay? This kid was the guy who threw another kid through a plate-glass window in yeshiva and was this close to getting expelled. Rabbi Tendler called him in and sat him down. Instead of throwing him out of yeshiva, made a seder with him.

What you do with a kid like that is you give that kid responsibility. You say you're on my team. You identify the area in which the kid is a troublemaker and you say that's the area in which you shine.

You're going to use all that. You're going to use those strengths. You're not going to deny those strengths. You're not going to turn them off. You're going to use all of that and you're going to use it on

-- it's going to be part of my team. God said you know what your issue that's getting you into problems with is? It's this incessant desire to be the firstborn. I could use a firstborn too. I need somebody who's going to be my firstborn, who's going to stand up and show what it means to be a model nation.

So I need somebody on my team. Will you take all that passion and transform it? In order to do that, you're going to have to relive the sin. You're going to have to go through everything that you did, all the lies and all the deceptions. You're going to have to do it right this time. Instead of deceiving father and lying and sneaking around, you're going to have to stand up in front of everyone and slaughter the blood of this goat and put it on the door and claim in front of father, directly. I am the firstborn, choose me. Do it directly, there's no deception. Do it right and you'll do it right through the Passover offering. If you do, you'll be my firstborn. I will redeem you from this sin. You'll take all of that and you'll use it powerfully. It's like complete repentance, but It's the inverse.

The Rambam's definition of complete repentance is when you confront a temptation by avoiding it. Same place, same time, same woman and there's no affair. That's not redemption. That's avoidance. That's great, that's complete repentance. But do you know what a step above complete repentance is? A step above complete repentance is the positive inverse of that. Instead of avoidance, engagement. Go through the sin again, but everything that you did wrong, do it right. Use all of that energy. Don't quash it and just say I'm not having the affair. Use it. Use it for me. That's redemption. That's ga'alti. That's when we're born. We're born anew. We're born anew and we're cleansed. We become God's firstborn. That, I believe, is what the Passover offering is about. I didn't even get to tell you what I really meant to tell you, which is what I've come up with this week. This is all the background.

So here's the beginning of what I discovered this week. If you thought that any of this is fantasy, I can prove to you that it's not. I can show you that this is true. Here's how I can show it to you.

Let's go back to the beginning of the Jews enslaved under Egypt. The last thing that happened over here was -- okay, we'll start from here. "Vayamat Yosef v'chol echav v'chol hador hahu." Okay. End of Joseph. That's the last you ever hear of Joseph, in the book of Exodus. Now I'm arguing to you that you hear about him again in the Passover offering. Now I'm going to show you that you hear about him again in the middle too. You hear about him constantly in the book of Exodus. Watch. "Vayamat Yosef

v'chol echav v'chol hador hahu." Now, I just came up with this yesterday so I didn't have time to actually create a PowerPoint or make it pretty for you. So you'll just have to pay attention in the text here and see it in the text.

Look at the next words. "U'Bnei Yisroel paru vayishretzu vayirbu vaya'atzmu bi'meod meod, vatimaleh ha'aretz otam." All right. The next thing that happens is the Jews are "paru vayeshritzu vayirbu vaya'atzmu b'meod meod." How did that happen? How did the population explosion happen?

Rabbi Fohrman: Correct. That's the answer. Because Joseph created the optimal conditions for it. How did Joseph create the optimal conditions? Do you remember, in Parshat Vayigash? He put them in Goshen and he separated them. What did he do more than that?

If you look carefully at the text -- I don't have time to show you, but go home and look. I think it's Chapter 42. You will find that what he does is -- it says that he gives -- there's a sandwich -- Joseph gave them "lechem l'fi hataf," he gives them bread enough for children. Bread enough for children. There's a famine going on. He provides for his children, "lechem l'fi hataf." The next thing that happens, is a long, excruciating, drawn-out journey, when, "v'lechem ayin b'chol Eretz Mitzrayim." There was no bread in the whole land. The people came to Joseph, "havu lanu lechem," please give us bread. Joseph forced them to sell themselves, ultimately as slaves, for bread. Egyptians were slaves. They said, "niyeh anachnu avadim l'Pharoh," let us be slaves to Pharaoh. Well, who became slaves to Pharaoh later? We did. First it was them, they were the first slaves, the Egyptians. While Joseph and his brothers enjoyed what? Bread lefi hataf.

Then they sold themselves -- they sold their land first -- and they sold their land and then they sold themselves. Then Joseph had this whole pact system and all of that. At the very end of that it says, "Uvnei Yisroel paru vayirbu meod." Right? "Vayifru vayirbu meod." Why "vayifru vayirbu meod?" The answer is because they had bread lefi hataf, for children. You can reproduce if you have bread. If you're Egypt, nobody has children in a famine, but the Jews got a head start on having children. A generation later, every other word in "paru vayishretzu vayirbu vaya'atzmu bi'meod meod," comes from Vayigash. Back then, it was "vayifru vayirbu bi'meod."

Now, it's exponential expansion -- paru vayishretzu. Not only was it paru, but they swarmed. Not only was it vayirbu like Vayigash, it was vaya'atzmu. They were overwhelming. Not only was it meod, it was meod, meod. You understand? It's geometric expansion. The graph is going like this. Now, if you're in Egypt, boys and girls and you're watching this happen, what's the deal? What do you start thinking?

They're taking over. Why are they taking over? Let's go back to the historical, socioeconomic root cause for why they're taking over. It was because of Joseph. Let's read it.

"Vayakam melech chadash al Mitzrayim asher lo yadah et Yosef." So there was this new king who supposedly doesn't know anything about Joseph, but he says to his people, "hinei am B'nei Yisroel rav va'atzum mimenu," the people of Israel are "rav va'atzum mimenu." They are "rav va'atzum mimenu," they are greater than us. Do you know who said rav va'atzum? The last rav va'atzum was? Joseph, just before he died. Joseph just before he died turned to the brothers and said you know what -- am rav

(great nation).

He says, you know what I can do? Don't worry about the sin, you know, you sold me in the pit. I don't really have to forgive you guys. He never says, I forgive you. Instead, he says, don't worry. God will be the judge between us. It's all okay. If you want to know what God thinks? It's probably just fine because, look, thank God, he gave me food to be able to give you and to make you into an am rav, to make you into a great nation. Thank God, you're going to be a great nation. But he never forgave them. He said, it's up to God to forgive you. You know what? God probably thinks it's fine. God made me -- it's all destined, but I was -- they just threw me in the pit so I could make you into this great nation.

What did God say? God said, one second. You never forgave them? You said it's up to Me? They offered themselves as slaves at the end of Vayechi. They said, let us be your slaves. He said, it's really not up to me to decide whether you're slaves, it's really up to God. But, you know, thank God, God made you into a great nation. Probably everything's fine. God says, okay. So there was an offer of slavery on the table and it's up to Me? Like, I didn't think it was up to me. I mean, it was really up to you to forgive them, but if you really say it's up to me -- and this is a great person who was thrown in a pit and he doesn't forgive. He says it's up to Me and there was this offer of slavery that's left on the table. I guess we could do slavery. Yeah, we could do slavery. We could do slaves.

As a matter of fact, you say it's destined because you gave the food so that you could be a great nation. I've got an idea. You know how to become slaves? Through the food. Because the next generation is going to look at the food and it's going to look at the great nation and they're going to say, how did this happen, this population explosion? Because Joseph paid for his family. They're not good Egyptians.

They're his family. They're all Jews, right?

"Hinei am B'nei Yisroel rav" -- quoting Joseph, there's a great nation over here. This becomes the paranoia that plunges them into slavery, "am rav mimenu. "Hava neschakmah lo" -- that's a Joseph word, right? Joseph was an "ein chacham venavon kamochah," that we should save up food, but now, look, his wisdom -- he was used against us. Let's use wisdom against him. "Pen yirbeh v'hayah ki tikrenah milchamah, venosaf gam hu al soneinu." What a strange word, "nosaf gam hu al soneinu." For a king that forgot about Joseph, he's doing pretty good at remembering Joseph, isn't he? Right, nosaf is a Joseph word.

Audience Member: That's why Rashi says it's probably not a new king.

Rabbi Fohrman: Right, exactly. "V'nilcham banu ve'alah min ha'aretz." So therefore the next thing that happens is, "vayasimu alav sarei missim." So the next thing that happens is, he places tax officers. Now, vayasimu and sarim and missim is a playoff of what happens in Vayigash. What happened in Vayigash was, Pharaoh -- before the whole thing with the food, Pharaoh said, if you have any brothers that are especially skilled, "vesamtem sarei mikneh al asher li," why don't you make them officers of sheep? Now, the "vesamtem sarei mikneh," turns into, "vayasimu alav sarei missim." Now, they're officers of taxes, that God did. What did Joseph levy against the people? Taxes. "Vayasimu alav sarei missim lema'an anoto besivlotam, vayiven arei miskenot lePharoh." What does this remind you in the Joseph story? Building

the storehouses. When were storehouses built? The answer is Joseph -- "bar k'chol hayam." There was so much he built. Now, it's we will build storehouses without Joseph.

I want you to recognize, this is going backwards. There are backwards parallels that are inverses of each other, that are the mean side of something nice. It begins with the last thing that Joseph's dying. The last thing that Joseph says before he dies. It progresses to the whole story about Joseph and the Egyptians and all that. Then it progresses before that, when Pharaoh says, make them sarei missim. Then it progresses before that, when Joseph saved up the food. All of this -- it's happening backwards. Why? Because it's the unravelling. You're unravelling into slavery. It's spiraling out of control. "V'ka'asher ya'anu otoh kein yirbeh v'ken yifrotz, vayakutzu mi'penei B'nei Yisroel. Vaya'avidu Mitzrayim et B'nei Yisroel b'farech."

Where are we in the Joseph story now? Who was a slave in Egypt? The answer is, Joseph. Where was Joseph a slave? In Potifar's house. Was it back-breaking slavery for Joseph in Potiphar's house? Was it backbreaking slavery for Joseph in Potiphar's house? No, he was the head butler. It was a very nice life for him. He was always in the house. Where were the people? The people were "b'avodah kashah -- u'bechol avodah basadeh." They were in the fields. It's backbreaking slavery, it's not house slavery. "Vaya'avidu -- bechol avodeh basadeh."

Now, here's where it gets really chilling. "Vayomer melech Mitzrayim lameyaldot ha'ivriyot, asher shem ha'achat Puah." He says, you know what? It's time for me to start killing Jews. If you see Jews, you should really kill them. The midwives didn't do that. Instead, they lied to their authority figure, Pharaoh and they said, "vatechayenah et hayeladim," which is a playoff of "ki chayot heinah." So they let the child live and they said when they were taken to task, "lo kanashim haMitzriyot haIvriyot, ki chayot heinah." Now, listen carefully. What does this remind you of in the story?

Do you ever bother that? It's such not nice thing for them to say, right. They say you know what? These women, they're not like the Egyptians. They're like wild animals. They give birth like before we -- it's not such a nice thing for them to say, they're like wild animals. Wild animals in Joseph's story? "Chayah ra'ah achalathu." We're now back to that part of the story. It's a perfect inverse of "chayah ra'ah achalathu." What happened in "chayah ra'ah achalathu?" Brothers said to parent -- lie to parent and deceive them with "chayah ra'ah achalathu." Now, the midwives, feminine, right, women, are lying to their father, so to speak, the one they're in charge of, talking about chayot (animals).

It's even more than that. Because when the brothers lied to father about animals, what did they say? "Chayah ra'ah achalathu," meaning that Joseph died and met his end by being consumed by the mouth of the beast and ending up where? In the beast's tummy. What are the midwives saying? It wasn't death, it's actually birth. It's coming from the beast's tummy out into the world as birth. But it's a lie, but it's a lie about birth instead of a lie about death. It's a lie that saved instead of a lie that killed. It's a lie of redemption. It's the beginning of things turning around. It's a correction, as it were, but it's still a lie.

Now let's keep on going. The next thing that happens is -- oh, I didn't even realize this, look at that. "Beterem tavo aleihem." Where is that in the Joseph story? Before they came to them. Before "terem yikrav aleihem, vayisnaklu oto l'hamito." it's the same language, I didn't realize it. Before Joseph came to

the brothers, "terem yikrav aleihem," before he comes to them, they plotted to kill him. Here it's the inverse. Before they came to them, we're plotting to save them. They were already born, right? Here, before he could get to them we're going to kill. There, before we can get to, already born. Again, the inverse. I didn't notice that one. There you go. I mean, it just keeps on going.

Okay, "Vayeitav Elokim lameyaldot, vayirev ha'am vaya'atzmu meod." Okay. Now, look at the next thing that happens. Pharaoh, frustrated than this -- "vayetzav Pharoh lechal amo leimar, kol haben hayilod haye'orah tashlichuhu." Oh, my gosh. The language of shalach, as in casting in Joseph story. "Vayshlichu otoh haborah." How many times do you have casting together with Hey, X, Hey. Hey as the Hey hayediah -- the, right. Then the Hey at the end, meaning, into. "Vayashlichu otoh haborah," turns into "haye'orah tashlichuhu." You threw your brother into the pit? What did the pit have? "Ein bo mayim." Now, there's going to be a pit full of water. This huge crater in the earth. Because it's not going to be just one person thrown in a pit. It's going to be hundreds of thousands of children thrown into the pit, but this time there's more water than you could even imagine. Pretty scary, right? It's all Joseph. You can't get out without redeeming this. You have to redeem this.

Now look what happens next. Where are we up to in the Joseph story? We're right up to throwing in the pit. It hasn't happened yet. It's Reuben talking, remember -- and here's the tragedy. Remember Reuben's role. Reuben was such a good guy. He wanted to save Joseph. Let's remember what happened with Reuben. Let's remember all the words of Reuben. Okay? Here's what Reuben says, "V'yad al tishlechu bo." Don't send out your hand against him. He says, "al tishpechu dam," don't spill blood. "Hashlichu otoh el habor hazeh asher bamidbar." It was his idea to throw him in the pit. Why? It says, "veyad al tishlechu bo," and don't touch him. Don't touch him there. "Lema'an hatzil oto," that will be to save him.

The tragic part of Reuben, the so very tragic part of Reuben, is that Reuben fails. Reuben tries to save him by putting him in the pit and he does. He saves him from death as a result of it, but his whole plan is to come back. By the time he comes back, Joseph has been sold. He misses this opportunity. He can't do it, it's an ineffectual attempt. You hear Reuben later coming to his brothers and saying. Reuben tells them, "Halo amarti -- al techetu bayeled." I told you not to do this, right? Then he says, "asheimim anachnu asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho behitchaneno eileinu velo shamanu, al kein ba'ah aleinu hatzarah hazot." "Asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho," we saw his pain in the pit., "behitchaneno eileinu veloh shamanu", as he was screaming to us and we did not hear. "Al kein ba'ah aleinu hatzarah hazot," that's why this misfortune comes to us.

Audience Member: Which?

Rabbi Fohrman: Which misfortune? The loss of Simeon. Simeon is taken as a slave at that point. That's why Simeon is taken. It's very interesting, by the way, how did Reuben get his name? "Ra'ah Hashem b'anyi," Hashem has seen my pain. If you were Reuben -- don't you understand -- if you were Reuben, you should be the guy throwing Joseph in the pit. If you were named for, Hashem saw the pain of Leah. Here's this usurper, this child of Rachel, who exacerbates the pain by being the firstborn and passes over

my mother. It's not just about me, Reuben could say. It's about my mother's dignity. I'm named for the pain of my mother. His greatness is, "asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho." The seer -- the one name for seeing -- saw the pain of another, of a rival. That's Reuben's greatness. He saw the pain of a rival.

You know what the problem is? Lo shama'anu. We didn't hear. Who is that? Simeon. Simeon named for "shamah Elokim ki senuah anochi," couldn't take that perspective. My father saw that my mother was hated. My job is to avenge the hatred of my mother. I will put Joseph in the pit. Therefore, when Joseph hears this because he can speak Hebrew and he understands. "Heim lo yaduh ki shomei'ah Yosef," they didn't know that Joseph was listening when Simeon didn't listen. Therefore, "vaye'esor et Shimon," he imprisoned Simeon, the listening one.

Now, "al kein ba'ah aleinu hatzarah hazot." The very first Jew ever enslaved in Egypt was Simeon because he didn't listen. Tzar. "Al kein ba'ah aleinu hatzarah hazot." How do you spell Mitzrayim? Right in middle of Mitzrayim is tzar. What's on the sides of Mitzrayim? Mem on this side, tzadi, reish, yud, mem. What's on the sides? Mayim with tzar in between. You know what Egypt is? They're water torture. They are the ones who threw your babies in the Nile. They are the tzar through water. The first tzar began, the first tzar came upon you when Simeon was taken by a slave, by none other than Joseph. That tzar multiplied, until it was water tzar. Until all the water becomes the tzar.

You know how you get redeemed at the end, the very end? At the Red Sea. When it happens to them. "Vayashuvu hamayim al haMitzrim." Look at those words. "Vayashuvu hamayim al haMitzrim." Spell those words. The water -- mayim, returned on the Mitzrim. How do you spell Mitzrim? Mem, tzadi, reish, yud, mem. What happened? The water was split, wasn't it? It was split water, with mem over here and yud, mem over here. What was in between it, following you? There was the tzar, following you.

What happened? Vayashuvu, the water came together. Over what? Over the tzar, until all there was, was water and the tzar dropped to the bottom. You couldn't see Mitzrayim anymore. It was just mayim, with no tzar. That's how it ends. It begins with water torture. It begins with the tzar of Reuben. The tragedy of Reuben, the tragedy of Reuben was that it his idea to throw him in the pit. He did it to save him, but it was his idea. That's where it came from. That's the tragedy. It didn't work.

When Reuben goes and rips his clothes -- remember when Reuben comes back and rips his clothes. That's why he's ripping his clothes. Because it was his idea. Now he's gone and I tried so desperately to save him, but it didn't work. Now come back to our pasuk. Here's the next pasuk. We're now up to Reuben. Remember, it was Reuben -- the last words. "Hashlichu oto haborah," was Reuben's words.

That ends up being all the babies thrown in the Nile. Now let's read. "Vatahar ishah vateiled ben" -- the birth of Moses. "Velo yachlah od hatzpinaoh, vatikach lo teivat gome, vatachmerah bachomer uvazefet, vatasem bah et hayeled, vatasem basuf al sefat hayeor. Vateisatzav achoto meirachok l'dei'ah mah yei'aseh lo. Vateired bat Pharoh lirchotz al hayeor, vena'arotehah holchot al yad hayeor, vateira et hateivah betoch hasuf, vatishlach et amatah vatikacheihu."

Okay. Look at these words -- "vatishlach vatireihu." Okay. Stay with me. Where in the Joseph story do you have shalach and ra'ah together? Father. Jacob says, "lechah v'eshlachacha aleihem," I'll send you to

them. "Leich na re'ei et shelom achecha," why don't you see how the sheep is doing? I'll send you. So now there's somebody sending, but it's now the daughter of Pharaoh sending. "Vatireihu et hayeled," she sees the child, "v'hinei na'ar bocheh. Vatachmol alav." Now, what happens? She sends to see. What happens? Joseph meets up to -- before we had Reuben's perspective, now we have a father's perspective

-- the father has sent him. Now it's Joseph's perspective.

While the brothers are plotting to kill him, Joseph comes and Joseph meets up with them. What does it say? It says, "beterem tavo aleihem, vayitnaklu oto l'hamito." Do you understand what's happening here? What's happening is, the brothers plotted to kill. What happens is, here comes Joseph -- perched between life and death. Nobody knows. Is he going to survive the encounter, won't he survive the encounter? The brothers are plotting to kill him. What's her position? The opposite. Vatachmal alav.

Joseph is coming. She's seeing him. They saw him too, coming from afar and she sees him from afar. There's this thing, it's 30 feet away. I've got some time to think. Vatachmol alav -- her instinct is compassion. The only problem is, "vatomer miyaldei ha'ivrim zeh," it's a Jewish child. She has this conflict. I'm Pharaoh's daughter. It's a Jewish child. I feel compassion.

It's the same conflict of the brothers. It's my brother, but I feel compassion. They're bearing to kill and she's bearing to save. "Vatomer achoto el bat Pharoh" -- enter one sister, one sibling. Who is this sibling in the Joseph story? One sibling comes and says, "ha'eilech v'kararati lach ishah meineket," should I call somebody to help you? She says call him. "Vatikrah et eim hayeled," she calls the parent. A girl -- sister calls a parent, instead of -- in the Joseph story, who was this? It's Reuben, who wants to do what? "Lema'an tatzil oto." For what purpose? "Lehashivo el aviv," to return him to parent. But Reuben couldn't succeed. Miriam succeeds, where Reuben doesn't succeed.

Do you understand? The girl -- sister, succeeds, where the boy -- brother, failed, right. Miriam goes and brings parent into this. There's a reunification between parent and endangered child. We were all going backwards though the story, but this time it's happening right. This is the beginning of redemption.

Literally, redemption is starting here, on two levels. This is the redemption of the Jews from Egypt. It's not just the redemption of the Jews from Egypt. Do you understand what this is? This is the redemption of the Joseph story that's happening. This is the right way. It's happening now, with Reuben succeeding. Are you with me?

Okay. Keep on reading. "Vatomer lah bat Pharoh," then the daughter of Pharaoh comes and says, "heilichi et hayeled hazeh v'heinikihu li, va'ani etein et sechareich." So she takes him and she nurses him. I will leave you with the last thing. Here's what I'm going to leave you with. Oh, I didn't realize this too. "Min hamayim meshitihu," I pulled him out of the water. What does that remind you of? Instead of Arabs pulling him out of the pit. What's the right way to do it? Whereas Reuben who pulled him out of the pit. Now Reuben is successful. Reuben as the two women over here. Miriam slash the daughter of Pharaoh, right. He gets his name for being pulled out. There's the mem and the shin and the vav of mishchu. Not all of it, but some of it. It means pulled out. Moses gets his name from the mem and the shin, right?

Now, the next thing that happens is -- here comes Moses. Moses sees an Egyptian man. What happens? "Vaya'ar ki ein ish." He goes -- "vaya'ar besivlotam," he sees the pain. There's no hearing, but look who hears. "Vayishmah Pharoh." He sees, but the hearing gets short-circuited. He sees the pain of his brothers, but he can't completely save them because he's on a one man crusade to save, but what short- circuits it? Pharaoh hears and issues the death sentence against him. Who is he? He's Reuben. He's the one who saw, but unfortunately was short-circuited because someone else came and sorted it as Pharaoh this time. It's Pharaoh who comes and short-circuits the hearing. He's the frustrated Reuben. He's the one who sees, who tries to save, but can't save. Right?

By the way, look what happens. The Priest of Midian comes and he says, "Ish Mitzri hitzilanu miyad ha'ro'im." -- hitzilanu miyad (saved us from the hands of). What does it say with Reuben? "L'ma'an hatzil oto miyadam." It's Reuben language. Do you understand? Here is Moses acting like Reuben. He's trying to save people in trouble. He is seeing without hearing. It's all going to come to an end, where the daughter of Pharaoh doing her job and Miriam doing her job, as an affective Reuben, but Moses is trying and trying, but Pharaoh is getting in the way.

Moses is on a one-man crusade to save the Jews. If you keep them going he's going to do it. He's got the influence, he's got the political power; he's a prince of Egypt. He's going to do it, but Pharaoh gets in the way.

Then what happens? What happens is, "Vata'al shavasam el ha'Elokim," this cry comes up before God. "Va'yishma," and God hears. "Va'yar," and God sees. And God appears to Moses in the very next verse -- and God appears to Moses and says I've got a job for you. You know what my job is? Look what He says? That here's my job. My job is -- "Va'yomer Hashem, ra'oh ra'iti," I have seen the suffering of my people. "V'et tza'akatam shamati mipnei nogsav," I have heard and guess what? "Va'ered l'hatzilam mi'yad," I'm going to go and save from the hand of Egypt. You're running into trouble. Here's who I am. I'm you with a little more power. I am the omnipotent Reuben, whose going to do it right. I see you. You're trying to save, you're trying to hear, you're trying to see. You're trying to save. You're doing it. You're only getting so far. I'll step in. I will hear and I will save. I will be with you and I will be able to save them.

Along comes Moses and says it's not going to work. They're not going to believe me. They're going to say God never showed himself and they won't listen. It's a despondent Reuben saying it won't work. So God turns around. He says yeah, it won't work? It will work. Let me show you exactly how it's going to work.

I'm going to end with this. He says, in response to Moses, tell them, "Pakod pakadti etchem," I've redeemed you. Where do those words come from? That's Joseph -- "Pakod yifkod," you will be redeemed. How are going to be redeemed? Not just redeemed through Egypt, you're going to be redeemed through redoing Joseph; that's how you're going to be redeemed. I am going to bring you out, right?

The next thing that happens is he says to Moses, who says it's not going to work, "V'hein lo ya'aminu li

v'lo yishme'u b'koli, ki yomru lo nirah eilecha Hashem," there's no seeing, there's no hearing. "Mah zeh b'yadecha?" What's in your hand? Mazeh spelled Mem, Zayin, Hei, not Mem, Hei, Zayin, Hei? Why do you think it's spelled Mem, Zayin, Hei? Mi zeh -- where do we have mi zeh in the Joseph story? The last words that Joseph hears when life is normal. Those are the words that the anonymous man told him in Nablus and said "Nas'u mizeh," they left from here. And then it was all a whirlwind.

At the very end of his life, the last words Joseph will breath is "Ve'ha'alitem et atzmotai mizeh," take my bones from mizeh. And our sages comment, you know why Joseph is buried in Nablus? Because that's where he was taken from, from mizeh. Right? It's his last words. It's a parable, the sages say, to people who break into a cellar and steal wine from bottles. The owner finds them and he says there's nothing I can do about the wine, enjoy the wine, but at least put the bottles back where you found them. Here's Joseph. There's nothing you can do. You messed everything up, but I'm going to die and I had a messed up life, but at least take my bones and put them back from mizeh. "Ve'ha'alitem et atzmotai mizeh," bring them back to Nablus.

God says, "Mah zeh b'yadecha?" Mizeh. But let’s start from mizeh. Let's redo the selling of Joseph. This is how they're going to see. This is how they're going to hear. This is the sign that's going to happen. You want to know how it's going to happen? I'll show you how it's going to happen. What's in your hand? "Vayomer mateh." Translate mateh. It's not a staff, you only think it's a staff. What's the other meaning of mateh? A tribe. What's in your hand? The whole tribe. It's the tribe of Joseph; it's Ephraim and Manasseh in your hand. "Vayomer hashlichei'hu artzah" -- there's those words again. Throw it; cast it down to the ground.

Whose idea was it to cast Joseph, the tribe, in the pit? Tragically, whose idea? It was Reuben's idea. You're the Reuben here. Now do what you rebel against doing. Do the thing that you can't even look at yourself in your eye, that you said throw him in a pit. You wanted to save him. Take the staff. Take it and throw him in the pit. That's the reason you got here, now confront it. Throw it down. And it became a snake.

What's the snake? The snake is the ultimate symbol of sin; primal sin. There it is. Joseph the other. Joseph the snake in the pit. The thing nobody wants -- the sin that nobody wants to confront. The thing that's getting you here. If you read The Beast That Crouches at the Door, you know that what does the snake stand for? The snake stands for one idea. The snake said, "Af ki amar Elokim lo tochlu mikol eitz hagan," even if God said don't eat from the tree. So what? Because God speaks to you with words, you don't need to listen to those words. It's all what you want. It's all the voice inside of you. God doesn't speak in words. There's no reason to listen.

The snake is the one who says don't listen, there's no hearing. The snake is the one that short-circuits all the listening. What did the brothers do when they saw the snake in the pit? Do you know what they did? They went faraway to eat bread. Why faraway? Because, as Rabbeinu Bechayai says and as the Rashbam says, you can't eat bread near there, he's screaming. So you had to distance yourself from the other so that you couldn't be there to help him because it was too painful, because he was the other.

Because how could you not hear? So you had to go so far away that you literally couldn't hear and you were eating bread, because it was a snake that doesn't believe in hearing.

What's Moses' response? "Vayanas Moshe," Moses recoiled. He doesn't want to have anything to do with it, because that's what you do. You recoil from the sin, you recoil from the snake. You also don't want to hear and you don't want to touch. You want to have nothing to do with the snake.

Vayanas also comes from Joseph. There's one vayanas in the Joseph story, it was "Vayanas va'yeitzei hachutzah" in the story of the wife of Potiphar and that story was another Joseph story in the pit. You know why? Because where's he going at the end of that story? Into a pit; he's going into a jail and he's losing his coat because she's holding on to it. And she's going to lie to her father about him, just like in the first story. And if you're Joseph, that you went through that experience once before, every bone, as she's holding onto your coat, is saying don't do it -- sleep with her, because if you sleep with her you don't have to go in the pit, you can lie.

He doesn't. His greatness is, he actively leaves his coat with her. First he was stripped of the coat, now he looks the pit in the eye. He looks the snake in the eye. He remembers the snakes at the bottom of the pit and he says I'm going back. I'm going to leave the scorned woman if I have to and I'll leave her with my coat, willingly this time. And I'll let her tell lies about father, because that's what it means to be loyal to father. And every part of him wanted to recoil from the pit, but his strength was that he faced that which he wanted to recoil from, which was the pit and instead recoiled from her that he was attracted to. He recoiled from her and that's what made him Joseph the Righteous.

Now, God turns to Moses and says you want to get out of this? You want to get out of this sin? You want to get out of Egypt? There's only one way out. You have to do what Joseph did to get himself out. He faced the pit and he didn't recoil from it. He was willing to go in. Therefore, "Vayanas Moshe mipanav" -- you're recoiling? Don't do that. "Vayomer Hashem el Moshe, shelach yadcha." Shelach yadcha is a quote from Reuben too. What did Reuben say? "Al tishlach yadcha," don't send out your hand. God says that was bad advice. Put out your hand. Do what you wanted to do. You wanted to grab hold of him? You wanted to touch him because he's a human being? He wasn't this other thing, the snake? It's not really a snake; it just looks like a snake.

Go out, reach out and touch someone. Connect to the other. He's not an other. What is monotheism about? Monotheism is about -- and this we talked about before, our hearing and seeing series in Parashat Va'eschanan. It's about hearing from God. It's about responding to the other. Idolatry is about you seeing. You do not hear, you see things and you don't hear anything from them. So you make up things in your head and you impute them and they're really just you. It's just narcissism. There's just you imputing things to the thing and you think it's spirituality, but it's narcissism.

You know what narcissism is? It's not in the spiritual realm between man and God, but between people it's seeing and not hearing. It's seeing suffering and not being willing to hear and saying it's a snake and there's a separation between you. Therefore, you impute to desires instead of hearing what they actually have to say. Why don't you listen to Joseph and see what he has to say? Why don't you actually touch it

and reach out and see what he feels like? Why are you just not stay faraway where you can't hear him and you think in your head. You know what he says, just like an idol and you impute these ideas of the idol and you say this is what I think. That's idolatry. We don't do that. In monotheism we care and we reach out and we touch and we listen and therefore, confront the snake; grab hold of the snake.

By the way, the same words as with Hagar, who also kept herself away from Ishmael because it was too painful. What did the angel say to her? "Hachaziki et yadeich bo." And God says "Shelach yadcha v'echoz biznavo," hold its tail. "Vayishlach yado va'yechezak bo." From Hagar -- hachaziki es yadeich bo, hold on to the child that you're scared of, he's dying. He's not the other, have compassion. Make that human connection.

Therefore, Moses did it. He faced the snake. "Va'yehcezak bo," he grabbed hold of it. And guess what happened? "Va'yehi l'mateh b'kapo," it turned back into a tribe. The only way you're going to get out of this, the only way you're going to have a tribe out of this. The only way is you have to face the pit. It's the only way. When did they face the pit? In the Passover offering.

So go through the whole thing again, symbolically. Go through it and say we want to be the Firstborn, but do it right this time. Do it right and pledge yourself to God, as with the monotheist offering and say I am a monotheist and because I'm a monotheist I turn my back on no morality between people. If we are all one family and I care and I'm going to do the whole thing the right way this time, with no deception and no hurting. Also when I leave, "Ve'ha'alitem et atzmotai mizeh." At least put the bottles back from where took them. The final thing that you do for Joseph -- you can't put his life back together; his life is destroyed, but you can at least take his bones with you.

There's the Midrash that says where did he know where the bones were? Do you know where the bones were, the Midrash says? At the bottom of the Nile. What was the Nile? It was the water pit. That was Joseph still in the pit, but in the pit -- the water pit of Egypt. And Moses called out and said pakod yifkod

-- these are your words. This is your messenger; I'm here to do it. I'm from the other side of the family. Our sages say he had no obligation to bury him; he wasn't even his child. He comes from the other side of the family. He had no obligation to bury him. His father should have buried him, Not Moses who's from Leah's side of the family.

God says in the merit that you buried him, when you weren't his relative, I'll bury you because I'm not your relative. And God buries Moses because Moses buried Joseph. But it's a reconciliation from the other side of the family. I'm from Leah's side of the family. I reached out and I cared, because there's someone that had to be buried. Someone whose bones were at the bottom of the pit and the only thing we could do is put them back where we found them. So we put them in Nablus and with that final act, on one hand the act of the Passover offering, of monotheism, of going through it all again symbolically and the act of doing whatever we humanly could to rectify it, by bringing his bones back, we redeemed ourselves and we were able to come out of Egypt.

Rabbi Fohrman: He's going to reveal Himself as Creator of the universe. The plagues, in essence, would show this. Really, if you're the all-powerful God in the world, you don't really need 10 plagues to get the Jews free. You don't really need Pharaoh's consent to get the Jews free. You don't need any of that, but the plagues were designed to be a display of power. Not just a display of power but a display of a certain kind of power, which would not exist in a polytheistic world.

You see, it's not easy to reveal yourself as Creator. Because, what are you going to do? You have a tidal wave that destroys your enemies. It doesn't show you're the Creator. You're might be the sea god. You have an earthquake that destroys your enemies. It doesn't show you're the creator God. You might be the ground god. But 10 plagues would do it because if you can show increasing control over different aspects of nature, so you begin to show that maybe there's one force behind all these different things and maybe there aren't just disparate forces ruled by different gods. Maybe there's a creator of all.

Now, I believe that this whole process comes to ahead not where you think it would come to ahead, not in the 10th plague. It's actually before that. There's another plague, where a climax of sorts is reached, where seemingly, God achieves His design. What is His design, by the way? His design, I think, is to show the world, including Pharaoh and Egypt, that He is Creator, that He is God and the plan -- what I'm going to call Plan A. Plan A is that the Exodus would reveal God as Creator by making this manifest to the world and that Pharaoh and Egypt are going to buy this. In order for Pharaoh and Egypt -- if Pharaoh and Egypt buy this, then what's in it for God?

What's in it for God is that stands as a historical testament to the truth of monotheism. Once upon a time, the most powerful polytheistic empire in the world, whose sovereign considered himself a god among gods in the pantheon of gods, capitulated and understood that it wasn't true, changed his whole view, people converted, they became sons of Noah, they understood that it was all a lie, that there's a creator to whom they're subservient. That would be a big deal. However, it takes two to tango.

Pharaoh has got to play along and Pharaoh has got to agree. The challenge, of course, is what happens if Pharaoh doesn't play along. Now, there are two possible ways that Pharaoh could not play along. One possible way Pharaoh could not play along is it could just be that Pharaoh will capitulate too soon. In other words, it could be by Plague Number 1 or Plague Number 2 it's just not worth fighting anymore. So even though Pharaoh might not be convinced that he's battling a creator, he might give in simply because the power of the plague is too great to bear.

My theory is that in situations like that, God has a secret weapon up His sleeve and that is He will be, strengthen Pharaoh's heart. Now, strengthen Pharaoh's heart, the word strong -- if you notice, there are two different words being used to describe God's interference, so to speak, with Pharaoh's free will. One word is strengthening the heart and the other word is hardening the heart. The theory that I have is that those are actually two different things. The Torah wouldn't use two different words for the same thing; they're two different things. Strengthening the heart is what you might expect it to be. What does chazak mean?

Audience Member: Strength.

Rabbi Fohrman: Strong, right? To be courageous. When I'm strong of heart, I'm courageous; I'm brave. If somebody is faltering in courage and I give them courage, that's not really interfering with their free will. We have a word for that. We call that to encourage someone. When I encourage someone, I'm lending them courage. I'm not interfering with their free will.

God's plan is should Pharaoh ever falter because he lacks the courage to pursue his vision, he's locked in a battle with someone and he doesn't want to give in and believes that he's battling the Creator, so God will encourage him. God will give him the strength of will to persevere in his battle. If Pharaoh should ever give in on principle, of course, then it's over. God has achieved His aim. God is not going to interfere with Pharaoh's free will at that point. But if Pharaoh gives in because he doesn't -- because it's too hard to fight, God will encourage him.

Now, that's what happens for the first six plagues. The first six plagues, Pharaoh encourages himself for the first ones. Then, on the sixth plague, God encourages him for the very first time, "And He strengthened the heart of Pharaoh," in the sixth plague. However, in the seventh plague, I want to argue is a kind of climax because it's in that plague that Pharaoh seems to realize it, Pharaoh seems to get it for the first time. All other times, when Pharaoh got it, he never really capitulated on moral terms. He never really said he was sorry. It was just that I gave in because things were hard.

Finally, in the seventh plague, you hear language that you've never heard from Pharaoh before. The language is, I'm wrong, I'm sorry, all of this stuff. He seems to be coming to an understanding that he never really had before. Let's see if I can find it for you. Yes, 27, there it is. "Vayishlach Paroh vayikra l'Moshe ule'Aharon vayomer aleihem chatati hapa'am." So you've never this from Pharaoh before, I have sinned this time. "Hashem hatzaddik va'ani v'ami haresha'im." God is the righteous one and me and my people are wicked. Pharaoh has never said anything like this before. This is a whole new level of understanding for Pharaoh.

Audience Member: His grammar is incorrect. Rabbi Fohrman: Okay.

Audience Member: What chapter are we on?

Rabbi Fohrman: Chapter 9, Verse 27. This is in the aftermath of the seventh plague. Now, at that point, this is a whole different world for Pharaoh. In fact, it's logical because if you think about it, morality, the concept of sin, of wrongdoing, of righteousness, the very words, to be wrong and to be right, those words actually don't really have a place in the polytheistic universe.

In a polytheistic universe, there is no real morality. There's simply self-interest. There are a bunch of gods, none of which is the Creator. They're a bunch of powers that happen to have rule over their various different fiefdoms. You've got the sun god. You've got the rain god and all these things. They

battle with each other and your job as a human being is to ally yourself with the power that's going to be most beneficial to you and to try to appease it so that power will be nice to you.

If you are Egypt and you have the Nile River and you don't have to worry that much about rain because you've got agriculture through automatic irrigations, so you're not going to ally yourself with the rain god; you're going to ally yourself with the sun god. In fact, Egypt worshiped the sun god. If you are the Philistines and you are worried about your fishing-based economy, so you're going to ally yourself with the sea god. In fact, the Philistines worshiped Dagon, the sea god. That's kind of how it worked.

This notion that you're actually obliged to follow a particular god, that doesn't really -- that only works in a universe with a creator. Because there's a creator, so He created you. You're obliged to Him as much as you would be obliged to a parent. This language, "Chatati hapa'am," I have sinned this time, is language that itself indicates Pharaoh accepting the notion that there's a creator God before whom he is a subject.

The question at this point is why -- so one question also is what's different about hail? Why does hail do this? One of the answers, of course, is because what do you have in hail? You have fire and ice together in one hailstone. Well, that doesn't really work in a polytheistic universe. It's not just the power. That's true, but it's not -- I think it's that in a polytheistic world, you for sure don't have an alliance between the fire god and the ice god. Maybe the amphibian god got together with the water god or something like that, but you don't have an alliance between the fire god and the ice god.

Moreover, you also have God's expression of compassion that goes along with this. Do you notice, by the way, that when we think of Yud-Kei-Vav-Kei, we think of it as expressing the measure of mercy? Why do we associate the measure of mercy specifically with Yud-Kei-Vav-Kei, the name of God as God, as the Creator of the universe? The answer is obvious, because where does compassion come from? Compassion is an expression of being a creator, which is why in Hebrew, rechem, rachmanus, lerachem, it's not a coincidence that the word for womb is the same thing as the word to be compassionate, to nurture that which comes from you.

God loves us, loves His creatures, cares for His creatures, even when they're rebellious against Him and that's a function of Him being the creator God. God expresses that, by the way, also in the seventh plague when there's a warning to Pharaoh, even as the adversaries, as for how they can avoid the effects of the plague. Pharaoh is counseled by Moshe that he can go indoors and avoid the effects of the hail. So you've got compassion together with fire and ice together. It's too much to bear. The accumulative effects of the plague have finally taken their toll and Pharaoh capitulates.

Now, the question is, if I'm right, if it's really true that the seventh plague is a kind of climax, so the next question is why are there 10 plagues? Why doesn't the whole story end? We could tie it up with a nice bow. Bottom line, the question is why is it then that there are any more plagues? That should be it.

Exodus should be over at the seventh plague. What's the reason why it's not over?

The answer is it would've been over, except that Pharaoh changes his mind. Just after Pharaoh lets them

go, Pharaoh changes his mind and basically recants the whole thing. If I had the text in front you I would show it to you, but basically, at that point, he hardens his heart. The word for hardening his heart, by the way, is not chizuk halev. Now, it's kibud halev. Kibud halev is to make yourself stubborn, hardness of heart. It's not a virtuous thing like courage.

Audience Member: But we're saying that Hashem did it.

Rabbi Fohrman: No. Well, here it gets a little complicated. It says Pharaoh hardened his heart. God would never do that because God is not going to harden your heart, so Pharaoh does that. The narrator says a very interesting thing at this point also. If you look at the verse, it says "Vayechbed Paroh el libo," Pharaoh hardens his heart and then it says "vayosef lach'to." Interesting words and he continued to sin.

What's interesting is that the narrator had never accused Pharaoh of sinning until this point. Now, this wasn't the first time that Pharaoh had ever recanted. He'd done this consistently, but the narrator had never seen it as a sin. When is the first time that it's a sin?

Audience Member: When he says I sinned.

Rabbi Fohrman: Right. The answer is it's only a sin if Pharaoh thinks it's a sin. If Pharaoh thinks that he sinned because now he realizes there's a creator, so now that you consciously understand that for the first time, to turn you back on that is a sin. But before that, that's not really a sin. So the idea is that if Pharaoh is simply subconsciously evading the implications of the plagues, we wouldn't call that a sin. We subconsciously evade lots of things in our lives. It's a sin when you consciously evade something. For example, if you would imagine two different kinds of researchers. You would imagine a scientist. There's a scientist who believes in a certain theory and the theory is wrong, but the scientist genuinely thinks that his theory is right. So imagine there's somebody who believes that there's -- I don't know what he believes.

So what happens? He writes all these very scholarly academic papers, refuting all of the other studies that object to his way of viewing things. We, standing from the side, can see that he's biased, can see that he's really taking a jaundiced eye at the data, he's not really being honest, but he doesn't see that. He thinks he's virtuously defending his theory. He doesn't realize that he's mistaken, that he's being a little bit biased. We wouldn't call that a sin. We wouldn't say that he's ethically compromised. We would just say, you know, he's a human being and he's not being honest with himself.

On the other hand, you could imagine another kind of scientist who's come to the realization, fully and consciously, that his pet theory upon which he staked his reputation is completely flat-out wrong. He just knows that that's true. However, he can't bring himself, because of ego, to admit this, so he resorts to forging data and he publishes papers based on forged data in order to protect his reputation. That's a sin because he's consciously recognized that he's wrong.

Basically, what happens is that when Pharaoh changes his mind in the aftermath of the seventh plague, that's different than changing your mind all the other times. All the other times, that's not a sin, but now,

all of a sudden, it's a sin. Moreover, prompting an even greater consequence, the question you really have to ask yourself after the aftermath of the seventh plague is what's God's plan now?

In other words, if the plan before was to try to reveal yourself as Creator because you're educating Pharaoh and educating Egypt, well, what do you do after the seventh plague? After the seventh plague, Pharaoh's been educated, but now, he's turned his back on it because he doesn't care about being educated.

I'm not saying that God is foiled. I'm saying if you're God, let's say you know this beforehand, so what's going to be your Plan B if this would ever happen? There's got to be a Plan B. What's the Plan B? Is God really going to allow His plan for the unfolding of the universe to be dependent upon one measly human being's foibles? Unlikely. So there's got to be some sort of Plan B if this would ever happen.

Now, what's the nature of Plan Bs? Let's take a look and see if we get any hints from the language and see if we can find a Plan B. At this point, here's what we have. "Vayar Paroh ki chadal hamatar v'habarad v'hakolot vayosef lachto vayachbeid libo hu va'avadav." Here we have Pharaoh hardening his own heart. "Vayechezak leiv Paroh v'lo shilach et B'nei Yisrael ka'asher diber Hashem b'yad Moshe." Okay. Now, let's look at what happens next. Chapter 10.

Audience Member: So she says both. It's vayachbeid and vayechezak.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yes, he did both. Pharaoh first hardens his heart and then gives himself the courage to pursue his new vision of recalcitrance. Pharaoh's going to do his own thing from now on. Now, Pharaoh's not interested in being educated anymore. Now, look at God.

Audience Member: What's vayachbeid hu va'avadav?

Rabbi Fohrman: He and his servants both have their hearts hardened, both hardened their hearts.

Okay. "Vayomer Hashem el Moshe," and God then says to Moses "bo el Paroh," go unto Pharaoh. Now, here's the first thing that you need to deal with. "Ki ani hichbadeti et libo." Now, this is strange because it just said before that Pharaoh did this himself, so what's the deal with that, right? We have to figure this out. "Bo el Paroh ki ani hichbadeti et libo v'et leiv avadav lema'an shiti ototay eileh bekirbo," so that I can establish my signs in his midst. "U'lema'an tesapeir b'oznei bincha u'ben bincha et asher hitalalti b'Mitzrayim," so that you should be able to tell your children and your children's children the way I played with Egypt "v'et ototay asher samti bam," and my signs that I placed within their midst "vidatem ki ani Hashem," and you will know that I am God.

Now, what's interesting about this is that there's a change in God's instructions to Moses. It is not that you should go to Pharaoh and try to convince Pharaoh and Pharaoh is going to understand. Maybe he'll understand and maybe he won't. It's not about Pharaoh anymore. It's about you. You are going to see that I am God. It's not going to be through Pharaoh anymore. It's going to be through the Jews. The Jews are going to witness something that will incontrovertibly show that God is the Almighty, is the

Master of the Universe. That's going to take place through "Et asher hitalalti b'Mitzrayim," you'll be able to tell your children the way I have played with Egypt, I played with him almost like a toy.

The question is this if we just set it up. It seems like God is saying that the plagues that are going to follow are actually not for Egypt anymore. They're for the Jews and they're going to demonstrate God as Creator to the Jews. How? By showing how I played with Egypt. So there's got to be something about the way God plays with Egypt, which is going to now show that He's the Creator.

Now, just to put this together, it's no longer going to be -- it's not going to be through what we did before. Earlier, we were talking about plagues that signified power over all different forces of nature. We did that. That was successful. We showed it to Pharaoh. There's no more to prove on that front. There has to be some different way that God is going to establish Himself as Creator and the name of the game is He's going to show the way that He played with Egypt and somehow, that's going to show that He's the Creator. So that's what we have to figure out. What's happening now in the final three plagues? How is God going to demonstrate that he's the Creator to the Jews by virtue of how He plays with Egypt?

Let's talk about how God plays with Egypt and let's see how this unfolds. I want to come to a problem that I raised with you before, this "Ki ani hichbadeti et libo." There's a contradiction here. The contradiction is that we go a few verses before, it sounded like Pharaoh ended up hardening his own heart and now we have God hardening Pharaoh's heart. What's going on? Which is it? What's correct? If Pharaoh did it already, why would God have to do it?

I want to suggest a radical theory to you for a change. I know I never suggest any radical theories. So here's my theory that I want to suggest to you and if you repeat this to your friends, I'll deny it. The theory I want to suggest is that, in fact, God never ever interferes with Pharaoh's free will, ever.

Everything that you've learned is wrong. Everything you learned about God going and messing with Pharaoh's free will and why and how could He be allowed, how could He punish Pharaoh anyway, it's all not true. God never ever interferes with Pharaoh's free will.

Some of you are saying one second. I'm looking at the words. The words say that God said that He hardened Pharaoh's heart, so you came and you gave me a whole speech and you said there's a difference between chizuk haleiv and kibud haleiv, and chizuk haleiv is encouraging, but kibud haleiv is hardening, and here's kibud haleiv. God says I hardened his heart. So what's going on? So you could kvetch and you could say well, it's after Pharaoh already hardened his heart. Okay. So it's after Pharaoh already hardened his heart, so why does God have to harden his heart any further?

Here's what I want to suggest. It's all very natural. It's all very rational. There's no fancy sleight of hand going on. All you have to do is actually read the verses. Let's read the verses and we will understand what it means "Ki ani hichbadeti et libo v'et leiv avadav." What does it mean?

What it means is that Pharaoh has hardened his heart and I'm going to play along with that. Let's go back to our scientist analogy. What is holding Pharaoh back at this point? In the aftermath of the seventh plague, what kind of scientist is Pharaoh? Pharaoh is no longer the scientist who sort of deludes himself a

little bit. He's the scientist that knows exactly what's true. He's got it. He figured it out. He saw the truth. He just doesn't care anymore. Why doesn't he care anymore?

Audience Member: Because he's egotistic.

Rabbi Fohrman: Because of his ego, he's not going to give in. So he thinks that he's going to maintain his position. If you would ask Pharaoh, is ego a form of strength for you or a form of weakness, what would Pharaoh think about his own ego?

Audience Member: Strength.

Rabbi Fohrman: Strength. Ego is now the only thing giving me the power to continue to persevere in my courageous fight against this Creator. What God is going to show is that that's actually not true. The final, exquisite tit-for-tat with Pharaoh is going to be that God is going to destroy Pharaoh. What's going to be the way that God is going to destroy Pharaoh? What is going to be the tool that God uses?

Audience Member: His ego.

Rabbi Fohrman: Pharaoh's ego. Pharaoh's ego is going to be it. Pharaoh is going to destroy himself. I'm not even going to do anything. I'm just going to let Pharaoh use his own ego to destroy himself. That's "Ki ani hichbadeti et libo," and that's "Asher hitalalti b'Mitzrayim." I'm going to play with Egypt. Do you want to see how I'm going to play with them? I'm going to very gently use Pharaoh's own ego and I'm going to wrap him around my finger. I'm going to make him dance to my tune as if he was a marionette. Let's see how it happens.

Right after this, the very next verse after this, let's see Moses' strategy. "Vayavo Moshe v'Aharon el Paroh vayomru eilov koh amar Hashem Elohei ha'Ivrim," thus says God, the God of the Hebrews "ad matay mei'anta lei'anot mipanay shalach ami v'ya'avduni." Would anyone care to translate these words for me, "Ad matay mei'anta lei'anot mipanay"? Pharaoh, ad matay?

Audience Member: Until when.

Rabbi Fohrman: Until when, mei'anta? Audience Member: Are you going to refuse.

Rabbi Fohrman: Are you going to refuse to withhold yourself, lei'anot, what does lei'anot mean? Let's go for the root word. The root word is anah. Anah usually means answer, but it doesn't mean answer here because it's actually --

Audience Member: Humility?

Rabbi Fohrman: No. Lei'anot, this is the reflexive pi'el form of the word. It's a very unusual form. Anah

in its pi'el form actually means to oppress. Lei'anot is going to mean to become oppressed. What it literally means is how long are you going to withhold yourself from being crushed before me? That's what it means. How long are you going to withhold yourself from becoming oppressed before God, from becoming trampled down before God?

Now, the problem here is -- what I want you to notice is that Moses has never ever spoken to Pharaoh like this before. This is new. Now, if you were Pharaoh and Moses came to you and began a conversation by saying how long are you going to withhold yourself from being crushed before me, how would you feel? What are you going to do? Are you going to give in now?

Audience Member: No.

Rabbi Fohrman: No. This is the equivalent of -- imagine a bully on a playground. This is the equivalent of some sort of medium-sized kid coming up to a bully and pushing him on the playground in front of everyone and saying how long are you going to give a hard time for? You don't do that to the bully. I mean, you're talking to the King of Egypt. How long are you going to withhold yourself from being crushed before me? Pharaoh's ego is not going to allow him to give in.

Now, notice that Moses has not revealed the identity of the next plague yet. He's just said how long are you going to withhold yourself from giving in? Then, the next thing he says is, you know, here comes the plague. "Ki im ma'ein atah leshalei'ach et ami hineni meivi machar arbeh bigvulecha. V'chisah et ein ha'aretz v'lo yuchal lirot et ha'aretz v'achal et yeter hapleitah hanisheret lachem min habarad v'achal et kol ha'eitz hatzomei'ach lachem min hasadeh. U'malu vatecha u'vatei kol avadecha u'vatei kol Mitzrayim asher lo ra'u avotecha va'avot avotecha miyom heyotam al ha'adamah ad hayom ha'zeh vayifen vayeitzei mei'im Paroh." He doesn't even give Pharaoh a chance to respond.

Now, what just happened here? What plague has he just revealed is going to happen? Locusts. Let's talk about what locusts mean to a guy like Pharaoh. What do locusts do?

Audience Member: They eat everything.

Rabbi Fohrman: They eat everything. What do you mean by everything? Audience Member: Vegetation.

Rabbi Fohrman: Vegetation. Now, if you're Pharaoh, what's your economy based on? Your economy is based upon grain, agriculture. That's what you can do. You have the Nile. You can grow things. You're the only arid place in the Middle East that can actually have reliable crops. All of a sudden, you have a plague now that threatens the economic core of your society. Everything else is painful, there are people killed, problems, but there's not going to be a stalk of grain left standing.

Audience Member: And there's no escape.

Rabbi Fohrman: There's no escape. So this is devastating. It's the most economically devastating plague of all.

Audience Member: Hadn't Hail already destroyed it?

Rabbi Fohrman: Hail had destroyed some stuff, but now, here comes -- Hail had destroyed some standing grain, but now, along comes Locusts. The whole point of Locusts is to destroy what's left, whatever is there. That means there's going to be nothing to eat. Now, if you come back to the history of Egypt, we all know the history of Egypt going back to Joseph. We talked about Joseph last time.

What had Joseph done? Joseph had managed to shepherd Egypt through a famine. As a matter of fact, we talked about how the psychology of Pharaoh in enslaving the Jews before, so where does that psychology come from?

Never again, are we going to have to come onto Jews to save us from famine, so what are we going to make these Jewish slaves do? They're going to build "Arei miskanos l'Paroh," they're going to build storehouses for grain to make sure that -- so the whole rationale for slavery is to be able to save up grain, that you're never going to be -- and now, here comes this plague, Plague Number 8, and Plague Number 8 is going to bring us right back to where we started. It's going to devastate all of our grain.

Now, the interesting thing is that Pharaoh is literally caught between a rock and a hard place. He's just been taunted and yet this is the most devastating plague of all, so what do you do? Let's keep on reading and see what happens next.

Audience Member: Question. Rabbi Fohrman: Yes?

Audience Member: How come the day before you said people were -- had illnesses, were dying, were suffering, but this one, the financial stability of the whole nation is what hit him to the core.

Rabbi Fohrman: Right. If you are a good dictator, so you're willing to lose some people. That's just collateral damage. But if you have the economy of your whole nation has gone bad, you're going to go to war to safeguard the oil in the Middle East. I mean, that's the economy.

Let's keep on reading. What happens next? "Vayifen vayeitzei mei'im Paroh." Now, look at Verse 7. Moses exits. At that point, "Vayomru avdei Paroh eilov ad matay yih'yeh zeh lanu lemokeish shalach et ha'anashim veya'avdu et Hashem Eloheihem." This is the first time the servants have spoken like this. Here are the servants coming in quiet rebellion against their leader. Basically, they're talking to Pharaoh and they're saying you're mad. How long are you going to allow this go on? Just let them go already.

"Haterem teida ki avdah Mitzrayim." Don't you know that Egypt is lost? Our economy is lost. We're all going down the tube. You've got to do something. Now, let's translate these next words. "Vayushav et Moshe v'et Aharon el Paroh." What do those words mean?

Audience Member: They were brought back.

Rabbi Fohrman: Right. Vayushav is going to be the reflexive over here. It means that Moses was brought back before Pharaoh. So what question does that raise in your mind?

Audience Member: Who brought them back?

Rabbi Fohrman: The question is who brought them back? You'll notice that they're anonymous bringer- backers. It's not like Pharaoh sent for them to come back; they were brought back. So who do you think brought them back?

Audience Member: The servants.

Rabbi Fohrman: The answer is the servants. The servants anonymously go in the hallways. It's like, Moses, get back here. Work this out. Come on, don't go anywhere. It's like the servants are now becoming a political force. They have to be dealt with over here. The servants awkwardly bring back Moses in front of Pharaoh, and are like, let's work something out. So here comes Pharaoh. Pharaoh, at this point -- before, he had not been willing to give any concessions because he just got taunted on the playground, but his own servants are bringing him back to try to work things out, so he's got to do something. Let's see what he does.

"Vayomer aleihem," Pharaoh says fine "lechu ivdu et Hashem Eloheichem mi va'mi haholchim." Go serve God, your God, who exactly do you want to go? Stop right now. You're a negotiator. You run a consulting firm for negotiation. You're looking at this. Tell me, if we stop the movie right over here, what is Pharaoh trying to do? What was the deal with "Mi va'mi haholchim," who exactly do you want to go?

Audience Member: He's delaying.

Rabbi Fohrman: What's Pharaoh looking for? If you could call a timeout and call in your team for a huddle and explain the psychology of Pharaoh right now, you would say Pharaoh is looking for a way out. In other words, Pharaoh says you can go, but -- now why did he say but? Why didn't he just say you can go?

Audience Member: Ego.

Rabbi Fohrman: Ego. Ego is going to kill him. He needs to way to save face. He can't just say you guys can go. The "Mi va'mi haholchim" basically is Pharaoh's cue to give them a fig leaf. Tell me who do you want to go? He expects that Moses is going to come back with, well, you know, we really just want our males. We'll leave behind some animals. Something, right? But, then I can give in. It's in front of my servants. I can make it all work out.

Now, look at Moses' response. "Vayomer Moshe binareinu u'vizkeineinu neileich b'vaneinu u'vivnoteinu

betzoneinu u'vivkareinu neileich ki chag Hashem lanu." Moses is like tone deaf. He just did not hear what just happened over there. He says no, you don't understand, we've got this holiday. We've got to take everybody; our young, our old, our men, our women, our animals. We're going to take things. It's the July 4th; we're going to have the greatest of times, Pharaoh. It's like, hello? Did you hear what I said? You didn't get that?

At that point, Pharaoh is infuriated. "Vayomer aleihem yehi chein Hashem imachem ka'asher ashalach et'chem," he says yeah, good luck to you when I'm going to send you out of here "v'et tap'chem," along with your children "re'u ki ra'ah neged peneichem," I can see through your disguise; I know what you're planning. "Lo chein lechu na hagevarim v'ivdu et Hashem ki otah atem mevakshim vayegaresh otam mei'eit penei Pharaoh." He says you want to take the males, you could take the males and he sends them out. He's very upset.

Then, poor Pharaoh is going to get his plague. What happened? Did God interfere with his free will at all? No. What did God do? God played on his ego. You think you're strong because of your ego? I'm going to make you suffer a plague that you don't want to suffer. You want to come to a negotiated settlement. I'm not going to let you come to a negotiated settlement. I'm going to let you hold out for the fig leaf that isn't coming because I'm going to make your ego work against you in the most devastating plague there was. Now, let's look at what happens next. Let's just keep on reading.

Audience Member: Quick question? Rabbi Fohrman: Yes?

Audience Member: Did God create Pharaoh with his ego or do we create our own egos?

Rabbi Fohrman: We create our own egos. "Vayomer Hashem el Moshe neteih yadcha al Eretz Mitzrayim ba'arbeh veya'al al Eretz Mitzrayim v'yochal et kol eisev ha'aretz et kol asher hishir habarad." So then, what happens next? The locusts are gone and we're up to the next plague. The next plague is "Vayemaheir Paroh likro l'Moshe ule'Aharon vayomer." Now, look at the response -- I'm sorry. No, we're not up to the next plague. The locusts come. Pharaoh calls them back. He says I'm sorry. It was a mistake. Please, get rid of this death from me.

Audience Member: He says I sinned.

Rabbi Fohrman: "Chatati ach hapa'am," I have sinned one more time, please get rid of this plague. They get rid of the plague. "Chatati laHashem Elokeichem v'lachem. V'atah san a chatati ach hapa'am." Okay. The next plague is Darkness. We're up to Darkness because that's Number 9. Now, look at what happens in the aftermath of the Darkness. "Vayikra Paroh el Moshe," Pharaoh calls out to Moses and says "lechu ivdu et Hashem," go serve God "rak tzonchem u'bekarchem yutzag gam tap'chem yeileich imachem," you can even take your children; just leave some cattle behind.

Now, notice that this is a further capitulation on the part of Pharaoh. See, when Pharaoh say you can go

"Mi va'mi haholchim," that's a relatively strong position. You're going to come back and you're going to tell me, well, couldn't we just take -- you know, leave back our animals and I'll come to negotiate a settlement. But now, Pharaoh is being explicit about the fig leaf. He's showing him exactly what it is he wants. He says look, you can go, all of you can go, I'm really just asking for one thing. Leave behind your cattle.

Now, if you were Moses, would you take this deal? Four hundred years of slavery are now all going to come to an end and the only price you have is we have to leave behind some cattle. Deal or no deal?

Audience Member: Deal.

Rabbi Fohrman: You take the deal. So look at Moses' response. "Vayomer Moshe," oh, the cattle, I'm really glad you mentioned cattle "gam atah titein beyadeinu zevachim v'olot," you actually have to give us cattle because we think that we might not have enough cattle "v'asinu laHashem Elokeinu." By the way, "V'gam mikneinu," plus we're going to take our cattle "lo tisha'eir parsah," we're not going to leave a hoof behind "ki mimenu nikach la'avod et Hashem," what do you think we're going to sacrifice to God on our holiday "va'anachnu lo neida mah na'avod et Hashem ad bo'einu shamah."

We don't know what God's going to ask. He might want hippopotamuses, He might want giraffes. We're going to have to have the whole national zoo with us. That's what we're going to have. You have to actually give us cattle, thank you very much for reminding me. Do you see what's happened? No fig leaf. What's going to destroy Pharaoh?

The answer is Pharaoh's own ego is going to destroy him. God is going to play with Egypt. God is literally playing with them. He's toying with Egypt and He's going to allow -- if it's your ego by which you defy me, then it's by your ego with which you'll be destroyed. There's something else happening.

There's another aspect of playing, which is happening here as well. This is where we get to the part, I believe, of God demonstrating Himself as Creator. How is this a demonstration of God as Creator?

I want to suggest something else is happening in these plagues. Here's the second radical thing I want to tell you today. The second radical thing I want to tell you is that there aren't, in fact, three more plagues after Hail; Locusts, Darkness and Death of the Firstborn. I want to argue to you that in fact there's only one. There's only one plague after Hail. I want to argue that, in a certain way, Locusts, Darkness and Death of the Firstborn are all one plague. They're all one plague with all one design. It's just a countdown to one thing. It's all Death of the Firstborn. It's just Death of the Firstborn slowly graduating itself.

Here's why. If you look at the language of Locusts, you see something kind of interesting. When God says I'm going to bring locusts, so look at this language. There are going to be these locusts. "V'chisah et ein ha'aretz v'lo yuchal lirot et ha'aretz." Let's translate these words. What does that mean?

Audience Member: It means they covered the earth.

Rabbi Fohrman: It's going to cover the eye of the earth. "Velo yuchal lirot et ha'aretz." You won't be able to see the earth. Then lo and behold, when it comes -- so if we actually look at the language when this comes. "Vayechas et ein ha'aretz, vatechshach ha'aretz." Isn't that interesting? So what does this evoke for you? It evokes the next plague, the next plague of Darkness. It's as if the next plague of Darkness is already implicit within the plague of Locusts, right. Because Darkness is happening. The land becomes darkened. You can't see the land.

As a matter of fact, it's very explicit, if you think about it. If you go back to the warning for Hail, "vechisah et ein ha'aretz." It covers the eye of the land. Now, you didn't know that the land had an eye, did you? So what's interesting is, is that, if it covers the eye of land -- the land has an eye, then that means that who can't see? The land can't see. Now look at the next words. "Velo yuchal lirot et ha'aretz." You won't be able to see the land. What does that mean? Who can't see? The people can't see. So it means is that the land can't see people and the people can't see the land because there's this darkening Locusts between the people and the land. That's vatechshach ha'aretz.

So Darkness is implicit within Locusts. Now, is it only Darkness that's implicit within Locusts? If we look at Pharaoh's response to the Locusts, we find a very interesting thing. Pharaoh says, please, I entreat you. Get rid of the locusts. "Veyasir mei'alai rak et hamavet hazeh." What does this remind you of, coming down the pike in the plagues? Death of Firstborn. So there's language in Locusts that anticipates both of the next two plagues, both Death of Firstborn and Darkness.

Now let's go to Darkness. When Darkness happens we also find an interesting thing, which is that when the Darkness takes place -- here, what does this remind you of. So there's choshech afeilah. Let's translate

-- "vayomer Hashem, nateh yadcha al hashamayim vayehi choshech al eretz Mitzrayim vayamesh choshech." Vayamesh choshech literally means what? You could feel it. So a tangible kind of darkness. "Vayeit Moshe et yado al hashamayim vayehi choshech afeilah," there was a dark, thick choshech, "bechol eretz Mitzrayim," for three days. "Lo ra'uh ish et achiv velo kamu ish mitachtav sheloshet yamim." So what does it sound like? People lying in a prone position, no one able to see each other, no one even able to get up for three days?

Kind of reminds you of what? Being dead. So again, you have the imagery within Darkness of death as well. So Locusts contains both Darkness and the Death of the Firstborn. Darkness contains the Death of the Firstborn within it too. So what does that mean? How does that add up? So what I want to suggest is the following. In fact, there's really only one plague. That plague is called Death of the Firstborn. Death of the Firstborn evolves. How does Death of the Firstborn evolve? It evolves by the beginning with something called Locusts. Locusts has qualities of Death of the Firstborn and qualities of Darkness in it as well as qualities of Locusts. It is darkness and death caused by Locusts. A kind of death -- economic death

-- caused by Locusts.

Now, what I want to suggest to you is that Locusts has three qualities in it. It has Locusts and it has Death and it has Darkness. I want to suggest that the Darkness and the Death are latent in the plague. What's expressed is the Locusts. They're latent and you hear the foreshadows in the language, but they

don't express itself. Why are they latent?

So here is just a theory, just what comes to mind. They're latent because -- if you have a plague that's composed of Darkness, Death and Locusts, the only thing that's going to take over the plague really, is going to be locusts. Why? Because what's the difference between Locusts and Darkness and Death? It's the only one visible. It's the only one that's a presence instead of an absence. So a presence is always going to overshadow an absence, right. So if there's a plague that has all these qualities, the plague is going to express itself in the presence, not in the absence. The absence is just going to be behind the scenes. What happens is once you get rid of the presence of Locusts, what are you left with? You're then left with Darkness and Death of the Firstborn.

Now if you have a plague that has two qualities, which is going to express itself and which is going to be latent? The answer is, the one that has the most presence, the one that's least absent, is going to express itself. Out of Death and Darkness, which is least absent? Darkness. Death is the ultimate absence, right.

Darkness is just, you know -- it's a less profound sort of absence. So you see what happens is that as the presence of the Locusts leaves, that place of expressed plague is going to be filled through Darkness.

That's the language -- vayamesh choshech. It's like the darkness became thick. You could touch it. Which means, the darkness is expressing itself as a presence. So now there was the presence of darkness, right.

Audience Member: Would you say that it went away in between the two plagues?

Rabbi Fohrman: Yes, technically. Technically it did go away. Somehow it's almost like it's still hanging in the air. So all you had to do now is -- you brought back the plague but you brought back the plague without the locusts. So with the plague without the locusts, now you can see the darkness in the plague. The darkness wasn't just coming from the locusts. It was coming from actual Darkness, with a capital D.

Audience Member: It was also more attempts because before it seems that there was an ability to move around, let's say. Here you could touch it, then you couldn't move.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah. It could be. Then what happens is, once darkness is gotten rid of, the only thing left in the plague is the ultimate absence which is death. Now death moves from its latent stage into its active phase. That's where you have Death of the Firstborn. Okay. Yes?

Audience Member: So if all three of these came after the seventh plague as one tri-party plague, then was it possible to stop it after each one?

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, sure. There's always --

Audience Member: Was there a choice to -- because all three elements were still there. Once you got rid of the Locusts, you still your Darkness and Death of the Firstborn?

Rabbi Fohrman: Okay. I suppose so. When the plague comes back, it comes back without the Locusts. It

just comes back as Darkness.

Audience Member: Could it not have come, I mean, if it --

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, it could have not come back. My argument now is that God never interferes with Pharaoh's free will. So Pharaoh could, at any point, stop it for good. He just has to get over his ego, right. If not, his ego is going to destroy you.

Audience Member: I liked when you asked what lei'anot means and you said inui and suffering. Really, if you said anavah because it's the same shoresh (root). When are you going to stop, you know,

start showing humility.

Rabbi Fohrman: I'm not sure if it's the same root or not. It's similar phonetically. The root of anah is not the same root as anav. Anav has the Vav in the root and anah doesn't.

Audience Member: It does say humbled in the translation. Rabbi Fohrman: Okay. That's just a nice way of putting it. Audience Member: His whole thing was an ego problem, then.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yes. Okay. Now, I want to conclude with one last piece to kind of tie this together. There's something else going on in the 10th plague. Once you see it, you understand, I think, what's really happening in the 10th plague. The 10th plague is not just about death. It's about other things too. So let's take a look. There iss a very strange digression in the 10th plague. That digression -- you see the beginning of Chapter 11 over here.

"Vayomer Hashem el Moshe. Od nega echad avi al Paroh v'al Mitzrayim acharei kein yeshalech etchem mizeh keshalcho kalah gareish yegareish etchem mizeh." Now, actually in order to understand it I do need to go back to just two more verses at the end of Chapter 10. So let's just look at the end of 10 for a moment. Here. "Vayomer lo Paroh, leich mei'alai," this is at the end of Darkness. "Hishamer lecha al tosef ra'ot panai," don't show your face again. "Ki b'yom ra'otcha panai tamut." The next time you see me, you see my face, you will die. "Vayomer Moshe, kein dibarta lo osif od ra'ot panecha." He says, fine. I will never again see your face.

Now, notice by the way -- this notion of don't see my face, the next time you see my face you'll die -- when else in the Torah do we have something like that? That if you see someone's face you would die? Hashem's face in the aftermath of the eigel (sin of the Golden Calf), right, to Moses. So you see what Pharaoh's doing in a way, is acting God-like. This is the ultimate hubris. I'm not letting go of my vision of myself as a god, right. Should you see me -- even seeing me, you're going to die. Okay. "Vayomer Moshe kein dibarta lo osif od ra'ot panecha." Fine, I will never see you again. Okay. So now let's continue.

Audience Member: Can I just ask you one thing? How do you fit in the Modrash about four-fifths of the Children of Israel dying during Darkness?

Rabbi Fohrman: I am not obligated to fit in all Midrashim, okay. Audience Member: Pharaoh thinks of himself as a god?

Rabbi Fohrman: Yes. Okay. "Vayomer Hashem el Moshe. Od nega echad avi al Paroh v'al Mitzrayim v'acharei kein yishalach etchem." I'm going to bring one more plague and then I'm going to let you go. "Dabeir na be'oznei ha'am." Speak now into the ears of the people. Now notice also something. The last thing Pharaoh had said was, if you see my face you will die. "Dabeir na be'oznei ha'am." Different senses, right. We're not talking about seeing anymore, we're talking about hearing. Speaking and hearing.

Speak to the people -- into the ears of the people, let them do the following. "Vayish'alu ish me'eit rei'eihu ve'ishah me'eit re'utah klei kesef v'klei zahav. Va'yitain Hashem et chein ha'am hazeh be'einei Mitzrayim gam ha'ish Moshe gadol me'od b'eretz MItzrayim b'einei avdei Paroh uv'einei ha'am." Very strange -- these verses are very, very odd.

We have this strange digression here when really we should be getting the 10th plague and instead, God's got other things on His mind. Number 1 is, please make sure to take gold and silver as you leave, just ask the Egyptians nicely, I'll make sure they give it you. Like, what's the deal with that? Do we really need that? That's really so important -- 400 years of slavery coming to an end. Why do we have to have the gold and the silver? In addition to that, what's even more bewildering is this. "Gam ha'ish Moshe gadol me'od b'eretz Mitzrayim," and by the way, Moses, was very popular in Egypt. "Be'einei avdei Paroh uv'einei ha'am," in the eyes of Pharaoh's servants and in the eyes of the people. His poll numbers

-- he was hitting 74 percent with the Egyptians at this point.

It's like, do you really care? I really care how Moses is polling in Egypt? I mean, they're going to leave. It's going to be over. Why do I need to know how popular of a guy Moses was in Egypt? Okay. So let's keep on reading. "Vayomer Moshe, koh amar Hashem. Kachatzot halaylah ani yotzei betoch Mitzrayim." God says at about midnight I'm going to go out. "Umeit kol bechor b'eretz Mitzrayim m'bechor Paroh hayoshev al kis'o ad bechor hashifchah asher achar hareichayim, vechol bechor beheimah. Vehaytah tze'akah gedolah bechol eretz Mitzrayim." There's going to be a great crying out in Egypt, "asher kamo lo nehiyatah v'chamohu lo tosif." It's never been before like this, it's never going to be again like that. "Ulechol Bnei Yisrael," but for all the Jews, "lo yecheratz kelev leshono." It'll be so quiet, a dog won't even bark. "L'mei'ish v'ad beheimah l'ma'an teidun asher yafleh Hashem bein Mitzrayim uvein Yisrsel."

I want you to pay attention to the metaphors. What's being said is that the plague of Death is only going to descend upon Egypt and not upon the Jews, but the metaphors -- we're speaking about it metaphorically, we're not mentioning Death. What are the metaphors that we're using? What are the metaphors? What's going to happen to the Egyptians, what's not going to happen to the Jews? A great cry. It's going to be screaming for the Egyptians and what's it going to be like for the Jews? It's going to be silent. So my question is why is it that the Torah is so interested in using these metaphors? Where are these metaphors coming from? So let me answer this question first and then answer the other two. There

are three questions on the table now, right. Why do I care about Moses' poll numbers, why do I care about the money and why this language of -- these metaphors of hearing and all of that.

So the answer is look at this word. "Kamohu lo tosif." What does lo tosif remind you of very recently? Earlier, you remember what Pharaoh had said? "Lo tosif od ra'ot panecha", don't see my face anymore. Don't continue to see. Now what do you have? What will be lo tosif? "Et tza'akah gedolah." Which is what? A great cry. So Moses says what did I just promise you? You made me promise that I won't see you anymore. I won't see you anymore, but boy will we hear you. So we will hear your screams, but for us everything will be quiet.

Now, where does this come from? It turns out that this is the end of a long chain of lo tosif. It actually goes back to the initial paranoia of Pharaoh, with of all people, Joseph. Joseph and lo tosif. Remember what Pharaoh first says when he forgets about Joseph? He says maybe they're going to be a fifth column and they're going to end up warring against us? So the language is that they will be -- what's the language again? "Venosaf gam hu al soneinu," they will add themselves against their enemies. It reaches a kind of climax in the story of the bricks.

Do you remember that last moment of slavery where Moses goes and says I want you to let the Jews go and Pharaoh refuses. So let's go back to that for a moment. I think it was in Chapter 4 or so. Maybe it's five. It's five, yeah it's five. So let's go to five very quickly for a moment. There it is. Okay. Let's take a look at this.

Audience Member: That's asaf, that's not --

Rabbi Fohrman: No, just relax. Okay. What happens? "Vayomer Paroh hein rabim atah am ha'aretz v'hishbatem otam misivlotam. Vayitzav Paroh bayom hahu et hanogsim ba'am v'et shotrav leimor." Verse

7. "Lo tosifun lateit teven la'am," don't continue to give the nation straw, "lilbon hal'veinim kitmol shilshom, heim yelchu v'kosh'shu lahem teven." They'll make their own straw -- and they will cut their own straw. "V'et matkonet hal'veinim," but the quota for bricks, "asher heim osim t'mol shilshom tasimu aleihem lo tigre'u mimenu."

By the way, when else do we hear "lo tosifu v'lo tigre'u?" With the commandments in Parshat V'eschanan, when God uses those words. "Lo tosifu al hadavar asher anochi mitzaveh etchem v'lo tigre'u mimenu." It actually comes from Pharaoh, interestingly enough. So the first person to use this language was actually Pharaoh. Pharaoh uses it unjustly. Listen what happens. "Ki nirpim heim. Al kein heim tzo'akim." Oh, tzo'akim. We had that word before, right. Do you see what's happening over here? "Al kein heim tzo'akim leimor nelchah nizbechah l'elokeinu, tichbad ha'avodah al ha'anashim." There's another word, the hardness of heart. "Tichbad ha'avodah al ha'anashim, v'ya'asu bah, ve'al yish'u bedivrei sheker."

So what happens? The people then come back and the people plead with Pharaoh. "Vayuku shotrei b'nei Yisrael asher samu aleihem nogsei Paroah leimor madu'a lo chilitem chakchem lilbon". They come back to Pharaoh and they say "lama ta'aseh ko la'avodecha", why are you doing this? "Teven ein nitan

l'avodecha" we don't have any straw and all you're doing is "v'chatat amecha" and you are sinning against us and you're saying we're lazy "al kein atem omrim neilchah nizbechah la'Hashem".

At that point, Pharaoh turns his back and does not listen to them. So what happens is, is that there's a history here. The history is that Pharaoh -- the Jews screamed out to Pharaoh and that Pharaoh turned his back on those screams and just said you're lazy and in connection with that said lo tosifu, I'm not going to give you -- I'm not going to give you anything more.

There was a time when Egypt turned its back -- when Pharaoh turned his back on our screams and said lo tosifu -- ending with lo tosifu lirot panai. What's going to happen now? What's going to happen now is that Egypt will scream and who's not going to listen? We're not going to listen. We're going to be silent while Egypt screams. What kind of screaming? A lo tosifu kind of screaming. You said lo tosifu when you turned back on our screams, so your screams will never stop in the screaming.

What's happening? What's happening, I believe, is the following. If you look back to all of our three questions, let's go to the question with the money. Why is it so important that we get money? The answer is it's tit for tat, which is that when you go free why do we need money? Because it's not enough just to take the Jews free. What else happened? There's an economic side of this. There's all this unrequited labor, 400 years of unrequited labor. There has to be monetary compensation for that. So you're going to go out with monetary compensation.

There's got to be compensation another way too. What I want to argue is the following, is that the evil of slavery played itself out on many levels. There was the economic evil of slavery. The taking of money that didn't belong to them. There was the suffering of slavery, the torment of screaming out in pain for your masters while no one listened to you. That needed to be paid back.

There was the political evil of slavery. What's the political evil of slavery? We aren't slaves. Who are we? We are free men who ought to worship the only one that anybody should be a servant to, which is our Master in heaven. We're servants to another god. That had to be paid back too. How is that paid back? Pharaoh, you took servants that rightfully ought to serve someone else, God, and made them serve you? What's going to happen at the end?

Notice Pharaoh's loss of political control. What's happening to Pharaoh's servants? The ones who really ought to be serving him. Where are they going? They're going to fetch back Moses and at the end what do we hear? "Ha'ish Moshe gadol me'od". Look at his poll numbers. Right? "Gam b'avdei Paroh", the servants of Egypt and in Egypt, Moses is very high and at the end Moses comes and says going back to Chapter 11, he says that since "kamo'hu lo tosif." Let's read it for a moment, Chapter 11. Look at this "v'yardu kol avadecha eileh eilai." Moses says, when you scream all of your servants are going to be coming to me "v'hishtachavu li", and they're going to bow before me and they're going to say leave.

You won't have the guts because your ego will keep you, but they will tell me to leave.

What's that? That's the loss of political control. It began when you took servants that had no business serving you and then you made them bow before you. It's going to end when your servants who have

no business serving me, end up bowing before me. Right? That's the political tit for tat.

What I want to argue is all this is evidence of God playing with Egypt. How is God playing with Egypt? God is manipulating Egypt in such a way. How? Here's what's happening. God is revealing Himself as creator. What does it mean to be creator? So part of it is that you have compassion for your victims, but interestingly, there's another side of compassion for victims. When one person hurts another person, it's not just enough to have compassion for the victim. Compassion to the victim is tied together with something else, which is?

Justice for the aggressor. There's no such thing as cuddling up the victim and just cuddling him while the aggressor runs rampant. Part of compassion for the victim is justice for the aggressor. In a world where there is no creator, when there's no one -- there's also no one in charge so there is no compassion in how the gods deal with us, but there's also no justice. Every once in a while there's a capricious thunderstorm that seems like it's justice where people die and things like that, but it's all very haphazard. It's all very chaotic. There's no real justice in a polytheistic world.

Part of what it means for God to be a creator is not just that there's compassion for the victim, but it means there's justice. There's real justice. What does real justice mean? Real justice means that everything is exquisitely repaid on all levels. Only in a creator universe where the Creator has complete power and cares about justice would you see something like that.

What happens in the 10th plague is a revelation of God, I want to argue, through justice. Justice will be done. A justice for the greatest act, the greatest evil that Egypt did. What's the greatest evil Egypt did? They threw our babies in the Nile. So it begins -- the 10th plague is the children of Egypt will die as justice for the way they killed our children. Politically the servants of Pharaoh are going to end up serving Moses. The screams are going to be paid back. The screams of the Jews when no one listened will now become the screams of the Egyptians when no one will listen. The money is going to get paid back and it's all going to happen together.

In one instance all of these measure for measure elements are all going to converge. It's going to be three plagues. They're going to cycle down to one and in that moment of climax, it's all going to happen. All the justice is going to be paid back and that's how God will demonstrate Himself as Creator. As the Creator that cares about what happened to the victim and expresses that partly by doing justice to the aggressor.

So that's how I'm going to leave you. There's more to say, but that's it for now.

As a final footnote to this, the one thing I would say is that part of the justice, I think -- part of the measure for measure is to use Pharaoh's own ego as a way of destroying him. Right? What's the most just way to respond to a rebellion through ego? It would be to allow your own ego to destroy you. It's just measure for measure. I'm not even doing anything. I'm just letting your own ego -- because if it wasn't for ego, you ---

Rabbi Fohrman: Kibud halev is strength. Kibud halev, no. I think kibud halev just means you were machbid your lev. You didn't give in because of ego. Ani hichbaditi just means I will accent your hardness of heart. I will play off of it causing the effect of it to come out and to flourish further, but I'm not interfering with your free will. All I'm doing is I'm taunting you in the play yard, backing you into a corner and not giving you the chance to retreat, but I haven't messed with your head.

Audience Member: I would even play with something else.

Rabbi Fohrman: I messed with your head, but I haven't done it in -- Audience Member: Exactly that's what you did.

Rabbi Fohrman: That's what I did, but I messed with your head the way anybody can mess with your head. All I did was took advantage of your own weakness.

Audience Member: They say lev and seichel are interchangeable also so your --

Audience Member: I would say the word kavod, being honored, that his honor is being--

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, and that's what we see at the end. "I'kavdah b'Paroh u'v'chol cheilav", I will be honored through your ego.

Rabbi Fohrman: Today I want to continue our discussion from last week and before and, if we get up to it, I am going to review in some way or put into a larger context the discussion that we were having before Passover about yetzi'at Mitzrayim (the exodus from Egypt) and the connection with the Joseph story. I want to begin that by continuing our discussion of last week and focusing this time on the encounter between God and Moses at the burning bush. The continuation from last week, basically, comes in the following way.

Last week, I suggested to you that the 10th Plague -- that first of all, I suggested to you that the last three plagues were really one plague, as it were. They were just, sort of, a final countdown to the 10th Plague and I showed you how there was language in the last three plagues that anticipated the Death of the Firstborns and there was, sort of, this countdown or winding down to the Death of the Firstborns. I further suggested to you the significance of the Death of the Firstborn, in a certain way, was a, kind of, culmination. In the sense that God was revealing Himself in a different kind of way. It was that -- I suggested to you that there was a different agenda in the last three plagues than there were in the first seven.

Whereas the first seven plagues were about showing that God was God, through God's manipulation of nature as it were. It's, kind of, interesting to see it this way, but maybe this is the way to see it. The last three plagues is about showing that God is the Master of the Universe not through the manipulation of nature, but through the manipulation of Egypt. "Et asher hitalalti b'Mitzrayim," the way that I'm going to show you, God says as an introduction to these last three plagues. "Et asher hitalalti b'Mitzrayim," the way that I played with Egypt, as a plaything.

What God does is plays with Egypt, I suggested to you in two ways. Plays on Pharaoh's ego in order to

-- in a non-miraculous kind of way so that Pharaoh doesn't give in, but also in many different kinds of ways God engineers a, sort of, middah k'neged middah (measure for measure) repayment scheme for the evils of slavery. We talked about this last week. From the political sphere there's payback and the economic sphere there's payback. In the sphere of pain and suffering there's payback and I don't want to get back into all the details of how I showed that to you, but I want to argue that the 10th Plague is a culmination, in a way, that in one moment there is payback in many of these different kinds of ways in a measurement kind of measurement way.

This is, again, one of the differences between a polytheistic world and a monotheistic world. In a polytheistic world, you don't get elegant measure for measure kind of justice. You get that in a world where God is the Master of the Universe.

So far so good, but if that theory is true, there's one respect in which the 10th Plague is not really, fully at least, measure for measure justice for what happened. That is, I might say, in the sphere of pain and suffering. Which is to say that even though there is a metaphorical way, at least, in which there is a measure for measure punishment in the deprivation of Pharaoh's firstborn in a sense that God says before "b'ni bechori Yisrael," the Jewish People are my firstborn. If you don't send them out I will keep your firstborn. Right? That's true and even though Jewish children were drowned in the Nile and now

Pharaoh and the Egyptians are being deprived of their children, but in that respect at least we don't have what we might call a real measure for measure response.

For example, the Egyptians tried to kill all the Jewish males. Not all Egyptian firstborn or children are being killed. It's only the firstborn that are being killed. They're not dying by drowning, the horrors of drowning, they're dying quietly in the middle of the night. It's a different kind of thing. Is there a measure for measure for that as well? The answer, of course, is yes, but it doesn't take place at the 10th Plague it takes place at Kri'at Yam Suf (the Splitting of the Red Sea). The Splitting of the Red Sea is really when exactly what happened to the Egyptians -- what the Egyptians inflicted upon the Jews, death by drowning. All males, really. That happens to the Egyptians, as well.

I want to focus in on that with you in the context of the sneh, the burning bush, because, I think, sort of all of this is foretold at the burning bush in an interesting kind of way and if we pay close attention to it, I think, we'll see that there's another meaning in God's justice. That God's justice is not just about justice, but it's about something else too.

The theory that I want to suggest to you -- it's really a pretty common sense theory -- is that there are two ways in which God relates to human beings, by virtue of God being Creator of the world in ways that are unique to God as Creator of the world as opposed to any other, sort of, polytheistic God. The two basic ways that God relates to humanity, as a function of Him being Creator, are through what we might call rachamim (compassion) and din (judgment). Both of these, I want to argue, are a function of God being the Creator.

Compassion is more obviously so, because compassion is very obviously a function of being a Creator. Even the word rachamim, itself, seems to come from rechem, womb. It's the ideal of being compassionate, of nurturing that which you've given life to. So compassion is very clearly a function of being a Creator.

Judgment is also a function of being a Creator. It's a function of having -- let me put it to you this way

-- needing to discipline your children, as it were, when they've gone awry and what really is the best discipline? The best discipline really is not to shield, so to speak -- the best discipline is really to allow the child ultimately to experience what it is that they've done or to experience the repercussions of what it is that they've done. Not so much punishment, but to allow the child to experience the natural consequences and there's something about the way the world works which is that what goes around comes around. A good parent, at some point, can't continue to shield a child from what goes around comes around and, in some sense, discipline is allowing what goes around comes around to ultimately be the teacher for the children.

The interesting question is what if the child doesn't learn? What if the child doesn't learn, so then what does judgment look like? There is an aspect of judgment where you look at the wayward child, the child who's been an aggressor and committed evil and you try and rehabilitate them by allowing them to experience the consequences of what it is that they've done. But what happens when the child proves that they're not interested in rehabilitation? What then? Then, I think, there's another interesting

dynamic. I'm just going to give you the theory and then I'll show it to you in the verses.

The theory I'm going to suggest to you is that at that point judgment takes upon another meaning. It's not just about rehabilitation any more. It's about punishment and here's the model I would use to understand it. At that point judgment and compassion cease to be two things, but they become, in fact, two sides of the same coin.

Let me explain to you what I mean by that. Let's say you have two children, Bobby and Suzy. Bobby has acted terribly aggressively towards Suzy. So now, as a parent, you, sort of, have two choices. There are two ways you could handle this. One way you could handle this is you can handle the judgment for Bobby and the compassion for Suzy, kind of, separate and apart from each other, in a vacuum. Where you could say my job is to comfort Suzy and that's one of the things I do then I display compassion for Suzy and to impose judgment for Bobby. To allow Bobby to experience some repercussions from what it is that they've done. So that's one way -- in the hope that Bobby will learn something from this.

However, let's say that Bobby is utterly recalcitrant and is committed to striking Suzy whenever the opportunity allows him to and I mean, God forbid, you have a family like this, what do you do then? What do you do then? So at that point, I want to argue, that the judgment for Bobby ceases to become just an educational exercise, but it actually becomes a function of the compassion for Suzy. What I mean by that is that when you have -- think about it in terms of the American court system or in terms of any justice system -- what is the idea of justice for an aggressor when an unrepented aggressor commits a crime? You will find victims spending every last cent they have, in court, to do what? To achieve justice for the aggressor. Not really in the hopes of rehabilitating the aggressor, but just in the hopes of, kind of, putting an end to the suffering. There's something about the victim knowing that justice has been carried out that is itself strangely a comfort for the victim.

Audience Member: Validation?

Rabbi Fohrman: Yes and that's the interesting kind of thing. Now, here's where it gets a little funny because, I believe, that Americans, the way we grow up, we're not -- I don't mean as Jews now, I mean as Americans -- we're not educated to be proud of this. This seems vindictive. It seems like giving in to our bastard natures. It's not something that we like to talk about, but there's a little family therapy over here. We're going to talk about it and, I think, it's not as dark as we might imagine this impulse of the victim to see justice done. I don't think it's about something as blind or based as blind vengeance. I think there's something deeper going on.

There is and, I think, it gets to the point that you were talking about. Validation. Which is that if the aggressor escapes the, sort of, natural consequences that ought to be due this sort of rocking of the world order that they've done that it feels surreal to the victim. It feels like you're not living in the real world. It feels like I'm crazy. Like I know that my life was turned upside down by that. I know that there are consequences for me and when there's no consequences for him it's just like off kilter. It's like am I crazy? Did this thing not really happen? Is that why there's no consequences? You call into question the legitimacy of your own experience of suffering and the seeing of justice done is a, kind of, sigh of relief

that the world as it were, that God, that society acknowledges what happened that caused you pain.

That acknowledgement takes the form of natural consequences. I experienced the natural consequence, the deprivation of a loved one, the rape of a loved one, whatever it was and they now experienced that too that means that this really happened. It's a kind of deep, sort of, validation. That's different than a blind desire for revenge in the sense of being a pure active vindictiveness. If you understand what I mean?

Audience Member: I know you said that as Americans, that's probably what you're meaning and that's why you stressed it. Aren't we, at that point, supposed to say the only validation we really need to be concerned with is God's validation? Like, whether we're happy with the results or not, whether it makes sense or not.

Rabbi Fohrman: Well, yes or --

Audience Member: Yes, we have those natural feelings, but --

Rabbi Fohrman: Yes and no. I don't think that's true. I do think that God's validation is very important. There's no question about that and that there is a great sense of comfort in God, in a sufferer feeling that God has validated their suffering. But, I would ask you, how do you understand the directive of God, in the Torah, to have judges meet out justice to the aggressor? How do we understand that? Is it simply that there are utilitarian reasons for that? That we couldn't have a society run well unless there was enough deterrence, value in doing something evil and that's -- there certainly is that aspect. I'm not denying that, but I believe that the imperative for justice within the Jewish system is deeper than that.

If you look at the Gemara, in Sanhedrin, at the Agadatha, in the Gemara in Sanhedrin talking about the significance of the court system, the significance of justice it's much deeper than simply being a deterrence. It's becoming a partner with God, in a certain kind of way, in the maintenance of the order of the world. It's becoming -- it's that it's enough for God to validate; the human beings have to validate it. It's not enough for God -- for there to be consequences in the heavenly realm, there have to be consequences in the earthly realm and we're partners with God in making that world order. "Chosmo she Hakadosh Baruch Hu emes," the seal of God is truth and we partake in that seal when we make truth come alive in consequences in our world. It's part of bringing a kind of reality to the world and that reality is a kind of comfort to the sufferer, in a certain kind of way. That's what I'm arguing.

That's all very abstract. I want to show that to you in reality. I want to show that to you in practice. My argument now, just to recap, is that there's, sort of, two stages in how compassion and judgment kind of interact with one another in a case where one human being harms another. One way of doing it is to see compassion and judgment as separate. Which is to say that I comfort the sufferer and I punish the aggressor with hopes that punishment will be rehabilitative.

The other way of saying it is that compassion and judgment are enmeshed together and that especially in situations where the aggressor is -- there's not really any hope of the aggressor learning from what it is

that they've done, then judgment takes on another form. What judgment, at that point, becomes is the flipside of compassion. A way that compassion has done. In other words, it's not just enough to comfort Suzy. It's not enough just to hold Suzy and say I have to give her a hug and say I know it was really hard for you, but you keep on getting bashed with a stick by Bobby. Right? Part of what it means to comfort Suzy is for Suzy to see that there are consequences for Bobby. Now, if Suzy doesn't see that, you're not really doing your job as a parent. There's something false about your comfort. Are you with me?

I want to now show how these ideas play out in the exodus from Egypt because in the exodus of Egypt this is -- you know, we've been abused, basically, for 400 years. So what does it mean for God to treat us with compassion? I want to argue that the same model exists. At some level, there's the hope that the Egyptians, by experiencing certain consequences of their crimes, might be brought towards rehabilitation to see what it is that they've done and to let the Jews go with a clear conscience and to call it quits and that's one possibility. But what if there's a point where the Egyptians will not learn? What if there's a point where the stubbornness of Pharaoh reaches about where he's not going to give, there's still an idea of judgment. Accept judgment, at that point, takes on the complexion it's totally for the victim, it's not for the aggressor.

In other words, it's not for the benefit of the aggressor, it's for the benefit of the victim and it's part of making the suffering real. It's really an act of validation. I want to show that to you with respect to what I consider the greatest crime of the Egyptians, of the entire 400 years of servitude, which was the act of throwing our babies in the Nile. The genocidal act of killing thousands and thousands of babies by drowning them in the Nile. I want to show how this dynamic works by taking a look at the burning bush. Let's take a look together.

Audience Member: It goes back and forth between Hashem and Elokim.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah. I actually haven't analyzed that, but we can talk about that.

Audience Member: You have at Bereishit, with the creation of the world, you have Elokim and the suspension of nature in Va'eira and Bo you really have more of Hashem, I think. So that also is bringing in both.

Rabbi Fohrman: All right. Let me see if I can find this over here. You all know -- we are going to be looking at Chapters 3 and 4, right now. As you know, at Sinai, Moses experiences three signs. Those signs are a; he takes his staff, throws it down, it turns into a serpent. We talked about this a little bit before Passover in context of the Joseph story, but I'm going to give you a different interpretation of it now. Later on, I'll show you that the two interpretations I've given you are not actually contradictory to each other, but they're complimentary to each other, but for now let's just forget about what I told you earlier and look at it from a different perspective.

So the first of the three signs is Moses takes the staff, throws it down, it turns into a serpent. The second of the three signs is Moses takes his hand, puts it into his coat, takes out and it's metzora'as kashaleg, it is white as snow. The third of the signs is that Moses takes a cup of water and pours it on the ground and it

turns into blood. I bet you were always wondering what's the deal with these signs. Like, you were always wondering, right? Like are these just magic tricks to show that Moses is --

Audience Member: So why these specific signs?

Rabbi Fohrman: Why these specific signs? Could God just as easily have said and now, take a woman and put her behind the curtain and take this savor and slice her in two and then take your hat and pull the rabbit out of the hat? I mean, could it have been any magic tricks that would have demonstrated that Moses was he the man? You know what I mean? Was that what it is?

Audience Member: First the burning bush is a sign.

Rabbi Fohrman: That's true. Well actually there's a -- according to the text that's not the case. According to the text well, yes and no. We're going to talk about that, but you're right that there is a pre-existing sign in the burning bush story besides this and we'll get to that in a moment. But let's just keep it simple for a moment. When you think of these three signs, the question is do they have any larger meaning other than being three really cool things that Moses can do now?

Audience Member: I see the relationship the first two, but the third one throws me. Whereas the first two you could say Moses is talking lashon hara (slander) against his people believing him so you have a snake which has brought evil into the world and you have tzora'at (leprosy) which is also a punishment for slander, but then the third one is not.

Rabbi Fohrman: That's right. That was a good try; two out of three. (Laughter.)

Audience Member: Well, you always say don't you wonder. So that's what I always wondered about.

Rabbi Fohrman: Right. Okay. I get it. So it's a problem. How do we understand these three signs? I want to give you now a theory of these three signs. There are two things that you need to understand this theory. You need to understand the larger context. The first thing you need to understand is there was a sign before this and the sign before this is going to give you a clue as to how to interpret these three signs. I'll show that to you in a minute.

The other thing you need to realize is what the purpose of the signs were. What exactly were the purpose of the signs? For that we need to actually pay attention a little bit to the conversation that is developing between God and Moses. Here's how the conversation goes. The conversation goes all the way back to Chapter 3 before the signs. Here's what happened in Chapter 3.

God says the following "leich v'asafta et ziknei Yisrael," go and gather the Jewish People, the Elders of Israel, "v'amarta aleihem," and say to them the following things. Now, let's just keep track of how many things are being said. I believe there are three things that are being said. Thing number one is "Hashem Elokei avoseichem nir'ah eilay." Are you with me? Yud-Kei-Vav-Kei the God of the Hebrews, the God of their forefathers has appeared to you. That's the first thing you must tell them. "Elokei Avraham,

Elokei Yitzchak v'Elokei Yaakov," that's all one thing.

The second thing you have to tell them is what God says. "Leimor pakod pakadati etchem," God says that the time has come that I am going to redeem you.

Audience Member: That's Joseph.

Rabbi Fohrman: That's Joseph language. "Pakod pakadati etchem," I am going to redeem you as Joseph had said.

Now, the third thing is "v'et he'asui lachem b'Mitzrayim." What that means is not only "pakod pakadati etchem," but "pakod pakadati et he'asui lachem b'Mitzrayim," I have redeemed that which was done to you in Egypt. Now at that point I'm just going to challenge you which is what would you say the really important things. If you would have to rank these things in order of importance, what would you say the really important one or two is and what would you say, sort of, falls by the wayside a little bit? If you could only communicate two which one would you say?

Audience Member: Pakod pakadati.

Rabbi Fohrman: First that God has redeemed you and the second would have to be what? Audience Member: Revenge.

Rabbi Fohrman: All right. I'll talk to you about this after class. (Laughter) I'm serious about that Devorah.

What I was going to say -- I think you're right that that's important, but I think most people don't really see that. That God appeared to them, that's really blown me out of the water. God appeared to you, wow. That God is going to take them out of Egypt, that's a big deal. What does it mean that God is going to redeem that which was done to you in Egypt? It sounds, actually, like what Devorah is saying. In other words, it's not just -- it's not simply enough -- and this gets back to the point I was making earlier. It's not enough for God to take us out of Egypt. For God to take us out of Egypt, that's basically God cuddling the victim --

Audience Member: Compassion.

Rabbi Fohrman: That's compassion. I'll help you, I'll salve your wounds, all that, but what about all this pain for 400 years. He had to validate the pain. That's the "v'et he'asui lachem b'Mitzrayim." Not only have I redeemed you, I have redeemed that which was done to you. You're going to see that there was payback, there was significance to that which happened to you.

This is what God has committed Himself to. These three things and this is really -- this is the central argument I'm making to you. There's compassion, but there's judgment and judgment is the handmade in the compassion. It's really just an expression of compassion. It's part of what it means for you to be

redeemed. It's not just that I'm taking you out of Egypt. It's what happens to them too. That's part of the therapy process, as it were, of what's going on for you.

What happens next is that Moses expresses doubt about this. "Vaya'an Moshe vayomer v'hein lo ya'aminu li velo yishmi'u bekoli ki yomru lo nir'ah eilecha Hashem." I want to argue that implicitly Moses is calling everything into question. He's saying we're not even getting into first base because they're not believing anything. They're not going to listen to me. They're not even going to believe that You appeared to me. For sure, they're not going to believe You're taking them out of Egypt and for sure they're not going to believe that You cared about them to the extent that You share their pain, that You're going to redeem anything. Nothing's happening.

This is Moses's response. It is to that response that God comes with the three signs. The three signs are oh, yeah, right. Watch this. So that means that the three signs are going to be a response where God is going to have to demonstrate to Moses you think they're not going to listen to you? I'll show you they will listen to you; all three things I'll show you. So that means the three signs are going to show three things. They're going to show God appeared to Moses, that the Creator of the Universe appeared to Moses; that God is committed to taking them out of Egypt and that God is committed to payback for the Egyptians for what happened to them.

The question is how do these three signs possibly express any of that? Now, we have to look at the three signs carefully and see. Here's when we get to the second clue which is the sign that precedes the three signs. It turns out that if you look carefully at the experience of Moses, at the burning bush, you will find that there was a sign before this. Not what you think is a sign, but what God thinks is a sign. The same word ot, which God uses to describe these three signs, He's going to use to describe a sign afterwards.

By the way, what's interesting is if you take a look at these signs and how they play out -- look at this. "V'hayah im lo ya'aminu lach velo yishmi'u lekol ha'ot harishon v'he'eminu lekol ha'ot ha'acharon." Isn't that interesting? If they don't listen to the voice of the first sign, they'll listen to the voice of the second sign. What's strange about that language?

Audience Member: What voice?

Rabbi Fohrman: What voice? The signs are something that you see, they're not something you hear. God says oh, no. The signs are something you hear. Yeah, of course, you see them, but if you don't hear them something's missing. Which is the signs are talking to you, the signs have a message. If you don't get the voice of the signs -- it's about the voice of it, it's not about the magic trick. It's about the message that these signs convey. If they haven't figured out the message of the first sign, you can be rest assured they'll figure out the message of the second sign.

In other words, if they're so thick that they can't figure out the message of the second sign, show them the third sign. They'll get that for sure. Which means, by the way, that if we want to figure out the meaning of the signs, which is the most obvious sign?

Audience Member: The last one.

Rabbi Fohrman: The last one. So we probably should start with the last one and work backwards, so we're going to do that. In order to do this, we also have to understand, as I mentioned to you before, there was a first sign before all of these. The first sign is the strangest of all. This takes place back in Chapter 3. Let's go back to it. Here's the first sign, sort of hidden away; you don't even notice it. It's not described as a sign. Here it is.

You would think it's a sign. It's what you would think is a sign, but God doesn't call it a sign. Here's what God calls a sign. "Vayomer Moshe el ha'Elokim mi anochi ki eileich el Par'oh vechi otzi et B'nei Yisrael m'Mitzrayim," who am I that I should go to Pharaoh. You think I'm going to be able to get the Jews out of Egypt? This is Moses's first act of recalcitrance, in the face of God, at the burning bush.

Hear what's God's response. "Vayomer," God says, "ki eheyeh imach," don't worry about a thing I'll be with you, "v'zeh lecha ha'ot," and here's the sign. You get it? There's the sign. We're about to see a sign. Here's the sign "ki anochi shilachticha," that I have in fact sent you. Don't worry about a thing, I'm going to give you a sign. I'm totally reassuring you, "b'hotzi'acha et ha'am m'Mitzrayim ta'avdun et ha'Elokim al hahar hazeh," when you successfully take the Jews out of Egypt, you'll end up serving me on this mountain.

Now, if you're Moses, how reassured are you by this? Audience Member: Not at all.

Rabbi Fohrman: So put yourself in Moses's shoes. You really think this is totally not going to work. You're going to go to Pharaoh, he's going to laugh you out of the palace. This is just not happening. God says no, totally, don't worry about a thing. I'm going to show you a sign that it's going to work. You know why? Because when you take the Jews out of Egypt you're going to serve me on this mountain. Hello? By that time it's all over, right? You know what I mean? Like there's no -- I won't need a sign after I've already taken them out of Egypt. I'm not worried about that; I'm worried about now. What are You going to show me now that -- what have You done for me lately. What are You going to show me now that is going to give me any sort of confidence? Don't tell me that after it's all over there'll be a sign. What is God talking about?

Why bother with a sign? Just say, look, Moses just I'm God. You know, trust Me. There is a sign. There has to be. What's the sign? How could you have a sign when it's all over?

Audience Member: The voice of God -- the voice of God telling him I am with you.

Rabbi Fohrman: Okay. All right. So let me give a theory here of what's going on. You hear the problem? This is a reasonable problem, right? Okay. So here is a theory. I'm going to give you theory of these signs. It's the combination lock theory of signs. Just remember it that way; the combination lock theory of signs. Here's how it works.

Let me try and suggest to you a theory of what's really happening in the first sign. In order to understand it, you have to look at the experience of the burning bush as a whole because the truth is the burning bush is a sign even if it's not described that way. It's part of this first sign I want to argue and here's how. Look at how the story opens. There's something odd about it.

"U'Moshe hayah ro'eh et tzon Yitro chotno kohein Midyan vayinhag et hatzon achar hamidbar vayavo el har ha'Elokim Choreivah." Are you with me?

Audience Member: What chapter is that?

Rabbi Fohrman: Chapter 3, 1. I'm here at the top. I'll read it to you. Moses was shepherding the sheep of his father-in-law, "vayinhag et hatzon achar hamidbar," and he leads the sheep through the desert until he gets to the mountain of God, to Horeb. Okay. Stop. What is the problem with this verse?

If you're reading Shmot for the very first time, you're in sixth grade bible class and you're reading Shmot how are you supposed to understand this verse? This verse presupposes that you've learned the rest of Shmot. Once I understand that there was thing called Sinai and I figured out through Devarim that Sinai and Horeb are really the same thing then I can come back over here, to Shmot and I can understand that oh, the mountain that he went to in Horeb, really that is har ha'Elokim. But if I haven't learned the whole Torah, how am I supposed to possibly understand it? Where at "har ha'Elokim Choreivah?" What is there about this mountain that makes it har ha'Elokim?

You see, that even here the Torah is focused on the future. It's focused on a certain future event and that event is the revelation at Sinai. The revelation at Sinai is important for understanding what's happening here.

I showed you, about six months ago, when we did Jethro 1 and Jethro 2 -- if you remember that whole thing -- I showed you that there are a whole cornucopia of parallels between Moses's experience at the burning bush and the experience of the Jewish People at Sinai. But I'm not even going to go there now. Let's just keep it simple and just say that as this is being introduced we're prefiguring Sinai somehow into the equation. Here's what I want to suggest is happening. I'm going to tell you an event and you tell me when it happens. Here's the event.

Moses leads sheep through a desert, brings the sheep to the mountain of God at Horeb and at that mountain experiences an amazing thing. Fire descending from heaven upon some sort of natural object and it's not consuming that object. What story am I telling you about?

Audience Member: It's this.

Rabbi Fohrman: So you're now telling me, I'm telling you about our story, the story of the burning bush. The answer is no. I'm telling you about Sinai.

Audience Member: Where's the sheep? What's sheep going to represent?

Rabbi Fohrman: The sheep are the Jews. Audience Members: Oh, wow.

Rabbi Fohrman: Moses again has father's sheep except this time it's not Jethro's sheep, it's his father in heaven's sheep and the sheep are the Jews. Once again, he's leading these sheep, he's leading this flock through the desert until he gets to the mountain of God. Now, again, the mountain is burning with fire, why? "M'p'nei asher yarad alav Hashem ba'eish," because God had descended upon them fire.

If you think why it is that the bush is not being consumed, there's a reason the bush isn't being consumed. It's not magic. There's actually a rational reason why the bush isn't being consumed. Again, here, too, if you think about the sign it's not just a magic trick. There's a meaning to the sign. What's the meaning to the sign? The meaning of the sign is this. What do you learn from the fact that the bush isn't being consumed?

Audience Member: It's not really fire.

Rabbi Fohrman: Well, there's two possibilities. One possibility is that it's not really -- yes, it's not really fire as we know. Now, let's test the theory. Devorah, would you be willing, if you were Moses, to stick your hand in the fire?

Devorah: No.

Rabbi Fohrman: So Devorah what do you mean when you say it's not fire as we know it. It sure is pretty darn hot so it's no explain -- you're right, let's talk about this.

Audience Member: It's just to an extent of God showing who He is here.

Rabbi Fohrman: Okay. Good. Let's understand that. So you're saying it's hot. It has the same biochemical qualities of fire, if you would analyze the plasma and the energy and all that it would sure look like fire.

In a laboratory it wouldn't look any different than fire. So what do you mean when you say it's different than real fire?

The point is that if the bush is not being consumed, then we understand something about the relationship between the bush and the fire which is different from most fires. Most fires, if it's burning a bush, what's happening? What's the nature of the relationship between the bush and the fire?

Audience Member: There's no more bush. It will consume it.

Rabbi Fohrman: The fire consumes the bush. Why does the fire consume the bush? Because the fire is using the bush as fuel. If this bush is not being consumed, what do we know about the relationship between the fire and the bush?

The fire is not using the bush as fuel. The fuel's coming from somewhere else. Where is it coming from? Audience Member: God.

Rabbi Fohrman: It's coming from God. That's what Moses saw. What Moses saw was there's an event which looks very much like standard bush fire stuff. In other words -- let me put it to you this way -- if you were walking through the desert and you saw a bush on fire, do you really think you'd notice that the bush wasn't being consumed. Nine out of 10 people would not notice that. Ninety-nine out of 100 people wouldn't notice it. Why? Because you'd walk right by it, you'd see it burning for a minute and then you'd go on and you'd move on and you'd just assume it's a regular thing. You'd have to really sit and study and like really be a scientist about this and say well, I've been looking at this for a long time and something isn't fitting.

Now, here's the problem. The problem is this. There's a famous psychology experiment which I talk about often so if you've heard about this, from me, before don't come yelling at me. The experiment goes like this. They did a perception experiment, with college students and cards, where they took cards and they showed them -- cards, like in a deck of cards -- and they had to identify the cards. So if they saw a seven of hearts they had to identify that it was a seven of hearts. What the college students didn't realize was that there were a number of doctored cards in the deck. So there were, for example, there was a three of hearts with one of the hearts rubbed out so there were only two hearts on the card, but there was a three of hearts.

The college students could look at all these cards for like five seconds and they'd have to tell you identify the card. What happens when they got to a doctored card, like, a three of hearts with only two hearts?

You know what happens? What happens is that some of the students, about half of them, identify it as a two of hearts and about half of the students identify it as a three of hearts. But not one student says there's no such card like this. There's something wrong with the card. No one. No one.

What does that tell you? It tells you that your brain computes and says there's only 52 cards in this deck. Your brain is now seeing a 53rd card. Your brain has an option. It can either say there's a 53rd card, I was wrong. There's not 52 cards in the deck. I have to change my basic assumptions about the deck. Or the brain has to say no, I don't care what I see, there's only 52 cards in the deck so I'm going to take the round peg and smash it through the square hole and it's going to be one of these cards. So the brain is going to change your perception to make it fit what you think is comprised in reality. That's the way we, human beings, work.

Moses's greatness is he saw the 53rd card. He saw and experienced that doesn't exist in the world. The rest of us would have seen the same thing. We could have sat there for an hour-and-a-half looking at this bush. It would have been clear as day that the bush isn't burning and we would have been looking at one of the anomalous cards. We would have said it's a two of hearts, it's the three of hearts either the bush isn't burning or it's not real fire, something like that, but we wouldn't have actually understood what was happening. Which is the fire doesn't come from the bush. The fire comes from somewhere else. It's a transcendent fire.

In other words, you see the fire, you understand it's transcending. What basically is happening? You need that. The person who's going to allow Sinai to happen has to be able to perceive things that way because what is Sinai? That is Sinai. Basically, what is fire? Fire is the most "spiritual" thing that we experience in the physical world. The metaphor which we give to God, the Ultimate Transcend of Being, is -- that the Torah gives to God -- is that God is Eish Ochala, God is a consuming fire.

Now, God is not really fire, but fire is the nearest thing you can use to describe God. It's the closest thing we have to a spiritual, untouchable entity in this world. Our experience of fire is that it's a by-product of bushes. It's a by-product of physical things that we can touch and feel. Sometimes there's fire that uses them as fuel and therefore, if we take that metaphor to its logical extreme and I ask you could you please explain your experience of consciousness, how would you explain consciousness?

Well, if you take the view of fire, then fire is just a product of bushes. So you look at consciousness and you say oh, no, consciousness seems pretty spiritual to me. I mean, like, it doesn't seem like a physical thing, but you would say it ultimately has to reduce to something physical. You see there's neurons and there's veins and there's arteries. When you put all the neurons and veins and arteries together it creates this allusion, this sensation of consciousness. That's one possibility which is a consciousness of using the physical body of the human being as fuel, so to speak, it emerges from the physical body.

There is, however, another possibility; equally valid or perhaps more valid. Which is that consciousness is by its nature a spiritual thing. The spiritual thing which we call consciousness rests upon the physical things which we call the body, but is not a by-product of the physical thing. It rests upon it. There are spiritual things in this world whose place of origin is not this world. They're not a by-product of this world. They look like they're a by-product of this world, but they're actually an example of something transcendent coming from heaven and manifesting itself in this world in relation to something, but the thing that it's in relation to is not its fuel.

That's the message of the burning bush. If you don't get that message, Sinai is impossible because Sinai is the ultimate fire coming down and the mountain doesn't burn. You know why the mountain doesn't burn with this huge volcanic fire? The answer is because it's not the fuel from the fire. It doesn't come from the earth; it comes from heavens. When God sees Moses, "Vaya'ar Hashem ki sar lir'ot," God sees that Moses turned to look, the implication is and had Moses not noticed the sign he wouldn't be Moses. The answer is that's true. There was something about noticing that sign that was necessary in order to be able to understand what was going on.

Now, this is a little bit of a digression, but the point that I'm really making is that the experience of Moses at the burning bush is a miniature experience of Sinai. He is experiencing Sinai as an individual, as a miniature and this brings us to the combination lock theory of signs. Here's how the combination lock theory of signs works.

Let's talk about combination locks for moment. Here's how a combination lock works. You go to the hardware store because you want to lock up your bike. You buy a combination lock. The first thing you do when you get home is what?

Audience Member: You set it.

Rabbi Fohrman: The first thing you have to do is you have to set the lock. What happens when you set the lock? What do you do when you set the lock? You pick out a bunch of numbers that are meaningful to you, that you're going to remember -- your birthdate or something like -- and what you do is you then set the lock. You create a set point. That's the first thing you do.

Then the next thing you do is you go home and you lock up your bike. Now, what happens is you want to unlock your bike, so what do you have to do?

Audience Member: Remember the combination.

Rabbi Fohrman: You have to remember the combination. You have to enter the combination. What is happening conceptually when you enter in the combination?

Audience Member: You're thinking about why you chose those numbers.

Rabbi Fohrman: Why does the lock open? The lock is just a lock, there is no why, but conceptually why is it that the lock opens at that point?

You have authenticated yourself as the owner of the bike. That's the point, right? So there's two steps when it comes to combination. This is very simple, nothing fancy, right? Two steps when it comes to combination locks, very basic. Step number one is you set the lock. You set the lock because you take something meaningful because you have to remember it, so something meaningful and you take meaningful numbers and you put them into the lock. Then there's an authentication process. Whoever comes along and correctly match up the numbers, who knows the meaningful thing, which is if you can create an experience of that meaningful thing, you have authenticated yourself as the owner of the bike.

That's exactly how these signs are working. The only difference is that when it comes to combination locks, the set point is in the past, the authentication point is in the future. Here, with God, the set point is in the future and the authentication point is in the past. Now, let's understand what that means. Here's how it works. God says you're worried? You think you're not authentic, Moses? You think this is all a lie? It's not really going to happen? Let me explain it to you.

There are certain very special numbers. There's something really important that I need to happen. There's an endpoint to all of this. There's the teleology of all this -- is a telos. There's something that I need to happen. This is all going somewhere. What I need to happen is something called Sinai. I need to reveal the Torah. I need to reveal Myself to humanity and to have My chosen nation, my mamlechet kohanim come and --

Audience Member: And exemplify.

Rabbi Fohrman: -- and exemplify My will for humanity. That's the game plan over here. That's where

we're going. You want to know that you're authentic; I'll show you how authentic you are. Everything you're doing now is a miniature of that. When "b'hotzi'acha et ha'am m'Mitzrayim," and when you successfully take the Jews out of Egypt guess what's going to happen? You're going to end up serving Me on this mountain. We're going to do it all again at the national level.

What you're experiencing now is an authentication point. You're matching up the numbers. Everything that you're doing -- taking sheep through the desert, bringing them to this particular mountain, the mountain of God, experiencing and noticing this fire coming from heaven that not consuming this thing

-- all of this is just a little miniature. This is just -- the whole point of this is to authenticate you; to prove that you're real is not the future. The proof is now by virtue of the future. I'm revealing to you what has to happen in the future and I'm showing to you that, guess what, it's exactly what's happening now.

That's what shows you I mean business. You think I don't mean business? Of course I mean business. This is where we're going. That's the authentication. Are you with me?

The set point is in the future. The authentication is now. I'm revealing to you what the set point is that you understand now that there's an authentication process happening. If that was what was going on with the first sign, maybe, that's what's going on with the next three signs. If you want to understand the next three signs, the same thing is going on. They're combination lock signs. There is an authentication point and there's a set point. The set point is in the future. The authentication point is now. Which means that what's happening now is a miniature of what's going to happen in the future; what needs to happen in the future. When you show these signs to the Elders and they understand that the things you're showing them are miniatures of things that are going to happen in the future then they will understand very clearly that I am God and I'm taking them out of Egypt and that there's payback for what is done to them.

Now, let's see if the model works. We have to actually go through the three signs and see if this model works.

Audience Member: I see this as giving you the code, now. Rabbi Fohrman: Right.

Audience Member: It's an authentication. It's giving you the combination code now. It's going to help you.

Rabbi Fohrman: No, he's not locking in the mountain. It's the other way around. It's unlocking it now. What He said I'm authenticating you. You're worried you're not authentic, I'm authenticating you. It's an authentication moment. By virtue of the authentication, you're matching up things against what needs to happen. It's a little bit subtle because you're transposing the authentication point and the set point, but that's how, I think it works.

Audience Member: We'll go into the signs.

Rabbi Fohrman: Go into the signs and you'll see it again.

Let's start with the third sign. The third sign is supposed to be the easiest. That's what's really going to hit people over the head. My theory is that the third sign is the easiest sign because the authentication point and the set point are closest to each other. Which is to say what's happening now is going to happen again in the very near future. So it's really going to hit people over the head. They're going to get what they saw and then they're going to understand by extrapolation everything else. Once they see that, they'll figure out what's going on.

What is the third sign? The third sign sounds a lot like -- what future event does -- Audience Member: The Plague of Blood.

Rabbi Fohrman: It's the Plague of Blood. Taking the water, pouring it and turning it into blood; the Plague of Blood. Let's think about that for a moment. Let's say the third sign does point to the Plague of Blood, how is that third sign, i.e. first plague, going to be a revelation of the three things that God says He's authenticating? A; I am Yud-Kei-Vav-Kei, B; the Elokei Avoseichem, I am going to redeem you from Egypt and C; I am going to visit upon the Egyptians, "et he'asui lachem b'Mitzrayim," what was done to you.

Audience Member: The third one.

Rabbi Fohrman: The answer is most obviously the third one, but through the third one actually the other two, as well.

Let's talk about this. How does blood in the water -- do you understand -- the greatest crime that was ever done to us was that our -- with the genocidal event of hurling our children in the water. Now, if you think about it there was something terribly evil about that event. What was so evil about that event? It was worse than just murder. It was worse than just Egyptians showing up with submachine guns and mowing down children. It was worse than that.

Why was it worse?

Audience Member: It's trying to show that their God could do this because they believed in the Nile, so the Nile is consuming the children.

Rabbi Fohrman: So all of that is really very theological and very interesting, but I'm going to tell you something just on a very simple human level. It was worse because when all this happened, when hundreds of thousands of Jewish babies were being thrown in the Nile, did the Nile turn red? The answer is no. There's no proof. Do you understand? The Egyptians did it this way for a reason. They did it this way because they wanted to cover up their crime. All the mangled corpses of children, with blood leaching out of them, end up at the bottom of a river that no one can ever see. The river is placid. The river has billions of gallons of water. Even with all the blood leaching into it, there's no sign of the crime.

It's all regular and therefore, they can cover their crime and because they can cover their crime they can look at themselves in the mirror at night and say nothing happened, nothing happened.

Conversely, we have to live with the horror of the sense that nature itself has conspired with the aggressor to cover over the crime. I wake up in the morning, after a night of screams, after a night of Egyptians coming in in the middle of the night and yanking these babies away from mothers and mothers screaming and running after them to the shore, to watch their children hurled in the Nile only to find in the morning the Nile looking as it did, placid as before. Birds migrating the waves they did before. Egyptians sunbathing on the beach, reading Schopenhauer and playing Mozart on stolen pianos. That is the experience that the Jews have and the experience is where is -- am I crazy? Do you understand? It's bad enough that this happened to me, but I think I'm crazy. I look at the Egyptians and there's no sign that anything happened. I look at nature and everything is normal and there's no sign that anything happened. But my child is missing, but everything else looks normal. So am I crazy?

This is, sort of, the post-traumatic stress reaction of what happens. This is what all post-traumatic stress is. Which is I can't talk about this. There's no way to relate it to the world I'm in. It just seems like I'm crazy.

God says, you know what compassion means in this situation? It doesn't just mean taking you out of Egypt. It means payback and why payback? The first part of payback is the Nile turns red. When the Nile turns red, two things happen. The aggressor has to confront their crime. There's no more sunbathing on the Nile. You had to look and see what it is that you've done. These are the consequences of what you've done. You're shocked with the vicarious pain that you experience in your victims, in the Jewish People.

You have a choice at that point. The choice is you can be shocked by that pain and you can be shocked back into reality and jolted back into reality and there is a potential, educational, rehabilitative aspect to that pain which is that the Egyptians can, if they choose, allow themselves to be jolted back to humanity and say this is crazy, we can't be doing this and to apologize to the Jews and to let them go. If they would do that, then the three things that God had said would come true.

There was payback for the Egyptians, the Nile turned red; there was "pakod pakadati etchem," I took you out of Egypt by the Nile turning red and I've revealed that I'm Yud-Kei-Vav-Kei which is I've revealed that there is justice in the world because there's a creator of the whole world and there's not just a polytheistic world where there's gods at sides where this god has power over this and this is the power of the Hebrews and there's the power of the Egyptians. I have power over all and therefore I can -- I have the power to punish the Egyptians. I have full power to make consequences come alive for -- all of those things would have been revealed, but if the Egyptians do not listen there will be a step two which will bring us to the next sign.

Before we even get to the next sign, though, I just want to show you how compassion and judgment play out over here as partners with each other, not just two separate things. You see there are two possibilities. One possibility is that judgment is rehabilitative. Judgment is educational. There's another

possibility, too. Which is that maybe they won't listen. I can't force the Egyptians to listen. What if the Egyptians aren't interested in rehabilitation? There's still a meaning to the judgment because the judgment is part of compassion.

It's not just enough to take Suzy out of Egypt. Suzy has to see that the pain matters and the first step in showing that pain matters is that God has to show I get it. I understand the Nile is red. That's a validation. You're not crazy when you woke up in the morning. The Nile is red and that validation is part of the compassion for Suzy. The judgment on Egypt is part of the compassion for the Jews. Are you with me?

That's part of the process of healing. It's part of the process of closure. Without that there is no closure. It's like there was this terrible consequence for me, but it doesn't exist anywhere else in the world. There is no consequence anywhere else in the world. There's just regular Nile, regular Egyptians. It's out of kilter. Am I crazy? It's not real. It's cognitive dissonance. The fact that an event that was this profound is showing up in the world and other places is a validation that I'm not crazy. It shows the reality of the event. It gives via comfort in just understanding that this is a real thing.

Audience Member: You're saying that in order for the Jewish People to come to accept to God at Mount Sinai they need to go through this process, as well.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah. That's a good way of saying that. Right? That, in other words, if the end product is coming to Sinai, they can't come to Sinai and accept God as their God without this. You have to see some -- I know, worship You. I have to feel cared for. It's not just enough for God -- in other words, I talked before about the exodus being a revelation of God as Creator. That's all very fine. It's not enough for the Jews to see that the Creator of the Universe has revealed Himself. That alone is not enough to make them want to worship Him. They also have to see that the Creator actually cares and that the Creator actually is there when brutality has been inflicted upon His children and that it makes a difference. And that the Creator knows how to handle this and that it's not just -- and even taking me out of Egypt wasn't enough. Even the "pakod pakadati" wasn't enough. They had to see "et he'asui lachem b'Mitzrayim." But if they didn't see that, there would be the sense as I don't know whether I can worship this God. That's what I'm arguing.

Moses is seeing something which is indicating to him -- in other words the authentication is -- back to our combination lock of the signs. God is revealing to Moses that there is a telos, that there's an endpoint over here. That there are certain things that have to happen and the first thing that has to happen is that the river just has to turn into blood. I have to make that happen. These three things have to happen. I need to reveal myself as Creator through the way that I deal with my creatures. Do you understand?

That's part of Me showing that I'm a genuine Creator. A genuine Creator wouldn't allow His creatures to be brutalized without a response. I am responding by making their pain real. That's the first step.

However, there's a second step. What's the second step? The second step is the second sign. We're going backwards through the signs. A little bit harder to see because it's going to happen later. So what event that happens later that reminds you of payback for the Egyptians would seem to be signified by the

following event.

Moses takes his hand, a perfectly good hand and puts it into his vest pocket and it comes out white as snow. Now, ask yourself this. When does flesh turn ghostly white?

Audience Member: When you die.

Rabbi Fohrman: When you die. Why does flesh turn ghostly white when you die? Audience Member: Circulation stops.

Rabbi Fohrman: Because the blood drains out of it. Because normally blood circulates through the body, but when blood doesn't circulate it falls through gravity and your flesh, the corpse, becomes ghostly white.

This is a sign that prefigures death. When does death come to the Egyptians during the Plagues? The answer is the 10th Plague. So if the last sign prefigures the first plague, the second sign prefigures the 10th plague, which is Egypt, you have a choice. You can be rehabilitated, you can be educated. If you get it when you see the blood in the water, you won't have to -- it's enough for you just to experience vicariously the pain that you inflicted upon the Jews. If you get it. That can be justice. That can be an existence, so to speak, of "pakod pakadati etchem v'et he'asui lachem b'Mitzrayim." God has shown, God has validated the experience. That would be enough if you, of your own free will, would give in and let the Jews go and understand and be shocked by what you've done and treat them as human beings from here on in.

However, if you choose to recoil. If you choose not to get it and to continue in your struggle against them, you will experience more of the pain that you inflicted upon them. Still not all of it, but more. It won't be enough for you to vicariously experience the pain, you will actually experience the pain. Your children will die, not all of your children the way you tried to kill all Jewish males. They won't die in the same grizzly, ghastly way of being drowned in the Nile in the middle of the night. They'll die quietly in their sleep, but they'll die.

You'll have an experience of it and at that point you'll have another choice. You can learn, you could let the Jews go, you can call it quits. But at that point if that would have happened, then again those three things would have happened. I've shown Myself as God, as the Creator; I'm there for the victim, I'm there doing judgment for the aggressor; there's "pakod pakadati etchem," there's "he'asui lachem b'Mitzrayim," it's the whole thing, but if Egypt doesn't play along there will be one other possibility.

What is the other possibility? Of course, the moment when the Egyptians experience everything, is when?

Audience Member: The Splitting of the Red Sea.

Rabbi Fohrman: That's the Red Sea. That's the final moment where it's complete destruction for the Egyptians. All of their males will die in exactly the same way that they inflicted death upon us, by drowning in the sea. They will all die that way and that is the final validation for the Jews. That's when they really know that they've been validated.

What are the words that we have after the Splitting of the Red Sea? When the Jews see the Egyptians dead, what does it say?

Audience Member: Vaya'aminu.

Rabbi Fohrman: "Vaya'aminu baHashem u'veMoshe avdo." That's when they got it. That's when they really understood. That's when they understood that there was a Creator in the world. When they saw that God would go that far, that he really understood what happened to us. That if they wouldn't learn. That that's when there was that feeling of vindication that everything that happened to us happened to them and there is justice to the world. There is a Master of the Universe. That's when they understood, in their bones, "vaya'aminu baHashem u'veMoshe avdo."

The argument that I want to make to you is that the third sign is a reference to the Red Sea. Let me begin to show you how that's so. If you look at the first sign of the mateh (staff) is actually a reference to the Splitting of the Red Sea. Let's look at the staff, for a moment and I will show it to you. The first sign is presaged by these words. "Lema'an ya'aminu ki nir'ah eilecha Hashem." Isn't that interesting? "Lema'an ya'aminu," so that they will trust.

When do the Jews ultimately trust? "Vaya'aminu baHashem u'veMoshe avdo." The next time you have the word ya'aminu --

Audience Member: But I don't understand why it's going backwards, though.

Rabbi Fohrman: Give me a moment. Let's do everything all in due time. "All in due time," as the witch once said to Dorothy.

So "lema'an ya'aminu" so that they will trust. They words "lema'an ya'aminu" evoke the Splitting of the Red Sea. It's not just "lema'an ya'aminu." What about these words over here. Take a look at the first sign over here when -- what's Moses's response to the snake? He recoils from the snake. He runs away, "vayanas Moseh m'panav." Now, think, the Red Sea. Have you heard those words?

Audience Member: "Hayam ra'ah vayanos."

Rabbi Fohrman: A; "Hayam ra'ah vayanos." Very interesting. Later on in Psalms that same word vayanos being applied to the Splitting of the Red Sea. Now, the truth is Psalms gets it somewhere. We'll come back to that at the very end of this, "Hayam ra'ah vayanos," but let's leave that aside for a moment.

The truth is that the ba'al hamizmor, in Psalms, gets vayanos, "hayam ra'ah vayanos" from something the

Pentateuch says about the Splitting of the Red Sea. As a matter of fact, there's only two times in the Torah that you have the verb nas together with panav, the face of someone. The only other time you have it aside from the burning bush is at the Red Sea. The last thing that the Egyptians do before they're destroyed, as they see the wall of water coming towards them is they say "anusah m'p'nei Yisrael ki Hashem nilcham b'Mitzrayim," I will flee, I will recoil from Israel because God is fighting on their behalf.

"Vayanas Moshe m'panav" is the same words. What happens later is the Egyptians are going to recoil from the Jews the same way that the Moses recoils from the snake. So what I'm showing you is that there are language cues within the first sign of bringing you back to the Splitting of the Red Sea.

At this point, you might say okay, I get that, but I'm still bothered. The reason why I'm bothered is this. Not because of your point yet. The reason why I'm bothered is because I get it that there are language cues about the first sign that bring you to the Red Sea, but that's all there is. In the other signs there's something about the sign themselves that really reminds you about what's going to happen. The sign itself is really a little miniature of what's happening.

Fohrman, if your theory is really right, it has to go through all three signs. You have to show me that what is happening in the first sign is actually a little miniature of what's happening then. Otherwise, your theory doesn't work. How is this a miniature of what's happening then?

That's a very good question --

Audience Member: I'm happy we thought of it.

Rabbi Fohrman: You're happy you thought about it, but you weren't going to think of that. Even if you hadn't thought of it, you were going to go home unsatisfied because of that question. So now I just verbalized it for you. So let's understand, so how is it? So Bobby's point is well taken. That's part of the picture. Part of the picture is the staff. How does Moses split the sea? With the staff. Now, I'll prove it to you. It's very interesting. What happens to the staff in this sign? It turns into a snake. The second time, Moses doesn't have a -- first Moses has a staff in his hand and it turns into a snake. Then when Moses grabs hold of it, he doesn't have the staff, he's grabbing hold of the snake and it turns into a staff. He grabs hold with his hand.

I want to show you something really interesting now in the Splitting of the Red Sea. Let's go to the Splitting of the Red Sea. What chapter is the Splitting of the Red Sea?

Audience Member: 14.

Rabbi Fohrman: Come with me into the Splitting of the Red Sea, for a moment. I want to show you something truly wondrous.

Audience Member: Verse 16. "V'atah hareim et matecha."

Rabbi Fohrman: You see this. Here's how the Splitting of the Red Sea begins. The same kind of way that the first sign begins. "V'atah hareim et matecha," pick up your staff. Now notice, though, that that's the last time that Moses has the staff in that sign because then it turns into a snake and there's no more staff. He has to reach out with his hands.

Now, look at the next thing that happens. Audience Member: "Hateh et yadcha."

Rabbi Fohrman: That's true, but first he picks up his staff and it says -- now let's look and see what happens --

Audience Member: "Vayeit Moshe et yado al hayam."

Rabbi Fohrman: Exactly. You see what happened? No staff. "Vayeit Moshe et yado al hayam." Moses throws out -- where did the staff go? The answer is the staff isn't here anymore. The staff's already a snake. Now, the question is the staff's a snake? What's the snake? Here's where we have to do a little bit of math to figure this out. I need you to stay with me while we do some math. What is the snake?

There's a very uncomfortable answer to this. The answer is it's the Jewish People. How do you know it's the Children of the Israel? Prove that it's the Children of Israel. Can you prove it? You would prove it because you think they look like a snake. We'll get to that. Prove that the snake is the Children of Israel.

Audience Member: Maybe it's a numerical value.

Rabbi Fohrman: No, it's not a numerical value. It comes from the word correspondences I showed you before.

Let's back up. It's a simple algebraic equation. Watch this. Follow the algebra with me. It's very basic algebra. Here's how it goes. We're going to go to Fran, our mathematician here.

Remember the word correspondences between the first sign and the Red Sea? One of them was "vayanas Moshe m'panav," Moses recoiled from the snake. There is only one other time in Pentateuch where you have someone recoiling in the face of something.

That's when the Egyptians recoil. Now, the Egyptians recoil from the face of something, "anusah m'p'nei B'nei Yisrael." That means if Moses is recoiling from the snake and the Egyptians are recoiling from the Jews, what does snake equal? Do you understand? Snake equals Jews. Moses equals Egyptians. In other words, Moses gets transformed into the Egyptians in the sign somehow and Moses's role is now being occupied by the Egyptians. The snake's role is being occupied by the Jews.

Audience Member: You're making an analogy.

Rabbi Fohrman: I'm making an analogy. But the truth is it does, kind of, look that way. What about the

Jews is sort of snake-like? Now, I want you to look at the exodus of Egypt, look at the Splitting of the Red Sea from space. Take a God's eye view. You're looking down. There's this huge chasm in the earth. There is water on both sides and there's this huge chasm on the earth, but what do you see with these Jews? There's this long line of Jews snaking through this chasm. The Jews are a snake.

Now, Fran is very uncomfortable with this. She's crossing her arms and the reason why she's uncomfortable with this and the reason why all of you guys are uncomfortable with this is that you don't like being a snake. It just doesn't feel right. You've shown it to me. I get it, I get the language, I get the visuals, I get it, but I don't like it.

Objection noted. We will get to that. So I want you to shelve that objection. We'll talk about it next week. The Jews are a snake? If the Jews are a snake there must be some deeper meaning to the Jews meaning a snake. Boy, is there a deeper meaning to the Jews being a snake. We haven't even gone there yet. That will take more work to uncover why the Jews are being analogized to as a snake over here. So we will have to get to that. We can't get to that today, but before we get to that day, I just want to prove to you that this in fact is what's going on. I know we're out of time so here's your final proof; two minutes and I let you go.

Of all the three signs, the only one that we have evidence Moses actually did in front of Pharaoh is the first sign. Do you remember that moment where he goes in front of Pharaoh, he actually performs the first sign. But there's something kind of funny about it. Let's go the text when he performs the first sign. Where is that?

Audience Member: Chapter 7.

Rabbi Fohrman: Chapter 7. So let's go the performance of the first sign, for just a moment. Here we go. "Vayavo Moshe v'Aharon el Par'oh vaya'asu chein ka'asher tzivah Hashem vayashleich Aharon et mateihu lifnei Par'oh v'lifnei avadav vayehi l'tanin." Now there's a problem here.

Audience Member: It's not a snake.

Rabbi Fohrman: It's not a snake. It's a tanin. Now, if you go the JPS 1917 translation, which is generally a good translation, you would find to their great discredit that they translate this as serpent which is the exact same translation of which they give to nachash as serpent. They are trying to cover over a bold faced problem in the text. It's not the same animal; it's a tanin. Now, I want to show you something also strange which is that there is another very subtle discrepancy. Which is that when Moses does the sign at Sinai it says "kach et matecha hashlicheihu artzah," throw it to the ground, "vayashlicheihu artzah," and he throws it to the ground.

I want you to look at the language here. "Kach et matecha v'hashleich lifnei Par'oh." Notice what disappeared.

Audience Member: The ground.

Rabbi Fohrman: The ground. Similarly, when they do this "vayashleich Aharon et mateihu lifnei Par'oh." What disappeared? The ground. I'm going to explain to you why the ground disappeared. Because it didn't turn into a snake, it turned into a tanin. The only other time in Torah, in all of Pentateuch, we have a tanin is in the Six Days of Creation.

What's a tanin? It's a sea monster. Isn't that interesting? A sea monster, in a sign, that prefigures what event?

Audience Member: The Splitting of the Red Sea.

Rabbi Fohrman: The Splitting of the Red Sea. Why of all things would the staff turn into a sea monster in front of Pharaoh? The answer is this is the last thing you're going to see before you die. This is, I am showing you the final payback. This is where it ends and this is the answer to Bobby's question. I begin with where it ends because that's really the complete and full payback; everything else is just stages. I give you a chance, I give you a chance, but we begin with the end and this is the complete version. The complete version is you die this way. You threw babies into the Nile, without thinking what the mangled corpses looked like at the bottom, you die. When you find yourselves at the bottom of a body of water and you have to face the sea monster -- now here's the thing -- but why did it turn into a snake in front of Moses?

Here's what I want to argue is the answer and this is pretty cool so this is a good way to leave you. You notice how in all the plagues there was a dual reality. For example, with Blood. It wasn't just that in Goshen it was water and everywhere else it was blood. No. The same glass of water that an Egyptian would drink for blood, if you gave it to a Jew it would be water. And Darkness, it wasn't just in Goshen it was light. The same house that an Egyptian would go into in which it was dark, for a Jew it would be full of light. It was a dual reality. Reality became bifurcated between Jews and Egyptians. It would only make sense that the same thing happened at the Red Sea.

I want to show something very interesting in the Red Sea. Let's talk about the nature of the bifurcation of reality at the Red Sea. What was the nature of the different experience of reality at the Red Sea? So you say, well, the Jews went through on dry land and the Egyptians got drowned. Yeah, but that's like saying that in Goshen it was light and it was dark over there. No. It was more than that. Reality actually bifurcated. What was ocean for the Egyptians, was dry land for the Jews. I'll prove it to you.

Look at this description of the actual Splitting of the Red Sea. If you look at what happens to the Jews, when the Jews go through the water, look at this description in Verse 22. "Vayavo'u B'nei Yisrael b'soch hayam bayabashah," the Jews went through the water on dry land and it says that several times over and over again. The Jews went through the water on dry land. The Jews went through the water on dry land. Look at the next verse. "Vayirdifu Mitzrayim vayavo'u achareihem kol sus Par'oh richbo u'farashav el toch hayam." What's missing?

Do you get it? What for the Jews was dry land, for the Egyptians was just "b'toch hayam." For us it was "b'toch hayam bayabashah." For the Egyptians, that's not how they perceived it. It means from the

Egyptian vantage point when we jumped into the water they didn't see what we saw. We saw ourselves going through the water on dry land. What did they see? They saw these crazy Jews, jumping into the water and literally going into the water and seeming to survive and the Egyptians were crazy enough to follow.

When they followed look what happened. "Vayasar et ofan markevotav vayinahageihu bichveidut," the wheels start coming off and they get stuck in the mud. There's no mud, it's dry land. No, it's only dry land for us. For them, they're on a sea floor. They're at the bottom. There's rivers, there's water all over the place.

Audience Member: For the Jews there's a floor and they don't have the floor.

Rabbi Fohrman: For the Jews there the floor and there's no floor. There's just water. So they start getting stuck. At this point, when they look at the Jews, what they see -- the Jews in front of them -- is not what we see. When we see ourselves, we see ourselves as proceeding on dry land. It's not what they see. We see a nachash where a snake is endogenous to the desert. It travels on dry land. We're a snaking column going through on dry land. What do they see when they see us?

Audience Member: A tanin.

Rabbi Fohrman: "Anusah m'p'nei Yisrael." They see a tanin. Do you get it? We are a sea monster. What's a sea monster? The K'li Yakar says a tanin is the same as a nachash. The only difference is that a tanin lives in the sea and a nachash lives on land. A sea monster is this huge eel-like creature that's indigenous to water. When they look and they see us, the last thing they see before they die, is they see themselves stuck in the water, unable to move and the Jews gliding effortlessly through the water. That's what it looked like to them. They come to the only logical conclusion. What are the Jews? They're a sea monster. They're like indigenous to this and it gets back to the original crime. We thought we could drown them. We thought we could kill them. We thought they were like snakes that had to be killed from afar, that you would throw in the water and they would drown, though we wouldn't have to confront the corpses. We could cover over the crime.

What do we learn? By the way, this gets back to the burning bush. If you think about the metaphor of the burning bush, the burning bush has another metaphor. If you take the inverse of the burning bush --

Audience Member: Sneh, so it's B'nei Yisrael.

Rabbi Fohrman: The Sneh is the Jewish People and the fire is the water. The inverse of fire is water. Do you understand what happens? The bush that is not consumed by fire is also the Jewish People that is not destroyed by drowning. You thought you could drown them. We see they're indigenous to water. It's as if all of the corpses and you couldn't get rid of them that way, we kept on throwing in the water, we kept on throwing in the water and now we meet them. Where do we meet them? We meet them in the midst of water and it turns out that it's a place where they are indigenous and we can't survive and we are the ones who drown while they can survive. It's almost like all the corpses of the children that we put

at the bottom of the river are coming back with the nation and we're seeing them all together and it's one large sea monster that couldn't be killed.

Audience Member: Einenu ukal.

Rabbi Fohrman: That is the ultimate, sort of, sea monster. So we see, again, we see a snake and they see a sea monster. This is the final payback. The final payback is the last thing they see before they die is that they understand. They understand that we can't be destroyed that way. They are the ones who will be destroyed by drowning, but not us.

When we come back next time, I want to pick up with the unsettling question of why we had to be a snake. We'll talk about that one.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Hi, everybody.

Welcome back.

Today we're going to address the lingering

question from last week. That lingering question was we were looking at the three signs that God gives Moses and we analyzed them and we came to a kind of understanding of them where they seem to be

alluding to a series of events that would occur. In particular, there were three events that seem to be

connected to each other. Those events were the plague of the blood on the one hand, the plague of the

firstborn on the other hand and the Red Sea.

In particular, we argued that the first of the signs corresponds to the last of these events. The first of the signs is, of course, the story of the event in which Moses cast down his mateh (staff) and it becomes a snake. That seems to correspond to the crossing of the Red Sea. We talked about the various aspects of that correspondence and we noted in particular that the language in which Moses recoils from the snake, mirrors the language of the Egyptians recoiling from the Jews at the Red Sea. “V'yanas mipanav,” Moses recoils from the snake and that echoes later on the Egyptians "anusa mip'nei Yisrael ki Hashem nilcham lahem b'Mitzrayim."

I'm not going to get into the details again, reconstructing what we talked about last week. You can

listen to the tape, but what I will say is that there was a troubling implication in that analogy. That is, if

we take the analogy seriously that Moses casting down the snake and recoiling from the snake is equivalent at some level to the Egyptians recoiling from the face of the Jews at the sea, if we do the analogy: Jews equal snake. Right? That's what happens. Jews at the sea equals snake at Sinai. The question is so why do we have to be a snake of all things to analogize us. It doesn't seem very appealing.

A snake is not one of those appealing things. We have this going back all the way to B'reishit that the snake is the symbol of animal and the animal kingdom which inspires the greatest natural sense of dread, the greatest natural sense of enmity. If you see a snake in your house, you crawl up on the nearest chair, wave a broom and scream. Kind of like on the way here, BBC had a story about why people don't

integrate insects into their diet more.

It's so good for protein.

Snakes are kind of in that class where you

just don't want to have anything to do with them.

It seems an odd kind of thing for the Jews to be analogized to a snake.

How is it that we understand

this? Somehow that seems to be what's going on. We talked about the snake having a dual identity.

The snake and the sea monster, a tannin and a nachash. The Jews see themselves as a snake. The

Egyptians see themselves as a sea monster. It all just seems a little bit strange. The Egyptians seeing us a

sea monster we understand and we explained, but why is it that we see ourselves as a snake? Part of that is, you know, we talked about a sea monster as indigenous to the ocean. A snake travels on the ground. We had the experience of dry land. But it doesn't seem to be a satisfactory enough explanation or a full enough explanation.

Today we're going to explore a little bit more: why would we be a snake? Audience Member: (Inaudible).

Audience Member: It bothers me a little bit more that when Moses came to Egypt and he wanted to

show that he was in fact sent by God and he does these three things. How does the --

Rabbi David Fohrman: them.

You don't know that he does all three of them. We know that he does one of

Audience Member: How would the elders know that that's a sign? happening?

How would they know that that was

Rabbi David Fohrman: Well, I don't know the answer to that. What I suspect might be an answer to

that is, remember that the signs get easier. The last of the signs, we said, was the easiest sign to understand. One of the reasons why the last of the signs is the easiest to understand is because it's the

first to happen. Remember, the last of the signs foretells an event which is right around the corner. The

second to the last foretells an event which is a little bit farther off. The first foretells an event which is

farthest off. I'm referring to the blood, plague of the firstborn and the Red Sea, respectively. It could be

that the last of the signs is the reason why they "v'he'emin'u lech kol ha'ot ha'acharon," they'll get the last sign, is either because it's right around the corner and they'll figure it out when it happens because the plague of the blood happens immediately after that. Or, it's also because it was most vivid for them. In other words, remember the crime that's being avenged in all of this is the crime of --

Audience Member: But why would that be the last sign?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

That's a different question.

Hold on.

...Is the crime of throwing the babies into

the Nile, so seeing the blood turn to water would've been something meaningful to them.

Audience Member: I get that. It's just that -- are you saying that the three signs that God did to Moses by the burning bush were not (inaudible 00:07:32)?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

No.

They were. Yeah.

Audience Member: So then the first two signs flew right over their heads.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

May well be.

So what's your question? Why bother with them?

Audience Member: If the signs are supposed to have significance, then it should have significance. Then

why right over the tops of their head?

Something has to trigger something.

A natural sign--

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay.

So it could be that the elders would figure out the meaning of the last

one even if they would've been baffled by the first one. So then your question is why bother with the

first two if they would've been baffled by them. That's an interesting question. A similar thing, by the way, according to Rashi at the burning bush also with God's name. Remember Rashi about "eheyeh

asher eheyeh"? All right.

So what was that about?

Right? It was a very strange Rashi. Let's say you

accept Rashi's interpretation of "eheyeh asher eheyeh". What is "eheyeh asher eheyeh" mean?

Audience Member: They want to hear about what's going to happen.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right. "Eheyeh asher eheyeh" means the same way that I was with them

through this trouble, I'll be with them in all future troubles.

Right?

So Moses says, according to Rashi,

coming from the Midrash, that what are we talking about future troubles for? "Dayam l'tzara zu",

they're up to their necks in this trouble.

So God says you're right.

You know just say "aheyeh shlach ani

aleichem," so leave out the second aheyeh. start with the first aheyeh.

So what was that about?

Like, God didn't know that? So just

The answer is there is a dichotomy between the reality and that which you can accept from a reality. The reality is that there's going to be thousands of years of antisemitism, and God's going to be with us

through all of it. Now human beings at the moment can't accept that. That just floods you so you can

only accept part of that. So God says fine, but I'm telling you what the truth is. It is important for me to

put the truth out there even if you can't accept all of the truth, but the truth is out there. So here's a

piece of it you can accept. The aheyeh piece of it you can accept. Fine. So call it aheyeh.

Something like that I think is going on with the signs. The reality is, is that I'm going to completely redeem everything that happened. They can't understand all of that, all right, so they'll understand part of it. They'll understand the first part of it and then they'll figure out the rest of it. But there's a reality that God's putting out there even though human beings can't believe it.

You see the same thing with Pharaoh also, I think, in terms of God -- this is another shmuz, this gets into something I talked with you about last year. The same thing with Pharaoh in the two speeches in the beginning of Chapter 5 when God reveals Himself. First, He reveals himself to Pharaoh in a way

that Pharaoh can't understand, but it's true, which is that I'm the Creator God. I'm yud-kei-vav-kei. I

have this relationship with the Jewish People which is direct. I'm asking them to go celebrate before me, not sacrifice before me. It doesn't fit it in with the polytheistic pagan system of understanding.

Pharaoh rejects it and says "lo yadati et Hashem v'gam et Yisrael". I don't know what you're talking

about. Then Moses says okay, so let's start with something you can understand. The God of the

Hebrews appeared. If we don't go to serve Him, He might kill us. We're very upset. We don't really

know what He wants exactly, but we have to go. So this kind of language is something which he can

relate to. Again, you find that dichotomy a lot where God will sort of put something out there. This is

the truth and now here's the part of the truth that you can understand now. Maybe something like that

was going on with the signs too. Just a thought.

Anyway, so much for the background, so the question is how do we understand this snake thing? Okay, so here's where I want to get back to something which I talked to you about briefly before Passover and I suggested to you that it was true before Passover, but I didn't prove to you it was true.

What I'm going to do now is I'm now going to give you a completely alternative understanding of the

three signs. Everything that you heard last week, you could just completely throw out the window. I'm

going to give you a completely different way of understanding the three signs. Now, you're all really

frustrated. Right? Because you spent last week, you thought it made a lot of sense and here I'm contradicting myself.

The answer is, I'm not contradicting myself. I only appear to be contradicting myself. What I'm going to show you is another way of looking at the signs, which at face value seems contradictory to what I

said last week, but in fact is not contradictory at all. It's just the flip side of the coin. I want to argue to

you that the three signs have another meaning. There's another meaning in the three signs or at least in the first of the three signs. That meaning is complimentary with the meaning that I just described to

you. This is where I'm going to circle around back to what I talked with you about before Passover,

because those of you who were here and remember know that I gave you an understanding of the first sign then which was very different to the one I talked about last week.

Last week, I suggested to you that the three signs were talking about the plague of blood, were talking

about the plague of the firstborn and were talking about the splitting of the Red Sea. Now I'm going to

suggest to you that the first sign is talking about something else as well. Not just the Red Sea, but it's

talking about a crucial point in the Joseph story of all things. Now, if you weren't here, you're going to

think I'm crazy. Even if you were here, you might think I'm a little crazy because I showed you parallel language that suggested it, but it seemed to come out of nowhere.

What I'm going to show you now is the structure -- the substructure beyond that that proves that that's in fact right. In other words, I'm going to now give you what I consider pretty close to ironclad proof

that the first sign is actually referring back to the Joseph story. I'd be surprised -- it's pretty ironclad

proof. Now the question is once I show that to you, what does that mean in terms of what we talked

about last week?

So we'll talk about that, but that's kind of the shape of things

to come.

Let me try to show this to you and once you see it, by the way, the Joseph part of this, I think we'll get an answer to the question which we talked about last week, which was why would the Jews be a snake at

the Red Sea. So it's all really going to help us understand that. Let's see the other side of the coin of

these three signs and then we can put them together.

The proof of this is not just a figment of my imagination when I start showing you about the three signs and show you language parallel to it, it's not just me kind of going wild. The proof of the pudding is that the language-parallels that link the Joseph story back to the three signs are ensconced within a much larger structure of language-parallels that span, I believe, the entire first four chapters of Sefer Shemot and the three signs are part of that.

With no further ado, let me start taking you through this. The title I'm going to give to this, if you want a title for today's little discussion over here, is going to be sort of The Exodus of Egypt Through

the Rearview Mirror. The reason why I'm going to call it The Exodus of Egypt Through the Rearview

Mirror is through the following analogy.

Imagine that you were driving through the story of the exodus of Egypt.

You're starting in Chapter 1.

It was like a Monopoly game and you pushed on the accelerator and you started going through the

chapters and you're just driving through and seeing these landmarks along the way. The Jews are being

enslaved. All these various things were happening to them. You're just driving through the text. But

now you're glancing through your rearview mirror and as you look through your rearview mirror, you see the landmarks that you're passing. Instead of you seeing them coming up in front of you, you see them receding from behind you.

Imagine that as a good driver, you're looking forward, but there's this truck behind you so you keep on

glancing through your rearview mirror so you have this dual view. You're looking at landmarks as

you're going forward, but you're also seeing them recede backwards at the same time.

We're now going to take a trip through the exodus of Egypt in almost exactly that way. We're going to be driving through the exodus of Egypt, but looking at it with our rearview mirror as we drive. The

rearview mirror is going to be the Joseph story. What I mean by the Joseph story is that as you -- I don't

just mean that you're going to be looking back on the Joseph story. That would be too easy. What I

mean is that as you drive through the exodus from Egypt, every single landmark that you see in the exodus from Egypt actually is connected to the Joseph story, but the connection is backwards.

When I say backwards, I mean backwards in two ways. One is chronologically backwards. That means that as we proceed forward through the exodus from Egypt story, you're going to find each one of these landmarks are going to remind you of something in the Joseph story, but you're going to start seeing a

pattern. It's not just like oh, yeah we're reminded of something in the Joseph story. There's a pattern to

the things we're reminded of in the Joseph story. It's going to start reminding you of the Joseph story

going chronologically backwards. The farther you get in the exodus from Egypt story, the farther forward you go in the exodus from Egypt story, the farther backwards you're going in the Joseph story.

You're reading the Joseph story backwards until when you're at the end of it, you're literally at the

beginning of the story. Now that's one way in which the Joseph story is going backwards.

The second way in which the Joseph story is going backwards is not only is it going chronologically backwards, it's going to go thematically backwards, which means that everything that happened in the Joseph story that might have been kind of nice, is going to re-happen in the exodus from Egypt story,

but it's not going to be kind of nice anymore. It's going to have opposite significance. Okay? It's going

to be kind of not nice. Conversely, the stuff that happens in the Joseph story which was not nice, is

going to re-happen nice. It's kind of backwards. It's the exodus from Egypt through the rearview mirror.

What is the meaning of all of this? That's another question. That's an interesting question. A very important question, but don't get sidetracked with that question yet because -- just keep the scientific method --

Audience Member: (Inaudible).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Right. Why would this be?

So that's a very good question and an extremely

important question. However, before you are in a position to entertain that question, you actually have

to collect the data. It's a scientific enterprise more or less. Right? In a scientific enterprise we collect data, we analyze the data, we see what the data says and when you're done seeing what the data says, then you're in a position to say what does the data mean? But if you start trying to figure out what the data means before you understand what the data says, you're not a very good researcher. First you have to figure out what it says.

Let's take a look and then we'll try to figure out what it means. All right, guys? You're game for this?

Ready to go? Fasten your seatbelts. This is going to be kind of mind bending, but let's give it a whirl. Here we go.

This pattern begins immediately after the last overt mention of Joseph in Sefer Shemot. You realize that

Shemot -- again, the background question for all of this -- there's really two background questions that I think are going to be addressed.

One background question for all of this is where did Joseph go in Sefer Shemot? We spent all this time

in the Book of B'reishit, 13 long chapters detailing the Joseph story in more detail than any other story is ever detailed in all of Tanach. It's the most detailed story we ever have. Then it's dispatched with one verse in the beginning of Sefer Shemot "vayamat Yosef v'chol echav v'chol hador hahu", and that's the

last you ever see of Joseph.

It just seems like bad storytelling.

It seems like a very abrupt kind of

transition from one story to another without a clear understanding of how one story is setting up another story.

In other words, if Joseph was so unimportant to Shemot that it was just a way that we got down to Egypt and that was it, so then why bother spending all this time on it? If we're just going to get rid of him in one verse anyway and then that's going to be the end, so why do we need all this? One question is where is Joseph in Sefer Shemot?

The second part of this addresses a question that my 8-year-old daughter, Ariella, asked me the day after

the Seder. Now, the day after the Seder, the question she had was” I don't understand the whole slavery

in Egypt thing. It's, like, everything was fine in Egypt and then all of the sudden Pharaoh got mad and before we knew it, we were slaves. Like, how did that happen? What she was asking was, like, what

was the process? Now the Ramban talks about this a little bit. The Ramban talks about it in terms of

well it was a gradual process. There was enslavement. There was trickery. There was subterfuge and

various ways that Egypt kind of layered it, but that doesn't entirely answer her question.

Her question also goes to the question of motivation.

Like, you know, the Jews were good.

Everything

was fine. All of a sudden, the Egyptians turn on them and enslave them and try to kill their children. Why would they do such a thing?

There's two questions at play over here. One question is what happens to Joseph in Shemot? And the

second question is motivation in the slavery story. How does slavery devolve?

What we're going to do is we're going to pick up this tale from the last time that Joseph is overtly

mentioned in Sefer Shemot. The last time Joseph is overtly mentioned in Sefer Shemot is in Verse 6.

You'll see it right over here. "Vayamat Yosef v'chol echav v'chol hador hahu". That is the last we hear of Joseph.

Audience Member: It's says "asher lo yada et Yosef."

Rabbi David Fohrman:

I'm sorry.

You're right. That's true. "Vayakam melech chadash al Mitzrayim

asher lo yada et Yosef".

All right. Kind of, but that's part of Joseph being not there anymore.

So Joseph

actually being around ends with Verse 6.

At this point, I want to suggest that Joseph doesn't go away. He just goes to covert levels. It's almost like Joseph becomes a submarine. The periscope goes underneath the depths and Joseph is now underneath the surface of the text instead of at the forefront of the text. Our job is to find Joseph underneath the surface of the text. It turns out that Joseph never left us. The very first covert reference to Joseph is actually going to be in the very next verse.

Verse 7. See if you could find it. "U'b'nei Yisrael paru va'y'shritzu vayirbu vaya'atzmu b'me'od me'od."

That actually is a covert reference to Joseph. Audience Member: (Inaudible).

Does anyone know where?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Excellent. That's exactly what it is. Very good.

Give that lady a free coke. I

will say it over for you. "U'b'nei Yisrael paru va'y'shritzu vayirbu vaya'atzmu b'me'od me'od." These

words that describe the population explosion in Egypt, these words are actually borrowed from words

that appear in the Joseph story. They appear as the last words in Parshat Vayigash. They describe the

beginnings of the population explosion back when Joseph fed his brothers. right now.

Audience Member: (Inaudible).

I'll show you those words

Rabbi David Fohrman:

So we talked about this. Okay.

Some of this is review. I talked about some of

this right before Passover. It could be I talked about a lot of it before Passover, so in which case, I'll move

faster. This is a sort of expanded view of really what is a Joseph chiasm over here. about this before Passover.

So maybe we did talk

Anyway, going back to the end of Vayigash, it's right over here. Here it is. "Vayeishev Yisrael b'eretz

Mitzrayim b'eretz Goshen vayei'achazu bah vayifru vayirbu me'od."

Right?

You see those words

"vayifru vayirbu me'od".

Got that?

So if you look at "vayifru vayirbu me'od", and you look at "b'nei

Yisrael paru va'y'shritzu vayirbu vayatzmu b'me'od me'od", you'll find an interesting thing, which is that

every other word is borrowed from Vayigash. You're with me? Right? Paru that's vayifru, then

va'y'shritzu is new. You see that? Va'y'shritzu. Then vayirbu from Vayigash. Vayirbu is right over

here. Then vayatzmu is new. B'me'od goes back to Vayigash. Right? That's over here. Then b'me'od

me'od that's new.

What's happening over here? What's happening is that the Torah is inserting expansive words into Vayigash and is expanding it. What you find here is that the population explosion which began back then is now expanding. What's the idea? The truth is that Joseph faced a very interesting moral dilemma back then.

Imagine that you were Joseph. The seven years of plenty have expired. The seven years of famine are in

front of you. So you do the math. There are 53 million Egyptians to feed. There's 30 thousand metric

tons of grains stored up in the king's storehouses. You do your math in the Excel spreadsheet and you

see you should be able to shepherd about 97 percent of the Egyptian population through this that they will survive the famine at just about subsistence level. It will be just above starvation level. An average

of 850 calories a day. Something like that.

Now you have one more dilemma, which is you have 11 more mouths to feed. You have your brother's

and their families.

Now the question is how would you feed your brothers?

Would you give them the

same rations that everybody else gets in Egypt or would you feed them a little bit better? Let's actually do this right over here. All in favor of giving your brothers the same rations as everybody else in Egypt, raise your hands.

Audience Member: They're illegal immigrants or legal?

Rabbi David Fohrman: They're legal. Pharaoh let them in. Gave them good jobs in Eretz Goshen.

Audience Member: Treat them better.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay, so everybody has to vote.

All in favor of feeding subsistence level to your

brothers for the next seven years. I just want to know, what would you do? Raise your hands if you're

going to give your brothers just about starvation level food.

Come on guys, nobody?

You've got to

vote.

Now raise your hands if you would feed your brothers better than that.

Unanimously, let the

record show -- you have to vote, so if you didn't vote, I get to say how you voted.

Let the record show that every one of you -- none of you were willing to feed your brothers at the same

level that the Egyptians were being fed.

None of you.

Bobby, maybe would've given them food under

the table or something, but you see the dilemma.

Now the question is how did the Egyptians react to this, because in fact Joseph did what you guys said to

do.

What did Joseph do?

If you go back to Vayigash what happens? "Va'y'chalkel Yosef et aviv v'et

echav v'kol beit aviv lechem l'fi hataf". You see that "lechem l'fi hataf". He gave them enough bread for

the children. If you have enough bread for children, what are you going to have? You're going to have

more children because you have bread for your children. If you know that you were going to be able to

feed your children, then you'll have children.

Correct?

Do you understand?

If you look at the next verse -- see this? Look at "lechem lefi hataf" (bread according to the children)

over here and look how that relates to the next words, "v'lechem ein bechol ha'aretz" (and there wasn't

bread in all the land). Do you see the contrast here? Here he is giving his brothers bread according to

the children because there's only 11 mouths to feed, but there isn't bread in all the land. There's no contradiction between the two because if there's 30,000 metric tons of grain, it's all relative if it means there's no bread in all the land.

Relative to 11 people there's plenty of food, right? But relative to 53,000,000 people there's no food,

30,000 metric tons of grain. "Lechem ein bechol ha'aretz" is: but there was no food. "Ki chaved hara'av

me'od, vateila Eretz Mitzrayim v'Eretz Cana'an mipnei hara'av," the whole world was going crazy

because there's no food. Then you get this long story and it's actually -- let's read little pieces of it that

are really important. "Vay'laket Yosef et kol hakesef hanimtza b'Eretz Mitzrayim u'v'Eretz Cana'an." So

the first thing Joseph does is he gets all the money together and he brings the money to the house of

Pharaoh.

Now, lest you think that Joseph was corrupt, he was not corrupt.

He faithfully brought all the

money to the king's treasuries, not taking any money for himself.

Here Joseph just figured out you have to have some way of distributing the grain.

You're not going to

just say well, Pharaoh's storehouse is open at 9:00 a.m. in the morning, everyone come take as much as

they want.

You do that, you have riots.

So Joseph sells the grain, capitalist system, right? The grain is

sold.

Then "vayitom hakesef mei'Eretz Mitzrayim u'mei'Eretz Cana'an."

Before you know it, no more

money left.

So the end of year one and there's no more money.

At that point the people come and they

say "hava lanu lechem", please give us bread, "velama namut negdecha", and why should we die, "ki afes

kasef", there's no more money. "Vayomer Yosef", so Joseph says you say "hava lanu lechem," I say "havu

mikneichem." So if there's no more money, give your cattle.

Everyone gave their cattle and soon there was no more cattle. It sounds like a child's book, right? Soon

there was no more cattle. remind you of in Exodus?

Now, look at this word hava lanu lechem, havu mikneichem. What does havu Isn't that interesting, "hava nischakma lo," the king says. We remember

hearing havu lanu lachem. What I'm suggesting is there's a kind of resentment which is building up here, but the resentment isn't evident in this generation. If you ask anybody in this generation what they think of Joseph, everyone's very happy with Joseph and it's not just because he's the dictator, because they have to say they're happy with him. They really are happy with him, because what is Joseph doing

for them? Joseph is keeping them alive and they're very happy to be alive, you'll see that.

So "vayavi'u et mikneihem el Yosef," they bring their cattle to Joseph, "vayiten lahem Yosef lechem

basusim u'v'miknei hatzon u'v'miknei habakar u'v'chamorim." So he gives them bread for all of their

cattle, but soon there was no more cattle. At that point the people come to Joseph and they say all we have is our bodies, "lama namut le'einecha?" Why should we die in front of you "gam anachnu gam admateinu k'nei otanu v'et admateinu balechem venihiye anachnu v'admateinu avadim l'Pharoh," let us

be slaves to Pharaoh. Now isn't that interesting because when we hear the phrase avadim l'Paroh, what

do we think of? Avadim hayinu, hayinu. We think we were the first slaves mentioned in the Torah to

Pharaoh, but we weren't. Long before we were slaves, the Egyptians were slaves and they were made so

by Joseph.

Joseph took them as slaves and gave them food and bought their bodies.

"Vayiken Yosef et kol admat

Mitzrayim l'Pharoh ki machru Mitzrayim ish sadeihu ki chazak aleihem hara'av vatehi ha'aretz l'Pharoh." So everything now belonged to Pharaoh and at that point he moved them to arim (towns) and that's

what he did. So at that point Joseph says I have bought you as slaves and I have bought your land. I am

magnanimous and I am giving you now the land back. You can have the land and you can harvest food

on the land, you just have to give taxes. "Unetatem chamishit l'Pharoh", you just have to give a fifth to

Pharaoh and then four fifths you can all keep for yourself. This is all lechem latafchem, so you can feed

your young.

Remember the young, right? What about Jewish young?

No problem for Jewish young,

because they had lechem lefi hataf.

What's the Egyptian response? Are they resentful?

Look at the next verse.

"Vayomru hecheyitanu", you

have given us life, the people say. "Nimtza chen b'einei adoni vehayinu avadim l'Pharoh", if only we could find favor in your eyes to successfully become slaves to Pharaoh, we would be delighted, that is

really fantastic. Thank you. So this is what happened.

Meet the next verse. "Vayeshev Yisrael b'Eretz Mitzrayim be'Eretz Goshen vaye'achazu va," here are the Egyptians dispossessed of the land, the Jews aren't dispossessed in the land, they actually have an achuza, they have a holding, and ancestral holding of land in Goshen and plus they don't have a problem, "vayifru vayirbu me'od" they have lechem lefi hataf. Because they have lechem lefi hataf, vayifru vayirbu

me'od. This is the last words in the sequence, right? They multiplied greatly.

So now what does it mean in Exodus when it says "u'v'nei Yisrael paru vayishretzu vayirbu vaya'atzmu

bime'od me'od?" If you know anything about math or statistics or population you know that if you have

a significant population advantage in one generation, what's going to happen in the next generation? It's going to geometrically multiply. Because if I have 10 kids in one generation, but each of those 10 kids had 10 kids then I have 100 grandkids. Then I have 1000, right? It's geometric expansion. That's the sense that you get over here. "B'nei Yisrael paru vayishretzu vayirbu vaya'atzmu bime'od me'od", but it

happened back then "vatimalei ha'aretz otam" and soon everything was filled. "vayakam melech chadash."

So now, all of a sudden,

Now, with Our Sages you see it in a new way. Our Sages say: was it really a new king or was it the

same king that was "nitchadshu gezeirotav (who renewed his decrees)." Now, you would ask yourself, if

it was a new king I would understand, but if it was a king who renewed his decrees the question you always have is what? Why? What changed? He was such a pal, the last Pharaoh. He was so nice, right? But what changed? Well, one of the things that might change is public sentiment. Think about public

sentiment the generation before and think about the kids. How do the kids look at it?

Audience Member: The kids don't feel like Joseph kept them alive.

Rabbi David Fohrman: That's right. The kids don't have the sense of being near death. They just know

that their parents don't own the land anymore, that their parents have to give 20 percent.

Audience Member: They'd be angry at Pharaoh.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

That's right, but who are you going to be angry at? Was Pharaoh visible?

Who

was visible? Joseph was visible and Joseph was the policy maker, right?

Audience Member: He very much did remember what Joseph did.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Exactly and that's the idea.

For a king who doesn't remember Joseph, he's going

to do a pretty good job of remembering him. So here's this new king that doesn't remember Joseph and

he goes to his people and he says "hinei am B'nei Yisrael rav v'atzum mimenu" and here's these words

hava nitchakma lo. When's the last time we had hava? Hava lanu lechem. What is the king saying

when his first words are hava nitchakma lo?

People remember hava, it's a direct reference.

So what is

the king really saying? He's saying never again. We remember how we had to beg for food with hava lanu lechem only to hear havu mikneichem, only to hear that if you have no more money give your cattle. We're never going to allow that to happen again.

Hava nitchakma lo, nitchakma lo.

What does that remind you of with Joseph?

What was Joseph known

for? "Acharei hodi'a Elokim otcha et kol zot" the previous Pharaoh had said. "Ein n'von vechacham

kamocha," there is no one who is a wise person like you, so if we're going to deal with the children of Joseph, we have to deal with them very wisely because otherwise what might they do? They might outsmart us. "Hava nitchakma lo pen yirbe," we need to deal wisely with them lest they get even larger.

"Vehaya ki tikrena milchama venosaf gam hu al soneinu."

Nosaf is Joseph.

Again, for a king that's

doing his best to forget about Joseph, he's doing a pretty good job remembering him. They'll add themselves against our enemies, "v'nilcham banu v'ala min ha'aretz," and they'll force us out of the land.

Therefore what did he do? "Vayasimu alav sarei misim", taxes of all things. What did Joseph do? It

began with taxes. Joseph was the first to levy these taxes. "Vayasimu alav sarei misim," so, he has tax

masters, also the language by yasimu alav sarim, do you know where that comes from? It comes from

Vayigash. If we go back a little bit earlier in Vayigash you will find an interesting conversation. "Vayomer Pharoh el echav", Pharaoh said to the brothers when they first came, "mah ma'asechem," so

what do you guys do for a living? "Vayomeru el Pharoh ro'ei tzon avadecha gam anachnu gam

avoteinu," we are shepherds, "vayomeru el Pharoh lagur ba'aretz banu ki ein mire latzon", we've just come to sojourn in the land and now can we please stay in the land of Goshen.

At that point he says sure, you guys can stay in the land of Goshen and that's totally fine and plus I'll give

you guys employment. Listen to this: "im yadata veyesh bam anshei chayil vesamtem sarei mikne al

asher li," see those words?

Guys, I'll give you jobs.

You say that you guys are cattle ranchers, great. If

you have any particularly good cattle ranchers, you can be officers of the royal cattle. That's what you guys are going to be, chief royal cattle ranchers. That's you guys. "V'samtem sarei mikne al asher li", now, what happens now?

The sarei mikne become what? Sarei misim, same language. Vayasimu alav sarei misim, v'samtem sarei mikne, you got that? Instead of placing officers of cattle now we're placing officers of taxes which

ultimately become taskmasters. "Vayasimu alav sarei misim lema'an anoto besivlotam" and all of a sudden look what they're building. Are they building just random things? Oh, no. "Vayiven arei

miskenot l'Pharoh", they are building storehouses. storehouses for Pharaoh?

Why do you think that they'd be building

Audience Member: So they were in control of the grain.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Exactly. Never again, right? That way back when Egypt built storehouses for

grain at the command of Joseph and look what he did. Never again will we be in the hold of a Jew who will control our economic destiny. We will build our own storehouses and we will use Joseph's children enslaved to be the ones who will build them. See what's happening? "V'che'ashar ye'anu oto kein yirbe v'chein yifrotz vayakutzu mipnei B'nei Yisrael." There's something else that's happening here too and I want to show you that it's, I think, interesting in terms of -- to see the parallels between this and the Holocaust and other moments of anti-Semitism, but remember this is the first genocidal scheme launched against the Jews. It ultimately becomes not quite as genocidal as the Holocaust, but there was a concerted campaign to throw Jewish babies in the Nile, remember.

Where did that come from? You see it emerging from the verses. If you look carefully you're going to

see three factors that are going to converge and that are going to lead up to the decree to throw our babies in the Nile. Let me point out one of these factors here. "Che'ashar ye'anu oto" as they oppressed the Jews, "kein yirbe 'echein yifrotz" there was nothing they could do to contain the Jews. "Vayakutzu mipnei B'nei Yisrael." What's that language vayakutzu mipnei B'nei Yisrael? What does vayakutzu

mean, do we have Rashi here? We don't have Rashi here.

Anyone have Rashi?

Bottom line is

vayakuzu, they shrank away, they were scared. But the language, if I'm not mistaken, what connotation

does vayakutzu have? They were disgusted by them. Isn't it a language of disgusted? by.

To be disgusted

Now, take a look at this language. "U'B'nei Yisrael paru vayishretzu", not such a nice word, they

swarmed. What are you disgusted by? We were talking about eating insects, right? You're disgusted by

insects, by snakes, by these reptilian creatures. So the Jews give the impression to the Egyptians -- it's

not just that they're having lots of children, they're swarming and the Egyptians are disgusted by them.

If you think about this, this is a dehumanization process. They are not viewing the Jews, the population

-- and later on, by the way, the midwives are going to use it to their advantage when they say --

remember what alibi they have, "ki chayot heina." What are they doing? Same thing. That would

resonate with Pharaoh because that's how Pharaoh is treating them. Pharaoh doesn't view them as human, they're like wild animals.

There are three factors that are converging here to allow genocide to take place. The first thing you have to feel is you have to believe that those people over there, they do not have your best interests in mind. Right? The Jews, we don't like them, they're dangerous, they don't like us. That's this notion

that what are we worried about?

"Vehaya ki tikrena milchama venosaf gam hu al soneinu."

We don't

even really need -- in a certain way --

Audience Member: What was the time span over here?

Rabbi David Fohrman: I don't know. We don't get that. But if you just look at the three factors,

whatever the time span is -- one is they don't have our best interest in mind, these Jews. They can't be counted upon to believe what we believe. They're not good Egyptian citizens.

Audience Member: And at this point there’s famine in the land?

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes.

Audience Member: And actually what Joseph is pointing out, we came to live here, to sojourn here, not (inaudible). That's apparent. (Inaudible).

Rabbi David Fohrman: That's true, but remember, they did move in. Right? Vayachazu ba they took

possession of the land, which was a mistake. And while they moved in, the Egyptians moved out, remember? The city dwellers go to the farms, the farm dwellers go to the cities. There's all this

population moving around, so that's part of the resentment too.

But back to the three factors.

Factor

number one is these Jews, they don't like us.

Factor number two is hava nitchakma lo.

Before I get to

these three factors, let me explain to you why these three factors are necessary. What I want to begin to try to explain is something which -- and I don't know that I can completely explain it, but I'll at least take a stab at explaining.

In the wake of the Holocaust and in the wake of enslavement in Egypt one of the questions that every

thinking person has to ask is how could this happen, right? How could a nation of -- what are they,

devils? Evil?

How could a nation of reasonably -- there must be some nice people, right?

So how do

nice people throw babies in the Nile?

How do nice people throw Jews in the gas chambers?

How do

nice people listen to the screams of babies and not respond? How do you understand how that works?

You would respond, right?

So there's nobody as nice as you are? Like, how did that happen?

So I think

that there are three factors. One factor is there's a national security issue. These Jews, they don't like us.

Okay. Fine, they don't like you. There's another thing too, they're dangerous.

The second thing is hava nitchakma lo, we have to outsmart them. Because what do we know about these Jews? They're very smart. The second factor which is important is you have to believe that your

enemy is smarter than you are. Your enemy is shrewder, is smarter than you are. And the third piece of

this is vayishretzu, right? Vayakutzu, the sense of disgust which comes from a sense that they don't share something basically human in common with you, that on some level there is a brotherhood of mankind and they are not part of that brotherhood.

Once you believe those three things, once you believe these people are dangerous, that they don't like us, and they're smarter than we are, and that there is no fundamental brotherhood between us and them. At that point it's open season, at that point you actually have gotten yourself in a position where you can kill

them. Why? How could you take their babies and throw them into the Nile, what about the screams?

How do you justify not responding to the screams? Think about The Matrix. Which part of The

Matrix is it?

Audience Member: They're not human.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

That's not enough.

You would respond to the screams of a dying cat.

You

would. If you heard a dying cat, you heard a kitten dying in the sewer you would respond to their

screams. The kitten's not human.

Audience Member: You might not because you would be afraid that they would harm you.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right. If a lion was screaming, you might not because you would be afraid it

would harm you. Now, what if it was a wounded lion or if it didn't have the ability to harm you, maybe

it still would.

But there's something else too.

Not only did they not have your best interest in mind,

they're smarter than you are. Because they're smarter than you are -- see that's the key. It's almost like biochemistry -- this is a little digression, but I have to tell you anyway. When I was in 10th Grade and I

was taking chemistry in Ner Yisroel we had this thing we had to do called a creative lab. So in our

creative lab you come up with your own lab experiment and you had to put down the procedures, what

you hoped to prove, the hypothesis. If you did a good creative lab you got a lot of extra points.

Somewhere I handed in one creative lab, so I had my materials. My materials were a copy of the periodic table, copious amounts of each element, a large witch's cauldron and then a monopoly marker and a pair

of dice. Place the monopoly marker at the beginning of the periodic table and roll dice. Move the

monopoly marker the amount shown on the dice and pour a copious amount of that element into the

cauldron. Add water, put it on the Bunsen burner when you're done, until you get to the end of the

periodic table and leave the lab. So I failed my lab, but the point is that chemistry is built upon the idea

that you can have each element which is perfectly inert, you can have hydrogen and you can have chlorine. Hydrogen is fine on its own and chlorine is fine on its own and you put them together and you

have hydrochloric acid and it's not so fine anymore. So it's the same thing over here, you've got each

one of these elements and they're fine on their own, but when you put them together a terrible reaction

takes place. Because what happens is that I won't listen to the screams because it could be a trick. Do

you understand? Once I believe that you are no longer my brother and that you're smarter than me and you don't have my good interests in mind, so I hold myself back from my natural response of compassion, thinking I can't afford to display compassion because if I do, you're just taking advantage of me. It's just another Jewish trick.

So the three elements in place here hava nitchakma lo, I need to outsmart them, vayakutzu mipnei Benei Yisrael, I shrink away from them in disgust and the threat vehaya ki tikrena milchama venosaf are actually the elements of genocide.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:53:08).

Rabbi David Fohrman:

It actually is. That's very true.

Now, remember all of the parallels to Joseph's

story. What's scary about this is these three elements were in place in how the brothers treated Joseph

too.

Think about it, how do you know?

Before the brothers throw him in the pit, so let's think about

that. Did they think that Joseph didn't have their best interests at heart?

Absolutely.

Did they think that

Joseph was shrewd and smart and conniving?

Absolutely.

Now, here's the last piece, did they think that

Joseph was their brother? Well, the answer is sort of yes. I mean, here's the interesting issue. He kind of

is, kind of isn't, right? He's the child of Rachel, they're the children of Leah.

Now, there's a fantastic thing that Our Sages tell us and this is going to become important in a moment. The verse that is the darkest moment for the brothers, arguably, is when "vayiru oto meirachok u'v'terem

yikrav aleihem vayitnaklu oto lehamito." They are literally plotting to kill him and they say "lechu

venahargeihu" let's kill him "venashlicheihu b'achad habarot" and we'll throw his body in one of these

pits that are in the desert. Now, if you think about the run up to that, the verse right before that is this.

The verse right before that is when Joseph is in Shechem, meets the anonymous guy and the anonymous

guy says "ma t'vakeish", what are you looking for? for my brothers.

Joseph says "et achai anochi m'vakeish", I am looking

Then the man answers a funny thing, he says "nasu mizeh ki shamati omrim neilcha Dotaina", they left

that, I heard them say they're going to Dothan. Now the point is the mize as I mentioned to you last

time, the mizhe is wrong, it should have been mipo. They left here already. Our Sages expounded

mizeh to mean that he was directly answering Joseph's question. Joseph, you say "et achai anochi

mevakeish", I am looking for my brothers? Nasu mizeh, they left that already. They left behind

brotherhood, they're going somewhere else. It was a double entendre and Joseph didn't understand what it meant. And of course the very next words are "lechu venahargeihu." That was the third element.

They already thought he was a threat, they already thought he was too smart. he's not really their brother.

Now they believe that

By the way, the language of throwing Joseph in the pit reminds you, as we talked about a few years ago,

of what other story? "Venashlicheihu be'achad habarot", the brothers sit from afar, they cast him down

into a pit, it's all the language actually of geirush Yishmael (the expulsion of Ismael), it's the language of Hagar throwing down Ishmael and what is the expulsion of Ismael, really? It's a dispossession really, you're not the brother anymore, you're not part of this family. That is what is happening here with

Joseph. So the scary thing is that in all these Joseph parallels, there's another Joseph parallel also which is

that the way Pharaoh is treating the Jews, the starting to circle around looks suspiciously like the way the

brothers were treating Joseph. little bit.

Which leads us to the next elements of the connection, let's continue a

I just want to point out, by the way that you already see the reverse happening, the reverse pattern.

Because all of the early connections are at the very end of the Joseph story. Oh, I missed one, I'm sorry.

I missed this one over here, am rav. I think I talked about it with you last time, did we talk about am rav

last time before Passover?

I didn't talk about this with you?

No?

"Hinei am B'nei Yisrael rav v'atzum

mimenu." We didn't talk about the connection between this and Parshat Vayechi when Joseph says am

rav?

No one remembers this? All right.

So very quickly. Hinei am B'nei Yisrael rav v'atzum mimenu,

this is another Joseph words. Who else said am rav? Turns out Joseph said am rav before Pharaoh ever

said it, he said it at the end of Vayechi, I'll show you. Audience Member: After Jacob died?

It's right over here.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes, after Jacob dies. After Jacob dies the brothers come to Joseph asking for

forgiveness, the only problem is they don't do such a good job.

Instead of saying hey, look.

We did

something bad, would you forgive us? They lie and they say dad says you're supposed to forgive us. Which Rashi says was a justified lie because it was for the sake of peace. Dad never said that they're supposed to be forgiven, but they figured they would lie to keep the peace. Little did the brothers realize that with, I think Rashi's sardonic wit, that if they'd only not lied to keep the peace, maybe there would have been peace. Lying to keep the peace was actually what prolongs the war. Right? Because if they would have come and said look, we did this terrible thing, please forgive us that would have been one thing. Instead of saying Dad says you're supposed to forgive us when Dad didn't say you're supposed to

forgive us, so at least do the following. "Avicha tziva lifnei moto leimor ko tomru l'Yosef ana sa na pesha

achecha vechatatam", notice how they're disembodied, they're not even talking in their own voice.

They're quoting their father so there's no real apology. They're not saying we did this terrible thing,

we're saying father says that we did this terrible thing. It takes all the power out of their apology and at

that point "vayeiv'k Yosef," Joseph cries. You have to wonder is Joseph crying because he's so

overwhelmed by the apology or because he's so underwhelmed by the apology or so hurt by the lack of apology.

In other words, if you think about it, the brothers of Joseph have spent 17 years living together since the revelation that they were brothers and they never discussed the pit before, they never discussed what

happened between them. How did they live together that whole time? Imagine, I don't know if you've

ever had this in your own life, but somebody's hurt you, but not somebody you can completely cut out.

You have to have connection with them and they never come to apologize. Ax: It's the white elephant.

What do you do?

Rabbi David Fohrman:

It's the white elephant.

So what do you do?

You smile in the hallway, you act

politely and all of that. You assiduously avoid any discussion of this. But imagine that one day, 17 years

later, that person comes to you and says you know, we really have to talk. Right?

That's an interesting moment, there's an interesting TED talk I saw about this, very fascinating. This fellow, actually who was driving in Jerusalem, an American. He was driving in Jerusalem and an Arab cut him off with a truck and sliced through their car and he became a paraplegic. One person in the car was killed. Then, a decade later, came back to Israel, paralyzed, to see if he could hunt down the guy who drove the truck. He talks about having coffee with the guy in his Arab village and all he wanted to hear was an apology and all the guy could do was you know, it really wasn't my fault, there was something that was cutting you off.

The guy had 27 other traffic violations before this one including going down, not in high-gear, on that

very hill. Still, he just could not see his culpability on this. So imagine someone coming to you after 17

years saying we got to talk, so you're hopeful, right? Maybe things will come to a conclusion and then you hear dad says you're really supposed to forgive us. Then you cry, but it's not necessarily you cry because there's this great sense of everything is forgiven, you cry because --

Audience Member: Even if the Arab, let's say, wasn't culpable, but the fact was that his truck caused this guy to become a paraplegic. There should have been a sense I'm so sorry that this happened to you.

Audience Member: But he did hear the brothers saying (inaudible).

Rabbi David Fohrman: That's true, but interestingly they never said it to him. They said it without

knowing it was him, which is interesting. It seems to have been led by Reuben, there's some question whether everyone else is going along with that. But anyway "vayeiv'k Yosef bedabram eilav", Joseph

cries. So now the next thing that happens is the brothers, almost with a sixth sense, realizing that they

have not really achieved forgiveness say this "hinenu lecha l'avadim", let us be your slaves. What are they really saying? They're saying if you won't forgive us, what's the only other way we can balance the

scales? We sold you into slavery, tit for tat. Take us as slaves, that's really what they're saying. Now, at

that point that's not what Joseph wants to hear, so Joseph goes back to them and says look "al tira'u ki

hatachat Elokim ani" don't fear, am I in place of God?

Now, these are weird words.

What does he mean

by that? Don't fear, am I in place of God.

Audience Member: (Inaudible).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes, Jacob did say that to Rachel, we'll get to that in a moment, but let's leave

that aside for a moment and keep it simple. Am I in place of God, what's he saying? Audience Member: That I should make you slaves.

Rabbi David Fohrman: That I should make you slaves. In other words, what he's saying is: guys, it isn't

up to me. It isn't up to me, it's up to God. But don't worry about a thing, guys, because "v'atem

chashavtem alai ra'a", it's true, you guys thought you were doing something bad when you threw me in

the pit, but thank God, look at the providence. "Elokim chashva letova", God made it work out

wonderful, "lema'an aso kayom haze l'hachayot am rav", so I could provide you with all this food, it was

really just God's way of taking care of you. There's 53,000,000 people here that are starving. And you, I

can give you guys food and really give you enough food for your families to make you into a great

nation.

So, guys, it's totally fine.

Don't you think?

God is totally on board over here.

Listen carefully -- we'll get back to that. Do you see what's happening here? What's happening here is

that everybody is hiding behind their father. The brothers are hiding behind their father, Dad says

you're supposed to forgive us.

Joseph is hiding behind his father, his Father in Heaven.

Not up to me,

it's up to God. It is up to him. What's the first thing you know about repentance in Hilchot Rambam?

God cannot forgive you unless you've appeased the one that you hurt. There's no such thing as God taking the place of the victim and this is where the Christians are all wrong, by the way. Right? When they talk about forgiveness and all of that there's nothing more corrupt than that notion of forgiveness

which is completely unearned. forgive them.

Forgiveness is when you've looked the person in the eye and you say I

Audience Member: But doesn't Judaism also have a concept of recognizing and saying you've

(inaudible), you did me a wrong. (Inaudible) and I'm willing not to carry a grudge.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes, another talk beyond the scope of this, but let's just keep it simple for a

moment. The idea is that to say it is not up to me as the victim to issue forgiveness to you, but is up to

God, is probably wrong.

Look what Joseph's doing, he's trying to rationalize it.

You guys are totally

fine, because if you want my view of providence, don't worry, thank God, it was so I could take of you, everything is fine.

Which, by the way, should make you suspicious when anybody sounds a little bit too frum with providence and thank God, it's all fine and it has to do with issues between you and them, you should get

nervous. Because it is an easy way of sounding religious at God's expense when you're not actually

doing the interpersonal work that needs to be done between two people. Joseph could have gone back,

if you want to play Monday morning quarter-back and said, guys, you can't ask me like that. You can't

go and say Dad's -- why don't you go back out there and walk in and let's start this all over again. Right? Rewind.

Audience Member: Or even if he would have said yes. Yes, you did do me wrong.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right. Even if he would have said that. But Joseph doesn't want to have this

conversation, the same way they don't want to have the conversation. So Joseph says you know what,

it's not -- what's in it for Joseph? When Joseph says it's not up to me to forgive, it's up to God, he's

sounding very benevolent because he's saying Elokim chashva letova, but it's actually passive-aggressive,

because what he's withholding is what they want, is actual forgiveness. It sounds religious because he's

saying oh, it's up to God to forgive. Whenever you ascribe something to God it sounds like the most

religious thing in the world, but it's not actually. It's a way of shirking what's happening. behind his Father.

So it's hiding

Audience Member: I suppose they are very happy with the response because this way they don't have to really face the reality.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Well, I don't know if they're so happy. By the way, "vayenacheim otam

vaiyedaber al libam", we don't have Rashi here, right? You know what Rashi says on vayenacheim otam

vayedaber al libam? You have it here? Here's what Rashi says about vayenacheim otam vayedaber al

libam at the very end of Genesis here. Vayedaber al libam, what did he say when he spoke words of comfort to their heart? Devarim hamitkablim al haleiv, Rashi says, he was saying very sensitive, very,

very sensitive words to the brothers. Things like this "ad shelo yerad'tem lechan", you know, guys, I

really got to hand it to you. You are so nice because until you brothers came here to Egypt "hayu meranenim alai", I had big public relations problem here in Egypt because I had ascended to power and all this, but everybody said "ani eved", everybody said I'm really a servant. I was sold into slavery, I came

up through the ranks. I'm not a real Egyptian citizen, I'm just a servant who somehow got promoted. "Al y'deichem", but all of a sudden my brothers come "noda she'ani ven chorin" and everyone sees that I'm part of a good upstanding family from Canaan. I got to hand it to you, you vouched for my

pedigree, guys. What are you so worried about? "Ani horeg etchem", you're worried that I'd kill you?

"Mah habriyot omrot", if I killed you, what would everyone say? I need you guys, you guys are vouching for my pedigree.

If I killed you they'd say "kat shel bachurim ra'a", they'd say he wasn't related to them, he saw some unrelated guys "v'nishtabach bahem", and he brought them in and he lied and he said hey, you guys, pretend to be my brothers and then "v'amar achai heim", say you're my brothers "veliv'sof", and when he's done with them "harag otam", he got rid of them. Because "yesh lecha ach sh'horeg et echav",

everyone would way is there such thing as a brother who would kill his other brothers? There's no such

thing as that, no one would understand our family, would they? This is devarim hamitkablim al haleiv according to the Midrash. What's the Midrash saying? It doesn't mean that Joseph said this, the Midrash is not to be taken literally, I don't think, like most Midrashim are. It doesn't mean Joseph said that to

them. It meant Joseph actually said devarim hamitkablim al haleiv. Joseph said whatever nice things he

thought he could say because Joseph probably thought he forgave them. Joseph was trying to be as nice

as he felt he could be in this situation of non-apology. Thank God, it worked out okay, I can't really get

the words out of my mouth that I forgive you, but look at the way God has played this all out. He was

trying to be as nice as he could. What are Our Sages saying? Midrash is always the subconscious of the

text, here it's literally the subconscious of Joseph, it's that underneath all those nice things, here's what

Joseph really wanted to say, even though he didn't say it and it percolates through his words. So here's

Joseph hiding behind his father, saying it's not up to me to decide whether you're slaves, it's up to God.

Now the question is, what did God say? What God said is, did anybody call my name? I didn't think

this was up to me, but if you say it's up to me, so all right. I can get involved. We've got somebody

who's victimized and was thrown into slavery. Then we have the aggressors who threw them into

slavery who are not really apologizing. And then we have the victim who's not really willing to forgive

them. And then we have the aggressors saying that if they won't forgive them that they're offering

themselves as slaves. Now it's up to me. We can do slavery, we can do that, we can work with that.

And lo and behold, a generation later this is the end of Parshat Vayechi, they're slaves. slaves? Well, what did Joseph say?

How are they

Joseph said, well, look at my providence, made it work out okay, they threw me in this pit just so that God could have his plan, so that you could feed them. Well, what Joseph doesn't see is I can make them slaves through exactly what you think is my providence to feed them, that will be the mechanism through which they'll become slaves. That will become the point that Pharaoh's paranoia will dwell

upon. Look at how many of them there are because they became a great nation because Joseph fed

them. That will become the vehicle through which they'll become slaves. What you see here at the beginning of Exodus is a kaleidoscope of events coming together like a perfect storm to bring about slavery.

There are memories of Joseph in Egypt, there's socioeconomic inequalities in Egyptian society, there's a population explosion, there is Joseph's fealty to Pharaoh and his ability to take care of the Egyptians and at the time it was all fine and nobody had any resentment that he was feeding his brothers a little bit

more. Of course, there's 11 people here and there's 53,000,000 of us and 11 of your brothers, of course

you would take care of them. But that was the way one generation viewed it, it's not the way the next

generation viewed it. Then there's Pharaoh's paranoia and behind the scenes there is God. There is God

working with the unresolved family situation and putting things together in the way God feels things

need to be put together.

And it all combines to form Egyptian slavery.

So this is the beginning of the

Joseph narrative replaying backwards, as it were. But it's just the beginning so when we come back I'll show you some more pieces of it.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Welcome back.

So we have some outstanding questions that we're trying to

address. One thing that we're trying to address is that we've seen a -- I've given you an interpretation of the three signs at the burning bush and the bottom line of that interpretation was that the first of those signs seems to be a reference to a future that's going to occur which is the Splitting of the Sea at Yam Suf (Reed Sea). And that, if you do the math, with the language parallels, it ended up that the nachash (snake), in the story, when Moses takes his staff and throws it down it becomes a snake that snake seems to represent the Jews themselves.

We know that because some of the language parallels that bring us to the Reed Sea, in that story, are the "vayanas mepanav," when Moses recoils from the snake. The only other time we have a case of "vayanas mepanav," of recoiling on the face of something, in Chumash, is in fact the Mitzrim (Egyptians) when they recoil in the face of the Jews at the Reed Sea. Right? That "anusah m'p'nei Yisrael." They said let

me run away, let me recoil from the Jews. So if you do the math, it sounds like the snake -- Moses

recoiling in front of the snake analogizes to the Egyptians recoiling in front of the Jews. Why should the

Jews be analogized to the snake? get back to.

So that's something which we want to get back to and which we will

In the meantime, we were going through what I called yetziat Mitzrayim through the rearview mirror.

Which is, we were taking a trip through Shemot.

Starting from the very beginning of Shemot.

From

the last moments that we see Joseph overtly in the story, which is the death of Joseph and, at that point, our theory was that Joseph becomes sort of a submarine. At that point Joseph does not disappear, but he's covert rather than overt and that if you listen carefully to the narrative, you'll find these covert references to the Joseph story.

I suggested that you'll find actually a pattern in the covert references. That as you're going forward through yetziat Mitzrayim when you look in the rearview mirror you see the same events that are so

familiar to you from yetziat Mitzrayim:, they'll look like the Joseph story receding in back of you. The

same events have a dual identity. They are Egypt, but they also echo back to the Joseph story, but the

pattern you're going to see is Joseph receding. So you're going to see the parallels as you go forward in

the yetziat Mitzrayim story are going to mirror backwards parallels in the Joseph story.

That's where we were up to.

We were working on that. A couple of other words of introduction.

Just

to be forewarned, what I was about to show you now is -- ultimately what I'm going to show you is an entirely different way of looking at the three sides, in particular the first side. I showed you one way of looking at it. Where the three sides seem to anticipate this future event of the Splitting of the Sea. I'm about to show you another way of looking at it which I'm going to argue is not contradictory but

complimentary. You have to, kind of, hold on to your seats for that.

One thing, also, by way of background which I want to throw into the mix here. The very first mention of slavery that we have in Bereishit, of course, is the Brit bein Habetarim (covenant of the pieces), which occurs in Chapter 15, in Bereishit. It's when God comes out of the sky and says "Ger yihiyeh zaracha b'eretz lo lahem va'avadum v'inu otam arba mei'ot shanah," your children are going to

be slaves in a land not their own for 400 years.

One of the oft overlooked parts of the Covenant of the Pieces is a seemingly contradictory statement that

comes right afterwards. Among the things that God tells Abraham he says "Vedor rivi'i yashuvu heinah,"

the fourth generation is going to return here. So the question is what does that mean, and what does that

mean, especially in light of the 400 years. In other words, if you just do the math, you say, okay. So

there's going to be 400 years of slavery. Okay, we've got that and the fourth generation is going to return to this land from the slavery, apparently.

Now, how does that work? Now, 400 years is a long time, right? Whether it's 210 years or whether it's

400 years, the bottom line is it's a long time.

Four generations is not a long time.

You live with four

generations. Your parents, you, your children, your grandchildren -- that's four generations right there.

What do you mean the fourth generation is going to return and what's that supposed to mean? Which is that four generations are a short time, 400 years are a long time.

You know, we've even talked, in this class, before about various possibilities. Remember when we talked

about the connection between the Joseph story and korban Pesach (Passover offering). We talked about

this before Passover time and during that time I suggested to you Rav Soloveitchik's theory that in Jacob's view, Jacob thought that he was the third generation, right? This is Rav Soloveitchik's view of

the story. Jacob picked up on the four generations and, in fact, that explains, according to Rav

Soloveitchik the verse that says "Vayehi ka'asher yaldah Rachel et Yosef," that when Rachel gave birth to Joseph so Jacob said "shalcheini v'eilchah el mekomi u'l'artzi," he said to Laban it's time to let me go because he thought it was him. He thought, you know, "ger yihiyeh zaracha b'eretz lo lahem," your children are going to be strangers in a land not their own; that's me. I'm in the house of Laban, I'm a stranger, I'm enslaved and now I have a fourth generation, Joseph, nobody else counts because Joseph is

the first child of my real wife, Rachel. Now, that there's a fourth generation it's time for me to leave.

Ay, 400 years, all right. You know, whatever.

It was a long time. You know what I mean. But you see the tension over here. Is it 400 years? Is it four

generations? Then we say well, Jacob was wrong. so, but what about the fourth generation business?

Well, if Jacob was wrong and it was really 400 years How do you reconcile these two things? This is

something which we're going to want to come back to.

One more word of introduction which is going to come in handy for us. There is a word that floats around here, in Shemot, which we're going to find in Shemot, but the origin of the word really comes from Bereishit. It's, sort of -- I'm not sure if it's a word or a phrase and we've talked about this a little bit before, but the phrase is mizeh, from this. Occasionally, the Torah will use the word mizeh when it really means mipoh, from here and it will strangely enough say mizeh.

Let me give you the classic example of this which Chazal (our Sages) point out is in the story of Joseph

and his brothers. It happens twice. Actually, there are three occurrences of mizeh, which are a little bit

odd, in the Joseph story. We'll start with the last one.

The last one is "pakod yifkod Elokim etchem veha'alitem et atzmotai mizeh itchem." God will

eventually redeem you and you're going to bring my bones out so it really should say mipoh, from here,

but mizeh, from this with you. So from this is a little bit strange.

There's an interesting Chazal which say that that verse indicates that Joseph's brothers fulfilled that verse

when they took his bones from Egypt and they buried them, in of all places Shechem (Nablus). why would they bury his bones in Nablus? Why Nablus of all places?

Audience Member: It comes full circle from the first mizeh.

Now,

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right. The answer is because it comes full circle from the first mizeh. The very

first mizeh, in the Joseph story, occurs in Nablus. It's when Joseph is looking for his brothers, can't find them, finds this anonymous guy, this man who our Sages say was an angel and asks them -- and he's

wandering around.

So the angel says to him "mah tivakeish," what are you looking for?

So Joseph says

"et achai anochi mevakeish," I'm searching for my brothers. At which point the angel says "nas'u mizeh

ki shamati omrim neilchah Dotainah," they've left this, I heard them saying they're going to Dotan. Now, what do you mean they left this? He should say they left here, right? What do you mean they left this?

So our Sages say he didn't mean they left here, he meant they left this. If you follow the conversation carefully the angel/anonymous person had asked Joseph "mah tivakeish," what are you looking for?

Joseph had responded, "et achai anochi mevakeish," I'm searching for my brothers. So what does it mean

"nas'u mizeh," they left this? They left that, right. What you're talking about? Brotherhood, you're

searching for your brothers, they left that already. They're no longer your brothers. treating you like your brothers.

They're not

In fact, there is strong indication from the verses to support what our Sages are saying. They're not

treating him like his brothers.

If you go back, first of all, to what we talked about last week.

For the

three decisions that have to be made in order to be able to kill, in order to be able to harm on a national level, in order to be able to commit genocide on a personal level, in order to kill anyone those three things are again, that person doesn't like me; they don't have my best interest in mind. B; they're smarter

than I am and C; they're not really my brother. There's no brotherhood between us.

Once there's no brother between us and you're smarter than I am, so I can't trust you anymore because

even if you're pleading for me, for help, and you look innocent, but I can't trust you. You're not really

innocent. Then and I know you don't have my best interest in mind so now I'm going to do what it takes to get rid of you and I'm not going to listen to your screams.

What our Sages are saying are sort of chilling in that the last normal words that Joseph hears "nas'u mizeh ki shamati omrim neilchah Dotainah" come right before the verse "vayir'u ota meirachok," right, "u'veterem yikrav aleihem vayitnaklu oto lehamito," as they saw him coming they were plotting to kill him. They're plotting to kill him because they had left brotherhood behind. Had they not left brotherhood behind, they couldn't have plotted to kill him. Because even if you believed that he didn't

like you and even if you believed that he was smarter than you, but he's still your brother. You can't do

this. So our Sages are focusing on the last piece of the puzzle. They're not your brothers anymore and

you see it in other indications in the text.

You see it, for example, in a very interesting series of parallels which we've talked about before in the

Joseph story. for a second.

I'll bring it back to the Joseph story quickly so you could see them. Let's go to Chapter 37 So up in your screen, you're going to see mechirat Yosef (the sale of Joseph) on the left-

hand side and you're going to see geirush Yishmael (the expulsion of Ishmael) on the right-hand side.

What about the sale of Joseph reminds you of geirush Yishmael, just for the language sale point. Here

look at the yellow. "Lech na re'ei et shlom achecha v'et shlom hatzon vahashiveini davar vayishlacheihu

mei'Emek Chevron vayavo Shechema." So Jacob sent Joseph from Emek Chevron and he came to

Shechem. Right? "Vayishlacheihu" appears again in the geirush Yishmael story, right over here. "Vayitein el Hagar sam al shichmah." Abraham places the bread and the water on the shoulder of Hagar

"vayitein el Hagar sam al shichmah v'et hayeled vayishalchehah," and he sends her away. So it's not just

"vayishalchehah," both of them are sent by their fathers on a journey. what about this?

Both Ishmael and Joseph.

But

Where do they go to, isn't that interesting?

"Vayavo Shechemah."

Joseph goes to Shechemah.

So long

before Shechemah was a place, going to Shechem, those same letters become the shoulder, right, shichmah, the shoulder of Hagar. Right in connection, just a couple words away from "vayishalchehah."

It's not just that; it's this too. "Vayimtza'eihu ish vehinei to'eh basadeh," so along comes a man and finds

Joseph wandering in the fields. Well, look at the geirush Yishmael. "Vayitien el Hagar sam al shichmah," places the bread on her shoulder "v'et hayeled vayishalchehah," and sends her away,

"vateilech vateita," same word and she goes and she's wandering in the desert. So both of these children

are wandering in the desert. So in the space of literally just six words or so, you have these three pieces

all in conforms and it's not just that, right.

Besides these connections, let's go a little bit further.

Going to the bottom, take a look at the pink

"vayikachuhu vayashlichu oto haborah," when the brothers, they cast Joseph into the pit. They don't just

put him there nicely. "Vayashlichu" is the language of to throw. They throw him in the pit.

Similarly, look at what happens with Hagar. The water is used up. Remember what happens? "Vayichlu hamayim min hacheimet," no more water, "vatashleich et hayeled tachat achad hasichim," and

she casts the child underneath one of the bramble branches. So in both cases -- it's not apparent -- a

relative are casting children now. We go a little bit further. Right next to "vayashlichu oto haborah" "vayeishvu le'echol lechem" and then what happens? They sit from afar to go eat bread. The Rashbam's theory, if you remember, they're not near the pit. They're far away from the pit and now look. "Vateilech vateishav lah mineged," as she casts him down, she sits from afar. That's just like the brothers.

Then very chillingly. "Vayichlu hamayim min hacheimet," no more water. What about no more water

in the sale of Joseph's story?

"Vehabor reik ein bo mayim," no more water.

So you have all these things.

No more water, sitting from afar, casting down. This whole section of -- by the way there is bread in

both stories, interestingly. Irrelevant bread. "Vayikach lechem v'cheimat mayim" and the brothers

sitting down to eat bread. Eating bread, but no more water in both stories. And, of course, Ishmaelites.

We're talking about the story of Ishmael -- geirush Yishmael -- but who should come along to pick up Joseph from the pit? "Hinei orchot Yishmaelim ba'ah miGilad," it's an Ishmaelite caravan coming from

Gilad. So here come the Ishmaelites. The idea is one cast out child is coming to pick up another cast out

child. In other words, the meaning of these parallels seem to be that what's happening here -- at least from the brothers standpoint -- it's that it's another geirush Yishmael. Where dad might have thought

you were the special ones. you're not even a brother.

You were the special brother. You're being disenfranchised.

Not only are you not the special brother, You're not part of this. The same way,

Ishmael is being cast out, "ki b'Yitzchak yikarei lecha zera." You're not part of the family anymore.

So all of this is coming to afore, according to our Sages, with those words "nas'u mizeh." They've left brotherhood behind already.

Now, relate the two mizehs.

Those we've talked about thus far in the Joseph story.

We have a mizeh in

the beginning of the Joseph story.

We have a mizeh at the end of the Joseph story.

So now, at the end

of the Joseph story, what is Joseph really quoting from? He's quoting from that mizeh. Which is where

our Sages come from the idea that they need to bury him in Nablus. When he says "ha'alitem et atzmotai mizeh" it contains a kind of clue. Right? Bring my bones out of this. Well, what do you mean out of this? On the simple level it's out of Egypt, but on a deeper level what does mizeh? Mizeh is the last normal word I heard. It's also the word that the angel used to try to signify to me a reality, a very bitter reality. Which is that there's no brotherhood left here anymore.

"Ha'alitem et atzmotai mizeh" contains another meaning which is that take my bones out of this place of no brotherhood; out of this space of no brotherhood and bring them back to normalcy. Bring them back

to Nablus. The last place where I remember there being any brotherhood between us. So it's like repair

the rift in a way, is what Joseph's saying. Bring my bones back, and in so doing, put this shattered

brotherhood back together. is one big mizeh.

"Ha'alitem et atzmotai mizeh." I can't stand the mizeh and the whole Egypt

Audience Member: Do you think that the "ba'al hachalomot halazeh" part --

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Yes, I do.

Thanks for reminding me about that.

So let's go back into Bereishit,

for a moment and I'll show you that. There's another zeh, right after mizeh, which is very interesting.

Let me show it to you.

It's back in Chapter 37. Here's the mizeh.

"Vayomer ha'ish nas'u mizeh ki

shamati omrim neilchah Dotainah."

There's the mizeh.

Now, isn't it interesting that when the brothers

see him coming, in the very next verse, "Vayir'u oto meirachok u'beterem yikrav aleihem vayitnaklu oto

lehamito," when they're trying to kill him, look what they say. interesting? They are brothers, just not Joseph as one of them.

"Vayomru ish el achiv," isn't that

So one man is saying to his brother about

the one among them who is no longer a brother, "hinei ba'al hachalomot halazeh ba." Strange word, right?

What does lazeh mean? Well, if you think of lazeh and mizeh, mizeh means what? would lazeh mean?

From this. What

Audience Member: To this.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

To this. It's like opposites, right?

So it's almost as if the man, the anonymous

man, is saying "nas'u mizeh," they left mizeh, but now here's the brothers off over there and they see Joseph coming and it's almost like they're view of it is the inverse of mizeh, it's lazeh. In other words, what it looks like from their standpoint to see the zeh. Which is this guy coming who's not really your brother, is the "ba'al hachalomot halazeh." Instead of a brother, what is he now? He's not a brother, he's

a ba'al hachalomot. What were the chalomot (dreams)? Here's this guy who's going to take us over.

Here's this guy who seems to have these divine revelations of power. Who is he? He's somebody who's

very smart, can't be trusted, doesn't have any of our good interests in mind. He doesn't look like a

brother to us. In ba'al hachalomot, you have all of those three things coming together. There's no

brotherhood, there's somebody very powerful, very scary who we have to do what it takes to get rid of.

Audience Member: Even if you look at the word "vayir'u oto" even though it means they saw him, very close to vayir'a so they were afraid of him.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yeah. That's true also.

Now, what's interesting also, I am not a gematria (numerical value) guy, but (laughter) I'm going to make a little, tiny quick exception. It's kind of interesting, isn't it, that the numerical value of zeh is 12.

How many brothers were there? "Nas'u mizeh." He's left the 12. the brothers.

Not one of us anymore.

Not one of

Audience Member: Could it be that the brothers --

Rabbi David Fohrman: By the way, and our Sages seem to pick up on that numerical value obliquely

when they say what about -- remember the story with the stone with Jacob. First it says that he took

mei'avnei hamakom, then he says that it was an even. So what do our Sages say? Really there were 12

avanim (stones) and they became one. Twelve stones, right? For each of the children. What is im zeh?

"Ki im beit Elokim." This place is not, but -- they seem to be playing off of that. Im zeh, these 12. This

one place. It's the place where 12 become one and you relate to God. So Joseph is out of this mix.

Audience Member: "Nas'u mizeh," zeh is the brotherhood and they moved away from it, but "ba'al hachalomot halazeh ba." He was still walking into it. He wasn't aware of what was going on?

Rabbi David Fohrman: It could be. That's an interesting way of interpreting it. Which is that maybe

that's the way to understand it. What you're suggesting is that the words of the angel were not heeded

by Joseph. Which is, as the Ramban says, Joseph didn't understand them.

Audience Member: That could've been Joseph's perspective, but the brothers could have said halazeh,

they could have almost interpreted it as his being rodeif them, coming after us.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yeah. I don't really know. The problem with that interpretation that it's

Joseph's perspective is that the brothers are saying it. "Hinei ba'al hachalomot halazeh ba." So I don't

know, but I do think it's related. Exactly what to make of it, I can't tell you, but I think it's related.

Let's back up now and go to the third mizeh. I mentioned to you there are three mizehs in the Joseph

story. There's one at the beginning, one at the end -- we've talked about those -- it turns out there's one

in the middle, also, that I noticed yesterday, which I think is part of the picture. So I want to share that

with you and that appears -- does anyone know what chapter it is when the brothers come to Egypt, Joseph sees them and disguises himself? Is that Mem-Alef-ish, Mem-Bet? Mem-Gimel?

Audience Member: Mem-Daled is when he reveals himself.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Okay.

So it's at the end of Mem-Beis, probably.

Let's see. Yeah. Middle here.

Let's read this story. "VeYosef hu hashalit al ha'aretz hu hamashbir lechol am ha'aretz vayavo'u achei

Yosef vayishtachavu lo apayim artzah." Take a look at this verse carefully. What word appears over and over again?

Audience Member: Aretz.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Aretz. Three times.

"Yosef hu hashalit al ha'aretz," Joseph is the master of all the

land, "hu hamashbir lechol am ha'aretz," he is the treasurer for all of the people of the land, "vayavo'u

achei Yosef vayishtachavu lo apayim artzah." So Joseph is the master of the land, he's the treasurer of the

land, the brothers of Joseph come and they bow to the land. Literally. we go forward and try to put this together.

Audience Member: What verse is this?

Now, let's keep that in mind as

Rabbi David Fohrman: What chapter? We're in Chapter 42, Verse 6. "Vaya'ar Yosef et echav," so

Joseph sees his brothers, "vayakireim," and he recognizes them. Now, of course, this is very bitter

because the last words that the brothers said to father was "zot matzanu haker nah," do you recognize

this, right? Referring to the brother's coat. So Joseph now sees his brothers and he recognizes them,

"vayitnaker alaihem." Now take a look at the words vayakireim and vayitnaker. What do you see?

Audience Member: It's the Nun.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Right.

You see it's the same letters with one exception. The Mem turns into a

Nun.

How close are Mem and Nun in the Hebrew alphabet? One letter apart, right.

So basically there's

one letter apart between vayakireim and vayitnaker, but they mean the opposite. Lehakir is what you do

with somebody you know. Vayitnaker means, literally, to estrange oneself, to see them as a stranger. So it sort of shows you the knife edge between reacting to your brothers as hey guys and the other

possibility which is to estrange themselves. So Joseph estranges themselves. "Vayidaber itam kashot

vayomer aleihem," and he says, "mei'ayin batem vayomru mei'Eretz C'na'an lishbor ochel," we came from "Eretz C'na'an lishbor ochel."

Again, "Vayaker Yosef et echav v'heim lo hikiruhu." Now, "Vayizkor Yosef et hachalomot asher chalam

lahem vayomer aleihem," Joseph remembers the dreams and Joseph says "meraglim atem," you are spies,

"lir'ot et ervat ha'aretz batem." Now, here's the question. Is there any rhyme or reason to Joseph's

accusation of all things that the people are spies specifically coming to see the nakedness of the land? Well, we've been talking about land, haven't we? Let's go back to our original verses that mention land. And Joseph is going to continually stick to this. He's always going back -- no, you guys are spies.

You're coming to see ervat ha'aretz. I'm telling you you're coming to see ervat ha'aretz. He can't let go of this. Over and over again. He's coming to see the nakedness of the land. All right.

Now, let's talk about land. The last thing we know about Joseph before this story is that he was promoted from servant to second-in-charge to the king. He literally has virtually unlimited power in

Egypt. Everything goes to him. "Hu hamashbir lechol am ha'aretz hu hashalit al ha'aretz." Now, the

brothers are bowing "apayim artzah" and he remembers the dreams. In the dreams, what happened in the dreams? They bow down to?

Audience Member: Him.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

-- to him. Where do they bow to in this story?

They bow down to the aretz in

the story. Now, of course they did bow down to him so the languages --

Audience Member: It's just describing the direction?

Rabbi David Fohrman: True. It's true. It is describing direction, but my point is this. That, in a certain

way, Joseph having been elevated to position of king, in charge of the aretz, in charge of the aretz, in charge of the aretz. When they bowed down towards the aretz, in a way, even in the direction at which

they're bowing, they're bowing down to him. Not only are they bowing down before him to the

ground, but in as much as they're bowing to the ground they're also bowing to him because who is he.

He is in charge of the ground.

He is the representative of the ground.

There is no one, other than

Pharaoh, who is more associated with the earth, with the land of Egypt than he.

You see this in Shakespeare, by the way.

How do you refer to kings in Shakespeare?

You read Hamlet,

Macbeth (inaudible 00:31:17) Norway, Denmark. This is how you refer to kings. You refer to kings as

the land because they're embodiment of the land. Joseph is the embodiment of the land.

"Lir'ot et ervat ha'aretz batem," you've come to see the nakedness of the land. Oh, now it takes on a

whole other possibility. What have you really come to see? What are you snooping around Egypt for

guys? What are you coming to check? You're coming to take another look at, another gander at poor

old Joseph who you left naked in the pit, in the earth and now it wasn't enough for you to go gawking

at his nakedness after you stripped him and put him in the land. "Lir'ot et ervat ha'aretz batem." What

you don't realize now is that little old Joseph isn't little, old Joseph anymore. He's the aretz now. He's

Egypt.

You're playing Egypt now.

You've come to see ervat ha'aretz? That's what you've come to see?

So there's this whole double entendre here, perhaps. It's not just that you're coming to see -- your spies come to spy out Egypt. There's something personal here. Which is that you're coming to jeer. Oh, we're here. Let's take a -- see if we could find some a slave boy Joseph and jeer at him one more time. "Lir'ot et ervat ha'aretz batem."

"Vayomru eilav," to which they respond, "lo adoni." Now, it always bothered me, "avadecha ba'u

lishbor ochel.

Kulanu b'nei ish echad nachnu keinim anachnu lo hayu avaecha meraglim."

How is it

that they're responding to him? I never understood this. By the protest that we are all children of one

father, how do they counter the accusation that they're spies? So maybe your brother spies, but how do I

know.

You're not talking. Why don't you just say we have no intelligence training.

You know, go

look up our FBI file. There's none of that. Instead it's like no, we're all brothers. But for some reason, that's the opposite.

Isn't that interesting?

In other words, their argument is we are in fact all brothers. We're all the children of one man. At

which point Joseph is thinking are we really all the children of one man or is there one of us that's not

really the child of one man. So Joseph's argument is -- is that if you guys -- and this is in a certain way

what I think he's saying -- if you guys take seriously this notion that you're all the child of one man then

you would have to admit that I am the child of that one man too, but you didn't treat me that way. So

that leads me to conclude that you are taking seriously the notion that we are all children of one man. Now, if you're not taking it seriously that we are the children of one man that means that it's not just me

who's not your brother. It means that on some deep level there's no brotherhood between you either

because you can't have it both ways. Either we're all the child of one man or not the child of one man.

Which is what Joseph comes back at them and says "Vayomer aleihem lo ki ervat ha'aretz batem lir'ot,"

no I refute you. You're not the children of one man. In as much as you're coming to gawk at the

nakedness of one of these brothers, you cannot claim that there's a bond of brothers living united either because you're not all the child of one man. At which point, they come back and they say no. They get very specific. "Shneim asar avadecha achim anachnu," we are 12. Right? Mizeh. Right? We're 12.

Which is now going to include Joseph, but "b'nei ish echad b'Eretz C'na'an v'hinei hakaton et avinu hayom veha'echad einenu," and one of them is not here.

Now listen to Joseph's response. "Vayomer aleihem Yosef hu asher dibarti aleichem leimor meraglim

atem," no, you're spies. "B'zot tibacheinu chai Par'oh im teitzu mizeh," by the life of Pharaoh if you will

get out of this. What is he -- there it is again. What is mizeh? Shattered brotherhood. This is Joseph's

accusation.

You guys are just one big mess of shattered brotherhood.

By the life of Pharaoh if you get

out of this. The only way you're going to get out of this is if I'm going to take one of you behind and we're going to see you're going to bring your brother and we're going to see if you're really brothers.

But his accusation to them is that you guys -- it's a farce that you claim that you're brothers. You guys

are just embodied shattered brotherhood. You're just one big mess of mizeh.

So mizeh ends up being the code word, in the Joseph story, for shattered brotherhood in all three of its

manifestations. Are you with me?

Audience Member: Where does it report the 12 (inaudible 00:35:58) they say shneim asar?

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yeah. They mean Joseph.

Audience Member: They mean Joseph.

Rabbi David Fohrman: (Interposing)

Yeah.

One's missing. One of the 12 is missing. Which according to Joseph, of course, is just a farce because we know why he's missing. Right? He's missing because there was no brotherhood.

Now, let's think of other times in Chumash you have mizeh when you really should have had mipoh. When else is mizeh used when it really should have had mipoh and, I think, maybe, that you still see echoes from this. Here's another case of mizeh where it should have been mipoh.

In the tenth plague, God says to Moses "od nega echad avi al Par'oh," I'm going to bring one more plague upon Pharaoh, "acharei kein gareish yigareish etchem mizeh," and after that they are going to

expel you mizeh, from mizeh. Now, if mizeh is the place of shattered brotherhood then it means that

God is referring to Egypt as the place of shattered brotherhood. Why would God refer to Egypt as the

place of shattered brotherhood? Interesting question. We will get back to that as we go forward

through the verses and you'll see why Egypt is the place of shattered brotherhood.

Let me show you another example of mizeh, in Shemot, in Lamed-Gimel, I believe. This is the aftermath of the Golden Calf. "Vayidaber Hashem el Moshe leich alei mizeh atah veha'am asher he'elita

mei'Eretz Mitzrayim." Was there shattered brotherhood there? Go, get up from this. Strange, isn't it,

but let's look at the end of Chapter 32 because this is Chapter 33. What just happened? Let's look at Chapter 32. "Ivru vashuvu misha'ar lasha'ar bamachaneh v'hirgu ish et achiv v'ish et rei'eihu." This is

the last thing that happened. Remember, go from gate to gate and let one man kill his brother. Those

who worshipped the calf. What is this place? A place of shattered brotherhood. When God says "leich

alei mizeh," get up from this place of shattered brotherhood, this mess of this idolatrous mess that destroyed the brotherhood between you.

In a way, by the way, there's something nightmarish but poignant also. Is it just by accident that the

time where the most egregious fratricide occurs within the Jewish People, which is this? Brothers killing

brothers, literally. There's a command, from Moses, for one man to kill his brother in order to wipe out those who worshipped the Eigel (calf) -- should come just in the aftermath of the Eigel. Is there a connection between those two things? Was it just that well, you know, we had to get rid of all the idolaters so we just happened to end up killing our brothers or was there more of an essential connection between them?

I would like to argue that there's a more essential connection. Is it a connection between idolatry and

killing brothers?

And that is the following.

What is idolatry?

Idolatry is a refusal to acknowledge what?

It's a refusal, ultimately, to acknowledge the truth of the one God. Now, the one God is the Creator.

He's your Father in heaven. "Kulanu b'nei ish echad anachnu." Where does the brotherhood of

mankind come from? The essential idea of the brotherhood of mankind, the brotherhood of the Jewish

People. It only comes from the acknowledgement that there's a father. If you don't believe that there's a father in heaven, if you aren't worshipping a father and you're worshipping something else, you've

destroyed brotherhood. At that point the bonds of brotherhood are gone. It's another mizeh.

So it's only fitted that, in essence, when one part of the community kills out the other part of the community they're doing it because there's a lack of brotherhood, in the community, that allows that to happen. Even though it's also destroying the idolaters from the midst.

So God says get out from this mess. Get out from this mizeh. It's enough of this no brotherhood. We're

leaving idolatry behind. We're leaving the no brotherhood. from here.

We're turning over a new leaf, as you leave

So mizeh equals shattered brotherhood. Right? That's the bottom line here and now let's see how that

plays out, in yetziat Mitzrayim, through the rearview mirror. Because I want to argue that one of the

places of shattered brotherhood is Egypt. Right? "Od nega achad avi al Par'oh," one more plague, "acharei kein gareish yigareish etchem mizeh," they're going to expel you mizeh. In what sense is Egypt a place of shattered brotherhood?

Audience Member: That mizeh we said in the Luchot.

Rabbi David Fohrman: So I was thinking of that and that's why I qualified it and said I'm really only

talking about places where -- you see, the problem is is that zeh is a common word. So you can't say it's

wherever zeh appears and I'm not even willing to say it's wherever mizeh appears. It's wherever mizeh

appears when you would expect mipoh. So when it means we're leaving here, but it's not we're leaving

here, we're leaving this it doesn't mean we're leaving here. It means we're leaving something about this

place. We're not saying every mizeh has these qualities. heim ketuvim is part of that with the Luchot.

Therefore, I wouldn't necessarily say mizeh

I'm not sure how far we got here, but I think that we're up to say Verse 11, or so, in Shemot. back to the beginning of Shemot, for a moment, Chapter 1.

So let's go

I was showing you how the beginning of the story was starting to lead us backwards through the Joseph

story. How, if you look at all the verses "Vayakam melech chadash al Mitzrayim asher lo yada et Yosef,"

there's all this oblique references to the end of the Joseph story. "Hinei am B'nei Yisrael rav v'atzum

mimenu, am rav." These were words spoken by Joseph on his deathbed. I have enough food, I can make you into an am rav. Similarly, what else? "B'nei Yisrael paru vayishritzu." These words come from the end of Vayigash.

Anyway, the bottom line is that when we get up to Verse 11 "Vayasimu alav sarei misim," we talked about this last time that this is an echo of something earlier in Vayigash "vesamtem sarei mikeneh al asher li" when Pharaoh says if you have any brothers who are really good at cattle ranching make them heads

of royal cattle. So now the really good officers of cattle ranchers become "vayasimu alav sarei misim" that

oppressed the Jews. Sarei misim, taxes, because Josef levied taxes upon the Jews. Now, that's going back

to bite them.

Now, "vayiven arei miskinos lePar'oh."

Was there a time when the Jews built -- by the

way, some of this is review. I know I did some of this before Pesach (Passover), but that's the way the

cookie crumbles. So you're just going to have to put up with me over here -- but "vayiven arei

miskenos lePar'oh," and they built storehouses for Pharaoh.

Why would they build cities of storehouses? First of all, was there any time when Joseph built

storehouses? Yes. When? Remember when there was the grain kechol hayam. It was like the sand

needed to be stored somewhere. So Joseph presumably built these big towers of storehouses, too. So

now, what's happening?

Those are playing off of each other.

In other words, what's happening is the

new Pharaoh is saying never again will we need to come onto a Jew to have Egypt survive a famine.

We're going to build our own storehouses. We're going to make these children of Joseph, who built our

first one, they're going to be the ones who are going to build our next storehouses.

I just want to point out to you that we're starting to go backwards through the Joseph story in these parallels. Because we're going from parallels from the end of Joseph's life and then the middle of Vayigash all the way back down to Mikeitz because that's when Joseph is building these storehouses. Now, we're going to go back farther still because the next thing that happens is "Vaya'avidu Mitzrayim et B'nei Yisrael befarech," the Egyptians enslaved the Jews with very hard labor.

Now, was Joseph ever enslaved in Egypt? The answer is yes. When was Joseph a slave in Egypt? In

Potiphar's house. But notice how, it's again, a funhouse mirror of it. Because what kind of slavery did

Joseph have in Potiphar's house? He was head butler of a very prestigious wealthy family. He was on

the management team. He was doing fine. Now, the Jews are -- they're not in a house, they're in a field

-- there's back breaking labor. But, again, notice how we're going backwards through the Joseph story.

Now, we're already at the end of Vayeshev already. We're in Joseph and Potiphar's house.

Audience Member: Didn't Joseph make the Egyptians into slaves when they couldn't eat. They sold themselves to him, as (inaudible 00:46:34)?

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes, that's true. We talked about that correlation last week. I matched it up to

something else, but, yes, that's certainly true. I think that's part of it also. In other words, it is tit for tat.

They enslaved us, we're going to enslave them. I think as you go back farther it continues to mirror Joseph's own experience, in a way, as well.

By the way, this word over here, vayimareru, from which we get marror (bitter herbs), by the way, "vayimareru et chaiyeihem b'avodah kashah." Vayimareru, what does that remind you of in the Joseph

story? I'm going to be really impressed if you guys get this one.

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:47:19.)

Rabbi David Fohrman: (Inaudible 00:47:20). Okay. The trick is that it's nowhere in the Joseph story,

but it is in a reference in Parshat Vayechi to the Joseph story. "Vayimararuhu vayistimuhu ba'alei

chitzim." It's part of Jacob's brachah (blessing) to Joseph that the brothers embittered him. Now, the

Chumash, in Shemot, is borrowing from the language of Vayechi to describe what's happening. Again,

it's the embittering of Joseph. u'v'chol avodah basadeh."

"Vayimareru et chaiyeihem ba'avodah kashahb'chomer u'vilveinim

Here's the part where it gets, kind of, neat because you can test the theory. The theory is that Egypt's in

the rearview mirror. We're traveling through the Joseph story backwards. If the theory is true, we

should be able to test it. So where are we up to now? We've gone all the way through Joseph's life and

we're back towards Joseph and Potiphar's house. If we're going to go back one step beyond that, we

should get to the next thing that we meet in this story. Audience Member: The meyaldos.

What do we meet now? What's the next --

Rabbi David Fohrman:

No, not in the Shemot story.

What should happen, in the Joseph story, right

before the Potiphar story?

Audience Member: The Ishmaelites.

Rabbi David Fohrman: The Ishmaelites, maybe. What about after the Ishmaelites? Because, in other

words, between the Ishmaelites and Potiphar. Even closer to Potiphar.

Audience Member: (Interposing) He gets thrown into a pit.

Rabbi David Fohrman: thrown into a pit and --

(Interposing)

He gets thrown into a pit. After he gets thrown into a pit. Between when he's

Audience Member: He takes the ride down to Egypt.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

No.

That's later.

Audience Member: The spice caravan.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Joseph gets pulled out?

Yeah. It could be the spice caravan, but it also could be what happens after The brothers, Reuben, comes to the pit, sees that he's not there and tells the

brothers and what do the brothers do? Audience Member: Eat.

Rabbi David Fohrman: No, no. That was before.

Audience Member: They take the coat to their father.

Rabbi David Fohrman: They take the bloody coat, bring it to the father and what does father say?

Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:49:19.)

Rabbi David Fohrman: "Chayah ra'ah achalathu," terrible pieces devoured him (inaudible 00:49:23).

Now, let's see. "Vaya'avidu Mitzrayim et B'nei Yisrael b'farech," so the Jews are working b'farech.

Now, "Vayimareru et chaiyeihem" is the next thing. We're already up to Potiphar. Vayimareru is after

Potiphar which means it's before that. Now, think about it. When Jacob said, in the blessing, of

Vayechi, "vayimararuhu vayistimuhu ba'alei chitzim," meaning that they embittered him and they hated

him with a grudge, those slingers of arrows. According to Sefer Shemot what was Parshat Vayechi

referring to?

You can now deduce that.

You can infer that. Just look where we're up to in Egypt

through the rearview mirror. Something that happened before -- we're talking about mechiras Yosef

(the sale of Joseph).

In the whole sale of Joseph thing, what were they doing?

That was the event that

embittered Joseph. chitzim."

That was the event that embodied the egregious grudge of "vayistimuhu ba'alei

Vayistimuhu is a kind of hatred. What kind of hatred is vayistimuhu? say, sin'ah?

How is satam different than, let's

Audience Member: You're closing off yourself to any type of reconciliation.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Yes.

So it's a deeper kind of grudge. Where else do we have satam? By the

way, we have it in Vayechi also. Audience Member: (Inaudible 00:50:55.)

Rabbi David Fohrman: No, that's a different -- satam with a Sin-Tet-Mem. Sitmah. Vayistimuhu.

You have it also in Vayechi when the brothers fear that Joseph is going to get back at them for what he did. "Lu yistineinu Yosef," maybe Joseph will hate us in this kind of way, "vehasheiv yashiv lanu et kol

hara'ah asher gemalanu oto," it will take revenge for everything we've done to us. So you see that

Joseph's sitmah would be a revenge for our sitmah. What we did to him.

So what do we do?

We did

sitmah. What did we do? We threw him in a pit. He's going to do the same thing to us. So

vayimareruhu is going back to that. So vayimareruhu, it's also a reference to this kind of deep anger. So

"vayimareruhu et chaiyeihem ba'avodah kashah b'chomer u'v'leveninim."

The next thing that happens is -- I think I did this with you before, so you're going to have to pardon

my brief review with this -- but the next thing we meet is the meyaldot. meyaldot were commanded by who?

Here come the meyaldot.

The

Audience Member: Pharaoh.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

By Pharaoh to do what?

To kill all the Jewish children, but they didn't do it.

Instead, "vatichayena et hayeladim." At that point, they're called to task by Pharaoh who says "madu'a asitem et hadavar hazeh vaticheyena et hayeladim?" Why are you allowing these Jews to live? At that point they say "ki lo chanashim hamitzriyot ha'ivriyot ki chayot heinah." Isn't that interesting? The Egyptian girls are not like the Jewish girls. The Jewish girls are like wild animals the way they give birth. That's not such a nice way to talk about a Jewish girl. But think about it. What does it remind you in the Joseph story, the Jewish girls are just like wild animals?

What was the lie that the brothers told their father? "Chayah ra'ah achalasu," a wild animal has devoured him. They're also lying. They're lying to the one in charge of them and the brothers are lying to the one in charge of them. They're both lying about chayah ra'ah. The lie is actually the perfect inverse of each other because whereas the brothers are lying because they want to get rid of Joseph, these meyaldot

are lying because they want to save the children. Therefore, their lie is the perfect inverse of the

brothers' lie. The brothers' lie was that Joseph met his end in the belly of a beast. Which is Joseph started outside the beast, the beast devoured him and he died.

Listen to what they're saying. They're saying exactly the opposite. You see, these children they start in

the belly of these woman, they come out like wild beasts and then they're live. Do you understand it?

It's exactly the opposite. opposed to die.

It's an inverse process of being consumed and being born and coming to life as

So this is the first good thing that happens. Everything we've seen until now is things that happened that

were more or less okay in the Joseph story have turned into disasters in the Shemot story. The first

glimmer of hope comes from something that was a disaster in the Joseph story which is the first glimmer

of hope in Shemot.

Audience Member:

Which is a better lie? A lie to save instead of a lie to destroy.

You can't ignore the fact that for a couple of times (inaudible 00:54:24) so many

times. I think we said seven times Joseph was in Pharaoh's house, he was (inaudible 00:54:29) as an eved (slave). They kept referring to him as the ivri? I think a number of times. Again, next time Pharaoh pointed out, we see it after seeing it mentioned so many times in the (inaudible 00:54:45). Again, it's not important at all, but that was in Potiphar's house.

Rabbi David Fohrman: What I could do for you next time maybe if I get a chance, if I'm very nice, but I

don't know if I'll be that benevolent is I actually print out for you. I have notes on this. I'm not going to

actually print out my notes for you, but I will print out -- I have a PDF sheet, of the text, marked up

with underlines. So whenever there's one of these parallels, you see it in these different colored

underlines. So it will help you, kind of, review if you want to see that. I'll try to print that out for you.

Anyway, here's something interesting that happens. We've just seen "ki chayot heinah." Let's just chart

where we're up to in the Joseph story. "Chayot heinah," would be where? That's after the sale of Joseph,

when the brothers lied to their father and they say "chayah ra'ah achalathu." Now, look at the very next

words after "chyaot heinah." I'm going to ask you, what do those words remind you of in the Joseph

story? They say "b'terem tavo aleihen hamiyaledet v'yaladu," before the meyaledet (midwife) even gets

there, they give birth.

What does "terem tavo aleihen" remind you in the Joseph story?

Let's go back to the Joseph story and

see if we could jog your memory, with another quick look, at Chapter 37. "B'terem yikrav aleihem."

Very similar, right? "B'terem tavo aleihen" in Shemot.

Now, this is at the beginning of the sale of Joseph story.

"B'terem yikrav aleihem."

At the beginning of the sale of Joseph story you

have "b'terem yikrav aleihem" and at the end of the Joseph story -- you might almost say that the boundaries of the sale of Joseph story are these two words, these phrases. The upper boundaries of the sale of Joseph story is "b'terem yikrav aleihem," as he was coming to them they started plotting to kill him. That's where the whole story starts.

When does the story end? The story ends when father says oh my gosh, "chayah ra'ah achalathu," this evil beast has devoured him. Which comes first in the Joseph story "b'terem yikrav aleihem" comes first.

Which comes second? "Chayah ra'ah achalathu" comes second.

Now, let's go into Shemot and in Shemot we find which comes first? "Chayot heinah" comes first.

Which comes second? "B'terem tavo aleihen." Why? Because we're looking at Joseph through the

rearview mirror.

We're going backwards through the Joseph story.

Because we're going backwards

through the Joseph story, we're going to see that these things are now in reverse order.

This is a little tricky. What's going to happen next is we're going to get into -- as many parallels as you have seen now to the Joseph story, you haven't seen anything yet. Because what's going to happen now

is you're really going to double done. You're going to see more parallels than ever focusing on a very

specific part of the Joseph story, which is specifically the sale of Joseph. of Joseph.

It's all going to be about the sale

My theory is that was the Torah is doing for you here, with "chayot heinah" and "b'terem tavo aleihen"

is that it's marking off the texts. It's almost saying to you, okay. You're about to see stuff that is going to

be bounded by "chayot heinah" and "b'terem tavo aleihen" and now let's jump in. What you're going to see now -- I'm just telling you this so that you understand though it's a little complicated -- you see the Torah get into the guts of the sale of Joseph story and not leave it for a while. Which, I think, is why these markers are here. It's almost like the markers are telling you okay, everything that's going to happen now is between this two stuff. Because what's going to happen now is you're going to see

iteration after iteration after iteration of the Joseph story. We're not going to leave it for a while. We're

going to go through it once, we're going to go through twice and we're going to go through it again. With that introduction in mind, let's see how it plays out.

Audience Member: That's no longer in reversed order because now the last thing that we did was --

Rabbi David Fohrman: It is reverse order.

Audience Member: Now we're going to do "kol haben hayilod layi'orah tashlichuhu" which is similar to

being (inaudible 00:59:13).

Rabbi David Fohrman: No, no, no. It is. It's all part of the reverse order because what we are going to

do now is we are going to go in reverse, through the selling of Joseph story, but I'm just arguing that

because -- I don't know. I'm speculating. So I'm speculating that this is the Torah's way of bracketing

texts. It's saying here are the brackets, here's what you need to know for everything that follows. We're

going to be talking about stuff between "chayot heinah" and "b'terem tavo aleihen" and now let's start going.

What happens next? "Vayitav Elokim lameyaldot vayarev ha'am vaya'atzmu me'od. Vayehi ki yar'u."

Okay. So now the next thing that happens is "Vayitzav Par'oh lechol amo leimor kol haben hayelod

haye'orah tashlichuhu." Now this is really scary. What's going to happen -- you know what I'm just

going to be nice. I'm going to do this the easy way. The easy way is that there's a particular perspective,

of the Torah, that's going to be interested in adopting in its parallels in the Joseph story. It's not just any

old parallels of the Joseph story. The Torah is actually interested in the perspective of one person and

one person only on the Joseph story and that person is Reuben. Everything that's going to happen, all three iterations through the Joseph story, are going to be done now through the eyes of Reuben.

Everything that's going to happen is going to happen through his eyes. So, actually, in order to

understand this we need to familiarize ourselves a little bit with Reuben's role in the story.

Let's go back to Reuben's role in the story and understand it for a quick second. Back to Chapter 37.

Shemot is going to shine a particular light on Reuben's role. Reuben actually is a very complex role in

the Joseph story and very poignant. Let's take a look at it. First of all, before we even look at Reuben's

role, we might imagine Reuben's role.

Who's Reuben? Reuben is the bechor (firstborn).

If anyone is

more displaced by Joseph's dreams of power it is Reuben. If anyone would be more aggrieved it would be Reuben. Right?

When, in fact the brothers take the coat and present it to father, I've read it to you a few years back, but

there's a double entendre in what they do. If you remember, I suggested that there are parallels between

the language of the sale of Joseph and the story in Devarim of the man who marries two wives. One

wife is a s'nu'ah (hated one) and one wife is a ahuvah (beloved one). The hated one is Leah language and

the beloved one is going to be Rachel. When he has children "lo yuchal levaker et ben ahuvah," you can't make the firstborn the child that you want, Joseph, the oldest child of your beloved wife when Reuben, the child of the hated one is there "ki atah ben habechor has'nu'ah yakir," you have to recognize the firstborn of the hated one, "lo pi shnai'im bechol asher yimatzei lo."

Yakir, you have to recognize him to give him a double portion "bechol asher yimatzei lo." Reuben

needs it. When the brothers bring the coat to father they're using language that reminds you of

Devarim. "Haker na" reminds you of yakir, "latet lo pi shnai'im." "Bechol asher yimatzei lo," give him a

double portion in his estate. "Yimatzei lo" reminds you of "zot matzanu haker na," we found this. "Haker na." The brothers then -- that means that the brothers are actually coming to the table

surreptitiously arguing Reuben's case for him.

In other words, the case their making to father is who's coat is this anyway. "Haker na haketonet bincha

hi im lo," is it Joseph's coat or is it Reuben's coat. Whose coat is this and recognize who your real

firstborn is. Is it Joseph or is it Reuben.

So you might say that Reuben is the most aggrieved child.

So if

you might expect anybody to be leading the pack it would be Reuben and Reuben's greatness is that he's

not leading the pack. Not only is he not leading the pack, he's the only one who sees the craziness of

what's going on and wants to save him; wants to save him for the right reason.

Now let's read. "Vayitnaklu oto lehamito. Voyomru ish el achiv hinei ba'al hachalomot halazeh ba.

V'atah lechu venahargeihu venashlicheihu b'achad haborot ve'amarnu chayah ra'ah achalathu." This is

plan number one. Plan number one, we're going to kill him now and we're going to put his body in the

pit. That's the plan number one.

"Vayishma Reuven vayatzileihu meyadam."

Now, you have to

remember all of this language. All of this is going to become important. Reuben hears, Reuben saves

him from their hands. Remember that, never forget that. "Vayishma Reuven vayatzileihu meyadam," Reuben saves from his hands.

"Vayomer," Reuben says, "lo nakeinu nafesh," we're not going to kill anyone. "Vayomer aleihem

Reuven," and Reuben says, "al tishpichu dam," don't spill any blood, instead, "hashlichu oto el habor hazeh asher bamidbar," cast him into this pit in the desert, "v'yad al tishlichu bo," and don't send your hand to him.

Now, careful. What does -- "lema'an hatzil oto meyadam lahashivo el aviv," in order to save him from

-- there's the hatzil again -- in order to save him from their hands to bring him back to father.

Remember this too. To bring him back to father. This is what Reuben wants to do.

I want to argue that something very, very complex is happening in Verse 22. There's two aspects to it. Reuben is making a very clever double case. At face value, his case is, let's escape the kind of moral culpability that we would have by killing him outright and instead let's accept the relatively minor

culpability of simply putting him into the pit and letting him die on his own. That way at least we're

not killing him. Right? So we are less culpable. But Reuben is very clever and he's actually making a

second argument at the same time.

Again, let's go back to how the brothers are viewing Joseph.

How are the brothers viewing Joseph?

Back to our Sages. They have to -- he's not our brother. He doesn't like us. He's smarter than us. He's

not our brother. In essence that means he's the other and we could get rid of him. What was in the pit

according to our Sages? Audience Member: Snakes.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Snakes. It's like he's a snake. It's like he belongs in the pit along with these

other snakes. Because what's a snake in the eyes of man? A snake is the ultimate other. It's the one who

we recoil from instinctively. The one that hatred is an instinct about. It's like he belongs in the pit with

the rest of the snakes. Reuben is clever enough to play off of that almost subconsciously with the

brothers. He desperately wants his plan to succeed. He wants to save Joseph and bring him back to

father. So he makes a devil's bargain and this is what he does.

What he does is, is he says "hashlichu oto el habor." Now, two verbs that sound very similar to one

another. Hashleich and "yad al tislichu bo." Shalach with a chaf, shelach with a chet. What's the

difference between shalach with a chaf and shelach with a chet? Audience Member: Shelach (inaudible 01:06:58).

Rabbi David Fohrman: Shalach with a chaf -- which one is harsher and which one is softer?

Audience Member: The chaf.

Rabbi David Fohrman:

The chaf is harsher. Cast him down.

Notice the language. He's not coming to

be nice to Joseph. "Hashlichu oto el habor," cast him in the pit, throw him there. It's like yich, right.

Because he's a snake. Get as far away as possible.

"Veyad al tishlichu bo" has a double meaning.

Don't

send out his hand to kill him directly, but also don't reach out your hand to pull him out of the pit.

Shelach has the idea of sending. Sending means coming back.

Don't retrieve him, leave him there.

You

may not -- don't kill him outright, but don't pull him out either.

So we don't have any culpability and, you know what, with a guy like Joseph who's smarter than you are, who really doesn't like you, do you really think you want to be engaging in hand to hand combat to

kill him?

Do you think that's safe with someone like Joseph?

Wouldn't it be much smarter to cast him

in the pit like a snake where he belongs? How do you kill a snake? If you wanted to kill a snake, a snake

is right in front of you, show me how you kill the snake.

Audience Member: From far away.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Do you get up and you say okay, let me grab the snake by its neck and I'm

going to -- right?

No.

You do not do that with a snake. What do you do with a snake?

You look for

the broom, the longest shovel you could find and that's how you kill the snake. You kill the snake from

afar. So "hashlichu oto el habor," just cast him there. Get him away from you and let's go eat bread

somewhere else because we do not want to listen to his screams. We don't even want to be tempted by hearing it.

All of that language of separation is a product of how the brothers are thinking of Joseph. Reuben is

smart. He's playing off of their psychology. He knows that if he portrays Joseph the way that they view

him, as a snake to be gotten rid of, he can succeed deviously in his plan to keep him alive. There's only one thing Reuben wants. He wants Joseph alive in that pit, not dead, because if he's alive I can come back at night and retrieve him.

It's a devil's bargain. Here is Reuben who wants nothing other than to save Joseph, but in a certain way

is accelerated -- the process of dehumanization which the brothers have started. He's bringing it to the

fore. He's saying this is where we're at guys. That's the devil's bargain.

It reminds me, in a way, if you've read or seen the movie, Lincoln, or read the book by Doris Kearns Goodwin, the Team of Rivals. One of the fascinating things in the book really turns on Lincoln's

attempt to ratify the 13th Amendment. So why did Lincoln have to ratify the 13th Amendment? The

13th Amendment, of course, abolishes slavery. Why abolish slavery? He had already signed the

Emancipation Proclamation. The Emancipation Proclamation already freed the slaves of the south.

Why is it necessary for him to engage in a pitch battle which he might well lose and lose all of his popularity and all lose all the political count and all for an amendment which isn't going to do anything?

So Lincoln explained it to his Cabinet and the way he said it to them was as following. He says look, I've

already signed the Emancipation Proclamation, but between you and me, the Emancipation

Proclamation rests on very shaky legal grounds. It's unclear whether it would stand up to a challenge in

the courts.

Why? Because what have I done?

What are the powers have I used for the Emancipation

Proclamation to free the slaves? He says well, I invoked the rule that a president -- that the Commander- in-Chief in war can take the possession of a belligerent nation and sequester them and use them for his

own aims and make them his. So that's what I did. The south is a belligerent nation. I've taken their

possessions, the slaves and I have freed them and I've done what I wanted to do with them.

He says, but in order to do that there are a few things which I have to agree to. I have to agree that the

slaves are property of the belligerents and I don't believe that because I don't think any human being is

the property of any other human being. I don't think it's true in the first place. So the whole idea that

the slaves are property in the first, I believe, is farce. Moreover, I have to argue that the south is a

belligerent nation in order for it to work, but my whole claim in waging this war is that they aren't a

nation whatsoever. That the laws of the states are still intact and that they are just people who are

rebelling, but not a nation. Proclamation.

Therefore, I myself don't believe what I'm propagating in the Emancipation

Moreover, I believe that it's a belligerent nation, but I also believe that the federal government doesn't have the rights to precede the laws of states. And I believe that the belligerents, even though they no longer consider themselves States in the Union, I consider them States of the Union, which means that

the laws of the states are still enforce. Which means that the laws that enslaved them are still enforced

and I, as in charge of the federal government, cannot abrogate those laws. But I felt it needed to be done and I did it.

That's why we need an amendment because otherwise it's all going to be -- this is Reuben, right? A

modern day Reuben, as it were. There's something he needed to do. He had to go into this thicket of

lies in order to be able to free these slaves and it's almost as if Reuben's doing the same thing. He has to dehumanize Joseph in the eyes of the brothers in order to be able to save him.

So this is what Reuben does. Here is Reuben, in the story and the final thing you have to understand

about Reuben is this. Later on, when the brothers show up with Joseph, the brothers are -- well, let's go

back to it. It's actually the piece which we just read in Chapter 42. So let's go back to that. Remember

that piece we read, that interview between Joseph and the brothers, having to do with brotherhood? Now, let's continue in that piece. It makes a lot of sense. This never made sense for me. What happens next? What happens next is Joseph says send one person and then the rest of you are going to be slaves

and we'll see whether or not you're really brothers. So he puts them in jail for three days and then, on

the third day, he says you know what. I'm going to take one of you and the rest of you can go home

and bring food. Just bring your little brother and prove to me that you're right.

Now, at that point, "Vayomru ish el achiv," one person says to another, "aval asheimim anachnu al achinu asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho behitchaneno eileinu velo shama'anu al kein ba'ah eileinu hatzarah

hazot." Joseph.

You know why this is happening to us? This is happening to us because of what we did to

It's all coming back to us. We're guilty for what we saw our brother's cries, we didn't listen and

that's why this stuff is happening now.

It always bothered me.

How did the brothers know this? I'm going to play skeptic for a moment.

This

reads like a bad Mishpacha article. (Laughter.) In other words, imagine an article in Mishpacha Magazine

after like the Twin Towers fell. You know why this happened to us? Because we say lashon hara, that's

why. If we all wouldn't say so much lashon hara these acts of terror wouldn't happen and we should all go home and do teshuvah (repentance) and maybe next time these terrible (inaudible 01:14:51). It's a

cheap attempt to capitalize on some tragedy. How do you know lashon hara has anything -- you know

what God is thinking that you could figure out exactly what it is? Of course, there's a judgment, but how do you know what it is. It's like how do the brothers know? The brothers are like oh, we know.

How do you know?

So good.

Something terrible happens.

So you did something wrong.

How do you

know exactly what you did wrong?

The answer is of course they know. Because what was the subtext of their argument with Joseph?

The

subtext of the argument with Joseph is -- Joseph was arguing in effect of them without saying it. You

aren't brothers.

There's no brotherhood between you.

It's smashed brotherhood.

Now listen to what

they say. They're keeping one of us behind. They're forcing, in a certain way, to tie the brotherhood to be -- Joseph is forcing the issue once again. They're going to keep one brother and the rest of us have to

go home as if he's not a brother. To leave another brother behind and this time it's the brother who's

most culpable. It's Simeon, right?

"Aval asheimim anu." You think, it's almost as if Joseph is forcing the issue and saying yeah, you think

you can live with this idea "kulanu b'nei ish achad anachnu," we're all the children of one man, but somehow exclude me from that. The reason why you're excluding me is because you don't like me, but what you don't realize is that if you're brothers by virtue of coming from one man you don't get to choose who you like and who you don't like. It's a matter of we're all brothers because we come from

one man. So now let's choose someone you like. Let's choose a ringleader. Let's choose Simeon and

make him stay there and you all have to go home and you'll see there's no brotherhood there and now how do you feel?

At that point they come back and say "aval asheimim anachnu al achinu," we are guilty for our brother "asher ra'inu et tzarat nafsho," we heard his screams, "velo shama'anu," but we didn't hear. We saw his

pain, but we didn't listen to his screams. That's why this tzarah (trouble) is coming to you. Do you

understand? What they're saying is it makes perfect sense. We're being attacked in our brotherhood.

Why would we be attacked at the level of our brotherhood? Of course, it's because we allowed our

brotherhood to lapse because if you thought Joseph didn't have your best interest in mind that's one thing. If you thought that Joseph was smarter with you that's also one thing, but if he's screaming at you from the pit and he's smarter than you and he doesn't like you, but he's your brother how could you not listen to his screams. That's why we're guilty. We're guilty because we let brotherhood lapse. That's why this trouble is coming to us. That's why the bonds of brotherhood are being tested once again with Simeon being taken this having to leave Simeon behind until maybe we could come back.

Audience Member: Also "vayomru ish el achiv."

Rabbi David Fohrman:

Yes.

"Vayomru ish el achiv." There's the brotherhood again. Okay.

Now, by

the way, the tza'ar (pain) piece over here is also very interesting. This is the first Jew ever enslaved in

Egypt done so by Joseph.

"Al kein ba'ah aleinu hatzarah hazot."

Why? This trouble is coming to us

because we saw the pain of our brother.

By the way, where are all the brothers going to end up being enslaved? In Mitzrayim.

How do you

spell Mitzrayim? It's just tza'ar with mayim on the outside. They're the watered tza'ar people. The people who --

Audience Member: Waterboarding.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Waterboarding.

They're water tortured.

They're the ones who inflict pain on us

by what they threw our babies in the Nile.

So "al kein ba'ah eileinu hatzarah hazot."

Little did they

know how the pain is going to come. more.

This is just the beginning of the end. But, here, is Reuben once

"Vaya'an Reuven otam leimor halo amarti aleichem leimor al techeta'u bayeled." Reuben then says I told

you not to do this. Now, Reuben, of course, is the child who got his name through seeing. His mother

named him for seeing her pain. Simeon is the one whose mother named him for hearing the suffering. Now listen. "Asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho," we saw his pain, the seer among us was there. What was the

problem? The hearer among us was not there. In other words, Simeon wasn't coming along for the

ride, but Reuben was there.

This is Reuben's greatness, by the way. Reuben's greatness is that -- and I talked with you about this once before -- is that he was able to universalize his mother's experience. If you were named for the pain that your mother felt, what would you think if God made a situation come about where the child of the tormenter of your mother was now in your hands and you could do with him what you will. And

you're named for the pain that your mother felt. Not only that, you're named for the fact that God saw

your mother's pain. Well, if I'm named for God saw my mother's pain and I have the child of the tormentor of my mother in my hand then obviously what does God want from me?

Audience Member: Vengeance.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Do away with him, vengeance. Reuben's greatness is no, that's not what God

wants from me. If God saw my mother's pain, you know what that means about God? It means that

God sees people's pain.

So how am I going to memorialize my mother?

I have to see the pain of others

even the child of her rival wherever it is because that's what God sees.

God sees pain.

So his greatness

was that he was able to universalize the message. He really is my brother and I need to treat him that way.

Audience Member: Also if you treat creator as the father then there's an inyan (idea) of kibud av va'eim?

Rabbi David Fohrman: Yes.

Audience Member: Out of respect for the father, in this case it's Jacob, they should have felt his pain. Forget about how they feel, as being the common father they should have felt his pain.

Rabbi David Fohrman: Right. That's true also.

I'm just about out of time, but let me just show you the beginning of Reuben here in this story. The first

piece of Reuben, which is tragic, is the following. Remember when I told you about Reuben's devil's

bargain? He's the one who dehumanizes Joseph in the (inaudible 01:21:09) of freeing him. Now, who's

idea was it "hashlichu oto el habor hazeh?" That was Reuben's idea, cast him in the pit and then "vayashlichu oto haborah," when they cast him in the pit that was Reuben's idea.

Now, where are we up to? We're up to "kol haben hayelod," Pharaoh says, "haye'orah tashlichuhu."

"Haye'orah tashlichuhu." 'Vayishlichu oto haborah." Where else do you have shalach with the hei

before the word?

A hei after the word?

It's Pharaoh saying throw the children in the pit. Pharaoh is the

corrupted form of Reuben. The one who instructs his children not to listen to the screams, to see the pain of the Jewish children, to listen to their screams and not respond because the Jews are smart because

they can't be trusted because they're snakes who need to be drowned in the great pit with water. So now, the pit is no longer a pit with no water. The pit is full of water. The pit is the Nile.

I'm going to close with the very next thing here which is the beginning of Chapter 2. We talked about this last time. That basically here is bas Par'oh (the daughter of Pharaoh). If the last thing we had was Pharaoh throwing babies in the pit remind you of I don't know of Joseph throwing in the pit what

would happen right before that if we were going backwards through the Joseph story? Right before

Joseph being thrown in the pit, Joseph would have been stripped of his coat, naked on the edge of the

pit. Who do we meet, but a child naked, in a little boat, at the edge of the great pit called the Nile?

"Vatasem basuf al s'fat haye'or," literally at the edge of the pit.

Now, here is Moses in our Joseph role.

At that point "vateitatzev achato meirachok."

What does this

remind us of in the story? Siblings situated from afar, it's the brothers eating. Except in contrast to the

brothers eating who don't want to listen to the screams, Miriam is very attentive from far away, "ledei'ah

mah yei'aseh lo."

She really wants to know what's doing.

The brothers don't care what's doing with

Joseph.

She wants to know what's doing.

Along comes the daughter of Pharaoh.

"Vena'arotehah

holchot al yad haye'or vateireh et hateivah betoch hasof vatishlach et amatah." Isn't that interesting?

What did Reuben say? "Al tishlach yadcha." was what?

Audience Member: Her arm.

Now, she sends her amah, which according to our Sages

Rabbi David Fohrman: Her arm. That's what Reuben said don't send and now she does it. If her father

was corrupted Reuben, who is she? Perfected Reuben. She does what Reuben can only dream of. She

takes the words with the devil's bargain of Joseph, the dehumanizing words, where he really wanted to save and she does the opposite in the service of saying. "Vatishlach et amatah vatikacheha. Vatiftach vatireihu et hayeled," she sees the child, "v'hinei na'ar bocheh," and she hears his screams. Remember?

We saw his pain, but we didn't hear. She sees. She hears. "Vatachmol alav," and has compassion upon

him. Except, in a chilling moment, she recognizes the truth. It's a Jewish child and I'm the daughter of

Pharaoh and now what am I going to do?

On the one hand, I feel this human compassion.

On the one

hand the realization strikes me, the cognitive brain, it's a Jewish child. I'm Hitler's daughter. I'm supposed to drown this child. What am I going to do?

Take out yaldei ha'ivrim and what do you have? "Mi'yaldei ha'ivrim zeh;" mizeh. There's the mizeh.

Do you see it? Is she going to give in to shattered brotherhood? There's a common brotherhood of

humanity. The Jews are our brothers too, but is this a Jewish child the other or is this not? What she does in saving that child, is she bridges the mizeh. What she does is she's I don't care that it's a Jewish

child. They're still my brothers. dangerous these Jews are.

I will reach out to them. I will listen to their screams; no matter how

"Vatomer achoto el bat Par'oh ha'ailech vekarati lach ishah meineket," shall I help you save this child. She says "leichi," and she says go, "vatikra et eim hayeled." Isn't it interesting? She calls the parent.

What had Reuben wanted to do?

"Lehashivo el aviv," to return him to parent.

So Miriam and the

daughter of Pharaoh, working together, actualize what Reuben had only dreamed of. become the embodiment of perfected Reuben and then she names the child.

These women

What does she name the child?

Moshe.

Moshe, what does it mean?

Audience Member: "Ki min hamayim mishisihu."

Rabbi David Fohrman: So you think it means pulled from the water, but isn't that interesting, pulled

from the water. What's the greatness of her act? What had Reuben said? Just cast him. Don't reach out

to him because he's not your brother. So her act of reaching out to him says yes, he is our brother and I

will reach out and she names the child that. You know what? As the K'li Yakar points out she doesn't

name the child mashui, which means the one who was pulled out, which you would think, but she names the child Moshe, the puller.

What does that mean? It means that he's the one who's going to pull. She gives him a destiny. His

destiny is to live her dream. To do what she did. He has to pull because he owes his life to someone

who pulled him out. To someone who is at the precipice who could have seen the Jews as brothers or as

not brothers and made the choice to pull that child back from the brink. This is the first Jew that was saved. If Simeon was the first Jew enslaved, this is the first Jew saved and now his destiny is to pull everyone else out.

Why? Because he has the same challenge that she has. He grows up in the palace, a proud Egyptian,

with Jewish heritage. Now, when he goes and sees the slaves, he's confronted with exactly the same

choice that she was confronted with. How are you going to view these people? The easy way to view it

as they're not my brothers. They're the riffraff. I grew up in the palace. But that's not what he does.

He says I want to go and see what's with my brothers, "vaya'ar bisivlotam," and he sees their pain and identifies with that. He makes the same choice she makes. That was his destiny; to pull. His destiny is to become Reuben just as she was. Pharaoh was a corrupted Reuben. She is a perfected Reuben so who

is Moses?

That's what we're going to talk with when we come back next time.

So I'll see you then.